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Back Door to the Land of Plenty: New Orleans as an Immigrant Port, 1820--1860. (Volumes I and II).

Fredrick Marcel Spletstoser

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BACK DOOR TO THE LAND OF PLENTY: NEW ORLEANS
AS AN IMMIGRANT PORT, 1820--1860. (VOLUMES I
AND II)

THE LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL
AND MECHANICAL COL., PH.D., 1978

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BACK DOOR TO THE LAND OF PLENTY:
NEW ORLEANS AS AN IMMIGRANT PORT, 1820--1860

VOLUME I

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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ABSTRACT

During the forty years before the Civil War over 550,000 immigrants entered the United States through the Port of New Orleans. Though that number amounted to only 10 percent of all passengers who traveled to this country by sea and but 14 percent of those who landed at New York, the Crescent City, rather than Boston or Philadelphia, was the nation's second antebellum port of entry. Furthermore, it was an almost perfect microcosm of the nation's paramount immigrant port and of the entire pattern of human movement into the United States prior to 1860.

The people who uprooted themselves and made the voyage to New Orleans, like the overwhelming majority of other antebellum immigrants, were primarily from Ireland and the German states. While they came from all stations of society, most were less than prosperous. Many were famine victims and paupers. As in all other times, they left their homes to better their lives by improving their economic status, and the bounty that the United States potentially offered them was their most important incentive for taking all of the risks inherent in moving halfway around the world.

Despite the facts that the ocean voyage to New
Orleans was longer and slightly costlier than the more linear route to an Atlantic port, that the city was notorious as a pesthole, and that it had no real industrial establishment to offer jobs to sizable numbers of newly arrived individuals, most of the immigrants who sailed to it chose to do so for a number of very logical reasons. Prior to the advent of direct rail transportation deep into the interior from the East, steam transit up the Mississippi offered newcomers the cheapest, quickest, and most efficient means for reaching their ultimate destination in the American heartland, and one of the Crescent City's major functions as a reception center was that of a way station. Moreover, it was essentially an open port with no real quarantine until 1855. People who would have been turned away elsewhere gained ready access to the United States there.

Many immigrants who disembarked at New Orleans tarried or took up residence there because they arrived destitute and unable to continue their journey, or because they did not have the desire, knowledge, or skills to become agricultural pioneers in the interior valley. Most of these people lived in abject poverty in the city's meanest slums, and they labored or worked in the service trades for a living. They engaged in fierce competition with blacks for this type of employment, and by the time of the Civil War foreign-born whites nearly had displaced blacks in such occupations.
The multitudes of Hibernians and Germans who made Louisiana's chief urban corporation their home during the antebellum period suffered more in its nearly annual yellow fever epidemics than any other segment of society, and they were the targets of a unique nativistic movement that arose, in part, to mask the city's cultural and ideological cleavages that antedated their arrival in large numbers by many years. They burdened state and local welfare agencies to the limit and beyond, and they engendered political and social ferment that colored New Orleans' character and left an enduring imprint upon it.

This dissertation addresses and elaborates on the foregoing points as well as many adherent issues. Based primarily upon antebellum immigrant guides, travel accounts, government publications, periodical literature, and newspapers, it analyzes and makes extensive use of the United States government's official passenger lists for the Port of New Orleans and other major statistical sources on immigration.
CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS

Human migration is a complex phenomenon in any age or era, and it becomes increasingly more complicated as studies analyze, compare, and contrast specific immigrant groups. Numerous diverse factors generate the movement of people and keep it alive, and this certainly is true of immigration into the United States during the four decades prior to the Civil War. In this period of incredibly rapid national growth the first great waves of Europeans flooded into American ports. A product of forces long in the making, this influx resulted from a series of immediate and increasingly crucial causes.

In the antebellum period, as in all others, people migrated to improve their lives. Many left environments they knew to be barren and devoid of opportunity and the very necessities of life for one that potentially offered abundance and mobility. They fled from bad times at home, from want, from famine, and from disease. These conditions in the old countries had been brought about by many developments, some of the most fundamental being a rather massive population increase, the industrial revolution, consolidation of rural economies, and the rise
of scientific farming.¹

Populations of the areas that supplied the bulk of the immigrants doubled in the eighteenth century as the science of medicine advanced and as there was a marked absence of severe plagues.² This was especially the case in Ireland which had the greatest population density of any European nation. In 1700 probably 1,250,000 people lived on that island, and their numbers grew to 4,500,000 a century later, 6,801,827 by 1821, 8,175,124 by 1841, and, ultimately, to 8,295,000 in 1845. There were only 13,500,000 fertile acres of land on the Green Isle in 1815, and peasants totally depended on the potato as their main staple. Production of that staple was not reliable, and the crop tended to fail every four to five years. However, the failure of the potato crop in 1845 was the most devastating ever, and the ensuing famine, far more than any of the many that preceded it, sent hordes of


² Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 18; Jones American Immigration, 95.
starving Hibernians in search of new homes. ³

While natural forces engendered famines, industrial and agricultural progress on the Continent and the British Isles simultaneously displaced thousands of people and filled steerage decks on ships bound for the United States. The industrial revolution and the rise of the factory system put the majority of home manufacturers and small craftsmen out of work. The concomitant consolidation of agricultural land for the application of new agrarian techniques left many already starving peasants impoverished and homeless. As many as one-third of the people in affected Irish parishes found themselves destitute. Immigration was a viable alternative that became more and more appealing as conditions at home deteriorated. ⁴

All immigrants were by no means paupers or famine victims. They varied tremendously in background and social station, and many circumstances in the old as well as the new country helped to determine who would join their ranks. Some undertook the most important journey of their lives

³ Daily Delta (New Orleans), December 2, 1845; Adams, Ireland and the Irish Emigration, 34; Davie, World Immigration, 61-64; Guillet, The Great Migration, 18; U. S., Department of Interior, Bureau of the Census, Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852 to which is appended the Report for December 1, 1851 (Washington, 1853), 7.

⁴ New York Times, September 25, 1851; Adams, Ireland and Irish Emigration, 48; Guillet, The Great Migration, 5; Jones, American Immigration, 96.
for the promise of freedom from religious persecution or political refuge. But, even though they differed considerably in economic status and in the level of education from those who migrated because of poverty and fear, they still left unproductive or hostile environments for one that potentially offered them a better life.\(^5\)

The key to understanding why some 5,500,000 people chose to take all of the risks inherent in moving halfway around the world to start new lives in this antebellum period lies in the promise of opportunity and abundance. Indeed, it was the United States, with its seemingly endless reaches of fertile land and its burgeoning economy, that attracted new sons far more than it was the decay and stagnation in the homes of their fathers that expelled them. More directly, as in all other times, the "pull" of the new country was stronger than the "push" of the old in propelling immigration, and the most vital energy sustaining this "pull" was economic in nature. One of the more revealing illustrations of the paramount nature of the economic motive is that, despite conditions in the old country, the tide of immigration fell as the United States entered and weathered periods of economic reversal and then rose again as the nation recovered. The immigrant viewed

the United States as a young, solidly established country, vital and bursting with energy— an El Dorado that virtually anyone could tap. What it offered made the life-or-death gamble of uprooting one's self worthwhile.6

The evolution of the word "immigrant" symbolically elucidates this attitude. Its use dates from around 1817, though major modern migrations began some two hundred years before that date. Prior to 1817 settlers were "emigrants," or people who left an established place of abode for a life elsewhere. Increasingly after 1817, those who took up new residences in the United States were "immigrants," or people who moved into something with a solid foundation.7

The thousands who took the gamble and made the voyage knew well that they were "immigrants" rather than "emigrants," and in most cases their fundamental motives for migrating had been amply nurtured by an abundance of literature on the United States. They had read, or had

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had read to them, countless "American Letters," "American Books," and "Emigrant Guides" generally written by American promoters or by natives of their own lands who had made initial settlements in particular areas (and who often wrote to promote those places) or who had traveled extensively in the United States, surveying the country in whole or in part concerning its potential as a home for others of their place of origin. 8

Many of these works gave the prospective immigrant detailed instructions on exactly how he should proceed, what he should take with him, and where he should settle. Some contained fairly meticulous geographies of parts of the United States along with discussions of its government and institutions. 9 Two very influential guides of this

8 Carl Wittke, We Who Built America, The Saga of the Immigrant (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1939), 101-12; Jones, American Immigration, 98-100.

9 Excellent examples of guides written by travelers, guides written to express political views, those compiled to promote specific settlements, and those published by booksellers who saw a real market for this type of material have been compiled on microfilm in British Records Relating to America in Microfilm. A Programme of Microfilm Publications (East Ardsley: Micro Methods Limited, n. d.). Other excellent examples of this type of literature are Calvin Colton, Manual for Emigrants to America (London: F. Westley and A. H. David, 1832); William Darby, The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and Southwestern States and Territories: Comprising a Geographical and Statistical Description of the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio— the territories of Alabama, Missouri, Illinois, and Michigan; and the Western Parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. With a Complete List of Road and River Routes, West of the Alleghany Mountains, and the Connecting Roads from New York, Philadelphia, and Washington City, to New Orleans, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh.
type were Morris Birkbeck's *Letters From Illinois*, published in 1818, and Gottfried Duden's *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas*, first published in 1829. Birkbeck advised immigrants to make their new homes west of Ohio—or, more specifically, in


Reprinted in 1968 by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.

10 Reprinted in 1968 by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.

11 William Bek, ed. & trans., "Gottfried Duden's 'Report,' 1824--1827," *Missouri Historical Review*, XIII (October, 1917), 1-21; (January, 1918), 81-93; (April, 1918), 163-79; (July, 1918), 258-70; XIV (October, 1918), 44-56; (January, 1919), 157-81; (April, 1919), 251-81.
Illinois where he had established himself—because of that region's cheap land and easy communication with Europe via the Mississippi and New Orleans. Duden's Report went through three editions and had a tremendous impact in Germany. Born in 1785, Duden had been a law student, a soldier, and a politician in the old country. He came to believe that Germany was overpopulated and that immigration could solve this problem. Accordingly, he sailed for America in the summer of 1824 to observe directly conditions there and to evaluate the possibilities for the establishment of large German settlements. He was largely responsible for northeastern Missouri becoming the ultimate destination of literally thousands of Germans.

Some better organized groups dispatched agents to collect data and to tender reports on the best means of traveling, routes, and sites for settlement. In 1818 Henry Bradshaw Fearon published Sketches of America. A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles Through the Eastern and Western States of America, Contained in Eight Reports. . . . With Remarks on Mr. Birkbeck's "Notes" and "Letters." Fearon was an English seaman, and he scouted


the "eastern and western states" between August 6, 1817 and May 10, 1818 for thirty-nine British families interested in immigrating. His report was generally negative, especially concerning the South, though he did recommend immigration to those in the lower economic orders. In a similar vein, after some thirteen years of extremely successful and highly organized immigration of British Mormons to the United States, church fathers felt the need for not only a history of this movement but a set of illustrations depicting significant places along the extremely long route from Liverpool to the Great Salt Lake. To make this a reality, S. W. Richards, a Latter-Day Saints' Elder and publisher, arranged for Frederick Piercy, a young artist, to make the journey over the by-then-familiar route and to produce steel and wood engravings of important sites. The resulting book, which is now extremely rare, was a solid history of the Mormon migration, and it contained thirty-six steel and nine wood engravings of such places as the New Orleans port, the Louisiana state capitol at Baton Rouge, St. Louis as seen from the river, and the

14 Henry Bradshaw Fearon, Sketches of America. A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles Through the Eastern and Western States of America, Contained in Eight Reports... With Remarks on Mr. Birkbeck's "Notes" and "Letters" (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), v, passim.

15 Doyle L. Green, "Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley," The Improvement Era, LVII (August-September, 1954), 560-61.
former Mormon headquarters at Nauvoo, Illinois. These engravings are some of the finest ever made in the antebellum period, but, even more importantly, this entire work exactly chronicled the Mormon route and methods and served as a superb guide for others who would make the trip to America.

In conjunction with this array of written material, agents of ship and land companies further stimulated immigration by canvassing European villages in search of customers. They extolled the virtues and economic opportunities of life in the United States and sold thousands of tickets and contracts in the process. Their task was facilitated by the veritable trans-Atlantic transportation revolution that accompanied the sharply stimulated Anglo-American trade after the War of 1812 and the ensuing panic. The British government's removal of restrictions on immigration in 1825 joined all of these developments in mobilizing displaced people in the United Kingdom, the

16 James Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley Illustrated with Steel Engravings and Wood Cuts From Sketches Made by Frederick Piercy, Including Views of Nauvoo and the Ruins of the Temple, With a Historical Account of the City; Views of Carthage Jail; and Portraits and Memoirs of Joseph and Hyrum Smith; Their Mother, Lucy Smith; Joseph and David Smith, Sons of the Prophet Joseph; President Brigham Young, . . . Together With a Geographical and Historical Description of Utah, and a Map of the Overland Routes to that Territory from the Missouri River. Also, an Authentic History of the Latter-Day Saints' Emigration from Europe from the Commencement up to the Close of 1855, with Statistics (Liverpool: Published by Franklin D. Richards, 1855).
German states, and in other parts of northern Europe.17

The recorded history of antebellum immigration began in 1820 when the United States government started compiling statistics on passengers who arrived at American ports. Prior to that date the picture is confused. Nevertheless, there is at least enough fragmentary information to push a few of the clouds away.18 Leading authorities have agreed that from the Declaration of Independence to 1820 some 250,000 people immigrated into the United States. Ten thousand arrived in 1794, and this was the record year

17 Wittke, We Who Built America, 101-12; Jones, American Immigration, 98-100.

until 1817 when the total stood at 22,240. Estimates tend to vary slightly, but from the mid 1780's to 1806 probably 4,000 to 6,000 people arrived annually, and they generally were English, Irish, Scots, and Germans traveling by way of British and French ports. Between 1806 and 1816 the flow drastically dwindled because of hostilities between England, France, and the United States, and few records remain on this decade's trickle of immigration. However, 1817 witnessed not only a return of earlier trends but the beginnings of new ones that would describe the movement of people into the United States for the next forty years.19

The character of immigration from the mid-1770's to 1820 differed little from that of the immediately ensuing years. Those who ventured to the new country tended to be young and less than prosperous. Indeed, the majority were poor, though not necessarily impoverished, and contemporary observers suggested immigration as a remedy for their economic plight while admonishing those well-established at home to stay there. The United States, just as in later years, demanded laborers, and it offered employment to common working people and skilled artisans, though not to spinners or weavers. To those who had the ability and the capital to engage in commerce this country was a mecca of opportunity. Farmers likewise populated the ranks of the home-seekers, though not without being warned about buying unseen land and settling in areas that differed radically from their places of origin. Ethnically, the multitudes of Irish and Germans that would become distinct features of the 1830's, 40's, and 50's did not appear in this early period. Still, the majority of those who chose a new life in America were from the United Kingdom.


21 Fairchild, Immigration, 65-64; Fearon, Sketches of America, 446-49; Holmes, An Account of the United States, 126-38.
and the German states.22

Just as the character of immigration prior to 1820 resembled that which would follow, so too did the early period foster the beginning of what came to be known as the "immigrant trade." Intimately fused with this trade, patterns also began to emerge for the major ports of embarkation. Throughout the antebellum period the transportation of immigrants tended to follow the lines of commerce, and, to a certain extent, there was a close relationship between the shipping of American produce to Europe and the return of vessels to the United States loaded with "human freight." Very predictably, this practice began when American trade resumed and accelerated after the Treaty of Ghent and the fall of Napoleon.23 It was destined to play a significant role in the rise of New York and the failure


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of New Orleans to maintain commercial greatness and to
develop a balanced urban economy prior to the Civil War.

The lines of commerce and their accordant immigrant
trade did not alone dictate ports of embarkation and debar­
kation in the five years before 1820 or the forty years
after that date. Profiting from the experience of those
who had gone before them, immigrants learned that certain
ports had better facilities to accommodate them than others
and that some port cities actively sought passenger traffic.
An immigrant's ultimate destination in the United States
also contributed to his choice of an entrance port just
as did the possibilities for immediate employment, even if
temporary, in a particular port city. In these early
years Liverpool and Le Havre quickly came to prominence
as the leading European ports engaged in American commerce
and as departure points for American settlers. By 1819
Bremen and Hamburg also engaged in this traffic, but neither
of these ports became important until the early 1830's when
German immigration sharply increased. Throughout the
colonial period and early national years Philadelphia was
the principal reception center, but after 1816 New York
took and kept the lead. 24 Available statistics for 1817
reflect the patterns that emerged after the war and that

24 Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 336-38; Adams, Ireland and Irish Emigration, 73-74; Byrne, Irish
Emigration to the United States, 15; Page, "The Trans­
portation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in
the Nineteenth Century," 736.
continued through the 1820's. Of the 22,240 arrivals in that year, 7,634 landed at New York, 7,085 at Philadelphia, 2,200 at Boston, 1,817 at Baltimore, and 879 at New Orleans. 25

New Orleans' rank as the fifth American immigrant port in 1817 was typical of what its position would be throughout the 1820's and well into the 1830's. Although it always received passengers from abroad, it did not firmly become this country's second port of debarkation until 1837. Very little statistical information exists concerning immigration into and through the Louisiana port during the years antedating the government's official passenger lists, but it probably is correct to conclude that immigration had little quantitative impact on the city in the colonial period and only a sporadic (though this was very sharp on two occasions) impact during the years between the Purchase and 1820. Official Spanish census figures reveal that the population of New Orleans was 4,980 in 1785 and only 5,338 three years later. When the United States took possession of the city it had 8,056 inhabitants, and it was only after this time that rapid growth through heavy immigration began. 26


Nevertheless, a number of important groups entered the port in the colonial period either to take up residence in New Orleans or in the surrounding area. While their histories are outside the scope of this study, it would be wrong totally to ignore them. Early in the 1720's John Law's Western Company attracted several thousand Palatine Germans by offering them free passage, free land, and citizenship in return for three years of service in Louisiana. These early "redemptioners" accepted Law's ill-fated offer, but hundreds died en route to their destination. As it turned out, the Company made no adequate plans to receive and settle them on its land grant near the mouth of the Arkansas river. Stranded in and around the new city of New Orleans, some later became wards of Charity Hospital, but eventually approximately 300 of the survivors settled in the area of Louisiana that came to be known as the "German Coast" where they rapidly assimilated with French elements in the population.  


Several French groups that had lasting impacts on the local culture immigrated into or through New Orleans during the colonial years. In 1727 the Ursuline Nuns arrived to begin teaching the city's young girls, and three years later they occupied their newly constructed convent on the square bounded by the river, Chartres, Ursuline, and Hospital streets. They remained in that building until 1824 when they took up residence in a larger facility. However, from 1831 to 1834 the old convent served as the Louisiana state house, and after that time it was the seat of the Archbishop of Louisiana. It remains a landmark to this day.\textsuperscript{28} After the French Revolution some French loyalists migrated to Louisiana, and a few established themselves in New Orleans. But the insurrection of 1791 in Santo Domingo gave the city a much more important group of refugees who were proficient at refining and processing sugar and who stimulated that infant Louisiana industry.\textsuperscript{29}

During the first half of 1765 approximately 650


French "Acadians" immigrated to the Attakapas and Opelousas regions of Louisiana. In 1605 they had begun settling in Nova Scotia which the British claimed by right of John Cabot's voyage of 1497 and the French claimed on the basis of Jean Verrazano's voyage of 1524 and the expedition of Jacques Cartier a decade later. Disputes over the ownership of this territory continued until 1667 when the Treaty of Breda transferred it solidly to France. Forty-five years later the Treaty of Utrecht returned it to Great Britain, and until 1755 the Acadians were an irritating menace to the British. There were many reasons for this bad relationship, but the most important were the consistent refusal of the French to swear allegiance to the British Crown, their concurrent refusal to bear arms for the British against local Indians, and their fundamental loyalty to France. Ultimately, the British declared them prisoners of the king and dispersed many of them throughout other North American colonies. From 1755 to 1765 these people became public charges and, in most cases, burdened the colonies in which they had been forced to reside. Always desirous of living under the French flag, they long had considered moving to the French West Indies or Louisiana. In 1765 their opportunity arrived when the British, wanting to be rid of them, gave them permission to leave.30 It goes without saying that the Acadians had

a tremendous social and cultural impact on their adopted home--an impact that remains strikingly evident.

The Irish also migrated into colonial New Orleans, though hardly in a manner that foreshadowed their future invasion. The city attracted them, especially during Don Alexandro O'Reilly's tenure as governor, because of Spanish Louisiana's Catholicism and anti-British policies. Most of these sons of Erin engaged in commerce and land speculation, and several, such as Charles McCarthy and Antonio Patricio Walsh, amassed great fortunes.31

These and other groups that migrated into or through New Orleans during the colonial era evoke curiosity because of their fascinating backgrounds and their unique social and cultural contributions to the city and its environs. However, the period prior to American control produced no sizable immigration via the Mississippi's mouth. From the time of the Louisiana Purchase to 1810 the population of New Orleans more than doubled, but this neither represented an influx of Anglo-Americans nor the beginnings of large-scale European immigration.32

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31 Ruby Nell Gordy, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845--1855" (M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1960), 4-5; Earl Francis Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862" (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1961), 1-5; Searight, New Orleans, 92.

32 Cable, The Creoles of Louisiana, 156; Cable,
War in Europe, on the high seas, and in the United States, along with its attendant commercial restrictions, retarded immigration as well as economic growth in New Orleans just as in the nation as a whole. Yet the war did give the Crescent City its first truly large group of aliens—the greatest single bloc to enter the port until the mid-1840's.

Between May 10 and August 19, 1809 some 8,000 refugees from Cuba made their way up the Mississippi to New Orleans. About 2,600 of them were French, the remainder being free blacks and slaves. These people had fled from Santo Domingo late in 1802 and early in the following year after French forces failed to crush a slave rebellion in that colony. The majority went to Cuba where they prospered growing sugar, cotton, and coffee. Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808 ended their welcome on the Pearl of the Antilles, and on April 11, 1809 Spanish officials there ordered them to leave. New Orleans naturally attracted these people because of its large French population and the predominance of Catholicism. But the town was unprepared and ill-equipped to accommodate a group that nearly equaled half of its municipal population. To make matters worse, the exiles arrived penniless, and many

"New Orleans Historical Sketch," in Waring, comp., "The Southern and Western States," 244. The population of New Orleans in 1810 was 17,242, of which no more than 3,100 were Anglo-Americans.
were near starvation. Their presence severely strained charitable institutions, gave rise to new ones, and rocked the local economy. Nevertheless, New Orleans' Creoles sympathized with the new arrivals' plight and were more than benevolent with them. The former Cubans quickly assimilated, and they became assets to the community. But in the process they presented Governor William C. C. Claiborne as well as the United States government a thorny problem. This problem revolved around the 2,000 slaves whom the Frenchmen brought with them in violation of American law, which forbade the importation of chattels.33 Because of their peculiar situation, industrious nature, and their desire to engage in agriculture in the vicinity of the Creole City, Congress exempted these refugees from the law and allowed them to keep their slaves.34


34 "An Act for the remission of certain penalties and forfeitures and for other purposes," U. S., Statutes at Large, II (1809), 549.
After the Battle of New Orleans immigrants did not surge into the Louisiana port. Travel accounts reflecting on the five years before 1820 routinely note that the city bustled with commerce and that virtually every known language could be heard on the levee and in the streets. But, other than the knowledge that 879 passengers probably arrived in 1817, very little statistical data exists for these years. There is no question that the city's ties with the West were strong and swiftly growing stronger. Because of these ties and the rapidly improving river transportation, it is fair to assume that potential settlers increasingly saw New Orleans as a logical gateway to the interior. Furthermore, immigrant guides written in this period endorsed and recommended the city as a port of entry for precisely these reasons.


the town gained the reputation as an unhealthy place because of frequent yellow fever epidemics, and already in the half decade before 1820 established residents viewed this malady as one that almost was peculiar to newcomers. This tendency to associate fever with strangers points out that the city was conscious of an expanding number of outsiders in its midst. But, other than bits and pieces of evidence such as these, nothing remains to evaluate immigration in this period.

Just as previously, one group emerges from the shadows in the years immediately preceding the passenger lists because of its unique circumstances. "Redemptioners," or "indentured servants," appeared and reappeared in the history of American colonization and settlement throughout


37 Ashe, Travels in America, 304-6; F. Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, Through the States of Ohio and Kentucky; A Voyage Down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and a Trip Through the Mississippi Territory and Part of West Florida, Commenced at Philadelphia in the Winter of 1807 and Concluded in 1809 (Pittsburgh: Printed and Published by Cramer, Spear & Eichbaum, 1810), 349; Flint, A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, 1, 557; Holmes, An Account of the United States, 142, 279; Niles' Register, XVII (October 23, 1819), 128; M. Perrin Du Lac, Travels Through the Two Louisianas, and Among the Savage Nations of the Missouri; Also, in the United States, Along the Ohio, and the Adjacent Provinces, in 1801, 1802, & 1803. With a Sketch of the Manners, Customs, Character, and the Civil and Religious Ceremonies of the People of these Countries (London: Printed for Richard Phillips by J. G. Barnard, 1807), 90; Wisner, Public Welfare Administration in Louisiana, 17-20.
the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and during the first quarter of the nineteenth. However, the system took on a particularly ugly aspect in Louisiana between 1815 and 1820. Stimulated by the congressional act of February 3, 1807, which prohibited the importation of slaves, Dutch shipowners and agents sent "runners" through the villages of the Palatinate, Alsace-Lorraine, Wurtemberg, and Baden areas of Germany in search of an alternative source of "human cargo." Residents of these villages had been torn by war and heavy taxation since the time of the French Revolution, and in 1816-17 they endured a severe famine. This famine served as a catalyst for causing many to gamble on the United States. Ripe targets for unscrupulous transportation agents, these people bound themselves to service for three to eight years in exchange for passage to America. No real statistics remain as to the numbers who entered into these agreements, but among those who did there is no doubt that mortality rates on the voyages were exceedingly high—as much as 50 percent. New Orleans was not the only port to receive these refugees, but the treatment they endured there was singularly brutal. Literally sold as slaves, those who were fortunate enough to arrive alive led dehumanizing existences, completely at the mercy of their masters. Negro slaves, vengefully happy as seeing whites in bondage, taunted them, and free blacks of means bought some as symbols of status. Not surprisingly, many tried to escape, though usually
in vain.  

Public indignation over their plight impelled the Louisiana legislature to act on their behalf in 1818 with a law that provided for at least two German-speaking "guardians," appointed by the governor, to examine all contracts entered into by these unsuspecting peasants and to see to it that those who mistreated them faced criminal prosecution.  

But by this time the greater part of the damage already had been done.

Throughout the years prior to 1820, just as after that time, it mattered little if an immigrant was a redemptioner or a man of some means. His primary goal was to better his lot in life. Whether he entered the United States through New York, Philadelphia, or the Mississippi's mouth, he did so intent upon improving his economic status.

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While immigration was not a major factor contributing to the nation's growth in these early years, by the end of the War of 1812 it had begun to accelerate. Trends emerged that would characterize the entire movement until the early 1830's when truly heavy waves of northern and western European people began to pour into American ports. New Orleans was by no means a major port of debarkation in either its colonial period or during the early national years prior to 1820. Nevertheless, it did receive a series of important foreign groups that made lasting impressions on the city and the surrounding area. Furthermore, as New Orleans' commercial relations with the Mississippi and Ohio valleys grew stronger, as river trade expanded, and as transportation improved and cheapened, the volume of immigration through the Louisiana port grew and totaled some 500,000 people before the Civil War began.
CHAPTER II

STATISTICAL SOURCES AND THE CHARACTER OF IMMIGRATION INTO NEW ORLEANS, 1820--1860

Statistical conclusions that approach certainty concerning immigration into the United States can be drawn only for the years following 1825, using the official passenger lists as the primary source and several important secondary works to supplement them. On March 2, 1819 Congress passed "An Act regulating passenger ships and vessels." Stemming from congressional authority to regulate commerce, this law was the first major legislation dealing with immigration. It came about due to increasing passenger traffic after the War of 1812 and the already apparent evils that accompanied it, such as overcrowding of vessels and the lack of sufficient provisions for the passengers on voyages. It limited the number of passengers entering American ports to two for every five tons of burden on any craft. It stipulated that masters or owners violating this rule would be sued for $150 for every person above this limit and that an entire vessel would be forfeited if it carried twenty passengers over its prescribed capacity. The law further set minimum amounts of specific provisions for transatlantic voyages. Then, in its fourth section, it enjoined captains to deliver to the collectors
of customs of the districts in which their ships called lists of all persons taken on board, including their age, sex, occupation, nationality, intended destination, and the number who died en route. The fifth, and final, section directed collectors to transmit quarterly and yearly returns of these statements to the Secretary of State who, in turn, would present the reports to Congress at every session.¹

Currently housed in the National Archives, the collectors' reports have been reproduced in full on microfilm, and films for major immigrant ports have been issued individually.² These lists are the single most important source of information on immigration into the United States. All other statistical accounts rest on them.

For obvious reasons the customhouse reports are


a tremendous boon to genealogists in their efforts to trace the descent of individuals and families. Practitioners of this craft have expended considerable energy on the New Orleans lists. They have extracted returns for specific vessels and important series of ships from the rather cumbersome whole. Works such as these serve as guides or aids to others doing genealogical research, and they can be of some use to historical studies as well.3

However, most historians of immigration do little more with these fundamental documents than cite totals for full years or decades derived from them by William J. Bromwell in his History of Immigration to the United States or in various government publications.4 There is nothing

3 See, for example Alice D. Forsyth, "Passenger List--January--December, 1833," New Orleans Genesis, VII (June, 1969), 278-83; (Mrs.) F. O. James, "Passenger Lists, 1815-1837," ibid., I (January, 1962), 23-29; (Mrs.) John M. Walton, Sr., "Manifest of all Passengers Taken on Board the Pyramid," ibid., II (September, 1963), 379-83.

4 The most frequently used government publications are U. S., Department of Treasury, Bureau of Statistics, Tables Showing Arrivals of Alien Passengers and Immigrants in the United States From 1820-1888 (Washington, 1889); and U. S., Department of Treasury, Bureau of Statistics, "Immigration into the United States Showing Number, Nationality, Sex, Age, Occupation, Destination etc., From 1820 to 1902," Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance, H. D. 15, pt. 12, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., June, 1903. The Seventh Census of the United States (1850) was the first to classify people according to their places of nativity, and it as well as the ensuing Census of 1860 contain statistics on arrivals. See U. S., Department of Interior, Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 (Washington, 1855), lxxxix, xc-xcxi; J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, Embracing its Territory, Population--White, Free Colored, and Slave--Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed...

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wrong with this practice in outlining overall trends and patterns in the movement of people into this country. In fact, there is much justification for it, because, as they exist today, too many of the lists are missing for them to be relied upon for totals over long periods of time. Nevertheless, a more meticulous use of this source broadens the picture and explains much about the effectiveness of the American and British laws governing vessels that carried passengers before the Civil War.

As with any major historical source, the immediate question that arises about the lists involves their accuracy. Most commentators contend that they fall short of exactitude for the first ten or twelve years and that they become increasingly more reliable after the early 1830's. Writing in 1854, James Dunwoody Bronson DeBow, who was then Superintendent of the Census, asserted that the customhouse reports presented far less than the true number of arrivals, and, while they had improved somewhat, early totals

Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census, to Which are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning with 1790, in Comparative Tables, With Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information (Washington, 1854), 122-23; U. S., Department of Interior, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population (Washington, 1864), xviii-xxxii.

5 Bromwell, History of Immigration, 12; Richard Mayo-Smith, Emigration and Immigration, A Study in Social Science (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 41; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population, xviii.
were short by as much as 50 percent.⁶ A canvass of the approximately 25,000 pages covering New Orleans prior to the Civil War clearly revealed that if the reports were imprecise in the early years they approached being haphazard later. Because of a series of shortcomings in them, caution and qualification must be used in drawing broad conclusions from the statistics they set forth.⁷

Their immediate deficiency as a record of immigration is that they are passenger lists. Throughout the antebellum period they make no distinction between true immigrants and other travelers. This is only a minor problem, and there is little difficulty in identifying vessels that exclusively carried immigrants by their ports of embarkation and the nationalities of those aboard. Though this is of small importance concerning the Port of New Orleans, it also must be noted that the reports only account for people entering the United States by sea. They ignore overland migration.

A far more serious flaw is that the reports are incomplete. Fifty-nine of the 160 quarterly returns for

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⁶ DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, 122.⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion of the passenger lists for the Port of New Orleans is based on a study of U. S., Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving From Foreign Countries, 1820-—(National Archives Record Group 36, H. Q. Records, Bureau of Customs, 1815--1936; Microcopy 272, National Archives Microfilm Publications), reels 1-13.
New Orleans between 1820 and 1860 are missing, and the records for two of the 101 quarters for which there are statistics are incomplete. More likely than not the collectors compiled most of the missing lists, and they were subsequently misplaced or lost. However, the unavailability of more than one-fourth of them reduces their cumulative usefulness, though not necessarily that of existing complete quarters or tabulations for specific vessels.

The number of deaths set forth in the lists only can be regarded skeptically. It is very difficult to believe that less than one of every 500 passengers died en route to New Orleans, but the official returns show fewer than 1,100 deaths out of the 555,322 who entered the port during the forty years before Fort Sumter. Even if one doubles the reported number of deaths to more than compensate for the missing quarters the total still remains unrealistic. Voyages on immigrant vessels seldom were as horrifying as some contemporary sensationalists claimed, but they hardly were pleasure cruises. A simple survey of the American and British legislation respecting passenger traffic bears

8 This conclusion is warranted by the facts that some manifests of passengers submitted to the collectors by ship captains (as required in section four of the act of March 2, 1819) exist for the missing quarters and that other compilations, such as Bromwell's, the Treasury Department's 1889 publication of Tables Showing Arrivals of Alien Passengers, and the Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance for June, 1903, contain totals for the years in question based on customhouse reports.
this conclusion out by demonstrating the increasing concern of these governments for those who ventured out to sea (see Chapter III). Collectors may have overlooked deaths, and captains may have failed to report them. Section fourteen of "An Act to Regulate the Carriage of Passengers on Steamships and other Vessels," passed on March 3, 1855, required masters, captains, owners, or consignees of vessels to pay the collector of the district in which they docked $10 for every passenger above the age of eight who had died of a "natural disease" on the voyage. This money was to be used for the care and protection of sick and indigent immigrants in that particular customs district. While this law may account for reluctance on the part of some captains to report deaths in the last five years of the period under consideration, it implies nothing about the previous thirty-five years. Since quarantine seldom was an obstacle at New Orleans there is little reason to believe that captains tried to conceal deaths to prevent longer than normal detention. More plausibly, if there was intentional failure to report fatalities its object was to protect the reputation of a ship. However, perhaps a better explanation for the strikingly low mortality figures lies in the quality of the lists themselves.

Collectors were inconsistent and often careless in compiling their reports to the Secretary of State. This is

9 U. S., Statutes at Large, X (1855), 715.
especially the case for New Orleans following the fourth quarter of 1836 when totals began to mount significantly. As the number of immigrants increased so too did the magnitude of the task of recording them. In the majority of cases collectors ceased to supply specific information about individuals and simply classified the bulk of passengers under general categories. For example, the reports regard almost all Irish as "laborers" and the better part of those from the German states as "farmers." Though valid more often than not, such bloc designations on the basis of nationality alone rarely were made during the 1820's and early 1830's, and they reveal that the precision of the lists decreased in later years. The same is true for passengers' destinations. After the mid-1830's collectors merely stated that arrivals intended to reside in the "U. S. A.," whereas in earlier years they generally pointed out the exact state or area of the country in which newcomers proposed to settle. Further evidence of such inexactitude can be seen in the differing classifications of vessels. While changes in rigging can explain why a particular craft may have been a bark one year and a ship the next, only overly hasty or slovenly reporting accounts for the same bottom being referred to as a "bark" on one page and a "ship" on another.

Some of these problems may be attributed to the fact that the customhouse reports are the products of many hands. New Orleans had sixteen different collectors between
1820 and 1860. A collector rarely compiled a list himself. Subordinates usually attended to this job, and assistant collectors signed some reports while others bore no signatures at all. Different script on individual reports indicates that they are the work of several officials. Various compilers used differing methods and arrangements in reporting. Returns for some vessels segregate males and females, while others enumerate passengers in family groups. These facts further point to the heterogeneous methods used and the lists' lack of consistency.

All of these deficiencies are real, and they must qualify any conclusions based on the New Orleans reports. Nevertheless, such imperfections do not invalidate the documents. No historical source is perfect or absolutely complete, and records far more fragmentary than these have thrown bright light on the past. The lists do indeed illustrate the character and trends of immigration into and through the Crescent City before the Civil War, and one of their major liabilities in supplying totals (the missing fifty-nine quarters) can be surmounted by simultaneously employing three other major statistical studies. These are William J. Bromwell's *History of Immigration to the United States* (New York, 1856), the Bureau of Statistics' *Tables Showing Arrivals of Alien Passengers and Immigrants in the United States From 1820--1888* (Washington, 1889), and the same bureau's "Immigration into the United States, Showing Number, Nationality, Sex, Age, Occupation, Destination, etc.,
From 1820 to 1903," in the Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance, June 1903. As has been pointed out, the two Treasury Department publications rest on Bromwell's statistics through 1855. Bromwell derived his figures from the annual reports submitted to Congress by the Secretary of State according to the act of March 2, 1819. However, he also claimed to have used certain customhouse reports that were not transmitted to Washington, though he does not elaborate on their nature.10

While these works fill in gaps left by the missing quarters, they give rise to a serious factual dilemma. Bromwell and the Treasury Department publications show yearly numbers of passengers entering American ports, but weighty questions must be raised concerning the accuracy of their totals for New Orleans.11 All of the quarterly customhouse reports exist for fifteen of the forty years between 1820 and 1860. As depicted in Table 1, the totals for only two of those fifteen years (1836 and 1851) exactly correspond with those offered by Bromwell and the Treasury Department. Differences between the New Orleans collectors' totals and those in the three other sources vary from two to 5,950 for the other thirteen years. Moreover, the customhouse lists contain an incomplete quarter in both 1834

10 Bromwell, History of Immigration to the United States, 11.

11 The same problem undoubtedly exists for all U. S. ports.
## YEARLY ARRIVALS OF PASSENGERS AT NEW ORLEANS

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<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
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<td>597a</td>
<td>591</td>
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</table>

- **I** - One quarter missing
- **II** - Two quarters missing
- **III** - Three quarters missing
- **IV** - Entire year missing
- **I** - One quarter incomplete
- **II** - Estimated total

### Sources:
- I - U. S. Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving From Foreign Countries, 1820–;
- II - Bromwell, History of Immigration to the United States;
- III - Bureau of Statistics, Tables Showing Arrivals of Alien Passengers and Immigrants in the United States From 1820–1888;
- IV - Bureau of Statistics, "Immigration into the United States Showing Number, Nationality, Sex, Age, Occupation, Destination, etc., From 1820 to 1902."
and 1840, but totals for these years (ignoring the fact that some figures are missing) are identical to those set forth by the other three sources.

All of these observations very easily could preface an extended exercise in hypercriticism that probably would lead nowhere. Undoubtedly the New Orleans collectors made many mathematical errors in arriving at their totals, and it requires only superficial scrutiny to detect glaring examples. In the days before mechanical calculators, it likewise is reasonable to conclude that Bromwell and the compilers of the Treasury Department publications made similar errors. However, since Bromwell was very close to the original documents when the collectors actually compiled them, and because he probably used supplementary materials that are not available today to arrive at his totals, his figures deserve much respect.

Because of wide discrepancies among immigration figures in the several sources and the many missing quarters, probably the best rule governing the use of all of the data is one that regards quarterly and yearly totals skeptically while employing the bulk of the information.

12 For instance, whoever compiled the return for the second quarter of 1841 added 619 females and 1,319 males to arrive at a total of 2,338 passengers--400 over the actual total of 1,938. This was Dennis Prieur's last quarter as collector during his first term of service, but the signature on the report, which is illegible, definitely is not his. The same type of error appears in the totals for the second quarter of 1847, the first quarter of 1848, and the fourth quarter of 1853.
to discover general trends and changes in the flow of immigrants into the United States as a whole and into the Crescent City in particular. This rule also should be extended to returns for individual vessels. Neither the passenger lists nor other statistical compilations offer consistently reliable or exact totals, but they do indeed reflect patterns that emerged.

Historians customarily refer to all immigration into the United States prior to the 1880's as "old immigration." Basically an ethnic term, this expression generally signifies that those who entered this country during these years hailed from northern and western Europe. While this concept is correct, it only broadly characterizes one phase of the movement. Statistically immigration into the United States in the forty years before the Civil War varied, and it falls into a series of patterns. One scholar divides the years from 1820 to 1860 into five chronological periods and the eighty years prior to 1900 into nine. This and other similar techniques graphically illustrate trends, but figures for the United States as a whole and its two major ports of debarkation suggest an


14 J. Hanno Deiler, "European Immigration into the United States From 1820--1900" (lecture delivered before the Germanistic Society of Chicago, December 16, 1907, Louisiana Collection, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge).
easier approach. This approach views antebellum immigration in three fairly distinct stages.  

The first of them ran from 1820 through 1831. The entire nation experienced a gradual increase of immigration with annual totals of 10,000 to around 24,000 during these twelve years. The year 1828 was an exception, because it witnessed a sharp gain of almost 8,500 over 1827. But the pattern resumed in 1829 with a national total of 24,513. A record number of 54,351 arrivals ended this period of moderate immigration in 1832 and ushered in the succeeding, or intermediate, phase. During its ensuing twelve years immigration abruptly and progressively mounted, and an average of 74,545 passengers disembarked annually. There was a notable drop in 1838 that may be attributed to the depression in the United States, but this decline was very temporary. It did not even continue through the financial crisis. The final phase, the period of greatest antebellum immigration, spanned the years from 1845 to 1860. Never under 100,000, yearly totals soared during this decade and a half, and 1854 set the maximum record with 460,474 arrivals. In fact, in the ten years following 1845 some 3,000,000 people entered this country which then had a population of about 20,000,000. This stood as the most mas-

15 The following discussion as well as the division of antebellum immigration into three stages is numerically and graphically illustrated in the appendix. The statistical bases for these conclusions are the sources cited there unless otherwise noted.
sive influx of humanity in American history prior to the Civil War. The flow diminished somewhat in the last five years of the third stage, and the reasons for this decline resided in both the old and new worlds. In Europe the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny placed thousands of young men under arms, and railroad expansion created many jobs at home for those who otherwise might have joined the exodus. The discovery of gold in Australia diverted the courses of many others. The Panic of 1857 and accumulating war clouds in the United States lessened the "pull" of this country and likewise accounted for the shrinkage of immigration in the final antebellum years.\(^\text{16}\)

The same people populated the intermediate surge of 1832-44 and the veritable avalanche that poured in from 1845-60. These people, of course, belonged to the two primary ethnic groups that dominated passenger lists at the major American customhouses--the Irish and the Germans. From the early 1830's to 1844 immigration from Ireland, where 6,000,000 to 8,000,000 peasants lived in perpetual poverty, rose from around 6,000 to a high of 51,000 annually. While conditions at home ranged from political oppression and strife with Great Britain to periodic

\(^{16}\) Deier, "European Immigration into the United States From 1820--1900," 5-7; Stanley C. Johnson, A History of Emigration From the United Kingdom to North America, 1763--1912 (London: Georges Routledge & Sons, Limited, 1913), 14; Bureau of Statistics, "Immigration into the United States," Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance (June, 1903), 4356; The Times (London), March 1, 1853.
famines, the prospect of finding work on the increasing number of internal improvements in the United States made the idea of leaving home more and more attractive. After 1846 the attraction turned into sheer urgency when the potato crop, the mainstay of the peasants' diet, utterly failed and Asiatic cholera swept the island. Hence, panic and desperation characterized the stampede of these "fugitives from defeat" into American ports after 1844.17

Statistically, immigration from the German states followed the same pattern as that from Ireland, though it was of lesser magnitude until 1854 when it gained the lead. During the intermediate period, especially in agricultural areas of Wurtemberg, Baden, and Bavaria, where farms tended to be small, peasants were in debt, and in 1840 their crops failed. Credit ceased to be available, but literally hundreds of "American letters" and books were within easy reach. These writings emphasized the fertile land that could be had for next to nothing in the upper Mississippi Valley, and shipowners and agents had thousands of tickets to sell at very reasonable prices. Just as in Ireland,

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the situation in Germany worsened in the mid-1840's. In 1845 there was a severe depression, and winters were exceedingly hard in these years. While economic motives continued to predominate, the failure of the 1848 Revolutions also stimulated immigration and gave the United States a series of highly educated and valuable political exiles.18

Quite predictably, the predominant immigrant port mirrored national trends. New York's moderate period ended in 1832, and during its twelve years annual totals progressively rose from around 4,000 to 15,000. Just as nationally, 1828 was an exceptionally heavy year, but it did not permanently change this initial pattern. Almost 29,000 people entered New York in 1832, and in the next twelve intermediate years annual totals steadily mounted to a high of 74,014 in 1842. There was a somewhat drastic decline in 1838, as was the case for the entire nation, but 1839 witnessed a substantial recovery. Beginning in 1845 immigration soared, and 1854 was the record antebellum year. The following half decade fostered the same type of

decrease that national statistics revealed.

Throughout the antebellum period New Orleans received only about 14 percent as many passengers as did New York and approximately 10 percent of the national total. But the Crescent City's statistical patterns were virtually identical to those for the nation at large and its paramount port of debarkation. New Orleans' moderate phase likewise continued through 1831 with annual totals progressively ranging from 400 to 5,000. Bromwell and the Treasury Department reports show a drop of over 50 percent in 1825, but their figure of 429 for that year, as compared to 1,014 the year before and 1,100 the year after, has to be inaccurate. It is less than the totals of the existing first and third quarterly customhouse reports. Very probably 1828 was a big year for New Orleans, just as it was for the entire nation. It was obviously heavier than Bromwell's figure suggests, since his total is only thirty above that of the three remaining quarterly reports of Collector Beverly Chew. However, even if 1828 did not reflect the national surge, 1829 definitely did. New Orleans ranked second in only two of its moderate years, 1823 and 1829, but, using Bromwell's data, it is interesting to note that a total of 17,312 arrivals between 1820 and 1832 made the Louisiana port the nation's third largest reception center during the first phase of antebellum immigration.

The Crescent City similarly followed the national trend by entering its intermediate stage in 1832. During
the ensuing twelve years its annual totals mounted from around 4,000 to a high of 13,000, with the maximum record being established in 1842. There was a slump in 1838, but it was just as transitory as New York's and the nation's. Bromwell noted surprisingly low totals in 1843 and 1844, but, considering the absence of any customhouse reports for these years, his figures must be regarded skeptically. New Orleans solidly moved into its position as the second American immigrant port in 1837, and it maintained this status without real interruption until the Civil War.

The years following 1845 were no different at New Orleans than they were in New York. Masses of people filed off of hundreds of vessels and crowded the levee and streets. During this period of great immigration some 415,000 passengers debarked, and yearly totals ranged from 14,400 to 52,000. Unlike New York and the nation as a whole, 1854 was not the Crescent City's record year, as 1851 held that distinction with 52,011 arrivals. But the 51,169 disembarkations of 1854 made it a close second. The final five years paralleled those in New York by witnessing a diminution of immigration via the Mississippi's mouth. The lack of customhouse reports and the fairly marked disagreements in the two Treasury Department publications, as illustrated in Table 1, make any conclusions concerning these years tentative at best.

Throughout the antebellum period the largest number of passengers arrived at New Orleans during the fourth quar-
ter of most years, while the third, or summer, quarter almost always was the slowest. Of the fifteen years for which all four quarterly reports remain, the fourth quarter held the first rank twelve times while the third was the most languid thirteen times. The first and second quarters usually placed second and third, though neither consistently maintained either position. These facts merely reflect an already established rule. Immigration followed the lines of commerce, and the summer season, without exception, was the slack season in New Orleans.

Those who arrived at New Orleans, like most other immigrants, tended to be young, and men outnumbered women. The largest age group was that from twenty to thirty-five, and men overwhelmingly predominated in it. Indeed, males outnumbered females in every age group, though the gap between the two predictably narrowed among children.\(^{19}\) Table 2 illustrates this fact by presenting data from a series of years after 1830 for which complete figures exist. These totals strongly suggest that many men immigrated alone, but the passenger lists reveal that virtually every ship carried numerous family groups.

While the great wave of immigration through New Orleans after 1844 ethnically duplicated the general movement into the United States, the intermediate stage did

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\(^{19}\) This, of course, reflects national trends. See Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (Part 2; Washington, 1975), 42.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>10-15</th>
<th>15-20</th>
<th>20-25</th>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>160</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>377</td>
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<td>375</td>
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<td>140</td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>205</td>
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<td>781</td>
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<td>2,793</td>
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<td>3,010</td>
<td>2,428</td>
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<td>866</td>
<td>1,327</td>
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<td>1,667</td>
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<td>921</td>
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<td>1,979</td>
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<td>6,501</td>
<td>4,657</td>
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<td>1,759</td>
<td>1,526</td>
<td>2,332</td>
<td>5,570</td>
<td>1,977</td>
<td>1,399</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>1,833</td>
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<td>2,034</td>
<td>4,206</td>
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<td>3,794</td>
<td>2,174</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,602</td>
<td>1,602</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td>3,488</td>
<td>2,584</td>
<td>1,794</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>2,610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One quarterly total missing or illegible.
not exactly reflect national trends. From 1832 through 1844 the number of Germans entering by way of the Mississippi increased, but they did not yet assume their position as one of the dominant groups. Many loads, especially from Le Havre, tended to be people of mixed national origins including natives of France, Switzerland, and the various German states. Beginning in the second quarter of 1834, fairly heavily laden vessels from Bremen began docking on a regular basis. The most prominent of these was the ship Olbers which first arrived on June 4, 1834 with 355 settlers. This was the largest single load during these twelve years, and all of the passengers hailed from "Bremen," according to Collector Martin Gordon's report. The Olbers called at New Orleans again on December 8, 1836 with 353 Germans, on January 21, 1839 with a very significant group of 181 Saxons, and on two other occasions in this intermediate period with less than 100 on each trip. The Irish were practically insignificant during the middle stage. Occasionally vessels arrived from Belfast or Liverpool with fewer than 100 aboard, but this hardly set a trend or fore-shadowed what was to come.²⁰ Passengers entering New

²⁰ The arrival of the ship Sheffield on March 5, 1841 with 230 passengers may be a single exception to this rule. The New Orleans collector listed all of these people as being "English," and collectors tended to call people who obviously hailed from Ireland "English" during the first several years of the ensuing period of heavy Irish immigration. All of the other loads referred to here are exemplified by arrivals such as the brig Planter on December 12, 1832 with forty-three passengers, the bark
Orleans between 1832 and 1844 tended to be from a number of different places, with those from France in the plurality. Mexicans, Texans, and Cubans also stood out and were, in fact, as numerically significant as either the Irish or the Germans.

The New Orleans customhouse reports are missing for 1843 and 1844, but all four quarters exist for 1845. Without doubt this year inaugurated the period of great immigration through the Louisiana port, just as it did at New York and for the entire nation. After this time the character of the movement took on new dimensions. While France still continued to supply large numbers of settlers, hordes of Irish and German home-seekers disembarked in the Crescent City. As this phase unfolded the number of vessels carrying passengers increased as did the size of the loads. More than 100 passenger-carrying vessels arrived in only nine quarters during the intermediate stage, but thirty of the existing thirty-nine quarterly reports from 1845 to 1860 show more than 100 such ships. Most of them carried from 200 to 300 people, but it became quite common to see 350 or more debarkations from a single craft. Table 3 lists the twenty-nine largest loads entering the port, and the greatest was that of the Heidelberg which arrived on December 5, 1854 with 639 people crowded inside. It must be emphasized that for each of these large (and, in

Robert Brown on May 9, 1834 with twenty-five, and the ship Sidney on October 17, 1838 with forty-five.
TABLE 3
VESSELS BEARING THE LARGEST NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS
TO NEW ORLEANS, 1845--1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Arrival</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-15-50</td>
<td>Bark Thomas</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-18-50</td>
<td>Ship First King</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-23-50</td>
<td>Ship David Cannon</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-5-50</td>
<td>Ship Ticonderoga</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-15-51</td>
<td>Ship Ellen</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-18-51</td>
<td>Ship Wm. Nelson</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-22-51</td>
<td>Ship Clara Wheeler</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5-52</td>
<td>Ship Old England</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-13-52</td>
<td>Ship Samuel Lawrence</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-25-53</td>
<td>Ship Heidelberg</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12-53</td>
<td>Ship Globe</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-29-53</td>
<td>Ship Wm. Nelson</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>441</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-7-53</td>
<td>Ship Queen</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>442</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-5-53</td>
<td>Ship Russell Sturges</td>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>470</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-16-53</td>
<td>Ship Herman</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7-54</td>
<td>Ship Elvira</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-22-54</td>
<td>Ship Windermere</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-23-54</td>
<td>Ship Roger Stewart</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-25-54</td>
<td>Ship Moses Taylor</td>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>503</td>
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<td>Ship Eurodydon</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
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<td>12-5-54</td>
<td>Ship Heidelberg</td>
<td>Havre</td>
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<td>Antwerp</td>
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<td>Ship Saxon</td>
<td>Havre</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-15-54</td>
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<td>Havre</td>
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<td>4-4-57</td>
<td>Ship Ottalia</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
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<td>10-28-57</td>
<td>Ship Bremen</td>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>438</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-6-57</td>
<td>Ship Uhland</td>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11-57</td>
<td>Ship Achilles</td>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>475</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-17-57</td>
<td>Ship Pronides</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>430</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


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most cases, illegal) human cargoes literally hundreds of over 200 made their way up the Mississippi to New Orleans.21

While all of this made New Orleans the second ante-bellum port of debarkation, it has been said that it was a poor second.22 This is true in a strict numerical sense. But, if New Orleans ran a weak second, Boston was a weaker third and Philadelphia hardly deserves mention as fourth. The appendix graphically and statistically illustrates this fact. Even more importantly, except for dominant national groups from 1832 to 1844, New Orleans was an almost perfect microcosm of the nation's paramount immigrant port and of the entire pattern of human movement into the United States before the Civil War. This salient point largely has been ignored by historians, geographers, and demographers, and neglect of it accounts, to a significant extent, for the almost total lack of scholarly attention to the Crescent City's role as a gateway to the nation.23

21 Bromwell, History of Immigration to the United States, 16-18. France was the fourth largest supplier of immigrants to the United States prior to the Civil War. However, one must be very careful in drawing conclusions from the large number that landed at New Orleans. Obviously, the city and South Louisiana in general attracted Frenchmen because of its culture and religion. Yet, many of these people simply may have been visitors or transients, though no figures exist to verify or elaborate on this point.


23 The only study that approaches thorough treatment of this subject is A. A. Conway's "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820-1860" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1949). Conway summarized much of this in "New
Any study of New Orleans as a reception center for new Americans that fails to base itself on this fundamental parallel views the Louisiana port out of context and can develop conclusions of, at best, a limited or local nature. Evaluations of the reasons why immigrants chose the longer

Orleans as a Port of Immigration," Louisiana Studies, I (Fall, 1962), 1-22. While his work is sound, Conway's treatment of the immigrant trade between New Orleans and the major European ports of embarkation is open to serious question. Victor Hugo Treat's "Migration into Louisiana, 1834--1880" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1967) is an interesting survey using Professor Barnes F. Lathrop's "child-ladder method," but it is not specifically addressed to this topic. Several works deal with the overall subject of immigrants in the South during this period, giving considerable, though less than adequate, attention to New Orleans. Walter L. Fleming's "Immigration to the Southern States," Political Science Quarterly, XX (June, 1905), 276-97; Ella Lonn's Foreigners in the Confederacy (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940); and Herbert Weaver's "Foreigners in Ante-Bellum Towns of the Lower South," Journal of Southern History, XIII (February, 1947), 62-73 are examples. Studies of the Know Nothing party in the South, and in New Orleans in particular, peripherally deal with immigration. Darrell Overdyke's The Know-Nothing Party in the South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950) and Leon Cyprian Soulé's The Know Nothing Party in New Orleans: A Reappraisal (New Orleans: The Louisiana Historical Association, 1961) are both well-rounded, though differing, treatments. Other works deal with specific ethnic elements in New Orleans. John Fredrick Nau's The German People of New Orleans, 1850--1900 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958) is a weak account of a very large subject. Other surveys of various aspects of German life in the city, to be cited later, fill in wide gaps left by it. More substantial recent work has been done on the Irish such as Father Earl Francis Niehaus' "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862" (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1961); Sylvia J. Pinner's somewhat shallow "A History of the Irish Channel, 1840--1860" (undergraduate honors thesis, Tulane University, 1954); and Ruby Nell Gordy's "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845--1855" (M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1960). In essence, however, the subject of New Orleans as an immigrant port, especially in its national context, has been left fallow by historians.
southern route to the United States, of the Crescent City's impact on them, and of their impact on the city only assume real authority when they proceed from the realization that the same types of people with the same motives and goals migrated through New Orleans as did by way of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, or any other major port of entry.
CHAPTER III
THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

Relatively few antebellum immigrants used New Orleans as their gateway to the United States in comparison to the overall total that entered the nation or to the number that landed at New York. Yet, some 550,000 traveled by way of the southern route, and they made New Orleans, rather than Boston, Philadelphia, or Baltimore, the second American port of debarkation in the period before the Civil War.¹ The journey over the southern route was, in the majority of cases, two journeys in one, and the logical method of surveying it is to study each of them individually. Its first leg included the immigrants' planning and packing, the trek from their village to the port of embarkation, and the Atlantic crossing. The second part of the odyssey took the migrants from the Crescent City to their final destinations, and the convenience, speed, and economy of this final phase of the trip explain New Orleans' attraction as a reception center. Prior to the advent of direct rail transportation deep into the interior from the East, New Orleans' commanding position at the base of the Missis-

¹ See Chapter II.

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sippi drainage system offered newcomers the most efficient means to reach the American heartland. The fact that steam transit up the Mississippi and its navigable tributaries was very inexpensive added to the city's magnetism. It made the total cost of the journey from Europe to the fertile western lands cheaper via New Orleans than by way of the more linear route through an Atlantic port. Furthermore, during this period New Orleans was essentially an open port. It offered those who would have been turned away elsewhere ready access to the nation, and it foisted upon itself a series of vexing social and economic problems in the process. While there were several half-hearted attempts at it, no real quarantine existed until two years after the disastrous yellow fever epidemic of

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2 Alan Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration," Louisiana Studies, 1 (Fall, 1962), 3; J. Hanno Deiler, "European Immigration into the United States From 1820--1900" (lecture delivered before the Germanistic Society of Chicago, December 16, 1907, Louisiana Collection, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge), 9; William J. Peterson, Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1937), 298-316.


4 See Chapter VI.
Nevertheless, thousands of immigrants shunned the southern route. One of the central features of immigration was its tendency to follow commerce. A fundamental weakness of the Crescent City's antebellum trade was its failure to establish regular direct links with Europe. Instead, the city remained one corner of the so-called "cotton triangle," the others being the major European cotton ports and New York, which dominated the system. Compounding this deficiency, New Orleans had no real ship-
building industry, and its merchants did not have a fleet of their own. New York interests and those of other Atlantic coastal cities owned and operated the majority of the vessels that called there. These factors alone would have kept the number of immigrants arriving via the Mississippi's mouth down, no matter what advantages it offered, but others over which New Orleans had less or no control also inhibited the flow. The ocean voyage along the southern route was longer, more unpleasant, and costlier than the journey direct to the Atlantic seaboard. Yearly ravages of yellow fever that increased in severity and the city's inhospitable climate warded thousands away. So too did


9 This will be discussed briefly in this chapter and in more detail in Chapters VI and VII.
the lack of an industrial establishment that could have given permanent employment and hence comfortable homes to the newly arrived.\textsuperscript{10} The existence of human slavery likewise played a central role in that it stifled employment possibilities and because it was morally repugnant to some foreigners. The lack of cheap, fertile land in the city's hinterland erased any real opportunities for farmers.\textsuperscript{11}

Yet, while all of these disadvantages undoubtedly kept the number of immigrants entering New Orleans lower than it might have been in their absence, they did not shut the southern door. The advantages of the southern route remained intact and very attractive.


Across the Atlantic to New Orleans

When an immigrant, about to make the perilous Atlantic crossing, found himself in the position of having to select a route one of the first questions that entered his mind was how long he would have to remain at sea. Since sailing ships depended upon the wind and weather, there was no precise answer. However, throughout the pre-steam era (and, therefore, most of the antebellum period) the ocean voyage to New Orleans was longer than that to any of the Atlantic ports. In the late 1820's a run of forty days was average between Liverpool and New York, though trips could be as short as thirty-one days in the early spring.12 By the mid-1850's there had been little change in the sailing time to the American East Coast. A normal trip to New York then required some thirty-seven days, and voyages to Boston and Philadelphia lasted a little over forty-one and forty-four days, respectively.13 Generally, the passage to New Orleans was from ten days to three weeks longer, or from


around fifty to sixty-one days. More specifically, in 1844 an English settler in Illinois reported that an immigrant could expect to be at sea for nine weeks along the southern route, and in 1855 Vere Foster's handbook for poor British migrants stated that fifty-two and one-half days was the norm. Anyone with even the vaguest notion of conditions aboard immigrant ships took this difference into serious consideration before actually contracting with a captain, and the longer journey detracted from New Orleans' appeal as a gateway to America.

When he engaged with a captain or agent, the potential immigrant also had to concern himself with the cost of passage. Fares naturally varied with demand, the season of the year, and destinations. Throughout these years they decreased as competition arose among the various ports of embarkation. In 1816 steerage from London to an Atlantic port was roughly £10, but by the early 1830's it rarely

14 Matthew F. Maury, Explanations and Sailing Directions to Accompany the Wind and Current Charts, Approved by Captain D. N. Ingraham, Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography, and Published by Authority of Hon. Isaac Toucey, Secretary of the Navy (8th ed.; 2 Vols.; Washington: William A. Harris, Printer, 1858), II, 81-104 is, by far, the best source on this, and it contains a multitude of other highly valuable information. See also Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 3; Page, "The Transportation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in the Nineteenth Century," 736; Gordy, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845--1855," 10.

15 This person, identified only as "C," is quoted by Foreman in "English Settlers in Illinois," 315-19.

16 Work and Wages, 5.
exceeded £5 from any British port. In the 1840's and 1850's, when immigration reached its high tide, one could travel between decks from Liverpool to the American East Coast for from £3 to £5 (or from about $12.00 to $20.00) including rations. Cabin rates were, of course, higher, ranging from £12 to £20 in the late 1840's. Fares fluctuated more from continental ports, and they tended to be a little higher.


18 Page, "The Transportation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in the Nineteenth Century," 738; Carl Wittke, We Who Built America, The Saga of the Immigrant (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1939), 115.
More precisely, in 1829 William Cobbett wrote that steerage from London to an Atlantic port was £8 for an adult and £4 10s for children under fourteen, while adult passage from Liverpool was £4 10s.19 An Anonymously authored guide similarly reported in 1832 that steerage for adults was £5 from Bristol and £4 from Liverpool.20 Eleven years later a guide, intended primarily for the British working class, noted that fares were cheapest in February and March, and that they increased as the season advanced. During the months of most economical passage one could go to New York or Philadelphia aboard first class American ships for £3, children under fourteen for half and those under seven for one-third of that amount.21 In 1844 J. B. Newhall's handbook listed the fare from Liverpool to New York at £3,22 and this remained the best going rate until the end of the period under consideration.

Germans usually had to pay more to get to the Atlantic seaboard. In April 1833 Hermann Steines, who made

19 William Cobbett, The Emigrant Guide (London: Mills, Jowett, & Mills, 1829), 106. The term "steerage" will be defined and steerage conditions will be discussed in ensuing pages. The steerage deck was a ship's main hold area.

20 Advice to Emigrants, Who Intend to Settle in the United States of America (2nd ed.; Bristol: Wright and Bagnall, 1832), 5.

21 Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; And What to Take (London: W. Strange, 1843), 14.

22 The British Emigrants' "Hand Book," 94.
an expedition to the United States to test the validity of Gottfried Duden's famed Report for his family, noted that at anytime one could book passage for $30.00 from Bremen. This was an exceptionally low figure, and Graebe simultaneously observed that vessels carrying people at that rate were extremely crowded. An article in the Bremen press, dated May 30, 1845, related that passage had increased from 20 to 25 Rix Dollars ($15.60 to $19.50) the previous season to 26 to 30 ($20.28 to $23.40) during the current year, and a few months later the New Orleans Daily Delta reported that an adult ticket from Germany ran about $20.00.

No matter where an immigrant embarked in England or Europe, the cost of the ocean voyage was slightly higher to New Orleans than to an Atlantic port. Hermann Steines

23 Quoted by Bek, "The Followers of Duden," 32.

24 U. S., Congress, Senate, Report from the Secretary of the Treasury Relative to the Deportation of Paupers from Great Britain, &c. in Obedience to the Resolution of the Senate of the 4th of July, 1836, S. D. 5, 24th Cong., 2nd sess., 1836.

25 "Germany, Emigration to America," Niles' Register, LXVIII (July 12, 1845), 289. These calculations are based on the 1838 rate of exchange at New York, which was $.78 to one Rix Dollar. See Clarke, The American Ship-Master's Guide, 161. The Rix Dollar retained this value until the Civil War. See Andros, The United States Customs Guide, 313-14. Daily Delta (New Orleans), October 31, 1845.
told his family in 1833 that the trip from Bremen to the South was more expensive, but he did not offer any figures.\textsuperscript{26} An Illinois settler wrote nine years later that passage via New Orleans stood at £3 15s from Liverpool, or just a few shillings more than that to New York,\textsuperscript{27} and in 1844 Newhall reported that a ticket to the Crescent City was twenty to thirty shillings in excess of one for the northerly crossing.\textsuperscript{28} In subsequent years others quoted the fare over the southern route at between £3 and £5, and near the end of the antebellum period £3 was the most common rate.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus, while the cost of ocean transit to New Orleans was a little above that to an eastern port, the difference between the amounts dwindled as the years passed. The fare to New Orleans probably never was enough greater to have been the single causal factor in an immigrant's choice of which route he took. However, when considered along with the greater duration of the voyage, the additional cash required for the southern passage undoubtedly influenced many to decide in favor of New York, Boston, or Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{26} Bek, "The Followers of Duden," 69.

\textsuperscript{27} The settler was one Job Rigby, and his remarks are quoted in Foreman, "English Settlers in Illinois," 320.

\textsuperscript{28} Newhall, The British Emigrants' "Hand Book," 94.

\textsuperscript{29} Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; And What to Take, 14; Foster, Work and Wages, 5.
An immigrant's port of embarkation, the route he traveled, and the American port at which he arrived had only a relative bearing on his preparations for the journey and the many perils he faced along his way. Once he had made the decision to leave his native country a contemporary British guide admonished him to consider eight factors concerning his destination. These were the place's distance from England, the cost of passage, the price of land there, the "facility of the markets," climate, opportunities for the capitalist, opportunities for laborers, and the state of society.30 This was sound advice, and most sojourners gave some thought to these as well as other important topics before they made the trip from their village to the vessel that would transport them overseas. Indeed, the first phase of immigration was intellectual. Those interested in going talked, planned, speculated as to destinations and means of travel, and read the literature they could obtain on the United States.

Immigrants did not necessarily follow this planning by packing and making the trek to a port city to book passage. Especially after immigration began to mount and become a profitable business, they seldom contracted directly with ships' captains or owners for tickets though a few highly organized groups continued this prac-

30 Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; And What to Take, 6.
Instead, brokers and agents of ships, lines, and companies specifically engaged in the immigrant trade made these arrangements, and they often worked in conjunction with allied firms in the United States. Some of the better Liverpool houses were C. Grimshaw and Company, H. Arnden and Company, and Fitzhugh, Walker, and Company. But, the term "better houses" is relative, because almost all such operations abused or took advantage of the people they purported to serve. Agents canvassed Irish and German villages extolling the virtues of life in America in the face of poverty and innumerable other problems in the old country. Later in the period representatives of American railroads and land companies solicited immigrants to promote business at home. Frequently these people not only sold passages, but they also bought peasants' property, all in an effort quickly to move immigrants to dockside and crowd them onto vessels waiting to sail for the United States.32

Agents and companies either chartered tonnage from captains and owners or worked to pack the lower decks of their own ships. Their object was to fill empty space with

31 In particular, the Stephanists and Mormons, discussed in Chapter IV, did this, and they chartered entire vessels.

32 Edward E. Hale, Letters on Irish Emigration (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1852), 8-13. This is an exceptionally valuable collection of letters covering most phases of immigration that first appeared in the Boston Daily Advertiser in December, 1851 and January, 1852. See also Daily Delta, October 31, 1845; Newhall, The British Emigrants' "Hand Book," 94.
human cargo—a cargo that had the attraction of being able to unload itself. They had little or no concern with the safety or comfort of the passengers they recruited, and, until required to do so by American law, masters assumed no responsibility for immigrants when they leased space to a broker. It was all merely a business agreement, differing little from a contract to haul any other type of freight.\textsuperscript{33}

Vessels that carried immigrants were almost always American freighters that transported raw produce, especially cotton, to Europe. Frequently faced with the possibility of returning in ballast, their owners required paying cargoes for their trips home. Initially some of these ships, after unloading, sailed to Irish ports and took on passengers for their westward voyages. But this proved both unprofitable and impractical due to navigational problems, excessive consumption of time, and the lack of other freight at these ports. All of this increased the price of passage the Irish had to pay if they sailed directly from their home island.\textsuperscript{34} Always intimately connected with commerce,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Page, "The Transportation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in the Nineteenth Century," 738; Wittke, We Who Built America, 111-12; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 41.
\item Some of the first vessels to engage in this were timber ships that brought Irish peasants to New Brunswick. See Sister Mary Gilbert Kelly, Catholic Immigration Colonization Projects in the United States, 1815--1860 (New York: The United States Catholic Historical Society, 1939), 34-36; Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 183-84; Great Britain, Parliament, Report From the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act; With the Proceedings of
\end{enumerate}
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immigration logically became part of the business of the major European shipping centers where transportation was cheapest and most abundant. Hence, Liverpool's Waterloo Dock became the leading departure point for the restless Irish. Virtually all of them who made the Atlantic crossing did so from there. They traveled to that port by steam packets, and passage brokers paid for these trips as an added inducement for the peasants to leave.35

Germans primarily used Le Havre, Bremen, and Hamburg as ports of embarkation. The latter two German ports participated in an active rivalry for this business, and Bremen won due to its better accommodations and facilities. Migrants often traveled from their homes to Bremen or Le Havre in freight wagons returning from the cotton mills of Alsace, filling space previously occupied by cotton just as they did on ships. During active seasons thousands often spent costly delays in the French city awaiting overseas passage.36

36 Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 184; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820-1860," 21-22. A German identified only as "Eder" recalled his experience in this respect, and Karl J. R. Arndt edited and translated this recollection (the original document being in the Louisiana State University Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Baton Rouge) in "A Bavarian's Journey to New Orleans and Nacogdoches in 1853-1854," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXIII (April, 1940), 485-500.
Such delays violated a cardinal rule for successful migration. That axiom was that immigrants should spend the least possible time in port cities. The obvious reasons were the high costs of lodging and provisions and the likelihood of the travelers' falling victim to thieves and swindlers. Naive peasants and provincials with all of their goods and gold were ripe targets for batteries of "runners" and confidence-men who populated bustling ports. One immigrant guide warned in this context:

At Liverpool or any other port of embarkation for America, be careful whom you employ to show you to a shipping office; ask no questions in the street, pay no attention to the offers of any one you meet, not even to ask your way to any place or office, as each such question may cost you five or ten shillings more; but having gone on board a number of ships and chosen the one you like best, buy your ticket yourself at the head agency office of the ship, the address of which will be posted up in very large letters on board the ship itself; or, what will be better still, ask the person to whom you may have been recommended from home to get the ticket for you.

Whether he bought the ticket himself or went through a broker, the immigrant had to exercise tremendous caution. As the business of shipping passengers grew, competition developed among agencies engaged in it, and this inevitably led to fraud. Great Britain and the cities of Hamburg and


38 Foster, Work and Wages, 7.
Bremen took pains to license brokers, but the practice of cheating migrants by selling them worthless tickets remained a vexing problem. Some dealers sold people passage to places they did not want to go, telling them that the undesired location was merely a stopover on the route to their intended destination. Other unscrupulous agents hustled unsuspecting travelers onto vessels of dubious character, and the immigrants crossed without ever knowing their ship's name. Recognizing these abuses, the London Times editorialized in 1837 that "No punishment is too great for such heartless speculators in the agony and poverty of their fellow men."

Immigrants also had to be wary as to the type of tickets they purchased, and they had to be especially

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41 The Times, September 9, 1837.
careful about buying passages that included inland transportation in the United States. More often than not, they could find cheaper, surer, and more efficient river or rail connections to their ultimate destinations once they arrived at their port of debarkation. Generally, they wasted their money if they invested in a contract that included it.\footnote{Voss, History of the German Society of New Orleans, 76; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 71-76; Great Britain, Parliament, Report From the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act (2 August, 1851), v.}

This problem developed to such an extent that the United States Senate requested an executive investigation into it in the mid-\footnote{U. S., Congress, Senate, Message of the President of the United States in Answer to a Resolution of the Senate, Calling for Information on the Subject of Contracts Made in Europe for Inland Passage Tickets for Intending Emigrants to the United States, S. Ex. D. 26, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 1858.}\footnote{43} in the mid-1850's.\footnote{44} In response to a circular dispatched by Secretary of State William L. Marcy that inquired about this abuse, the President of the New York Board of Commissioners of Emigration, a representative of the U. S. Legation in Bern, the Consul at Le Havre, and others replied that they were aware of it and were taking steps to end it.\footnote{G. C. Verplanck to Marcy, January 23, 1857, ibid., 3; Theodore S. Fay to Marcy, February 17, 1847, ibid., 10; W. H. Vesey to Marcy, ibid., 10-11.} However, by the time these pledges filtered back to Washington most of the antebellum immigration to the United States was over.

While still in his home village the prospective

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\footnote{42 Voss, History of the German Society of New Orleans, 76; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 71-76; Great Britain, Parliament, Report From the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act (2 August, 1851), v.}
\footnote{43 U. S., Congress, Senate, Message of the President of the United States in Answer to a Resolution of the Senate, Calling for Information on the Subject of Contracts Made in Europe for Inland Passage Tickets for Intending Emigrants to the United States, S. Ex. D. 26, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 1858.}
\footnote{44 G. C. Verplanck to Marcy, January 23, 1857, ibid., 3; Theodore S. Fay to Marcy, February 17, 1847, ibid., 10; W. H. Vesey to Marcy, ibid., 10-11.}
\end{footnotes}
migrant packed the provisions and baggage he planned to take with him. Under British and American law vessels carrying passengers had to provide minimum amounts of water and food. But most immigrants supplemented these rations to a greater or lesser extent with such things as dried meats, coffee, cocoa, and sugar. Cooking utensils were also essential on the voyage. If one elected to provide all of his own provisions he needed to stow at least fifty days' worth if he proceeded along the southern route.45

Other than such necessities, items included in baggage varied with the immigrants themselves and with their ports of debarkation and final destinations. Some people took virtually everything they owned, while others took almost nothing. It was always dangerous to carry cash. For this reason, some individuals invested in various things they intended to sell once in America, but the only such commodities that rather consistently proved profitable were books. Those traveling to the West by way of New Orleans usually carried more of the practical implements they would need once settled than did people making the journey via an Atlantic port. It was easier and cheaper to ship these goods along the all-water southern route, and it was costlier to buy them in the West than in an eastern

45 Newhall, The British Emigrants' "Hand Book," 93; Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; and What to Take, 21; Hale, Letters on Irish Emigration, 15; Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 343.

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city if the immigrant did not bring them along.\textsuperscript{46} Gottfried Duden specifically advised fellow Germans who intended to use the Port of New Orleans to join him in Missouri to come supplied with

\ldots utensils for the household, farm implements and carpenter tools, taking two articles of each kind, but especially should they provide themselves with axes weighing from five to six pounds, smaller hand axes, broad axes for hewing logs for building, wedges for splitting logs, large saws, six or seven feet long, hand saws, augers, planes, coffee mills, grist mills, \ldots light wood stoves, together with very long stove pipes, \ldots hoes, spades, plow-shares, plow-chains, heavy chains for dragging tree trunks, copper kettles, iron bedsteads, tongs, gridirons, iron rods \ldots spinning wheels, and reels. Such things cost four and five times as much in the interior of America as at home.\textsuperscript{47}

It is doubtful that many families actually carried this much equipment. But those using the southern route brought with them more baggage of this kind than did their counterparts who docked at an Atlantic coastal city.

After the immigrant had assembled the baggage he intended to take he marked his trunks with his name. Upon boarding his ship he found, or had assigned to him, a berth and likewise tagged it. Then the prudent traveler made ar-


rangements with the captain to stow his goods, preferably on top of any freight the vessel carried. This accomplished, he began settling in for the grueling voyage, usually familiarizing himself with facilities and checking on provisions. Authors of guidebooks also advised him to keep his part of the ticket as a record of his agreement with the captain or booking agent in the event that he should have to seek redress for some violation of existing laws during the voyage. 48

As previously indicated, most immigrant ships were American freighters on return trips, and they sailed with as many people aboard as possible. Since American registered vessels enjoyed a near monopoly of the coasting trade under United States law, 49 they could offer cheaper fares than those of Great Britain. However, both nations' bottoms were about equal in quality, while German craft were slower and probably a bit more dangerous. 50 No matter what flag it flew, the profit a ship returned grew with the number of its passengers. Hence, the tendency was to


49 "An Act imposing Duties on Tonnage," U. S., Statutes at Large, I (1789), 27; "An Act for enrolling and licensing ships or vessels to be employed in the coasting trade and fisheries, and for registering the same," ibid. (1793), 305.

pack people in. While this was undoubtedly very unusual, in 1828 Niles' Register reported that when the ship Universe landed from Scotland, "'Such was the crowded state of the passengers, that six families were obliged to live in the long boat on deck during the whole passage.'"\textsuperscript{51}

The practice of gorging ships to their legal capacities and beyond probably characterized voyages to New Orleans more than those to the Atlantic ports. The reason was that the Crescent City's prime season for accepting immigrants was scarcely more than six months long, stretching from September to March. While immigrants arrived throughout every year, they avoided the place like the plague in the summer quarter and the months immediately preceding and succeeding. Fear of yellow fever kept them away. Thus economic pressure forced captains to make the "best" use of the voyages that they could during cooler months.\textsuperscript{52}

Furthermore, ships transporting immigrants to New Orleans tended to be smaller and of poorer quality than those sailing to the eastern seaboard.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Quoted from the Halifax Recorder in Niles' Register, XXXIV (August 9, 1828), 392.

\textsuperscript{52} See Chapter II for a review of statistical trends founded on the official lists. Although he did not base this conclusion on the official passenger lists, Alan Conway is correct in arriving at it in his "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 42-62.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 60; Page, "The Transportation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in the Nineteenth Century," 736; Page, "The Distribution of Immigrants in the United States Before 1870," 684.
In 1851 the British Parliament's Select Committee on the Passengers' Act noted that there recently had been instances of English ships from Liverpool arriving at New Orleans with considerably more passengers aboard than the law allowed. This practice was quite common, and the masters had no reason to expect that anyone would notice or detain them. But, owing to a change of personnel at the customhouse, two of these vessels paid heavy fines after unexpected inspections.  

On October 26, 1854 New Orleans Collector Thomas C. Porter wrote United States District Attorney E. W. Moise telling him to file suit against the Bremen ship Augusta, Captain F. Ludwig. That vessel had arrived on October 20 with 320 disease-ridden adults and children in steerage. Under American law she could have carried no more than forty-one passengers. The next month Porter instructed Moise to file suits against the Bremen ships Ernst Moritz Amt, Captain F. Hayde, H. Von Gagero, Captain Remers, and

54 Great Britain, Parliament, Report From the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act (2 August, 1851), xviii.

the French ship Belle Assise, Captain A. Greilin, for similar offenses.\textsuperscript{56} Such violations were common, but they rarely resulted in litigation and only occasionally aroused public indignation. Routine infractions of the various American and British laws governing the carriage of passengers from 1820 until the Civil War testify that the statutes were difficult to enforce and that captains, collectors, and other officials sometimes ignored them.

Congress passed the first American law regulating passenger ships on March 2, 1819. It stipulated "That if the master or other person on board of any ship or vessel, owned in the whole or in part by a citizen or citizens of the United States, or the territories thereof, or by a subject or subjects, citizen or citizens, of any foreign country" carried to or from the United States "a greater number of passengers than two for every five tons of such ship or vessel, according to custom-house measurement," the person so offending would be fined $150.00 for every person in excess of the legal capacity. If a ship transported twenty passengers over its limit it would be "deemed and taken to be forfeited to the United States."\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Porter to Moise, November 15, 1854, in Excerpts from Letter Books of the United States Custom House New Orleans, Louisiana, 1834--1912, 80.

\textsuperscript{57} "An Act regulating passenger ships and Vessels," U. S., Statutes at Large, III (1819), 488. In the context of this and succeeding acts it should be noted that the formula for figuring customhouse tonnage was fairly simple. Indeed it was too simple and facilitated the
On February 27, 1847 Congress supplemented its initial legislation with "An Act to regulate the Carriage of Passengers in Merchant Vessels." It specified that ships could convey no more than one passenger for every "fourteen clear superficial feet of deck, if such vessel is not to pass within the tropics," and no more than one person for every twenty feet of deck space if the voyage ventured into the tropics. This standard was for steerage, or the main hold area between decks. If captains transported living cargo on the orlop deck, or in the lowest and darkest part of a craft, they had to allow thirty feet for each individual doomed to ride there. Under the threat of fines of $5.00 for each violation, masters had to provide berths at least six feet long and eighteen inches wide for every adult, two children under eight being considered equal to one adult. These space regulations merely supplemented the act of March 2, 1819, and, under no circumstances, did they change the two passenger for five tons rule. There were, however, slight modifications in penalties. Offenders could be found guilty of a misdemeanor, fined $50.00 for evasion of port duties by unusually deep craft. For double-decked vessels, one determined tonnage by subtracting three fifths of the beam from the length and multiplying the difference by the total width of the beam. This product, then, was multiplied by the vessel's "depth," and the depth was taken as one-half of the beam. The customhouse tonnage was the quotient of this final product divided by ninety-five. See Clarke, The American Ship-Master's Guide, 45-50; "An Act for registering and Clearing Vessels, Regulating the Coasting Trade and for other purposes," U. S., Statutes at Large, I (1789), 55; Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 308.
each passenger they boarded in excess of the limit, and imprisoned for up to a year. Again, if a ship carried twenty or more people over its maximum burden it was subject to forfeiture.58

A year later Congress overhauled all of these regulations with a major revision of the passenger laws.59 It repealed the two passengers for five tons rule and set detailed standards for all vessels transporting fifty or more persons. These craft now had to provide adequate ventilation, and, leaving nothing to chance, the act spelled out the exact specifications for it. At least one cooking range, four feet long and one and one-half feet wide, had to be located on deck for every 200 passengers. Captains became directly responsible for maintaining "good discipline," cleanliness, and the health of those who sailed with them, and they had to make available a "safe, convenient privy or water closet" for every 100 passengers. To insure that each vessel met these guidelines collectors of customs of the ports where they arrived and departed had the duty of appointing one of their inspectors to examine and report on all of them. Those found in violation of ventilation and cooking facility requirements could be fined $200.00, and any failing to provide privies were

58 U. S., Statutes at Large, IX (1847), 127.
59 "An Act to provide for the Ventilation of Passenger Vessels, and for other purposes," U. S., Statutes at Large, IX (1848), 220.
liable to a $50.00 penalty. The new act also increased the room allotted to each passenger. If the space between decks, or the height of the steerage, was between five and six feet there had to be sixteen "clear superficial feet" of space for each individual. If there were less than five feet between decks that amount increased to twenty-two feet. Captains not meeting these requirements could be found guilty of a misdemeanor and punished as under the act of the previous year.60

The 1848 law remained in effect until March 3, 1855 when Congress approved "An Act to Regulate the Carriage of Passengers on Steamships and other Vessels." It allowed ships to convey one passenger for every two tons of burden, not counting infants and regarding two children under the age of eight as one adult. While this appears to have been a rather extreme relaxation of the earlier rule, one must remember that this act emerged after the advent of fairly well developed steam transit and, hence, shorter transatlantic voyages. There still had to be at least sixteen clear superficial feet of space on the main and poop decks for every passenger. Those traveling on the lower deck had to be accommodated with eighteen feet, and these areas

60 Ibid. Ships with a legal capacity of 100 or more had to have at least two ventilators, one fore and one aft, on the steerage deck. One of these ventilators had to have an "exhausting cap" to carry off foul air, and the other a "receiving cap" to bring in fresh air. Ventilators had to increase in size as did the carrying capacity of the ship.
could not contain any freight or stores, including immigrants' baggage. Vessels with less than six feet between decks no longer qualified as carriers of human beings into or out of the United States. Masters or owners not complying with these regulations faced a $50.00 fine and up to six months in jail. In addition, the act required a ship's hospital, and it limited vessels to two tiers of well constructed berths separated from each other by partitions. These berths now had to be six feet long and two feet wide. They could be occupied by no more than one person, although, under certain circumstances, a vessel could supply double berths of twice the normal size. Failure to comply with these stipulations drew captains a fine of $5.00 for every person on board. Just as the one before it, this measure called on collectors to make inspections, set ventilation standards, called for a cooking range for every 200 people, made captains responsible for discipline and health, and required privies. It also carried the same penalties for breaches of its regulations as did the earlier law. However, in a new departure, this last major piece of ante-bellum legislation not only obliged captains to report deaths on voyages, but it also demanded that they pay the collector of customs of the port at which they docked $10.00 for each of them, to be used for the care and protection of sick and indigent immigrants. If a master neglected or refused to surrender this amount he became subject to an additional charge of $50.00 for every pas-
senger who died while under his care. 61

British laws were somewhat less stringent than those of the United States. Under the Parliamentary decision of June, 1803 ships flying the Union Jack could carry no more than one person for every two tons of burden. 62 This rule remained in force through the early 1820's, and in 1825 Great Britain reaffirmed it for vessels bound to foreign ports. 63 Three years later the law of the United Kingdom became even more lenient when bottoms transporting immigrants to North America received permission to convey three people for every four tons, provided that their decks were at least five and one-half feet apart. 64 A later statute of August 31, 1835 limited vessels sailing to any destination to no more than three persons per five tons, and they had to accommodate passengers with ten superficial feet of deck space or fifteen feet if the

61 U. S., Statutes at Large, X (1855), 715.

62 "An Act for regulating the Vessels carrying Passengers from the United Kingdom to his Majesty's Plantations and Settlements abroad, or to Foreign Ports, with respect to the number of such Passengers," June 24, 1803, 43 Geo. 3, ch. 56.


64 "An Act to regulate the Carriage of Passengers in Merchants Vessels from the United Kingdom to the Continent and Islands of North America," May 23, 1828, 9 Geo. 4, ch. 21.
course crossed the equator.\textsuperscript{65} During most of this time the
government left enforcement of these measures in the hands
of otherwise heavily burdened customs officials. But in
1833 it delegated the responsibility to a newly formed
group of immigration officers at the major ports. Even so,
the legislation did not take on any semblance of authority
until the organization of the Colonial Land and Emigration
Commission in January, 1840.\textsuperscript{66}

Once in power, this commission saw to it that
British law became more demanding, though not as demanding
as that of the United States. In August 1842 Parliament
passed "An Act for regulating the Carriage of Passengers in
Merchant Vessels." It retained most of the provisions of
the 1835 law concerning load sizes while being more precise
as to provisions and the seaworthiness of vessels.\textsuperscript{67} In
the wake of the Irish potato famine of 1847, the government
took new and more realistic action. "An Act to make Fur­
ther Provision for One Year, and to the End of the next
Session of Parliament for the Carriage of Passengers by Sea

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{65} "An Act to repeal an Act of the Ninth Year of
His late Majesty, for regulating the Carriage of Passengers
in Merchant Vessels from the United Kingdom to the British
Possessions on the Continent and Islands of North America;
and to make further Provision for regulating the Carriage
of Passengers from the United Kingdom," August 31, 1835,
5 \& 6 Wm. 4, ch. 53.
\end{footnotes}

\textsuperscript{66} Fred H. Hitchins, The Colonial Land and Emi-
gration Commission (Philadelphia: University of Penn­
sylvania Press, 1931), 122-23.

\textsuperscript{67} 5 \& 6 Vict., ch. 107, August 12, 1842.
\end{footnotesize}
to North America" set the maximum number to be transported at one for every two tons, and it required twelve feet of deck space for each passenger in steerage and thirty feet for those on the orlop deck.\textsuperscript{68} The following year this temporary measure became permanent with some progressive additions.\textsuperscript{69} In essence this remained the British rule as to load sizes on sailing vessels until the end of the period under consideration, though Parliament passed additional laws governing various other aspects of immigrant traffic and specifically relating to steamships.\textsuperscript{70}

Records for the Port of New Orleans covering the years from 1820 through early 1848, or the period during which the American two passengers for five tons rule held sway, indicate that in most instances vessels complied with the law. Table 4 sets forth data on forty arrivals prior to the date the act of May 17, 1848 took effect. Clearly, if the collectors' figures were accurate, the majority of

\textsuperscript{68} 11 § 12 Viet., ch 6, February 11, 1848.

\textsuperscript{69} "An Act for regulating the Carriage of Passengers on Merchant Vessels," October 1, 1849, 12 § 13 Vict., ch. 33. These additions included a requirement for a ship's cook and surgeon and royal authority to issue orders in council on the cleanliness and order of ships.

\textsuperscript{70} Two other important antebellum laws passed by Parliament were "An Act to amend and consolidate the Laws relating to the Carriage of Passengers by Sea," June 30, 1853, 15 § 16 Vict., ch. 44; and "An Act to amend the Law relating to the Carriage of Passengers by Sea," August 14, 1855, 18 § 19 Vict., ch. 119. Neither altered load sizes on sailing ships, though they allowed steamers to transport two and one-half times more passengers per ton than vessels depending upon the wind for power.
## TABLE 4
LOAD SIZES AND LEGAL CAPACITIES OF SELECT VESSELS ARRIVING AT NEW ORLEANS PRIOR TO MAY, 1848

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrival Date</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Passengers Aboard</th>
<th>Legal Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-7-28</td>
<td>Ship Harriet</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-3-30</td>
<td>Ship Charles Wharton</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-23-31</td>
<td>Ship Hanover</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-30-32</td>
<td>Ship Helvetia</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-10-32</td>
<td>Ship Dublin Packet</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20-33</td>
<td>Ship Concordia</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-22-33</td>
<td>Ship Bolivar</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17-34</td>
<td>Ship Ruthelia</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15-35</td>
<td>Brig Dido</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11-35</td>
<td>Ship Bolivar</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-26-35</td>
<td>Ship Marengo</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-23-36</td>
<td>Ship Augusta</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15-36</td>
<td>Ship Mozart</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12-36</td>
<td>Ship McLeilian</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-23-37</td>
<td>Ship Mozart</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20-37</td>
<td>Ship Bolivar</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2-38</td>
<td>Ship Olympia</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-30-38</td>
<td>Ship Garonne</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18-38</td>
<td>Ship Caledonia</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>165</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10-40</td>
<td>Ship Columbia</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-24-40</td>
<td>Ship Olympia</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-30-45</td>
<td>Ship Rose</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15-45</td>
<td>Ship Henry</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17-45</td>
<td>Ship Magnolia</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>259</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-22-45</td>
<td>Ship Windsor Castle</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-24-45</td>
<td>Ship Diana</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-26-45</td>
<td>Ship Lyons</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-28-45</td>
<td>Ship Sea Lion</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13-45</td>
<td>Ship Martha Washing</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5-40</td>
<td>Bark Damariscota</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-18-46</td>
<td>Ship Emperor</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-27-46</td>
<td>Ship Austerlitz</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-29-46</td>
<td>Ship Sea Lion</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17-46</td>
<td>Ship Emperor</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1-47</td>
<td>Ship Powhatan</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-29-47</td>
<td>Ship Windsor Castle</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-16-47</td>
<td>Ship Hope</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11-47</td>
<td>Ship Alhambra</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-11-47</td>
<td>Ship Windsor Castle</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-18-48</td>
<td>Ship Russell Clover</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U. S., Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving From Foreign Countries, 1820--, reels 1-13; Ship Registers and Enrollments of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1804--1870, Works Progress Administration, Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, 6 Vols., 1941. (Mimeographed.)
these craft sailed with legal loads. However, many of them made the crossing filled to capacity or very nearly so, and, as the years wore on, more and more carried more passengers than their legal limit. This is only logical, because, as has been established, immigration through New Orleans reached its peak during the fifteen years following 1845.

It is more difficult to come to exact conclusions about the legality of loads under the act of 1848. The main reason is that it is almost impossible to determine how many "clear superficial feet" of deck space a ship had to offer, even if its dimensions are available. To be precise one would have to know how much freight and baggage a vessel carried, as well as intricate details about its construction. Nevertheless, it is possible to paint at least a partial picture. The act of February 22, 1847, which retained the two for five tons rule but also required passengers to have fourteen feet of deck space, and that of May 17, 1848, which threw out the tonnage stipulation and flatly ordered captains to provide at least sixteen feet of deck for everyone they took aboard, were both reform measures to decrease congestion under the ordinances they modified and repealed. Therefore, any vessel transporting more than two persons per five tons had to be in serious violation of the new laws. Statistics for the Port of New Orleans after the summer of 1848 make it brutally obvious that when antebellum immigration was at high tide abuses
caused by overcrowding also peaked.

For example, the largest load arriving at the Crescent City before the war numbered 638, and it sailed from Le Havre aboard the ship Heidelberg in the fall of 1854. That three-decker registered 1,053 tons, and she was 174 feet, 8 inches long, 36 feet, 2 inches wide, and 27 feet deep. Under the two for five tons rule she could have carried no more than 421 people, and, hence, she was 218 in excess of her limit under the old law. No matter how one calculates, she had to be even more seriously in violation of the act of 1848. Moreover, this same vessel had arrived on April 25, 1853 with 608, or 187 above the number she could convey under the 1819 law.71 Had New Orleans Collector George C. Lawrason done his duty at that time the ship would have been forfeited, and she would not have made the voyage in the succeeding year.

The same held true for other large loads that docked during the period of heavy immigration. The Globe arrived on May 12, 1853 from Le Havre with 439 passengers. This 163 foot craft measured 797 tons, and, at two people per five tons, she could have carried 319. Thus, she was 120 over the old limit and even more in excess of that set in 1848. The Moses Taylor called on May 25, 1854 with 503 passengers.

71 All statistics as to ships' dimensions and tonnage in this discussion are from Ship Registers and Enrollments of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1804--1870, and all data concerning load sizes comes from U. S., Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving From Foreign Countries, 1820--. See also Table 3.
Germans packed inside. This 997 ton square-rigger therefore surpassed her two for five tons capacity by 104. Likewise, the 733 ton Saxon arrived on the following December 11 with 434, or 141 more than she legally could have transported under the act of 1819. These were among the largest loads, but they are not isolated examples of serious overcrowding and disregard for the law.

Even if they stayed within their legal limits, sailing ships offered virtually no comforts to those who traveled on them. Perhaps the best way to realize what the Atlantic crossing was like is to allow the imagination free rein. To have been one of 320 legally booked passengers aboard an 800-ton vessel, no more than 165 feet long and thirty-two feet wide, for up to sixty days at sea must have been, at best, a trying experience. But, in the likely event that something went wrong during the cruise, such as an outbreak of ship's fever, a storm, or excessive spoilage of water and food, that ordeal had to have approached being traumatic for those who survived it. Legislation supposedly designed to protect immigrants was, at best, feeble, and the optimistic spirits who sailed in search of better lives did so at considerable risk.

The overwhelming majority of those who made the journey traveled in steerage, or between decks, on vessels that primarily served as freighters. These ships ranged from 300 to around 1,000 tons, though those approaching the latter figure were rare at New Orleans. Most of them had
two decks, and their main cargo hold was between them. This was the steerage, and it usually measured from four to six feet vertically. Thus, in many instances, a tall man found it impossible to stand erect in his quarters. Less fortunate migrants made the trip beneath the steerage on the orlop, or the lowest deck that rested on the beams of the hold. Little more than a dark, dank hole, it normally served as a storage place for heavy supplies, and it was not fit for human habitation.72 Extremely few immigrants were cabin passengers. In 1844, or the last year of moderate immigration, 8 percent of those from England, 14 percent from Scotland, and only one in 102 from Ireland traveled first class.73

The thousands of rank and file people who crossed the Atlantic between decks too frequently did so in cramped squalor. In order to accommodate them shippers hastily erected tiers of wooden berths or bunks in steerages. These were often so close together that passengers found it difficult to walk between them. Portholes were rare, and ventilation was inadequate. Often, the only fresh air filtering into the densely populated hold came through hatchways which had to be closed during rough weather when those inside needed aeration the most. Seasickness was a univer-


73 Niles' Register, LXIX (November 1, 1834), 134.
sal misery. Sanitation often proved to be inadequate or nonexistent, and filth accompanied by disease characterized many, if not most, voyages. Those who fell ill rarely received medical attention, and if they reached their destinations they did so with luck. Thelka Dombois Hasslock, a minor German aristocrat, sailed over the southern route between December 1848 and February 1849. She and her family traveled in a cabin, and they paid 1,000 French francs for it. Not until the last day of her voyage did she peer into the hold. What she witnessed there appalled her.

Today for the first time, I visited the steerage. What a mob! What a stench! What stinkers! No person could ever imagine the real situation, much less the violence of the greater part of the steerage passengers and the immoral deeds which have been committed during the trip.

Hasslock's comment about immorality was not an exaggeration. Women traveled under the additional risk of being sexually molested by members of the ship's crew. This bane became so frequent and so utterly odious that the United States Congress approved an act designed to curb it on March 24, 1860. It forbade masters and mariners from having "illicit connexions" with female passengers.


either under promises of marriage or by undue exercise of their authority on the vessel. Those convicted of violations could be imprisoned for up to one year and fined $1,000.00, unless they subsequently married the women they had ravished. It further disallowed officers or sailors from entering the area of a craft occupied by immigrants unless they were under orders from the master to do so. Captains had to post conspicuous signs in English, French, and German warning those serving under them to abide by this rule, and a sailor could lose all of his wages for a voyage if he illegally visited immigrants' quarters.76 Nevertheless, this reform came at the very end of the antebellum period; it did nothing for women who had suffered physically and psychologically during the preceding forty years.

Women were not the only ones brutalized by unscrupulous crews. All immigrants were at the mercy of the mariners who sailed their ships, and in far too many instances, these people preyed on passengers just as did the runners and thieves in the ports of embarkation.77 In April 1852, 500 New York bound immigrants aboard the first class Amer-

76 "An Act to amend an Act entitled 'An Act to regulate the Carriage of Passengers on Steamships and other Vessels,' approved March third eighteen hundred and fifty-five, for the better Protection of Female Passengers and other Purposes," U. S., Statutes at Large, XII (1860), 3.

ican ship Rappahannock rioted before they left the Mersey after drunken crew members assaulted and robbed some of them. According to the Liverpool Times, this was the second rebellion of this type within the past three months, and in the earlier one the captain had been directly responsible for aggressions against his passengers.\textsuperscript{78}

As if forty to sixty days on a malodorous steerage deck were not trial enough, immigrants also faced crises concerning provisions and water. Shippers provided bare necessities, which often amounted to little more than hard bread and water. The problem worsened as voyages wore on, and it plagued travelers over the longer southern route more than those sailing to East Coast ports.\textsuperscript{79} Lieutenant Thomas Henry Prior, the Assistant Emigration Officer at Liverpool, testified before the British Parliament's Select Committee on the Passengers' Act in the summer of 1851 that the amount of water normally issued to passengers was sufficient for the voyage to New York. But, he maintained that it was not enough for the trip to New Orleans.\textsuperscript{80} By a voyage's end the water that remained was wormy and otherwise foul, and food always was short and bad. For these

\textsuperscript{78} April 15, 1852. This story was reported in the New York Times, May 29, 1852.


\textsuperscript{80} Great Britain, Parliament, Report From the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act (2 August, 1851), 202.
reasons, as previously discussed, most migrants supplemented ships' rations as best they could. Thelka Hasslock noted that her vessel had exhausted its supply of flour some two weeks prior to landing at New Orleans, and all that was left to eat was zwieback. A German traveler in 1854 reported that by the end of his trip to the Crescent City the water aboard was undrinkable. Food had been poor all the way. Sunday dinners consisted of rice, dumplings, and beef, all so heavily salted that most of those served dumped the stuff overboard. On Mondays they ate beef and barley, and on the following day the bill of fare included sauerkraut and peas "as hard as shot." Wednesdays saw more kraut and salt pork, and the last three meals of the week were rice with dumplings, peas and pork, and "abominable" barley cooked with plums. The tea the immigrants drank was nothing short of an emetic. Both black and white breads were inedibly hard, and the half pound of butter distributed weekly to each passenger was too salty for human consumption.

The minimal rations required by law aboard American and British ships were no better. The American act of March 2, 1819 required captains to carry sixty gallons of water, one gallon of vinegar, 100 pounds of salted provi-
sions, and 100 pounds of ship bread for every person they transported. Passengers not receiving these meager amounts had to be compensated at the rate of $3.00 for each day they were on short rations. It should be emphasized that under this law an immigrant following the southern route rarely could count on a full gallon of water a day for all purposes. Simple arithmetic computations readily reveal the slim proportions of the other basics available to him. By the end of the voyage the vinegar allotment became very important as the migrant combined it with his stagnant water so that he could swallow it. 83

The act of May 17, 1848 retained the sixty gallon water ration, and it potentially created a bit more dietary variety. Captains had to carry fifteen pounds of good navy bread, ten pounds each of rice, oatmeal, wheat flour, peas and beans, and boneless salt pork; thirty-five pounds of potatoes, one pint of vinegar, and sufficient cooking fuel for everyone aboard. But they could replace the rice, oatmeal, flour, potatoes, peas, and beans with increased amounts of the other commodities in the event that they could not purchase these things on "reasonable terms." Therefore, the immigrant might quite easily dine on nothing more than navy bread and salt pork. Masters had to supply each of their charges with three quarts of water daily and one-tenth of the other provisions weekly. The $3.00 per

83 U. S., Statutes at Large, III (1819), 488.
day penalty continued in force against captains who failed to render passengers their full allotments, and immigrants had the option of turning all of these provisions down and supplying their own.\footnote{Ibid., IX (1848), 220.}

The final piece of antebellum legislation, that of March 3, 1855, increased total portions of navy bread, rice, oatmeal, and peas and beans by five pounds each, and it decreased the potato ration by twenty pounds for every passenger. It also added ten pounds of salt beef to the list. In all other respects it was identical to the earlier law.\footnote{Ibid., X (1855), 715.}

Thus, under the best possible conditions, an immigrant on an eight-week voyage to New Orleans, if he consumed equal proportions of everything he received each week, had a daily diet of about four and one-half ounces of bread, three and a third ounces each of rice, oatmeal, peas and beans; two and a quarter ounces each of flour, salt pork, and beef; four and one-half ounces of potatoes, and less than a quarter of an ounce of vinegar. If a captain made legal substitutions, under this act he fed his passengers a little over a pound of bread, two and a quarter ounces of salted pork and beef, a quarter ounce of vinegar, and three quarts of water every day.

At least on paper British law at first assured the immigrant of slightly greater quantities of food, though,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{84} Ibid., IX (1848), 220.
  \item \textbf{85} Ibid., X (1855), 715.
\end{itemize}
undoubtedly, it was just as wretched in quality as that served on American bottoms. As the period progressed both nations' statutes became very similar. The act of June 24, 1803 required all of His Majesty's ships conveying passengers overseas to be stocked with twelve weeks' worth of provisions. Each person on board was supposed to have a daily allowance of one-half pound of meat, one and a third pounds of bread, a half pint of molasses, and a full gallon of water. In 1817 Parliament retained the twelve weeks rule, but it decreased the daily allotment of water to five pints and that of bread to one pound. The meat ration increased to a pound of beef or three quarters of a pound of pork, and, in addition, captains had to render two pounds of flour, three pounds of oatmeal, and half a pound of butter each week. The act of 1835 increased the water ration slightly and required that each passenger receive a pound of bread or biscuit and one pound of beef or three quarters of a pound of pork a day. In addition, every week captains had to distribute one-half pound of butter along with two pounds of flour and three pounds of oatmeal. They could, however, substitute three pounds of peas or pearl barley for the flour and oatmeal.

86 43 Geo. 3, ch. 56.
87 "An Act to regulate the Vessels carrying Passengers from the United Kingdom to certain of His Majesty's Colonies in North America," March 17, 1817, 57 Geo. 3 ch. 10.
88 5 & 6 Wm. 4, ch. 53.
Great Britain slightly increased the water allowance to three quarts per day, but it retained the previous bread ration and provided that five pounds of potatoes could replace the single pound of bread due to each traveler on a daily basis.\(^8^9\) The more progressive acts of 1848 and 1849 gave immigrants three quarts of water, about eleven and a third ounces of bread, four and a half ounces of flour, thirteen and a half ounces of oatmeal, nine ounces of rice, and a little over five ounces of pork per day, and captains doled out appropriate amounts of food twice each week. Furthermore, if a vessel transported over 100 passengers, a working cook had to be part of its crew.\(^9^0\)

This final innovation was indeed an advance, because in most cases immigrants found themselves on their own with the cooking chores. There usually were some sort of facilities on deck, and, as has been seen, the American act of 1848 required a stove there for every 200 people aboard. Because of heavy crowding, immigrants frequently fought for a short opportunity at the fire, and they seldom managed to cook their food properly. On some vessels they cooked in shifts, and ranges remained in use for most of the day. Of course, passengers also prepared food in their steerage quarters, though this practice had obvious dis-

\(^8^9\) 5 & 6 Vict., ch. 107.

\(^9^0\) 11 & 12 Vict., ch. 6; 12 & 13 Vict., ch. 33.
advantages. 91

Other severe perils exacerbated dietary problems and overcrowding. The most immediate danger, and the one over which no man or government had any control, was the weather. Only the most fortunate made the voyage without experiencing a storm, and heavy weather aggravated seasickness and plunged steerages into panic. Conversely, periods of calm dangerously prolonged passages. 92

There also were the possibilities of shipwreck and fire at sea. Most vessels carried two lifeboats, and some had four. The British act of August 12, 1842 required two boats on ships of 150 tons, three of those displacing at least 250, and four on craft of 500 or more tons. 93 None of the American passenger acts made specific lifeboat stipulations. Even the best organized and managed migrations ran the risk of losing an entire vessel, as was the case with the fifty-six Stephanists who sailed aboard the ill-fated Amalia on November 18, 1838. 94

Fire potentially


94 See Chapter IV concerning the Stephanists. Shipwreck should not be overemphasized. While the danger
jeopardized excursions on all wooden ships, especially when hundreds of lifelong landlubbers crowded over cooking fires and ranges that burned all day. Thelka Hasslock recalled that there had been two fires within a two-week period in the immigrants' kitchen during her crossing to New Orleans, and this was by no means unusual.95

The type and quantity of cargo a ship carried further dictated how safe the voyage would be. As has been pointed out, by the time immigration significantly mounted American legislation specifically restricted masters from stowing cargo in areas occupied by passengers. Still, when purchasing his ticket, the prudent migrant avoided vessels heavily laden with iron and similar items. This was highly dangerous and a leading cause of disasters.96

Needless to say, close steerage quarters and the lack of adequate sanitation fostered disease, and ship's fever (typhus), smallpox, and cholera plagued literally

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96 Great Britain, Parliament, First Report From the Select Committee on Emigrant Ships (6 April, 1854), iv; Riersen, "Norwegians in the West in 1844," 119.
hundreds of voyages. In 1854 the U. S. Senate Select Committee on the Subject of Sickness and Mortality on Board Emigrant Ships reported that confinement, the lack of fresh air, intense heat, and the retention of human excrement caused the Atlantic crossing to be anything but healthful. The committee concluded that "some, if not all, of these causes exist on board every passenger ship in a greater or less degree, and the consequence has been the mortality which has taken place of late years . . . ." Most diseases did not originate on board. Rather, they initially attacked travelers in the ports of embarkation while they awaited passage, and this was one of the reasons immigrants tried to avoid delays in these cities. The Senate Select Committee determined that "the weakness and enfeebled condition of emigrants at the time of embarkation" primarily caused illness on voyages.

All of this clearly indicates that mortality rates had to have been high among steerage passengers. However, it is impossible to arrive at any sort of average figure.

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98 S. Rept. 386, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., 1854, 2.

99 Jones, American Immigration, 106-7; William Forbes Adams, Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World From 1815 to the Famine (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932), 80-82.

100 S. Rept. 386, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., 1854, 2.
The official passenger lists are the logical source of information on this subject, but, as illustrated in Chapter II, those for the Port of New Orleans do not contain reliable death figures. Conditions varied on individual voyages. Those who traveled in highly organized companies under strictly enforced health and sanitation measures did so with greater assurance of good health than others who crossed inadequately prepared and alone. Historian Carl Wittke was undoubtedly correct when he termed doctorless ships "swimming coffins" as was the New Orleans Daily True Delta in calling them "caverns of death."\(^{101}\) Death rates of 10 percent were not rare. During the potato famine some 17 to 20 percent of the Irish who embarked failed to reach the United States alive, and the New York Tribune reported that over 18 percent of 1852's immigrants died. Horace Greeley editorialized that the system was to blame for this and that the practice of treating human beings like cattle was a "disgrace to our progressive civilization and to the nineteenth century."\(^{102}\) Even at their best, conditions under which immigrants sailed to the United States were very

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101 Wittke, *We Who Built America*, 114; Daily True Delta, April 4, 1851.

102 Page, "The Transportation of Immigrants and Reception Arrangements in the Nineteenth Century," 739; Guillet, *The Great Migration*, 124. These figures apply to the Port of New York, and they are cited by the Chairman of that port's Commissioners of Emigration, Friedrich Kapp in Immigration, and the Commissioners of Emigration of the State of New York (New York: The Nation Press, 1870), 20-21; New York Tribune, November 22 & 26, 1853.
Despite all of this, historians of immigration disagree over the difficulty of the Atlantic crossing. Some scholars maintain that it was, in most cases, easily endurable and that its hardships and abuses have been exaggerated. While there were pestilence-ridden ships that had high percentages of deaths, they were rather rare. Most immigrants made the trip to America in relatively good order. This was true for well disciplined groups on adequately financed and thoroughly preplanned journeys. Two such bodies that used the southern route with proper planning and discipline were the Old Lutherans and Mormons, discussed in Chapter IV. The opposite interpretation by students of the subject holds that most immigrant ships were little better than slavers, and it comes closer to the truth. This is not to say that all, or even a plurality, of these craft lost great numbers of their passengers to death and disease. But the mere facts that the governments of both Great Britain and the United States repeatedly investigated the steadily mounting abuses aboard them and passed whole series of laws governing the carriage of passengers testi-

103 Adams, Ireland and Irish Emigration, 80-82; Jones, American Immigration, 106-7; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 64-69.

fy to the magnitude of the problem. Moreover, even if cap-
tains precisely conformed to the provisions of any of the
antebellum statutes, fully laden vessels were horribly
crowded and rations were in short supply.

The only real remedy for the immigrants' plight
came not from legal sanctions, but from technical develop-
ments within the shipping industry itself. Paramount among
them was the introduction of steamships. Already in wide
use at the time of the Civil War, by the late 1860's
they transported the majority of settlers from Europe to
the United States. This innovation cut running times by as
much as two-thirds, and voyages across the Atlantic ceased
being totally dependent upon the vicissitudes of wind and
weather. Historians who contend that the various pas-
senger acts stood as the immigrants' chief bulwark against

105 The first vessel to cross the Atlantic at
least partially under steam power was the 380 ton, full
rigged, Savannah, and she left Savannah, Georgia on May 24,
1819, arriving in Liverpool the following June 20. See
Steam Marine of the Port of New York, Examined in its Con-
nection with the Southern Ports of the United States and
the West Indies; and its Communication with the Atlantic
and Pacific Oceans (Albany: C. Van Benthuysen, 1853), 4-9;
H. C. Calvin and E. G. Stuart, The Merchant Shipping Indus-

106 Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 348-49;
Guillet, The Great Migration, 19; Great Britain, Parliament,
Twenty-Sixth General Report of the Emigration Commissioners.
1866. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of
Her Majesty in Irish University Press Series of British
Parliamentary Papers, Emigration 16 (Shannon: Irish Univer-
sity Press, 1969), 12; Kapp, Immigration, and the Commis-
sioners of Emigration of the State of New York, 38.
the abuses of the system essentially are correct, but their judgment is shallow. The laws were no more than palliatives, and captains, ticket agents, and customs officials ignored them, disregarding the threat of fines and imprisonment. Had these statutes been enforced to the letter they could not have mitigated the suffering the vast majority of those who journeyed to the promise of better lives endured.

The Attraction of the Southern Route

Upon their arrival in New Orleans, or any other reception center, immigrants faced the same series of hazards they had confronted at their ports of embarkation. An assortment of racketeers lay waiting for them intent upon swindling them out of their meager amounts of money and other possessions. Runners for New Orleans boarding houses

and steamboat companies commonly got 50¢ a head for delivering people to their employers, and many fraudulent agents acted in this capacity merely to dupe the newly arrived out of their baggage. In October 1857 the editor of Emerson's Magazine and Putnam's Monthly wrote concerning his impressions of New Orleans that

One would have pity, if one had time, for these poor strangers who, plunged into this chaos, raw and ignorant, speak no language but an unknown one, know not where to go, have no friends (and who has in New Orleans?), and who are quite certain, in their own minds, of being woefully cheated; but one spends no sympathy or time on them, too happy if he can but save his own life and legs.  

To combat these abuses the city's major ethnic groups formed associations for the protection of members of their respective nationalities, and boarding officers gave ship captains printed notices designed to inform immigrants about criminal activities. In addition to protecting passengers against thieves, the German and Irish societies primarily sought to make their charges' stay in the port city as short as possible and to move them on to their ultimate destinations. For those electing to remain in New Orleans the organizations attempted to procure employment, usually with some success.  


Immigrants who entered the United States via the Mississippi's mouth encountered few obstacles. As will be discussed in ensuing pages, quarantine seldom interrupted their progress, and minor city and state regulations were of little consequence. "An Ordinance relative to foreigners," approved on December 12, 1807 required all nonresidents arriving in New Orleans to register with the mayor and pay a registration fee of 12 1/2¢ per person. All ship captains had to submit lists of passengers, and innkeepers had to turn in the names of foreign lodgers. Failure to render the lists carried a fine of $99.00.¹¹⁰ This measure continued in force through most of the antebellum period,¹¹¹ but there is no record of its hindering the flow of people through the port.


Beginning in 1842 Louisiana state law required immigrants from foreign ports to pay a tax of $1.00 for each cabin and 50¢ for every steerage passenger for the support of Charity Hospital. The tax was considerably less for passengers from Gulf and North American ports and from points on the river. Two years later the legislature increased the fee to $2.00 for first class and $1.50 for steerage passengers. Similar statutes existed in New York and other major reception centers. However, early in 1849 the United States Supreme Court disallowed all such measures, because they were "head taxes" and, therefore, "repugnant to the Constitution."

As a result of the Court's decision Louisiana altered the law, and in March 1850 the legislature approved "An Act Relative to Charity Hospital." It required the commanding officer of every vessel arriving from anywhere out-

112 See Chapter VI for a discussion of this and subsequent measures relating to the hospital


side the state to make a written report to the resident hospital commissioner containing information on every passenger aboard. Each person over the age of fourteen had to post a $1,000.00 bond against his becoming a charge of any state charitable institution for the ensuing five years. Obviously, only a tiny minority of immigrants ever had seen $1,000.00, and virtually none had anywhere near that amount. Thus, the legislature allowed those unable to provide the necessary surety to pay $2.00 to any hospital commissioner or the captain or clerk of their ship. If masters collected this commutation money they could keep 5 percent of it as a commission.¹¹⁷ Five years later the legislature increased the commutation tax to $2.50 and required all steerage passengers over ten years of age to pay it, but all other provisions of the earlier law remained intact.¹¹⁸ These acts, as well as those the Court struck down, benefited both the state and the immigrant. Funds collected under them kept the doors of Charity Hospital open, and it took care of thousands of sick and destitute foreigners who sought refuge there.

Before the advent of railways between Atlantic ports

¹¹⁷ March 21, 1850, Acts Passed by the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1850), 225.

and the West, the southern route was the cheapest, most efficient and direct way to what is now the American heartland. In fact, it was not the Civil War, but the development of rail connections from the East to St. Louis several years prior to it, that erased New Orleans' primary advantage as a port of entry. Until that time the Mississippi was "eine Volkerstrasse nach dem Westen," and the Crescent City's position at the base of that river's vast drainage system made it the key to the fertile interior valley.

From its earliest history virtually all observers regarded the city's geographic location as its most valuable asset, and many felt that it had a "natural destiny" to become one of the greatest, if not the greatest, commercial centers in the United States. Immigrants' use of New Orleans as a threshold to their adopted nation was only a tiny aspect of its extensive economic links with the West. Writing in 1806, Thomas Ashe said that the city

119 The Ohio and Mississippi Railroad reached St. Louis in 1857. Deiler, "European Immigration into the United States from 1820--1900," 9-10; Peterson, Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi, 298-335.

120 Deiler uses this phrase in "European Immigration into the United States from 1820--1900," 9.

stood "on the very bank of the most perfect course of freshwater navigation in the world" and that, despite all of its drawbacks, it eventually would rival every other city in America in wealth, power, and prosperity. 122 Two years later Christian Schultz reflected that it would "at some future period not only rival all the great commercial cities of the United States, but even of the world." 123 In 1812 Major Amos Stoddard, who took possession of Upper Louisiana for the United States from France, called New Orleans "the great mart of all the wealth of the western world." 124 Only two years after Andrew Jackson defeated the British on the plains of Chalmette geographer William Darby maintained that

New-Orleans alone will be forever, as it is now, the mighty mart of the merchandise brought from more than a thousand rivers. Unless prevented by some great accident in human affairs, this rapidly increasing city will, in no very distant time, leave the Emporia of the Eastern world far behind. With Boston, New-York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore on the left, Mexico


123 Christian Schultz, Travels on an Inland Voyage Through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and Through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New-Orleans; Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808; Including a Tour of Nearly Six Thousand Miles (2 Vols.; New York: Printed by Isaac Riley, 1810), II, 200.

124 Amos Stoddard, Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1812), 151.
on the right, Havanna in front, and the immense valley of the Mississippi in the rear; no such position for the accumulation and perpetuity of wealth and power ever existed.125

Almost as if not to be outdone, John Regan wrote shortly after Darby that "New Orleans, or some place not very remote from it, must become, in the process of time, one of the greatest commercial cities in the known world."126

Pioneer statistician Adam Seybert perceptively concluded at roughly the same time that

New Orleans must be, to a very considerable part of the United States, what Alexandria was to Europe prior to the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope; that city must be the entrepot to the extensive territories, which are watered by the river Mississippi and its tributary streams . . . .127


The next decade a British traveler dubbed New Orleans "the most important commercial point on the face of the earth," and Timothy Flint called it the key to the Mississippi Valley and the "great depot" of all its economic activity.\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^8\) Shortly thereafter, Robert Baird asserted the same view.\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^9\) In the winter of 1832-33 C. D. Arfwedson noted that

No city in the United States, with the exception of New York, has a more advantageous situation for commerce than New Orleans. The immense rivers which traverse the Western States bring thither, without difficulty, produce from distances of several thousand miles.\(^1\)\(^3\)\(^0\)

After visiting the Crescent City during a tour of the United States in 1844, the Reverend George Lewis predicted that it probably would become the largest and wealthiest metropolis in the nation primarily because of

\(^{128}\) C. Sealsford, The Americans as They Are; Described in a Tour Through the Valley of the Mississippi (London: Hurst, Chance, & Co., 1835), 166; Timothy Flint, A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States or the Mississippi Valley (2 Vols.; Cincinnati: E. H. Flint, 1828), I, 549.


\(^{130}\) C. D. Arfwedson, The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834 (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1834), II, 63.
its commercial connections with the West. At roughly the same time Alexander MacKay made an even more grandiose prognostication. He ventured that

There can scarcely be a doubt but that it [New Orleans] will, at no very distant period, be the greatest commercial emporium in the world. At present it is, more or less the entrepot for the trade of upwards of nine millions of people, the population of the great valley at present exceeding that number.

New Orleans' natural links with the West only wrought immense profits after the perfection of the river steamboat and the development of regular and heavy steam navigation on the Mississippi and its tributaries. While it is beyond the scope of this study to survey the history of this industry, there can be no real appreciation of the Crescent City's function as a port of immigration without some comprehension of the transportation system that served it. During the forty years before the Civil War the steamboat and the city's location gave it "the delusion of absolute and unlimited commercial empire inalienably bestowed by the laws of gravitation." Stubborn reliance upon

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that delusion caused the city to lose out commercially to northern and eastern competitors, but for many years immense wealth poured in over a pathway that seemed to have no rival.134


134 It is also beyond the scope of this study to survey the extremely intriguing topic of the commercial competition that arose against New Orleans, the city's overconfidence in its own destiny, and the failure to meet challenges from the North and East. There was a hot ante-bellum debate in New Orleans and the South over the seriousness of this confrontation, and numerous historical analyses of it have been written as well. Predictably, DeBow's Review published a series of articles discussing competition, the city's failure to meet it, and what its course of action needed to be. See James Gadsden, "Commercial Spirit of the South," II (September, 1846), 119-32; "Contests for the Trade of the Mississippi Valley," III (February, 1847), 98-111; "Commerce of Cities," IV (November, 1847), 399-404; "Direct Trade of Southern States With Europe," III (June, 1847), 557-59, IV (October, November, & December, 1847), 208-25, 337-56, 493-502; "The Course of Trade on Rail-Roads," XI (February, 1851), 521-22; "The Destiny of New Orleans," X (April, 1851), 440-45; "Why New-Orleans Does not Advance," XI (October, 1851), 387-89; Edward Kenna, "The Trade of the Wes. with the Seaboard," XX (January, 1856), 78-86. DeBow also dealt with this question in The Industrial Resources of the United States, II, 152-92, III, 1-17. George Washington Cable admirably discussed the topic in his sketch of New Orleans in in Waring, comp., "The Southern and Western States," 257-58, and in his The Creoles of Louisiana (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), 240-54. Several articles that address competition are Robert Marshall Brown, "The Mississippi River as a Trade Route," Bulletin of the American Geographical Society of New York, XXXVIII (1906), 549-54; John G. Clark, "New Orleans and the River: A Study in Attitudes and Responses," Louisiana History, VIII (Spring, 1967), 117-36; Albert Fishlow, "Antebellum Interregional Trade Reconsidered," American Economic Review, LIV (May, 1964), 352-64; Robert E. Roeder, "Merchants of Ante-Bellum New Orleans," Harvard University Research Center in Entrepreneurial History, X (1958), 113-22; and Lawrence H. Larsen's very perceptive "New Orleans and the River Trade: Reinterpreting the Role of the Business
Prior to the introduction of steamboats on western rivers all navigation depended either upon the current and wind or the power of men and animals. Therefore, most traffic was downstream, and four basic types of craft carried people and commodities on the Mississippi and adjacent waterways. The first and most primitive of these, the pirogue, was little more than a hollowed-out log fitted with a sail and propelled by the wind and oars. By the mid eighteenth century larger and more maneuverable bateaux, built of planks and pointed at both ends, were in wide use,

and crews of eighteen to twenty men rowed them. Both the pirogue and bateau were comparatively small. Neither met the needs of expanding river commerce, and others that could accommodate more cargo eventually supplanted them. From the 1780's until the solid establishment of steam navigation a class of unwieldy vessels resembling oblong boxes dominated the river. Though they came in many sizes and had numerous different names, most historians refer to them as flatboats. Roofed all over, or nearly so, and usually with no windows, they were anywhere from twenty to sixty feet long, between nine and twenty-five feet wide, and from four to seven feet high. Designed strictly to float downstream, these inexpensive forerunners of the modern-day steel barge could carry 400 to 500 barrels of produce, and they made the trip to New Orleans (or other locations) only once. Upon arrival their owners broke them up and sold their lumber. The fourth variety of pre-steam river craft, keelboats, were long, narrow bottoms, pointed at either end and constructed on keels. Primarily used for upstream transit, regular crews used a variety of extremely laborious methods, including poling and warping, to move them against the current. Never as important or as numerous as flatboats, keels quickly declined with the advent of steam power, though they continued to serve on lesser streams inaccessible to steamers.135

135 C. C. Robin, *Voyage to Louisiana, 1803--1805*,

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Commerce on the Mississippi and its tributaries never could have developed to anywhere near the point that it did had it been restricted to the transportation system offered by these four types of vessels. Upstream passage consumed too much time and required an inordinate amount of effort to meet the needs of large-scale mercan-

tile intercourse or of thousands of immigrants looking for cheap, efficient ways to the interior. The introduction of steam power on the Mississippi in the second decade of the nineteenth century allowed the immense valley economically to come of age. Indeed, the steamboat inaugurated an agricultural and commercial revolution, and it fostered rapid population growth as well. As Cincinnati's James Hall said, the river steamer "contributed more than any other single cause, perhaps more than all other causes which have grown out of human skill combined, to the advance and prosperity of the West."¹³⁶

Virtually all of the steamboat's inventors envisioned its potential on western waters, even though they all were Easterners. Robert Fulton of New York, backed by Robert Livingston's considerable wealth, was the first man actually to put a steamer in service on the frontier. The Fulton-Livingston combination secured monopoly rights over steam navigation of the waterways in the Territory of Orleans, and in October 1811 Fulton's aptly named New Orleans, built at a cost of close to $38,000, steamed out of Pittsburgh under the command of Nicholas Roosevelt, who previously had surveyed the Mississippi in preparation for the craft's maiden voyage. The New Orleans reached the Crescent City the following January 10 after stops and demonstrations in Cincinnati and Louisville, and beginning

on January 23, 1812 she engaged in the Natchez trade, turning a profit of $20,000 in her first year. She sank near Baton Rouge after striking a snag in July 1814.137

While the New Orleans demonstrated the tremendous potential of steam navigation on the Mississippi and other western rivers, before that industry could mature major technical problems involving the construction of boats' hulls and engines had to be overcome, the Fulton-Livingston monopoly had to be crushed, and the Falls of the Ohio had to be neutralized. By 1830 all of these obstacles had been surmounted.138 The fully developed antebellum steamboat


138 Hunter, Steamboats on the Western Rivers, 13-37, 65-181; Dixon, A Traffic History of the Mississippi River System, 13-18; Hartsough, From Canoe to Steel Barge on the Upper Mississippi, 47; Hall, The West, 125-26;
that evolved with this progress was from 200 to 300 feet long, though some exceeded this length and many were under 200 feet. They rarely had beams of over forty feet. First and foremost shallow water craft, they floated on the water rather than slicing through it, and their holds were often insufficiently deep to practically carry cargo. Hence, hogsheads and cotton bales went to market on the main deck, and there were up to twenty vertical feet of space on this deck for such goods. Built almost entirely of wood, steamers were rather fragile. Hulls were as thin and light as possible, and extensive superstructures rarely had strength enough to support more than their own weight. Consequently, on the snag- and sawyer-filled Mississippi, most boats had short lives of from four to five years, and those operating on the treacherous Missouri seldom lasted longer than three. 139


139 Hall, The West, 123-65; Gould, Fifty Years on the Mississippi, 626-70; Nichols, Forty Years of American Life, II, 4-7; Hunter, Steamboats on the Western Rivers, 64-114; Arfwedson, The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834, II, 82-85; Baird, View of the Valley of the Mississippi, 330-34; Paul W. Brown, "The Collapse of the Steamboat Traffic Upon the Mississippi: An Inquiry into Causes," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Histor-
By 1860 the average tonnage of steamers registered at New Orleans was 366, while it was 369 at St. Louis and 298 at Louisville. Their carrying capacities were from one-third to one-half more than their registered burdens. Arrivals at New Orleans ran from twenty-one in 1814 to over 3,500 in 1860, and in every year of heavy immigration there were over 2,000. By the 1850's the average running time between New Orleans and Louisville was five and one-half to six days, while the record time for that trip in 1815 had been slightly over twenty-five days.

It was this highly developed transportation system that made the southern route attractive to immigrants.

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Authors of guidebooks advised their readers to travel via New Orleans, because it was the most efficient method of reaching the interior. Overland journeys from the East Coast and by way of the Erie and other early canals were much more difficult and expensive. Some immigrants even transshipped to New Orleans after landing at New York to take advantage of the city's fine connections. British immigrant Rebecca Burland, who settled in western Illinois in 1831, recalled

Our reasons for sailing to that port [New Orleans], the most distant in North America, and not in a direct course to the Illinois, were on account of the ready transit we should make thence into the interior of the Mississippi; whereas, by landing at New York, Boston, or Philadelphia, we should have had to cross the Alleghany mountains, and travel a great distance by land, which would have been both very troublesome on account of our luggage, and very expensive.

Thus, one of the most important functions of New Orleans as a port of immigration was its role as a way station. First and foremost it attracted those desiring to settle in the trans-Appalachian West because of its ties with and trans-


143 The Times (London), June 6, 1846.

portation system to that vast region.

Closely interwoven with the port's intimate links with the upper valley was the second most significant factor that drew immigrants southward. While the ocean voyage to New Orleans was slightly more expensive than one to the eastern seaboard, the overall cost of the journey to the interior was less and the trip was more convenient by way of the Mississippi's mouth. Indeed, Cassell's Emigrants' Handbook advised in 1852 that

The tide of emigration for agriculturists has, of late years, been strongly settling in the direction of Michigan and Wisconsin (up the lakes). These states can be reached with even more convenience by way of the Mississippi River, and traveling on this river and its great tributaries is cheaper than in any other part of the world. A thousand miles may be gone over in five days at an expense of less than a guinea!

Both cabin and deck passage on river steamers varied with the stages of the river, demand, and the ability of individuals to bargain with captains. Under the Fulton-Livingston monopoly, in 1819 typical cabin fares from New Orleans were $30.00 to Natchez, $95.00 to the mouth of the Ohio, and $125.00 to that river's falls. After the monopoly successfully had been challenged and declared unconstitutional rates sharply decreased. By the late 1820's

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the charge was $40.00 from New Orleans to Louisville. Cassell reported in 1852 that first class passage from New Orleans to St. Louis could be had for $10.00, while Edward Sullivan quoted the price as $20.00 at the same time.147

Most immigrants, however, made the trip upstream on deck, and they paid considerably less for it. In the late 1820's passage from New Orleans to Louisville was from $8.00 to $10.00, and if one helped with the wooding he could go for a dollar or two less.148 About fifteen years later, a family of six could steam from the Crescent City to St. Louis for £3, or roughly $3.00 for each adult and half that sum for the four children. Again, the price was even lower if travelers assisted the crew with stowing fuel.149 These rates remained average through the remainder of the antebellum period, but by the time immigration reached high tide many probably made the trip for as little as $2.00 to $2.50.150 Furthermore, organized groups or

147 Dixon, A Traffic History of the Mississippi River System, 26; Hunter, Steamboats on the Western Rivers, 381; Cassell's Emigrants' Handbook, 24; Sullivan, Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America, 194; C. Sealsford, The Americans as They Are, 104-5.


large families often obtained special fares by applying for passage together.\textsuperscript{151}

As they steamed up the Mississippi Immigrants encountered many of the same problems they had experienced on their ocean voyages. In reality, deck passengers' accommodations differed little from those in steerage quarters. The one obvious difference was that on riverboats deckers had an abundance of fresh air—enough to make them miserable in any but the mildest weather. Crowding was as bad, if not worse, than between decks on a square-rigger. Captains provided no food at all, and cooking facilities were so poor that there might as well have been none. Generally, boats furnished immigrants berths or hammocks, but in almost all instances they were filthy and lice-ridden. Hence, most travelers tried to find a niche among the bales and barrels to ride out the trip. Steamers were notorious for carrying and spreading disease, and they offered no medical care to those aboard.\textsuperscript{152} Indeed, the immigrant continued his life-or-death gamble as he proceeded up the Mississippi. After investigating conditions on steamers for the government, Dr. John M. Woodworth wrote:

A deck-passenger is one who cannot pay full fare, and in America [this] at once indicates the individual

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\textsuperscript{151} Hall, The West, 147.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 146-47; Wittke, We Who Built America, 120-21; Page, "The Distribution of Immigrants in the United States Before 1870," 689-90; Hunter, Steamboats on the Western Rivers, 419-41.
as belonging to those classes of the community among whom infectious diseases find their most numerous victims. These persons are furnished with nothing but transportation. They sit during the day and sleep during the night in such positions as they may best secure; and this is generally to be found to be upon those piles of freight which will be for the longest time unmolested.153

Writing in 1831 about his experiences aboard the Scotland, bound to Cincinnati from New Orleans, one immigrant recalled that most of the passengers were German and Irish and that sickness quickly spread, killing some twenty-four. Few not afflicted paid any attention to the ill.

While one was lying fighting death, others would sit nearby drinking and playing cards. As soon as one died, the ship was stopped, a shallow grave dug, and the body was thrown in without any coffin. The grave was covered with sand and the journey was resumed.154

As if this were not enough, deck passengers always were in danger of being injured, because they rode in the area where the crew did most of its work. Deckers were simply in the way, and conflicts with crew members were common. Because their quarters were very close to engines and boilers, they suffered more than any other part of a boat's population from fires and explosions that were

153 U. S., Congress, House, The Cholera Epidemic of 1873 in the United States, by John M. Woodworth, M. D., H. Ex. D. 95, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1875, 52. This portrait of deckers was written thirteen years after the period under consideration, but it graphically depicts conditions and illustrates how few improvements were made.

154 An Immigrant of a Hundred Years Ago, A Story of Someone's Ancestor, trans. & retold by "An Old Hand" (Hattisburg, Mississippi: The Book Farm, 1941), 47. Undoubtedly, this refers to an outbreak of cholera. Whether or not this is an authentic, verbatim comment, it rings true as a picture of conditions as they were.
tragically frequent on the Mississippi and its tributaries.155

The United States government vaguely acknowledged deck passengers' plight, but its legislation concerning them was incredibly remiss. "An Act to provide for the better security of the lives of passengers propelled in whole or in part by steam," approved on July 7, 1838 required boats to meet minimal hull and machinery standards, mandated yearly inspections, and obliged captains to lower steam pressure when they stopped to take on cargo or passengers. Under the threat of a $300.00 fine, steamboats had to carry lifeboats and have fire fighting equipment. Every captain or hand whose misconduct or neglect resulted in the loss of life could be found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced for up to ten years in prison.156 Congress amended this law fourteen years later, and the new measure stipulated that deckers had to have ready access to the upper decks in the event of fire. It restricted the carriage of flammables and explosives and required life preservers for every person on board. But captains had little incentive to follow these rules. They were liable to the full amounts of any damages to passengers, but those wrong-

155 Hunter, Steamboats on the Western Rivers, 419-41; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 186; Wittke, We Who Built America, 120-21.

156 U. S., Statutes at Large, X (1838), 304.
ed had to sue to recover any losses. Extremely few immigrants had the time or money for such litigation.

Hardships on riverboats were real and well-known, but most passengers endured them for less than two weeks. An immigrant who landed at New York underwent a much longer, costlier, and harder journey to the interior. In 1843 a British guide advised that once he debarked in New York the traveler had to transfer his baggage to a Hudson River steamer and proceed 160 miles to Albany where he again transferred to an Erie Canal boat that transported him 363 miles to Buffalo. There he transferred his goods to a lake steamer, and, after a fourth transfer, he continued overland or on the Ohio river to his ultimate destination. This long, circuitous trip cost at least £3, exclusive of provisions, and that amount equaled the price of the Atlantic passage. Clearly, the single baggage change at New Orleans, the $3.00 price of the ten-day trip to St. Louis, and the lack of a tedious odyssey over rivers, canals, lakes, and land made the southern route very attractive.

While thousands of immigrants used New Orleans as a

157 "An Act to Amend an act entitled 'An Act to Provide for better Security of the lives of Passengers on board Vessels propelled in whole or in part by Steam,' and for other purposes," U. S., Statutes at Large, X (1852), 304.

158 Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; And What to Take, 14. Wittke, We Who Built America, 119, states that in 1840 fares from New York were 75¢ to Albany, $4.50 to Buffalo, $7.00 to Cleveland, $8.00 to Detroit, $14.50 to Milwaukee, and $14.50 to Chicago.

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gateway to the United States because of the easy and cheap access it offered to the West, many of the extremely poor, diseased, or disabled entered by way of the Mississippi because the Crescent City was essentially an "open port." During most of the antebellum period it had no real regulations governing admissions, and there is no record of anyone ever having been turned away. In fact, immigration agents distributed circulars in the interior of Germany warning paupers, cripples, and the deformed not to sail for New York, but to go to New Orleans, Baltimore, or Quebec where there were no laws to restrict them. A blatant example of this situation involved the case of the Frenchmen Meunier and Quenissit. Condemned to death for attempted regicide, their sentences had been commuted to banishment. They migrated to New Orleans, became citizens with no questions asked, and voted in the election of 1844.


Until 1855, when the state of Louisiana finally enacted an effective quarantine for New Orleans, officials and captains largely ignored various sapless isolation laws that did exist, and the business community encouraged this practice. Typical were the actions of a steamboat captain approached by the agent of an immigrant ship in 1840. The agent told him that he had a load of Germans waiting in quarantine to go to St. Louis. Since many of them had ship's fever, they could not legally land in New Orleans. Promised a good price for his services, the captain boarded the Germans directly onto his steamer. During the fourteen-day trip upstream thirty-three of them died.\textsuperscript{162}

Throughout the antebellum period the entire question of quarantine at New Orleans was a by-product of the city's primary curse, yellow fever, and the debate over whether it was of local origin or imported.\textsuperscript{163} Until after the catastrophic epidemic of 1853, the state legislature enacted a number of quarantines in the wake of particularly severe attacks of fever. However, especially after a relatively safe season, the business community always opposed these measures and secured their repeal. New Orleans lived on commerce, and its great mercantile barons were the most influential of its citizens. As the perceptive and erudite

\textsuperscript{162} Daniels, "Steam-boating on the Ohio and Mississippi Before the Civil War," 115-16.

\textsuperscript{163} See Chapter VI for a discussion of this debate and its ultimate connection with immigrants.
A. Oakey Hall wrote, "You may search the world over to find the science of money-making reduced to such perfection, and become of such all-engrossing influence as in New Orleans."\textsuperscript{164} Impediments to the flow of goods and paper gold were not only nuisances—they threatened the foundations of the city's prosperity.\textsuperscript{165}

In 1818 the legislature created New Orleans' first board of health and a strict quarantine for the port in an effort to keep yellow fever out. This measure provided for a Lazaretto, or quarantine-ground, and required all vessels with forty or more passengers, on which there had been a death or sickness, to anchor for examination there by a resident physician and quarantine-master. Ships from ports where there was fever or contagious disease that had suffered at least one death on their voyages had to wait thirty days after their arrival and twenty days after the discharge of cargoes for final clearance. All bottoms calling from May 1 to December 1 from anywhere in the West

\textsuperscript{164} A. Oakey Hall, The Manhattaner in New Orleans; or, Phases of "Crescent City" Life (New York: Redfield, 1851), 32-33.

Indies or any place in North America as far north as South Carolina had to spend four days in isolation before proceeding about their business.166 This statute remained on the books for less than a year, though when it was repealed, the legislature granted the governor the right to establish a quarantine by proclamation if he saw the need for it.167

Fever hardly exited with the act of 1818, and in the summer of 1819 one of every twelve New Orleanians died.168 This prompted Governor Thomas B. Robertson to include in his inaugural address of December 18, 1820, a call for a new quarantine.169 The following February 17 the legislature answered his appeal with "An Act to provide against the Introduction of Infectious Disease." It

166 "An Act to establish a Board of Health, and to prevent the introduction of Malignant, Pestilential and Infectious Disease into the City of New-Orleans," March 17, 1818, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1818), 124-53.

167 "An Act to repeal an act entitled 'An Act to establish a Board of Health and Health Office, and to prevent the introduction of Malignant, Pestilential and Infectious Diseases into the City of New-Orleans,' and for other purposes therein mentioned," March 6, 1819, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1819), 70-72.


169 Louisiana, Legislature, House, Journal of the House of Representatives, During the First Session of the Fifth Legislature of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans, 1820), 33-34.
established a quarantine of no less than fifteen days for any vessel on which there had been a death, and all craft arriving from ports suffering from disease spent ten days in detention. Five days of mandatory isolation greeted all ships calling between May 1 and November 1 from any place in the West Indies or on the North and South American Continents between 15 degrees south and 24 degrees north latitude. Furthermore, all bottoms transporting more than twenty "redemptioners" from Europe had to be thoroughly inspected and cleaned before they could make fast to the levee. 170

After scarcely a year of doing business under these restrictions the Crescent City's commercial interests had had enough. On Wednesday evening, January 22, 1823, Thomas Urquhart chaired a large meeting of merchants at Elkins' Coffee House. Those in attendance created the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, 171 and they adopted six other resolutions as well. The fourth of these stated in part:

That as late experience has tested, in our opinion, the total inefficiency of the Quarantine Laws and Regulations, we consider them not only useless, but in the highest degree oppressive and injurious to the commerce of the city; and that application ought

170 "An Act to provide against the Introduction of Infectious Disease," February 11, 1821, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1821), 68-92.

171 Louisiana Gazette, January 23, 1823; Louisiana, Legislature, House, Journal of the House of Representatives During the First Session of the Sixth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, January 24, 1823 (New Orleans, 1823), 25.
Notwithstanding a report on the following March 20 by the House Quarantine Committee stating its belief that fever was contagious and that the legislature should enact more stringent measures to prevent its introduction, Louisiana repealed its quarantine on February 19, 1825. Nevertheless, the New Orleans City Council nominally retained the right to hold vessels if a physician judged them to be disease-ridden.

While the city's mercantile magnates prevailed, yellow fever continued to reap its yearly harvests, and each major epidemic was worse than the one it succeeded. Medical men continued their debate over whether the malady was of local origin and not transferable from man to man, or whether it was contagious and imported into the city from other ports. Not until nearly 8,000 people succumbed to the plague in 1853 did the legislature enact a strict quarantine for the Port of New Orleans. The shock of that year's extreme perdition jolted local citizens out of their

172 Louisiana, Legislature, House, Journal of the House of Representatives During the First Session of the Sixth Legislature, January 24, 1823 (New Orleans, 1823), 23.

173 Ibid., 91.

174 "An Act to repeal an Act entitled 'An Act to provide against the introduction of Infectious Diseases,' and for other purposes," February 19, 1825, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Seventh Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1824 & 1825), 210-12.
lethargy; the public now demanded what seemed to be its only realistic protection. Yet opposition within the business community and from a number of anti-contagionist physicians remained strong.\textsuperscript{175}

Louisiana's legislators met the people's will on March 15, 1855 with "An Act to Establish Quarantine for the Protection of the State." This law created a nine-member state board of health with real power and a $50,000.00 appropriation. It provided for quarantine stations not only on the Mississippi, but near the mouth of the Atchafalaya, and at "some point" on the Rigolettes. It endowed the resident physician with the power to detain all bottoms calling from infected ports for at least ten days, and the governor could declare any place infected on the advice of the board of health. Violators of any of these quarantine regulations faced fines of $2,000.00 and up to twelve months in prison.\textsuperscript{176}

In reality, however, quarantine did very little to prevent yellow fever. Still, the issue of whether or not New Orleans should detain and inspect incoming vessels revolved around its nearly annual visitations by a dread

\textsuperscript{175} The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), August 11 & September 4 & 25, 1853; March 9-18, 1854. See Chapter VI for a full discussion of the debate and of the impact of the epidemic of 1853.

\textsuperscript{176} Acts Passed by the Second Legislature of the State of Louisiana, at Its Second Session . . . (New Orleans, 1855), 571-77.
disease that nobody actually understood. Even if quaran-
tine had been able to bar the door to fever, the act of
1855 came too late. The tide of immigration already had
turned. In essence, passengers entered the nation by way
of the Crescent City with few impediments before the Civil
War, and this influenced many to opt for the southern route.

A limited number of migrants sailed to New Orleans
to find work, though this never was a major motivating
force. As has been pointed out, the Louisiana port primar-
ily served as a way station for those desiring to settle in
the trans-Appalachian West. Still, either by design or
because they were so utterly impoverished that they could
not afford passage upstream, thousands remained in and
around the metropolis.\textsuperscript{177} In the early 1820's Isaac Holmes
advised immigrants that they easily could find employment
there during November and December at the relatively high
wage of $2.00 per day, and he said women could sew or wash
clothes for almost as much.\textsuperscript{178} The next decade Captain J.
E. Alexander, of the Royal [British] Geographic Society,
related that 600 Irish perished annually after going to New
Orleans from New York and Charleston to do heavy labor at
$1.00 per day.\textsuperscript{179} In 1854 one German reported that upon

\textsuperscript{177} See Chapters VII and VIII for specific dis-
cussions of the economic impact of various ethnic groups
on the city and its labor force as well as their predom-
inate occupations.

\textsuperscript{178} Holmes, \textit{An Account of the United States}, 128.

\textsuperscript{179} J. E. Alexander, \textit{Transatlantic Sketches}, Com-
arriving in New Orleans he immediately located a position paying $1.00 a day in the service of a cabinetmaker of his same nationality.180 This man was very lucky, and, more likely than not, the local German Society aided him as it did thousands of others.181 But as the number of foreigners increased the city became less and less able to absorb them into its labor force. Only after the ravages of severe epidemics could its almost strictly commercial economy offer any sizable number of jobs. One of the city's chief economic weaknesses was its failure to develop manufacturing concerns and to staff them with newly arrived potential workers.182

New Orleans' intimate ties with the West, its location and fine transportation system, and the fact that the port imposed few restrictions upon passengers entering the United States made it a very attractive reception center. But the longer ocean voyage, the oppressive southern summer climate, the threat of yellow fever, and limited economic

prising Visits to the Most interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies. With Notes on Negro Slavery and Canadian Emigration (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1833), II, 29.


181 See Chapter VII for an analysis of the work of the German Society in this and other respects.


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opportunities in and around the Crescent City caused thousands of immigrants to avoid the southern route—and the South in general. Throughout the history of human migration immigrants always sought new areas that resembled their places of origin geologically and meteorologically. The deep South simply failed to meet this requirement.  

Major Frederick Behlendorff, a remarkably literate German "forty-eighter" who had studied law at Leipzig, sailed for New York in 1849. He eventually saw considerable action with the Union Army in the Civil War, but just prior to the outbreak of hostilities he visited the South and New Orleans in particular.  

His initial comments about the place graphically illustrate the attitude of many who hailed from his region of Europe.

From Missouri I drifted gradually further South and finally into Louisiana. If I had not been so inexperienced and still so 'green,' I might have enjoyed the blessings of the North. But the spirit of adventure drove me into a kind of hell of which I had no previous conception. If any one wants to find out what hell on earth is, let him go down the Mississippi to New Orleans, Louisiana in the hot summer season with small means and when the malaria of the swamps is at its height.


185 Ibid., 322.
Captain J. E. Alexander was in the city in late August 1833, and he expressed similar sentiments.

But truly my situation was far from being an agreeable one, though I could not complain, for I had wilfully braved the climate of the 'Wet Grave,' New Orleans, 'where the hopes of thousands are buried.'

Closely associated with climate in keeping immigrants from taking the southern route were the almost yearly attacks of yellow fever that the Crescent City suffered. Chapter VI addresses the connection between fever and strangers in detail, and it traces the tendency of many established residents to blame strangers for importing and fostering the disease. Suffice it to say here that from its earliest history New Orleans had the reputation of being an unhealthy place, especially to the "unacclimated." In 1823 Isaac Holmes told prospective American settlers that they should shun the South because of the likelihood of their contracting the plague. He said that four out of five newcomers died every year in New Orleans and that during some summers seven of eight fell victim to it. In 1844 the London Times reported that the British Consul at New Orleans had advised that "yellow fever has been singularly destructive of life amongst emigrants arriving from Europe during the sickly

186 Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, II, 12. Alexander is quoting Sealsford, The Americans as They Are, 144-45, though he does not acknowledge him.

season . . . ." He warned travelers not to sail during June, July, August, and September. In October 1851 Joshua Garside, an Illinois pioneer, wrote:

'My opinion has often been requested as to which of the two ports, New York or New Orleans, I would recommend emigrants to embark for. I would say New York all the time, as I consider that emigrants coming from Great Britain come from too northern a latitude to land in New Orleans with anything like security from sickness; and a sick person has a poor chance of recovery on board the over-crowded steamboats. Too often, alas! does many a poor emigrant, after escaping the perils of a sea voyage, find his grave on the banks of the Mississippi River. I consider it healthier to land at New York by all means.'

Yellow fever not only acted as a deterrent to immigrants' use of the southern route, but it dictated the time of the year that they sailed over it and limited the season that New Orleans received them to around six months annually. Virtually all guidebooks warned travelers to embark no later than March. If they could not meet this deadline prudent migrants waited until the ensuing autumn before setting out. The best time to arrive in New Orleans was in the winter. Those who debarked then escaped the plague and had ample opportunity to reach their ultimate destinations and plant a crop by spring.

188 The Times (London), July 9, 1844.
189 Quoted by Foreman, "English Settlers in Illinois," 333.
190 See, for example, Darby, The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and Southwestern States, 38; Newhall, The British Emigrants' "Hand Book," 96; Bek, ed. & trans., "Gottfried Duden's 'Report,' 1824--1827," pt. 7, 263-64; Emigration. Who Should Go; Where to Go To; How to Get There; and What to Take, 14.
As significant as any of these liabilities to the southern route and to settlement in the South was the existence of human slavery and the concomitant lack of the immigrants' fundamental goal--economic opportunity. Undoubtedly, many Europeans found the peculiar institution morally disgusting, and Calvin Colton summarized that view when he said of the South:

. . . the existence of slavery in those states--an entailed, grievous, and lamented evil--generally constitutes a sufficient objection against a emigration there, so long as such vast and healthful regions of the North and West are open, and free, and unoccupied.191

However, Archibald Prentice may have come closer to most migrants' true feelings when he admonished them to avoid the slave states because of their "laxity in morals" and, more importantly, because the rank and file would encounter difficulty in finding work there.192

The argument that slavery morally affronted immigrants probably has been overemphasized, primarily on the basis of statements made by a few German liberals who arrived after the revolutions of 1848.193 Indeed, slavery did not deter large numbers of foreigners from settling in the eleven states that made up the Confederacy as well as the

192 Prentice, A Tour in the United States, 201.
193 Herbert Weaver makes a good case for this revisionist point of view in "Foreigners in Ante-Bellum Towns of the Lower South," Journal of Southern History, XIII (February, 1947), 62-73.
pivotal border states of Missouri and Kentucky, though the number that took up residence there was small in comparison to the totals attracted to other regions. In 1850 the states that would secede had 145,395 persons of foreign birth, or 6.5 percent of the total of 2,210,839 in all thirty-two states, the District of Columbia, and the four territories. If one combines the foreign population of Missouri and Kentucky with the southern total, 240,058, or 10.8 percent of all the nation's foreign-born resided in the South. In 1860, 233,651, or 5.6 percent of the country's 4,136,175 non natives lived in the future Confederate states, but nearly 11 percent occupied those eleven states, Missouri, and Kentucky. While these totals hardly demonstrate any tremendous southern magnetism, they do indicate that many immigrants chose to make their homes in the slave states.194

German immigrants may have disliked the institution of slavery, but they had little desire to associate with or live around blacks. The Irish opposed abolition as members of the Democratic Party and because many of them competed with free Negroes in the South as manual laborers. Both Germans and Irish who vied with blacks for heavy jobs

held Negroes in contempt. Some Germans and Norwegians who settled south of the Mason-Dixon line owned slaves, especially in Texas, and the comments of one German immigrant concerning blacks may reflect the sentiments of more foreigners than Calvin Colton's statement quoted above. This man reflected that everyone was a slave in Germany, and he wrote: "Dear friends, it is true, there are many slaves here, but they are all Negroes, who know no better than to be slaves." 196

Immigrants' feelings about the morality of human servitude were not what drew them to or what caused them to stay away from the South. The real problem was that that region's reliance upon staple agriculture diminished economic opportunities that existed in abundance for newcomers elsewhere. There was little good, cheap, available land, and industrial employment possibilities were negligible. Foreigners had to engage in degrading competition with blacks for service jobs and those spawned by commerce, though, as shown in Chapter VIII, by the time of the Civil War Irish and German elements prevailed in many of these


areas in New Orleans. Immigrants traveled to the United States to improve their economic condition. Whether they intended to settle in the South or merely had to find work there for a season before moving on, their chances were not as good south of the Mason-Dixon line as in other parts of the country. 197

After all is said and done about the various attributes of the southern route and the methods and quality of travel over it, one central question remains. Simply put, it asks to what extent New Orleans' rank as the nation's second immigrant port resulted from direct immigrant trade with the major European ports of embarkation. Always closely linked to commerce, immigration followed the flow of goods across the Atlantic. The key issue emerging from the history of antebellum migration to and through the Crescent City is whether or not those who made the trip there actually did so because of the city's location, the cheap, ready access it offered to the interior, and the open nature of its port. As the preceding pages have indicated, all evidence makes it clear that most people did sail over the southern route for precisely these reasons.

197 MacGill, "Immigration to the Southern States, 1783--1865," 595-96; Walter L. Fleming, "Immigration to the Southern States," Political Science Quarterly, XX (June, 1905), 276-77; Page, "The Distribution of Immigrants in the United States Before 1870," 680; Kapp, Immigration, And the Commissioners of Emigration of the State of New York, 17.
However, another interpretation contends that vessels laden with cotton regularly sailed directly from New Orleans to the major European cotton ports, and they made unbroken voyages back to the Crescent City loaded with steerage passengers. This continuous immigrant trade developed because American cotton ships would have had to return in ballast had there been no people to fill their holds. There were few other profitable cargoes for them to carry on their homebound cruises. While some immigrants used the southern route because of its positive attributes that facilitated their journeys, many sailed over it simply because it was the course followed by the ships they found available. 198

This argument fails to view the Crescent City in its national context. If all, or the majority of, ships that carried cotton out of New Orleans had sailed directly to Europe and then returned to that port with human cargo, immigration into and through it would have been much heavier than it was. This is blatantly obvious, because cotton was, by far, the leading antebellum American export. New Orleans was not only the predominant American cotton port, but its exports of that commodity placed it equal to or

ahead of New York in the value of all goods shipped out for the entire decade beginning in 1834. It ranked second in this category during all other years before the Civil War, and no other port came close to challenging this position. Yet, this trade was unbalanced. In no year did the tonnage entered at New Orleans even equal that of bottoms cleared, whereas entrances significantly exceeded clearances every year at New York. Furthermore, from 1834 to 1860 New York surpassed New Orleans by eleven and one-half billion tons in clearances, and it dwarfed the Crescent City by having twenty-eight and a half billion tons of shipping call as compared to the slightly less than ten billion that arrived at the Mississippi's mouth.199

All ships transporting cotton did not make direct voyages from New Orleans to Europe, and by no means did all bottoms laden with that commodity return directly to the Crescent City. The argument that there was direct immigrant trade between the Louisiana port and the major departure points for American settlers ignores a fundamental

199 These calculations are derived from figures set forth in U. S., Secretary of Treasury, Reports of the Secretary of the Treasury on Commerce and Navigation. These annual reports began in 1821, and they continued throughout the period under consideration and beyond. Generally, the report itself appeared in Senate Documents, and a "Register of Tonnage" was published in House Executive Documents. The figures used to arrive at these totals are in the eighty volumes of this series from 1821 through 1860. Serial and document numbers for them may be located in Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789--1909. Congressional: to Close of Sixtieth Congress; Departmental: to End of Calendar Year 1909 (3rd ed., rev. & enlarged; Washington, 1911), T.37.1.
fact about American commerce before the Civil War. That fact was the "cotton triangle," and New York's control of it was one reason that city became the nation's leading port and its major reception center for immigrants. The argument also disregards repeated efforts on the part of the more perceptive promoters of New Orleans to establish direct links with the city's European customers in order to strengthen the local economy.

Many vessels did make unbroken voyages from New Orleans to Liverpool, Le Havre, Bremen, or Hamburg, but this does not mean that they retraced their courses when they sailed back to the United States. Quite the contrary, the figures cited above indicate that many of them returned to New York and other Atlantic ports. From there they completed the third leg of the triangle, plying the coastal waters to Savannah, Charleston, Mobile, or New Orleans. Often--too often for the economic security of the Crescent City--this process operated in reverse, and cotton ships coasted first to New York where merchants either used or transshipped their cargoes.


201 See note 134.

A key reason for this pattern of commerce was that New Orleans neither built nor owned a merchant fleet adequate to the needs of its commerce. Shipbuilding was negligible not only in the Crescent City but in the entire South compared to New York, Massachusetts, Maine, and other leading centers. Primarily for this reason the city ranked far below New York in the amount of tonnage registered, enrolled, and licensed. In fact, during the forty years from 1821 through 1860, it placed fourth twenty-four times, behind New York, Boston, and Philadelphia; fifth five times, and lower in the remainder of years. Hence, it had to depend, to a large extent, upon vessels owned and controlled by outside interests to transport the vast quantities of southern staples bought, sold, or consigned there. New York dominated these outside interests, as well as the cotton triangle, and charity toward the Louisiana port played little part in its business operations. 203

This is not to say that no freighters sailed directly from New Orleans to the major European cotton ports and then returned on uninterrupted voyages loaded with immigrants. Had this never been the case the city would not have been the nation's second reception center, and it would not have had the large foreign population that it did. However, immigrants did not travel over the southern route because they had no alternative and because all

203 See note 199.
returning cotton ships used it. While the cotton triangle dominated New Orleans' trade to the benefit of New York, it did not dictate the terms of every transaction or the course of every voyage. Immigrants chose to enter the United States through the Crescent City for specific and valid reasons related to their ultimate destinations or because they might have been denied access to the nation at another port.

More than half a million people traveled over the southern route during the forty years before the United States waged its costliest war. From beginning to end their odysseys tried them in virtually every way imaginable. Victimized by unscrupulous ticket agents, besieged by thieves, herded into fetid steerage quarters, threatened with death and disease, they, like the nearly five million others who ventured to America, braved the perils of the Atlantic crossing and inland journey to better their lives. Those who used New Orleans as a gateway to their new country did so because the city offered them cheap, easy access to the interior and because they knew that there was little chance of their being turned away there. Despite the various laws passed to insure their safety, until the advent of widespread steam navigation, immigrants gambled with their lives both on their ocean voyages and as they made their way to their ultimate destinations within the United States.
CHAPTER IV

TWO NOTABLE GROUPS:
THE STEPHANISTS AND THE MORMONS

Regardless of their port of debarkation most ante-bellum immigrants arrived in America poorly organized, and they proceeded from one day to the next often with little better than hazy notions of what their ultimate destinations would be or exactly how they would reach them. Other than the frequently haphazard associations formed by shipmasters to facilitate voyages and the oftentimes fraudulent thru passages, including inland transportation, sold at the major European ports, immigrants forged ahead almost totally on their own in what amounted to a vast uncharted sea. Of the two major ethnic groups that migrated to the United States in these years, most scholars agree that the Germans tended to have been better organized than the Irish, or at least that they usually had more money and generally traveled in family groups.1 However, any conclusions of this

sort must be qualified, because when Irish immigration took on gargantuan proportions panic-stricken famine refugees dominated its ranks. Traveling in haste, out of fear, and with little more cash than the fare required, these people fled from their ancestral homes with little pretense of order. While such extreme chaos was far from the universal rule, it was fairly unusual for a group of immigrants to proceed in a disciplined manner fully using the opportunities that existed to make their exodus a pleasant experience.

All of this considered, it goes without saying that few immigrants left any written records of their experiences. Most were not even literate, and with a minimal number of exceptions, all plunged totally into the task immediately before them. Well regimented groups making adequately financed expeditions to specific areas were unique. Nevertheless, at least two such groups used the southern route to come to their adopted nation. Both of them were religious, and both had an important impact on the United States.

The first of these groups hailed from Saxony or, more specifically, the city of Dresden. Known as "Stephanists," or "Old Lutherans," they were one of the most widely publicized bodies of immigrants in the nineteen-

teenth century, and they stood among the fathers of the great German migration to the American prairie. Their primary motive for immigrating was religious, and, doctrinally, they represented a conservative element in the Saxon State Church. They stood for religion free from any rationalizing influences and solidly based on faith, strict adherence to the scriptures, and prayer. Therefore, they opposed the trend toward incorporating rational philosophy into religion and the movement, which had begun in Prussia in 1817, to unify all German Protestant churches. Since rationalism had its widest appeal among the middle class, most of these people were either wealthy or members of the poorer orders of their society.

2 Not only did this group leave a voluminous amount of correspondence and a great number of records and theological writings, all of which are located in the Concordia Historical Institute at St. Louis, Missouri, but several contemporary books were written about the movement by actual participants and others closely related to it. See, for example, Ludwig P. O. Lütkenmüller, Die Lehren und Umtriebe der Stephanisten (Altenburg, 1838); Carl E. Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika (Dresden, 1838); L. Fischer, Das Falsche Maertyrertum oder die Wahrheit in der Sache der Stephanianer nebst etlichen authentischen Beilagen (Leipzig, 1839). Several fairly recent studies have concentrated on this group, and Walter O. Forster's Zion on the Mississippi, The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839--1841 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953) is an utterly brilliant history.

3 Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 2; Marcus Lee Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 1607--1860, A History of the Continuing Settlement of the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 156.

4 Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 2--26; Edward Frederick Stegen, "The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Perry County, Missouri" (M. A. thesis, Indiana University,
The Saxons' alienation from the mainstream of their church alone probably would not have induced them to migrate. The guiding force behind their immigration was the charismatic personality of the man who led them out of the Sodom and Gomorrah that Saxony had come to represent to them. This man was their spiritual leader and the primary organizer of their journey to New Orleans and ultimately to Perry County, Missouri. His name was Martin Stephan, and he was one of the most fascinating characters in the entire history of European immigration to America before the Civil War.

Born on August 13, 1777 in Moravia, Stephan underwent strict biblical training during his childhood. Although he was an orphan, he managed to obtain financial assistance to study for the Lutheran ministry. In 1809 he began serving his first congregation at Haber, Bohemia. The following year St. John's, or the "Bohemian Congregation," of Dresden called him, and for the next thirteen years he enjoyed a placid career there. However, beginning in 1823, he developed a highly controversial personal following that drew stringent official opposition. An excellent psychologist, counselor, and an emotional preacher, Stephan attracted people from all segments of society. He

thrive on praise, and as his movement grew Stephan and Stephanism became the guardians of good and doctrinal purity as opposed to the remainder of the world which reeked of evil and spiritual perversion.  

In the early 1830's both Stephan's church and his personal life visibly deviated from anything that could have been considered normal. Stephan had marital problems, and some church historians have suggested that his decision to leave Germany was at least partly an option to leave his wife. His congregation began holding secret meetings late into the night and early morning that featured debaucheries of various types, and his immoral conduct in these affairs led to Stephan's first arrest on February 1, 1836. Predictably, his incarceration made him a martyr to his followers. 

Stephan's arrest served as the ultimate catalyst for the Old Lutherans' immigration, but the idea had been in his mind for several years before this incident. As opposition to him mounted that notion fermented, and immigration increasingly seemed to be the only logical solution to a steadily worsening situation. Stephan probably

5  Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 27-66; Stegen, "The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Perry County, Missouri," 7-11; Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, 1-2.

6  Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, 2-6; Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 67-90; Buenger, "The Saxon Immigrants of 1839," 7-8.

7  Ibid.; Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 136.
first began contemplating expatriation for himself and his followers in the mid-1820's. In 1827 he had been advised by Lutheran Pastor Benjamin Kurtz of Hagerstown, Maryland, who was then in Dresden, to consider settling on the Missouri river where the followers of Gottfried Duden had established themselves. Kurtz strongly advocated the southern route as the most efficient. However, in the spring of 1838, when immigration was a crucial subject to the Stephanists, a St. Louis businessman by the name of Kimm contacted them, gave them considerable advice, and pledged that his company, Kimm and Tews, would aid them upon their arrival in the Missouri city. 8

In July 1838 the members of St. John's congregation publicly announced that they planned to leave Dresden, and by early September 707 people had pledged to make the journey. 9 Elaborate preparations characterized the whole venture, and a close-knit Auswanderungs-Gesellschaft administered it using a series of immigration codes to maintain order and to make the operation as efficient as possible. 10


10 Walter O. Forster has collected and translated
This society arranged for transportation, and it chartered entire vessels for the voyage to New Orleans, as well as steamers for the upstream trip. The Saxons established a common treasury to finance their immigration and to buy land when they arrived at their final destination. They formed various departments to attend to specific problems, such as "Ecclesiastical Affairs," "Church and School," and, most importantly, "Care of Stephan."  

With the intention of founding a semi-autonomous theocratic community with power divided between the clergy and wealthy members, their basic immigration code required all to confess to the "old, pure, Lutheran faith" as it had existed in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries. It further stated that they found it impossible to practice that faith any longer in their homeland. They believed that the United States offered "complete religious and civil liberty," but in the early phases of the venture they knew little of the country and only that they would settle in one of the western states--Missouri, Illinois, or Indiana. They later decided to make St. Louis their immediate destination. While they considered both Hamburg and Bremen as ports of embarkation, they never questioned that these codes in Appendix B of Zion on the Mississippi, though some of them have been translated and published in part in various other works. All are deposited in the Concordia Historical Institute.

11 Ibid., 113-25; Schneider, The German Church on the American Frontier, 103.
New Orleans was the most logical port of debarkation for them to use to reach their initial destination on the upper Mississippi. In order for their church-centered society to have the proper supplies to begin functioning, they purchased a large theological library, a pipe organ, church music, instruments for a band, three church bells, and the necessary sacred vessels to conduct services.

Thus, by autumn 1838 all was in order for the excursion to begin—except Martin Stephan who had been jailed again. But the Saxons' leader had no intention of staying in Germany. He forfeited a 500 Thaler bail and made a dramatic last-minute trip to Bremerhaven where he joined his group on November 14, 1838. From that port 177 persons had already sailed on the ship Copernicus on November 3, 130 on the bark Johann Georg on the same day, and 111 on the bark Republik on November 12. Those vessels reached New Orleans on December 31, 1838 and on January 5 and 12, 1839, respectively. The ship Olbers sailed on November 18, 1838 with Stephan and most of the leaders, and it arrived in the Crescent City on January 20, 1839. Some fifty-six immigrants set sail on the ship Amalia on November 18, but that vessel failed to reach the Mississippi's mouth, having

12 Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, Appendix A; Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, Appendix B; Buenger, "The Saxon Immigrants of 1839," 9.

13 Schneider, The German Church on the American Frontier, 103; Stegen, "The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Perry County, Missouri," 16-19.

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been lost at sea with no survivors. Eight others died en route on the other craft. Therefore, a total of 655 people embarked on voyages that ranged from fifty-nine to sixty-four days in duration, and 591 arrived in the United States. In keeping with their cautious preparations, they insured their baggage with the Mississippi Marine and Fire Insurance Company of New Orleans.14

On the voyage Martin Stephan controlled the treasury, and this arrangement tended to stifle any opposition

14 [Gotthold Günther], Die Schicksale und Abenteuer der aus Sachsen nach Amerika ausgewanderten Stephanianer (Dresden: Druck und Verlag von C. Heinrich, 1839), I-4; Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 192-221; Kretzmann, "The Saxon Immigration to Missouri," 159-61. Forster incorrectly states that the Olbers was on her maiden voyage. As has been pointed out in Chapter II, the official passenger lists reveal that the Olbers had made several trips with passengers prior to this time. The reason for Forster's error is that he based his research entirely on the Saxons' own records, and they had been informed that the Olbers was "under construction" in the summer and early autumn of 1838. Undoubtedly, the ship merely was being refitted at that time. The New Orleans press almost totally ignored the Old Lutherans. However, The New Orleans Bee, January 1, 1839, noted the arrival of the Copernicus the day before. The Daily Picayune, January 2, 1839, likewise noted the arrival of the Copernicus on December 31. The New Orleans Bee, January 7, 1839, noted that the towboat Grampus had towed the Johanne Georg [sic] along with three other craft to the city from Southwest Pass on January 5. The Daily Picayune reported the arrival of the Republik in its issue of January 15, 1839, and the Bee, January 14, 1839, noted that this three-master had been towed to the city from Northeast Pass by the towboat Hudson with four other vessels. The Bee, January 21, 1839, stated that the towboat Tiger had carried the Olbers to New Orleans with an American ship. It also stated that the Olbers had on board M. Stephan and son, H. Walther, Dr. Vehse and daughter, Merehash and family, M. Wege, Brohin, Zakels, Fischer and lady, Schneider, L. Grithier, and 150 in steerage. The Daily Picayune, January 22, 1839, also noted the arrival of the Olbers.
to him that might have cropped up. In fact, the pastor so-
olidified his power in all areas during the trip. Prior to
their departure the leaders of the Old Lutherans opted for
an episcopal hierarchy, and before the Olbers entered the
Mississippi the leading divines aboard her "elected"
Stephan "bishop."15 By the time he set foot on land
Stephan was the undisputed master of "his church" and, poss-
sibly, of his own state soon to be formed in the American
West.

The Saxons originally planned to stay in New
Orleans the shortest possible time, primarily to conserve
funds. In keeping with this typical plan of using the
Louisiana city as a way station, the Copernicus group
quickly boarded the steamer Rienzi and set out for St.
Louis, arriving there on January 19, or nineteen days after
they docked in New Orleans. The Johann Georg people soon
followed, reaching the Missouri's mouth aboard the Clyde on
January 24, or after being in the United States for three
weeks. Those who had sailed on the Republik transferred to
the steamer Hudson and proceeded to St. Louis, the trip
taking roughly the same length of time. However, Stephan's
group elected to remain in the Crescent City for ten days

15 Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amer-
ika, 6-10; Buenger, "The Saxon Immigrants of 1839," 11;
Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 173, 215; Hansen, The
Atlantic Migration, 135-36; Kretzmann, "The Saxon Immigra-
tion to Missouri," 161-62; A. A. Conway, "New Orleans as a
Port of Immigration, 1820--1860" (M. A. thesis, University
of London, 1949), 32.
of what amounted to a sight-seeing tour. They did not start up the Mississippi aboard the Selma until January 31, arriving in St. Louis on February 19, 1839—or thirty-two days after their initial debarkation.16

There is no record of exactly what Stephan and his fellow travelers did in New Orleans, though it requires little exercise of the imagination to conjure up an idea of their—or at least his—activities. Nevertheless, one Gustav Dresel, an important and articulate German pioneer in Texas, happened to be in the Louisiana city at this time, and he had the good, or bad, fortune to come into contact with Bishop Stephan. Dresel was well acquainted with the Saxon consul in New Orleans, and he volunteered to assist that official in aiding a certain "Dr. Sch" whom the "notorious leader of the Old Lutherans" had abused and cheated. On the voyage to New Orleans aboard the Olbers Sch had verbally criticized Stephan, and the bishop responded by condemning the doctor to the steerage "while he, the supreme shepherd, and his chosen associates of either sex exclusively occupied the cabin." Once in the Crescent City the physician elected to part company with the other Saxons, and he requested his part of the treasury which amounted to $700.00. Stephan refused to return the money, and therefore Dr. Sch asked the consul to help him secure

16 Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, 10-11; Forster, Zion on the Mississippi, 203-24.
his reimbursement. Dresel, the consul, and the doctor proceeded to the courthouse, had a warrant issued for repayment, and obtained the services of a constable. All four men then went to the levee to confront Bishop Stephan who was aboard the Selma, about to depart for St. Louis. There they

... were given to understand by the people on board that His Grace the Bishop could not be disturbed at present. I [Dresel] had informed the constable of the Bishop's character, so we felt no desire to be unduly ceremonious. We advanced to the cabin where, as I had been informed, the choicest wines were flowing and the spiritual shepherd relished the products of the Southern soil. The emigrants paid the bill. The Bishop promised them in return a place in heaven--where he will hardly be in their way... The Bishop wanted to send me about my business, and his face clearly betrayed his impatience with a young countryman who should be allowed to encounter him in this manner. I threatened to instruct the constable to seize the value of seven hundred dollars... However, this man was otherwise reasonable. He declared in favor of depositing the legal amount, namely double the sum in dispute... The poor, deceived Old Lutherans, many a one of whom had lived in abundance at home, had been fooled by religious presentations, and were impoverished and miserable now.\footnote{Gustav Dresel, Houston Journal, Adventures in North America and Texas, 1827--1841, trans. Max Freund (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954), 44-46.}

Dresel's conclusion is a bit strong. Stephan hardly impoverished the Saxons. Once in St. Louis they paid $9,234.25 in cash for 4,472.66 acres of land in Perry County, Missouri. Furthermore, they ultimately caught onto their leader's immorality and dishonesty--if they had not known it all along. They disgraced and ousted him from
office, and Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther took over the majority of his responsibilities. Walther's name, far more than Stephan's, occupies an important place in American church history. Known as the "Lutheran Pope of the West," he was one of the primary organizers of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, which, until the early 1970's remained one of the most unified and powerful religious organizations in the United States.18

The Stephanists' venture was eminently successful. Fine organization and adequate financing, along with determination and effective leadership accounted for this success. Whatever else one might say about Stephan, his penetrating personality and near demagoguery made him a superb leader exactly suited for the task of keeping his people unified and disciplined. The Old Lutherans took full advantage of every possible opportunity that the existing system and circumstances offered for a profitable and efficacious migration. But more importantly, they left the least possible of everything to chance. Their choice of New Orleans as a port of debarkation was an important part of their planning, and it was intimately and logically connected to their ultimate destination on the upper Mississippi and the city's cheap and efficient transportation.

18 Vehse, Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, 13-22; Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 137-38; Wittke, We Who Built America, 221; Schneider, The German Church on the American Frontier, 103; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 37.
tion links with it.

While the impact of the Stephanists on the United States was considerable, less than 600 of them participated in their initial immigration. Twenty-five times more Mormons made the trip via the Mississippi's mouth, and their venture was just as well organized, successful, and significant in its influence upon this country as that of the Old Lutherans. Furthermore, the Mormon migration was longer and more arduous, and it had solid economic as well as religious motivation. Directed by the church hierarchy in America in conjunction with officers in England, the highly complex operation of populating the holy cities of Nauvoo and Salt Lake with British converts also received much of its financial backing from American contributions.

After their expulsion from Independence, Missouri Joseph Smith's Latter-Day Saints purchased a tract of land on the Illinois side of the Mississippi river about twelve miles north of Keokuk, Iowa. Admirably suited for a town, this site was the only place for many miles around where the bluffs did not come close to the riverbank. The Mormons planted Nauvoo there in June 1839, and they earnestly believed it would become a great city. They intended to see that it had the requisite population to meet this goal by an evangelistic recruiting crusade and especially with the aid of foreign immigration. They had begun their missionary work in 1835, but until 1837 they confined it to the United States and its territories. From the
beginning missionaries stressed five things that converts could expect to gain. These were Zion (or spiritual sanctuary), all the land they reasonably could cultivate, guaranteed employment, association with fellow believers, and equal opportunity with the "best people" in their society.19 Clearly, the Mormons recognized that while spiritual peace comforted people, economic motives loomed high as incentives for men to move.

On July 1, 1837 Smith sent Apostles Herbert C. Kimball and Orson Hyde to England along with five elders. There they found willing converts, because social and economic difficulties had racked the lower classes and caused many to turn to Methodism. That religion addressed the problems of everyday life and was more emotional than the established church. But Methodism had only a limited appeal, because it was autocratic and somewhat conservative. It simply did not go far enough to meet the spiritual cravings of the depressed ranks of the British population. Conversely, Mormonism was truly a layman's religion and a church that fostered no overt class distinctions. Its leaders to the very highest were men of humble origins.20


20 Stephen Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion
During 1837, 1838, and 1839 the missionaries to Great Britain baptized 1,417 new Mormons. According to the rules and customs of the church, each of the new Saints in turn also became a missionary who solicited new members. In April 1840 another mission arrived in England from the United States, and it included Brigham Young. Although somewhat poorly equipped, this project specifically looked for converts interested in becoming immigrants and in populating Nauvoo. Joseph Smith did not want just anyone to make this journey. Indeed, he was practically selective and instructed his representatives to look for experienced farmers, and especially those with capital. He also desired people who could establish manufacturing firms and offer employment to the less fortunate. From the time the second mission reached Britain until 1842 there were 8,425 conversions, and on June 6, 1840 forty new Saints became the first group to sail for America.21

Throughout its entire history the Mormon mission in England achieved considerable success. During the century following 1837 it baptized 126,593 people, and 96,214 of these conversions took place between 1837 and 1870. From 1840 to 1854, 15,642 of these neophyte Saints migrated to the United States, and the 4,750 who arrived through 1846


21 Ibid.
settled in Nauvoo. Significantly, and according to Smith's designs, they represented a quarter of that city's population by the time the church abandoned it. Immigration ceased during 1847 due to the Mormon migration in America, and after that time those making the trip proceeded to Great Salt Lake, usually via Council Bluffs, Iowa. Some of the later antebellum groups made the grueling cross-country trek from the upper Mississippi Valley with handcarts, attracting considerable historical attention as a result.22

After their initial work in England the apostles left Parley W. Pratt in charge there. He and those who succeeded him acted as official immigration agents as well as spreaders of the faith. In April 1841 Elder Amos Fielding assumed control of operations, and Pratt worked with him. Hyrum Clark became Fielding's assistant in October 1842, and other later important agents were Reuben Hedlock, Orson Spencer, Orson Pratt, F. D. Richards, and S. W. Richards. In 1844 Reuben Hedlock formed a joint

22 James Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley Illustrated with Steel Engravings and Wood Cuts From Sketches Made by Frederick Piercy, Including Views of Nauvoo and the Ruins of the Temple, With a Historical Account of the City; Views of Carthage Jail; and Portraits and Memoirs of Joseph and Hyrum Smith; Their Mother, Lucy Smith; Joseph and David Smith, Sons of the Prophet Joseph; President Brigham Young . . . Together with a Geographical and Historical Description of Utah, and a Map of the Overland Routes to that Territory From the Missouri River. Also, an Authentic History of the Latter-Day Saints' Emigration From Europe From the Commencement up to the Close of 1855, With Statistics (Liverpool: Published by Franklin D. Richards, 1855), 6, 14-16; Cannon, "Migration of English Mormons to America," 453-54; Flanders, Nauvoo, 85-86.
stock company to foster industrialization at Nauvoo, and he also opened a general immigration office for both Mormons and Gentiles. He further established a mutual benefit association and urged British converts to buy stock in it. Using these and other means the administrators in Great Britain sent 5,000 more Saints to the United States between the time the Mormons moved to Great Salt Lake and 1851.23

From the first, meticulous organization and efficiency characterized the Mormon migration, and church leaders took great pride in its effectiveness. After all, in their eyes this was not an ordinary movement.

The object of the Latter-Day Saints' emigration being not a speculation, but the fulfillment of a divine command, the spiritual and temporal comfort and happiness of the emigrants, are the prominent aim on the part of those charged from time to time with the superintendence of that business. Consequently, from the first we find that arrangements have been made to assist the emigrants while in Liverpool, and experienced Elders have been sent with the vessels, to superintend the voyage, in connection with the masters.24

The Saints embarked from the Port of Liverpool, and those desiring to make the trip received instructions to proceed there with sufficient provisions to tide them over until enough people had arrived for a ship to be filled. Generally, each adult could bring 100 pounds of goods and baggage for the trip, while the allotment was fifty pounds


24 Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 17.
for children from four to eight. In keeping with the experience of all immigrants, the object was, of course, to minimize the stay in the port city. If an agent already had a vessel under contract when travelers arrived he boarded them on it to save the expense of lodging ashore. Prospective immigrants also had to have the price of passage which usually was three pounds, five shillings, though it ran as high as five pounds. Children under fourteen went for ten shillings. Once a load had been made up the church's immigration agent saw to it that the ship carried the legal amounts of provisions. However, as in most other cases, those making the voyage supplemented these rations. Vessels left between September and April so as to reach New Orleans prior to the sickly summer season and to enable the passengers to cross the Plains before winter.25

After he had the immigrants on board their ship the British agent organized a committee consisting of a president, two counselors, and, if possible, elders who previously had made the voyage or who at least had experience at sea. This committee divided the vessel into wards, or branches, with an elder or priest (and assistants) acting as president of each. While still in port watchmen selected from among the passengers guarded the

the ship on a rotating basis.\textsuperscript{26}

Once they were at sea the ward presidents awoke passengers between 5 and 6 A.M. and supervised the cleaning of their quarters. Following this all attended prayers, and they then breakfasted. There were general meetings two to three times a week. Both children and adults attended schools in practical secular subjects, such as American history and geography, and in anticipation of the long overland journey that awaited them, the women sewed tents and wagon covers. At least by 1853 the Mormons had devised an ingenious system of cooking that avoided problems encountered by other immigrants. They delegated several young men to supervise it. Working in the on-deck galley these men provided hot water in exchange for cold for tea in the mornings. They also provided common pots for boiling foods, and everyone boiled meat together, each identifying his cut by tying a wooden or tin tag to it bearing his name and berth number. They cooked rice and similar items in the same way by tying them in individual cloth bags before depositing them in the pots. As with other immigrants, those wishing to fry meats had to wait their turn for a short chance at the fire. Not surprisingly, the Saints enjoyed excellent health on their voyages to America, and, characteristically, they

\textsuperscript{26} Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 17-18; Cannon, "Migration of English Mormons to America," 449-50; Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion in 1853," 35.
usually managed to convert some members of their ships' crews.27

As previously stated, the first load of Mormons left Liverpool on June 6, 1840. This ship, as well as the one that followed it on August 7 with 200 more Saints, landed at New York. However, after that time virtually all Mormons entering the United States traveled by way of New Orleans. They did so because they intended to take advantage of the city's fine water connections with the upper Mississippi and its intimate ties with the West. There were periodic exceptions to their use of New Orleans as a port of debarkation, but until the disastrous yellow fever epidemic of 1853 caused them to shun the Crescent City, it remained their primary gateway to America.28

British agents saw to it that the vessels transporting Saints were not unduly crowded. Generally, contrary to the usual situation, load sizes conformed to the prevailing British and American laws. While it is impossible to be absolutely precise in a statistical sense due to the lack of data, enough solid examples exist to affirm this generalization. As discussed in Chapter III, the American law of March 2, 181929 provided that no vessel

27 Ibid.
28 Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 1; Cannon, "Migration of English Mormons to America," 451; Flanders, Nauvoo, 75; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 9.
29 "An Act regulating passenger ships and vessels,"
owned in whole or part by a U. S. citizen or by a subject or citizen of any foreign country could bring into or convey out of the United States or its territories any more passengers than two for every five tons of burden. This provision of the law remained in effect until 1848 when "An Act to provide for the Ventilation of Passenger Vessels, and for other Purposes"\textsuperscript{30} repealed it. The new act stipulated that such craft had to allow sixteen clear superficial feet of deck space for every passenger if the space between decks was less than six feet and more than five. If the space between decks proved to be less than five feet a ship could convey no more people than could be accommodated with twenty-two feet of superficial deck space. As has been pointed out, British laws regulating the carriage of passengers were less stringent than those of the United States. Table 5 employs the Mormons' statistics\textsuperscript{31} for the years from 1843 through 1848 for load sizes, and, based on the tonnages they cited, it discloses the numbers each craft could carry under the American law of 1819.\textsuperscript{32} Revealingly, only one of these loads, that of

\textbf{U. S., Statutes at Large, III (1819), 488.}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., IX (1848), 220.

\textsuperscript{31} These statistics are contained in the official Mormon history of the migration through 1854 cited previously, Linforth, ed., \textit{Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake}, 14.

\textsuperscript{32} Because of missing data it is impossible to check pre-1848 figures against the official passenger lists.
<table>
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<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
<th>Legal Capacity</th>
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<td>80</td>
<td>380</td>
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*Note the thirty-two ton difference in what more likely than not is the same vessel making what appear to be annual voyages. Different agents chartered both voyages, Amos Fielding and Hyrum Clark handling that of 1843 and Reuben Hedlock administering that of 1844. Obviously one of them was slightly in error.
the Fanny in 1844, seriously approached the legal limit. The only obvious problem with these figures is that they show some loads as being very small in relation to tonnage. It is unrealistic to believe that a 595-ton ship, such as the Isaac Allerton, made the crossing with nothing more on board than sixty recently converted Latter-Day Saints. One must assume that such vessels also carried cargo or other passengers, which they undoubtedly did considering that Reuben Hedlock's general immigration office catered to Gentiles as well as Mormons.

Beginning in the fall of 1848, in some instances, the Mormon figures can be checked against those of the official passenger lists of the New Orleans collectors. In almost every case the two sources correspond very closely. For example, according to the Saints' records, the ship Erin's Queen sailed from Liverpool on September 7, 1848 with 232 souls aboard. Assistant New Orleans Collector D. O. Hincks' report for the fourth quarter of 1848 shows that this craft arrived on October 28 with 244 British citizens. In this same vein, the ship Sailor Prince got under way on September 24, 1848 with, according to British Agent Orson Pratt, 311 passengers. She made

33 All Mormon statistics cited here are from Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 14-16. The official U. S. statistics are from reels 5-11 of U. S., Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving from Foreign Countries, 1820- (National Archives Record Group 36, H. Q. Records, Bureau of Customs, 1815--1936; Microcopy 272, National Archives Microfilm Publications).
fast to the levee on November 20 with, as per Hincks' report, 308. Similarly, Pratt reported that the ship Ellen Maria started 378 Saints on their way to Zion on February 2, 1851, and the New Orleans collector reported that she docked on April 7 with 338. These and other available examples give much credibility to the Mormon record, though they do not entirely resolve doubts cited above concerning some loads prior to 1848. The point is that Mormon planning, organization, and execution of the migration of new British Saints indeed did see to their temporal comfort. Those who made the trip did so in vessels that at least conformed to the existing laws concerning load sizes. As much as anything else this single fact made the Latter-Day Saints' enterprise exemplary and unique.

When Mormon voyages terminated at New Orleans an agent of the church received the passengers. It was his duty to report their condition back to the Liverpool agent who had overseen their departure. Just as at the port of embarkation, officials did everything in their power to keep the stay in the port of arrival short, and they warned immigrants about local thieves, runners, and consuming the Creole city's food. Hence, New Orleans played its familiar roles as the most efficient gateway to the interior and as a way station. As soon as possible the New Orleans agent procured steam transportation to St. Louis. In fact, by the mid-1840's the church owned and operated its own
steamers, the Maid of Iowa, for this purpose. Upon their arrival in St. Louis another Mormon functionary greeted the immigrants, and he routed them to their departure-point for the westward trek. As pointed out above, Council Bluffs served in this capacity, but so too did Keokuk, Iowa, and, in 1854, the "Town of Kanzas," or present-day Kansas City, Missouri.  

This whole operation was expensive, and, while an analysis of its rather intricate financial arrangements is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to realize that many Mormon migrants received assistance from a "Perpetual Emigration Fund" established by the church in Utah in 1849. Supported by contributions from both the United States and England, this fund made available cash advances to prospective immigrants against their anticipated earnings once they reached Zion. In essence, many British converts made the trip to America indentured, though the exact process changed over the years. What is important here is that, as with all other aspects of the migration, the immigrants were never totally on their own. The church made every effort to reduce chances of failure to the minimum.  

As much as, if not more than, the Stephanists the

34 Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 18, 30-34; Forsdick, "On the Oregon Trail to Zion in 1853," 35; Cannon, "Migration of English Mormons to America," 451.

35 Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 7-8; Cannon, "Migration of English Mormons to America," 446-48.
British Mormons who migrated to the United States via the Mississippi's mouth had a tremendous impact on their adopted nation. Once firmly established in Utah the church matured into a mammoth religious organization and a real financial and political power. Those who crossed the Atlantic and the continent to Zion played an essential role in this growth, just as they had done at Nauvoo. But, for the purposes of this study, the Latter-Day Saints who made the most important journey of their lives stand out more for the example they set. Highly organized and determined, they made the system that so often was disastrous for multitudes of Irish and Germans work. Taking full advantage of existing legislation, paying strict attention to sanitation and health, constantly looking ahead to the next peril or challenge of the journey, and always with an eye on their ultimate destination, they resourcefully and meticulously forged their undertaking into a success. Always concerned with efficiency and economy, they used New Orleans as their port of entry because of its quick water access to the interior and because the total cost of the trip was less by way of the Louisiana port.

The rather elaborate contemporary history and record that the Saints made and left of their antebellum migration, complete with steel engravings and wood cuts of significant places along the route, made all of this abundantly clear to others intent upon making the move to America. This work, Route From Liverpool to Great Salt
Lake . . . , edited by James Linforth in 1855, stands as the best possible example of an "immigrant guide." But prior to its publication the Mormons already had made their mark. Writing in 1842, one Job Rigby, a non-Mormon Englishman who immigrated to Illinois along the southern route, wrote home: "You wish to know the cheapest way to come after us. You must come by the Anderton Carrying Company to Liverpool, and along with the Latter-day Saints to New Orleans."36 In June 1854 the New Orleans Morning Advertiser reported on the testimony of Elder S. W. Richards before the Emigration Committee of the British House of Commons concerning the migration of British Saints. The paper stated, in part:

'He gave himself no airs but was so respectful in his demeanour, and ready in his answers, that, at the close of his examination he received the thanks of the committee in a rather marked manner. . . . There is one thing which, in the opinion of the Emigration Committee of the House of Commons they (the L. D. Saints) can do, viz.--teach Christian shipowners how to send poor people decently, cheaply, and healthfully across the Atlantic.'37

It would be fruitless to speculate as to how many Christian shipowners the Mormons taught, but, based on available statistics in the official passenger lists, it is safe to assume that they convinced few to disregard the

36 Quoted by Grant Foreman, "English Settlers in Illinois," Journal of Illinois State Historical Society, XXXIV (September, 1941), 320.

37 June 2, 1854. Quoted in Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake, 18. No copy of the Morning Advertiser remains for the date in question.
highest possible profits for the sake of their passengers' safety and comfort. Nevertheless, the Mormons and the Old Lutherans effectively demonstrated that, even in the days of sailing ships, immigration did not have to be a life-or-death gamble. With proper management, organization, and adequate, though by no means lavish, financing they not only made it tolerable, but they made it almost a pleasant experience.
CHAPTER V

THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS

None of the rank and file immigrants who sailed to the United States over the southern route before the Civil War left posterity graphic descriptions of New Orleans' port, and, as pointed out in Chapter IV, only a tiny minority of them wrote concerning their general impressions of it. Nevertheless, no study of the Crescent City as a reception center for new Americans can be complete without at least a summary discussion of what confronted the 550,000 optimistic individuals who first set foot on their adopted nation's soil there. It is inconceivable that the port's physical plant, its facilities (or lack of them), its administration, and its gargantuan commerce did not fascinate and, in many ways affect them. Despite the facts that relatively few of these people had any enduring personal involvement with the waterfront and that the majority of them merely intended to pass through it, an overview of its major features is an essential part of their story.

In general parlance the terms "port" and "harbor" usually are synonymous, though they each have distinct meanings.1 The commonly accepted definition of a harbor is

1 H. H. Rousseau, "The Importance of Port

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"An area of water affording a natural or artificial haven for ships... separated by natural or artificial indentations of shoreline from the main body of water,... ."²

On the other hand, a port is "A location on a harbor or other water area equipped and in use for embarking and disembarking passengers or commodities transported by vessels."³ Hence, harbors are untouched or man-made geographic areas of water that offer vessels sanctuary from the open sea, and in a strict sense they are no more than this. While safe and efficient port operations require the shelter they provide, technically harbors can exist independently of ports.

Located at 30° north latitude and 90°.5' west longitude on the left bank of the Mississippi some 110 miles above its mouth, New Orleans was and is a "cont-
nental port" very similar to Hamburg and Montreal, and the river serves as its harbor. That stream's great meander on which the metropolis fronts almost appears to be an isolated body of water, and in the late 1840's the erudite Alexander MacKay correctly called it a "species of bay." Like many older shipping centers the Crescent City enjoyed the tremendous advantage of being inland which included almost total protection from the vicissitudes of the Gulf, insignificant tides, and greater proximity to its vast hinterland. At Canal Street the Mississippi is nearly three-quarters of a mile wide, over 200 feet deep at its


6 Louisiana, Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, Facts of Interest About the Port of New Orleans, Second Port U. S. A. (New Orleans: Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, 1922), 7; Louisiana, Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, Guide to the Port of New Orleans as a Unit of America's Most Interesting City (New Orleans: Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, 1937), 1-4; Louisiana, Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, Port and Terminal Facilities (New Orleans: J. G. Hauser Printing Co., 1919), 5.
channel, and thirty feet deep near the levee. Throughout the antebellum period the levee served not only to safeguard the city from the river, but it also was an earthen wharf and the port’s commercial hub where the majority of its economic transactions took place. Therefore, just as the terms "port" and "harbor" are common equivalents, both


expressions have close relationships with the levee at New Orleans.

The most fundamental fact about any port is its exact location. The Port of New Orleans had specific limits during the four decades before the Civil War, but, for all practical purposes, it merely occupied the city's waterfront and grew with it. Generally identified with local landmarks, most of which no longer exist, its precise legal boundaries are, in some cases, difficult to correlate with well-known modern locations. Nevertheless, they were extremely important in that they outlined the area over which the city had jurisdiction and in which it collected various fees from all types of vessels.

During the colonial period and for the first five territorial years the port had no official perimeters. This state of affairs enabled captains of bottoms calling there to evade paying levee duties, and, in order to remedy this situation, on December 27, 1807 the city council stipulated "that the said port comprehends, as heretofore, that space which lies between the plantation formerly belonging to Madame Delor, on the side of the suburb St. Mary, and the boundary of the plantation of Mde. Delachaise, on the side of the suburb Marigny; . . . ."9 This meant that the

9 New Orleans, "AN ORDINANCE concerning the Limits of the Port of New Orleans," December 27, 1807, Police Code or Collection of the Ordinances of Police Made by the City Council of New Orleans to Which is Prefixed An Act for Incorporating Said City with the Acts Supplementary Thereto

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port was larger than the original city, which extended three-quarters of a mile along the river, and it included the suburbs immediately above (St. Mary) and below (Marigny) the town.\(^\text{10}\) In modern geographic terms it ran from slightly below the Greater New Orleans Bridge downstream to the vicinity of Franklin Avenue.

As commerce mounted in the years following Louisiana's admission to the Union, and especially after the Treaty of Ghent, it proved necessary to enlarge New Orleans' port,\(^\text{11}\) and on February 10, 1821 the legislature redefined its limits, extending them about a half-mile farther downstream and around three-quarters of a mile from the former upper terminus. Equally important, by this act

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the state's lawmakers also included a portion of the Mississippi's right bank in the official port, and its boundaries on that side of the river were the upper line of John McDonough's plantation, or about a half-mile upstream from the present Greater New Orleans Bridge, and the lower line of the Duverge' plantation, or what is now Algiers.12

Some thirteen years later the legislature again increased the port's size. While the area it occupied on the right bank remained the same, it expanded upstream on the opposite side to what was then the Jefferson Parish line, or the boundary between New Orleans and the city of Lafayette, near present-day Felicity Street. The new act also stipulated that the facility was to continue down the Mississippi a full three miles from the city's main square.13

12 "An Act to define the limits of the Port of New-Orleans," February 10, 1821, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1821), 56. See also New Orleans, "An Ordinance concerning the Port and Levee of New-Orleans," February 23, 1829, A General Digest of the Ordinances and Resolutions of the Corporation of New Orleans. Made by Order of the City Council, by their Secretary, D. Augustin, Esq., Counsellor at Law (New Orleans: Jerome Bayon, 1831), 327-39. One of the better maps that depicts some of the locations mentioned in this state act and city ordinance is Major A. LaCarriere Latour's "Map Shewing the landing of the British Army, its several Encampments and Fortifications on the Mississippi and the Works they erected on their Retreat . . . ," (1815), an original and several copies of which are housed in the Louisiana Collection, Louisiana State University Library, Baton Rouge.

13 "An Act to Extend the limits of the Port of Orleans," March 6, 1834, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Eleventh Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1834), 106. The essence of this act also is included in New Orleans, A Digest of the Ordinances,
These remained the port's limits through the period during which the Crescent City was divided into three virtually self-governing municipalities, or until 1852. However, in point of fact, if not law, the shipping center was larger than all of this suggests, and it continued through Lafayette, or to the vicinity of Pleasant Street. Indeed, there was a movement among Second Municipality Anglo mercantile interests in the early 1840's to incorporate Lafayette's waterfront into the port, but, because all three boroughs could not agree as to the expediency of this proposal and because of the potential conflicts it might have engendered between the parishes, nothing came of it.

With the reconsolidation of New Orleans and the

Resolutions, By-Laws and Regulations of the Corporation of New Orleans, and a Collection of the Laws of the Legislature Relative to the Said City (New Orleans: Printed by Gaston Brusle, 1836), 421. Early in February 1837 the U. S. Congress passed a law that simplified matters and stated that the port's limits were identical to those of the city. See "An Act to extend the limits of the Port of New Orleans," U. S., Statutes at Large, V (1837), 146.

14 See Chapters VI and VII for details on the city's division from 1836 to 1852.

15 U. S., Congress, House, Report of the Committee on Commerce, to which were referred the memorial of A. Phelps and a large number of others, inhabitants of the second municipality of the city of New Orleans and the adjoining city of Lafayette in the State of Louisiana, and also the remonstrance of the city council of New Orleans . . . , H. Rept. 100, 26th Cong., 2nd sess., January 16, 1841; U. S., Congress, House, Extension of the Port of New Orleans, H. Rept. 840, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., June 8, 1842.

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annexation of Lafayette in February 1852 the port officially extended as far upstream as Pleasant Street on the left bank, and early in 1854, because of increasing commercial operations in Jefferson Parish, Congress declared that it should have the same limits on the opposite side of the Mississippi. Hence, by the end of the period under consideration the Crescent City had almost seven miles of shipping in front of it, and immigrants and any other individuals who disembarked along the levee could look up or down it and see no end to the maritime activities that transpired there.

No matter what its dimensions or geographic advantages, the facilities that a port furnishes largely determine the ease of accessibility to it, its system of mooring, and the methods employed to load and discharge vessels and handle cargoes. Just as is the case with the terms "port" and "harbor," "port facilities" and "harbor facilities"

16 Both acts were passed on February 23, 1852. "An Act to consolidate the city of New Orleans, and provide for the government and administration of its affairs"; "An Act Supplementary to an Act to consolidate the city of New Orleans for the incorporation of the City of Lafayette with the City of New Orleans," Acts Passed by the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1852), 42-55, 55-57.

17 U. S., Congress, Senate, Report of Mr. Benjamin of Committee on Commerce Concerning a Petition of New Orleans Merchants to Extend the Port, S. Rept. 12, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., December 21, 1853; "An Act to Extend the Limits of the Port of New Orleans," U. S., Statutes at Large, X (1854), 268.
each connote separate, though related, aspects of a waterfront. Harbor facilities are "Those aids, advantages or conveniences provided for ships as distinguished from those provided by the port for cargo or passengers."\(^{18}\) Conversely, port facilities comprise "Waterfront terminals, including structures, reservations, equipment appliances and necessary collateral aids or conveniences for embarking and disembarking passengers and commodities transported or to be transported by water."\(^{19}\)

A harbor with no serious obstacles at its entrance and a well-protected port that features the finest available terminal and transfer facilities always will attract shipping, but it is virtually an axiom of international commerce that, no matter how good or bad its accommodations happen to be, the essence of a port's success resides in whether or not it has a large and diversified cargo to offer.\(^{20}\) Classically illustrating the validity of this principle, antebellum New Orleans abounded with export

\(^{18}\) "Report of Committee to Study and Recommend a Uniform System of Nomenclature for Port Authorities," 110-111; The American Association of Port Authorities Port Glossary, 1925, 12; A Port Directory of Technical Terms, 115.

\(^{19}\) "Report of Committee to Study and Recommend a Uniform System of Nomenclature for Port Authorities," 111; The American Association of Port Authorities Port Glossary, 1925, 17.

commodities, though their diversity diminished as the years wore on. But its harbor and especially its port facilities were far from adequate to meet its needs. This factor in conjunction with the development of routes other than the Mississippi from the interior valley to coastal areas allowed northern and eastern competitors to draw increasing amounts of the heartland's trade away from the Louisiana metropolis. Thus, detailed analyses of the Crescent City's poorly equipped port and the activities of its rivals to the North are essential to a thorough understanding of its economy and commerce before the Civil War, but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

What is of central importance here is that all immigrants who traveled over the southern route came into contact with the major features of New Orleans' port and harbor, and some of these things were of crucial consequence to the final stages of their journeys. The first aspect of the harbor that confronted their ships was one of its most inferior facilities: the lack of a satisfactory channel from the Gulf into the Mississippi. The harbor in front of the Crescent City was of more than sufficient size and depth to accommodate any seagoing vessel, but throughout the antebellum period, and for a decade and a half thereafter, the bars at the river's mouth constituted a major unsolved problem faced by all craft except those of very shallow draft.

The Mississippi was and remains a huge, young, non-
tidal river that always carried as much sediment as commerce. It deposits masses of alluvium when its current slows at its birdfoot-like delta, and this process drastically decreases its depth, creating a natural navigational obstacle at its mouth. Early French colonists recognized the serious nature of this obstruction, made several futile attempts to remove it, and offered a reward to anyone who could do so.\textsuperscript{21} As New Orleans matured into a major commercial emporium after the War of 1812 the impasse at the river's threshold became an onerous handicap that few commentators on the city's potential destiny failed to recognize.\textsuperscript{22} It generally limited the size of ships serving


the port to under 1,000 tons, and it prevented new, first
class bottoms from entering the harbor. It contributed to
the Crescent City's failure to establish direct mercantile
connections with Europe, discouraged the development of a
sizable import trade, and prevented the metropolis from
obtaining a naval base. Finally, it gave rise to a special
variety of flat-bottomed packet ship specifically designed
to float over the bars and serve New Orleans, and, signif­
ically, New York yards turned out the majority of these
vessels.

Albert J. Salvan, ed. John Francis McDermott (Norman:
University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), 28; Amos Stoddard,
Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana
(Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1812), 160; William Darby,
The Emigrant's Guide to the Western and Southwestern
States and Territories: Comprising a Geographical and
Statistical Description of the States of Louisiana, Missis­
ippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio;--the Territories of
Alabama, Missouri, Illinois, and Michigan; and the Western
Parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. With a
Complete List of Road and River Routes, West of the Aleghe­
ny Mountains, and the Connecting Roads from New York, Phil­
adelphia, and Washington City to New Orleans, St. Louis,
and Pittsburgh. The Whole Comprising a More Comprehensive
Account of the Soil, Productions, Climate, and Present
State of Improvement of the Region Described Than any Work
Hitherto Published (New York: Published by Kirk & Mercein,
1818), 18-19.

23 James Pearson Cairns, "The Response of New
Orleans to the Diversion of Trade From the Mississippi
Valley, 1845--1860" (M. A. thesis, Columbia University,
1950), 71-73; Louis E. Newman, "Commercial Life in New
Orleans on the Eve of the War for Southern Independence"
(M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942), 54;
Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South
(Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), 148 n;
Lowrey, "Navigational Problems at the Mouth of the Mis­
sissippi River, 1698--1880," 113-15, 154; Robert Greenhalgh
Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 1815--1860 (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), 24, 109, 308; John Arthur
Over the course of the prewar years large numbers of vessels frequently went aground on the bar, and they sometimes remained disabled for weeks on end. This had a devastating impact on New Orleans' economy, to say nothing of its reputation, and it requires little exercise of the imagination to perceive the agony that such delays imposed upon fully loaded immigrant ships. Local business barons by no means ignored this problem, and, especially during and after particularly severe blockades, they cried out for remedies to it. Despite a series of government studies and surveys of the Mississippi and its mouths and several rather intense efforts to open a deep passageway, most notably from 1837 to 1838 and 1850 to 1853, the barrier remained intact. It was not until James B. Eads successfully constructed jetties to maintain a thirty-foot channel 200 feet wide in South Pass late in the 1870's that the Port of New Orleans truly became accessible to large

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The overwhelming majority of immigrant ships and...


all other vessels that called at the Crescent City relied on pilots stationed near the Mississippi's mouth to see them safely over the bars and into the stream. Few migrants had direct contact with these burly characters, but pilotage was an essential New Orleans harbor facility. Emphasizing its importance, in 1851 Commander B. F. Sands of the U. S. Coast Survey cautioned captains not to approach the shore any nearer than a depth of ten fathoms without taking a pilot aboard,26 and most followed this rule.

From colonial times on Mississippi river pilots occupied their station at the Balize near Northwest Pass.27 At least until 1837, when the state legislature took steps to reform it, that hamlet was a "mere mud bank" and a place of "barbarous strife and drunken debauch."28 To quote Benjamin Latrobe, the father of American architecture, who visited it in 1819,


28 "The Pilot System of New Orleans," 208; DeBow, The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States, II, 8.
A more wretched village, for it is a sort of a village, cannot be conceived. It consists of a tavern, a wretched habitation for the revenue officer U. S., and three or four other wooden buildings belonging to the pilots, besides the blockhouse. The whole population consists of 90 men and 11 women, and an internal feud breaks up this little society into parties who are at war with each other.29

Most branch pilots were former merchant seamen, and some were deserters. Their predominant nationality was British, though a good number were American and French.30 They literally lived in the mire of the lower delta, and one observer called them "a sort of aquatic men--with noses like fishes', fins like alligators', feet like ducks'--who never drown."31 Raised wooden walkways connected their miserable shanties and other structures that they frequently constructed on stilts.32 Licentiousness, constant drinking,

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29 Latrobe, Impressions Respecting New Orleans, 125. See also Basil Hall's similar description in Travels in North America, II, 289.


31 Susan Kemp, ed., "Up the Mississippi," Louisiana History, XII (Fall, 1971), 339. This is a reprint, with editorial comments, of an October 1857 article published in Emerson's Magazine and Putnam's Monthly, probably written by that journal's editor who visited New Orleans and the Balize.

32 J. E. Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, Comprising Visits to the Most Interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies. With Notes on Negro Slavery and Canadian Emigration (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1853), II, 6; Edward Sullivan, Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America (London: Richard Bentley, 1852), 234; Hall, Travels in North America, II, 289; Ingraham, The South-West, I, 75.

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and brawling broke up the monotony of their desolate environment, and, at least until the late 1830's, their domestic routines gained them the reputation of being semi-savages.  

Generally, pilots cruised outside the Mississippi's mouth, hailed and boarded incoming vessels, and guided them over the bar. According to the rules and customs of navigation, they actually took command of the craft that they served, and captains and crews followed their orders.  

However, especially before 1837, many masters had to have been somewhat apprehensive concerning their abilities. When the Spanish ship Aurora approached the great river in 1831 with the Royal [British] Geographic Society's Captain J. E. Alexander aboard, that very perceptive traveler recalled:

A pilot schooner approached, and from her a lanky and light haired New Englander jumped on board of us, who immediately called for gin; he then told us of many wrecks in the late hurricane, not a few of which we found out afterwards to be inventions of his own... He then asked for more gin, and thrusting his hand into his breeches pocket, took out a paper, and holding it out to me said 'read that, I don't care a curse for anybody.' It was a certificate

33 "The Pilot System of New Orleans," 209; DeBow, The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States, II, 8; Ingraham, The South-West, I, 75.

from Antonio DeSilva, a master pilot at the Belize, [sic] setting forth that 'William Stevens was competent to take vessels over the bar'; so, in order to enable this worthy to prove his competency, I told the captain to stop his grog, but he had finished a bottle before we came to anchor outside the bar.35

The Territory of Orleans and subsequently the State of Louisiana regulated these helmsmen together with the fees that they charged, and Governor William C. C. Claiborne promulgated the first law for this purpose on March 15, 1804. It granted the governor authority to license an unspecified number of pilots who were responsible for marking the channel across the bar, and it required each of them to have one boat for cruising the Gulf and at least one other at the Balize "for the dispatch of vessels." The rate for their service was $2.00 per foot of water drawn by a bottom, and captains who maneuvered into the river on their own had to pay the first pilot offering to assist them half of the regular remuneration. For the further benefit of these "Mississippi doorkeepers" the statute insured them chief mate's wages if a ship carried them to sea and $2.00 for every day they were detained on board any craft while negotiating the shoal. Finally it declared that pilots found guilty of misconduct could be fined up to $200.00.36

35 Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, II, 3-4.

A year later the territorial legislature modified Claiborne's edict in that it constrained all of the "two or more" branch pilots appointed by the governor to post a $1,000.00 bond. The new law also allowed each of them to hire deputies who only had to offer $250.00 as surety.\(^3^7\) This provision resulted in breakneck competition and the consequent lack of safety, and it ushered in the profligacy and violence that characterized the Balize. All too frequently deputies were men of base character and bad habits with insufficient training and experience to see vessels over the shallows with any degree of security. Under this statute the quality of one of New Orleans' most important harbor facilities vastly deteriorated.\(^3^8\)

In an effort to rehabilitate the system, on March 1, 1826 the general assembly required deputies to serve an apprenticeship of at least six months before taking the helm of any ship alone. The state solons disallowed them from working for any more than one pilot and authorized the master and wardens of the port to make additional rules governing their conduct. In order to impose at least a modicum of order on the Balize and to reduce the number

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\(^{38}\) "The Pilot System of New Orleans," 208-9; DeBow, The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States, II, 7-9; Lowrey, "Navigational Problems at the Mouth of the Mississippi River, 1698-1880," 140-41.
of disagreements there this measure forbade anyone from keeping a tavern, grogshop, or billiard room at any location within three miles of a pilot station unless recommended in writing by a majority of the pilots.39

The act of 1826 was little more than a palliative, and eleven years later the legislature passed a sweeping reform. It did away with all deputies and empowered the governor to appoint fifty branch pilots, all of whom had to pass an examination and post a $1,000.00 bond. Upon boarding a craft it required them to present their credentials to the captain, and anyone who guided a vessel over the bar without a license was subject to a $30.00 fine and seven days in jail. If a pilot refused to render service when hailed he could lose his commission, forfeit $500.00, and serve three to six months in prison. For the first time in twenty-two years this law raised the pilotage fee, and the new rate was $3.50 per foot of water drawn.40 Predictably, the universal application of this rule drew complaints from the New Orleans business community, especially from the owners of shallow craft

39 "An Act making further provision for regulating the discipline of Pilots and the port of New Orleans and the river Mississippi, and for other purposes," Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Seventh Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1826), 50-56.

40 "An Act Supplementary to the several Acts relative to the harbor masters, wardens and pilots of the port of Orleans, and for other purposes," March 15, 1837, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Thirteenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1837), 101-3.
craft, and in 1848 the general assembly adjusted it to $2.50 per foot for hulls displacing ten feet or less and exempted those of up to 150 tons from Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Florida from any payment. This amendment to the 1837 statute also increased the number of pilots at the Mississippi's mouth to a maximum of seventy-five, and, ultimately, in 1857, the governor received authority to appoint however many he desired.

The significance of the act of 1837 and of those that followed it was that they upgraded the safety and reliability of one of the harbor's key facilities. They did this by ridding the Balize of its more unsavory types, setting higher standards for pilots, and creating an esprit de corps among them. Those men had an added reason for having positive morale: they made good money. During a five-year period beginning on September 1, 1840 their average annual income was $1,634.90, which was a consid-

41 DeBow, The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States, II, 8-9; Lowrey, "Navigational Problems at the Mouth of the Mississippi River, 1698--1880," 144.

42 "An Act to amend an act entitled 'An Act Supplementary to several acts relative to the Harbor Master, Wardens and Pilots of the Port of Orleans, and for other purposes,' approved March thirteenth, eighteen hundred and thirty-seven," March 11, 1848, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Second Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1848), 37-38.

erable sum for the day. Due to these factors, by the late 1830's captains at least had the assurance that they could entrust their helms to capable hands when they confronted the treacherous bars at the entrance to the Mississippi.

Whether they conveyed new Americans or cargo, once ships were in the river they still had over 100 miles to go before they tied up at the levee, and over the course of the four decades before 1860 most of them relied on steam towboats to power them up the stream. Prior to the advent of this third major harbor facility square-riggers entering the Mississippi had to depend on the wind to battle its current, and it took as many as six to eight weeks to reach New Orleans, or nearly as long as the time required for the Atlantic crossing. Steam tugs drastically accelerated this trip, usually shortening it to a matter of days. They generally charged vessels $1.00

44 "The Pilot System of New Orleans," 208-9; DeBow, The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States, II, 9-10; Lowrey, "Navigational Problems at the Mouth of the Mississippi River, 1698--1880," 144. Two travel accounts that note the improved conditions at the Balize are Lyell, A Second Visit to the United States of North America, II, 113-17; Tixier, Travels on the Osage Prairies, 29-32.

Primarily designed to generate energy and bear heavy burdens, towboats had only a slight resemblance to elegant river steamers. In the mid-1840's an astute observer facetiously described one as a "tablespoon shaped piece of timber, decorated with a brace of pipes, halfway up whose sides the ingenious helmsman had erected an observatory for a lookout seaward." Just as this remark suggests, most were far from attractive, and their dominant features were extremely powerful high pressure engines located at the center of their main decks. Some simply had a cabin near the engine, and little else adorned them. Others were double-decked, and their hands' quarters as well as their helms were on the upper and smaller of the two.

After a ship had been towed to New Orleans the port's facilities were of utmost importance to it in discharging passengers and freight and, subsequently, in reloading for its outward voyage. While immigrants' main concerns involved gathering up their goods, disembarking, and continuing on their way, they all witnessed the congested and hectic scene along the waterfront. In this, the nation's second busiest shipping center, they beheld masses

Directory, for 1856 . . . (New Orleans: Daily Delta Print., 1855), 331.

48 Hall, The Manhattaner in New Orleans, 3.

of goods and agricultural produce, but they also saw a port that was too meagerly equipped to protect and expeditiously handle this valuable cargo. Because of its business leaders' complacent confidence in its natural geographic advantages, the Crescent City neglected to provide any but the most rudimentary of facilities for its port in the antebellum period.

Dating back to Bienville's days, New Orleans used the Mississippi's levee as a wharf, and the river was deep enough almost to its edge for vessels to load and unload without lighterage. All the city needed to supply in the way of facilities were wooden beams and boards used as bridge-like staging between ships' decks and the shore. French colonial officials planted a double row of trees, probably willows, along the quay which served as mooring posts, but the eighteenth century fostered no other improvements of any significance.50

Little changed after the Louisiana Purchase. Until long after the Civil War most business transactions took place in the open air on the levee. With armadas of vessels in front of it, this relatively narrow dike literally

seethed with mercantile transactions. Myriads of factors, speculators, draymen, hawkers, and others in quest of the dollar bustled about the mountains of bulging hogsheads, bales, and bags that dominated its every quarter and that were its _raison d'etre_. This crowded quay was the Port of New Orleans, and so long as it returned the tremendous profits that it did with only a few interruptions in the years before Fort Sumter, the people who realized those gains did virtually nothing to equip it with efficacious facilities. The city constructed a series of wooden wharves on huge piles driven into the riverbed, but they merely were an extension of the levee. Other than this New Orleans placidly continued to trust in what seemed to be an inevitable flow of commerce down the Mississippi, and it did very little to insure its safety or convenient

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transfer. It even failed to accommodate its businessmen with either an auction center or merchants' exchange until 1833 when Thomas Banks opened Banks' Arcade on Magazine Street and the Merchants' Exchange began operations on Rue Royale.  

Just as on the Thames at the Port of London, vessels moored with their bows facing the current in tiers up to six deep along the Crescent City's levee. Wooden stagings continued to connect them with the shore, and these portable bridgeworks extended between the hulls of the craft in each row. Thus, longshoremen loaded and unloaded each succeeding bottom by hand over those nearer to the quay, and it was not uncommon for an immigrant to walk across several main decks before finally setting foot on land.

As if this awkward system did not constitute enough of an impediment to the efficient and profitable flow of

53 Kendall, History of New Orleans, I, 144; Oliver Evans, New Orleans (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 50. In Forty Years of American Life (2 Vols.; London: John Maxwell and Company, 1864), I, 195-96, Thomas L. Nichols recalled that late in 1845 barrooms still served as commercial exchanges. However, he may have been referring to Banks' Arcade which housed a large facility of this sort along with an auction room.

commerce, New Orleans' wharves and levee were not roofed or covered in any way. Exposed to the city's brutal climate, and especially to its frequent, heavy rains, commodities awaiting shipment suffered undue spoilage. The only facilities offered for their protection were tarps which hardly proved adequate. In this same vein there was a chronic lack of warehouses within easy access of the levee, and this made handling and drayage expenses unnecessarily high. The Crescent City, far behind its northern competitors in the development of rail service, also had no belt line railway or other modern conveniences, and, obviously, car floatage never played any role in loading operations there.55

Directly resulting from these cancerous deficiencies that slowly ate away at New Orleans' mercantile relations with the upper valley, the consistently rough treatment that goods received there further militated against its continued prosperity. Early in 1847 J. D. B. DeBow lamented that "This spoiling, damage, and injury in the transshipment of property at New Orleans is a crying evil, spread all over the South and West . . . ," and he estimated that every barrel of flour received there decreased in value by twenty-five to fifty cents and that corn, wheat, hemp, and bagging depreciated even more. Despite pleas from DeBow and others for reform those who controlled the Crescent City's economy maintained their bovine and quixotic attitudes concerning the inevitability of the port's opulence, and they wasted little effort to insure the safe movement of commodities on the riverfront.

From colonial times on the Port of New Orleans always has been under public jurisdiction, and in 1919


56 Ibid.
57 "Contests for the Trade of the Mississippi Valley," 102.
59 John G. Clark, New Orleans, 1718--1812, An
Walter Parker, the General Manager of the New Orleans Association of Commerce, somewhat unconvincingly contended that this state of affairs prevented "private enterprise" from providing it with adequate facilities.\textsuperscript{60} In reality, however, during the four decades before the Civil War responsibility for its shortcomings rested with the city, because the city administered it. While the federal government has ultimate authority over all American navigation, the act that admitted Louisiana to the union implied that the new state exercised sovereignty over its rivers and harbors by stipulating that it had to keep them open and free for the use of all inhabitants of the nation.\textsuperscript{61} This merely put the stamp of legality on the status quo. When it incorporated New Orleans on February 17, 1805 the territorial legislature assumed its own jurisdiction over the port and partially passed this control to the municipality by authorizing it to lay taxes for the maintenance of the levee. The city council responded to this grant of authority on

\textsuperscript{60} Parker, "Facilities of the Port of New Orleans," 191.

\textsuperscript{61} "An Act for the admission of the State of Louisiana into the Union, and to extend the laws of the United States to the said state," April 8, 1812, U. S., Statutes at Large, II (1812), 701; Kendall, History of New Orleans, III, 599.
March 31, 1806 and March 24, 1807 when it imposed duties on imports of taffia and rum, and it ordained that a warden, appointed by the mayor, would collect specific amounts of cash from the various varieties of vessels that tied up at the quay, just as had been the case under Spanish rule. The warden also had the responsibility of keeping records of all bottoms that called, and he had charge of the planking used to make the stagings that connected them to each other and to the shore.\textsuperscript{62} Finally, on March 9, 1827 the state officially gave the city total dominion over its port,\textsuperscript{63} and it retained this proprietorship until thirty years after the Civil War.

The exact administrative apparatus of the port forms a highly complex topic revolving around a maze of rules governing it and officials who enforced them. Over the years there were slight changes in the system, and the whole thing became even more complicated during the period from 1836 to 1852 when the Crescent City was divided into three municipalities and when its shipping center had three loosely connected directorates. An in-depth examination of

\textsuperscript{62} "An Act to Incorporate the City of New-Orleans" and "AN ORDINANCE continuing in force the Levee duty laid on Vessels, Flats, Boats, Barges, Rafts and Cajeaux as also on Rum and Taffia imported; and establishing the mode of collecting," Police Code or Collection of the Ordinances of Police Made by the City Council of New Orleans, 1808, 4-32, 156-66.

\textsuperscript{63} "An Act to amend the several acts to incorporate the city of New-Orleans and for other purposes," Acts Passed at the First Session of the Eighth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1827), 52-55.
this subject is beyond the bounds of the present project. Suffice it to say that from the time it began functioning the city council, in conjunction with the state legislature, continued to impose duties on most vessels that anchored along the levee, and, primarily to keep the quay as orderly as possible, it established rather precise regulations for the storage of goods there and the length of time allowed to load and unload them. It also designated specific districts of the waterfront for seagoing ships, steamboats, and lesser river craft, and it limited the number of days they could remain in order to speed the flow of commerce. Bonded harbormasters and wharfingers, appointed by the mayor, together with their assistants, regulated the levee and wharves. Generally there were separate wharfingers in charge of bottoms that plied the ocean and those that operated only on the river. These officials endeavored to see that the port functioned smoothly, that the transfer of cargoes went swiftly, and that the quay remained unobstructed.64

In keeping with their attitudes about facilities, local officials regarded the administration of the port as an annoyance. They wanted the revenue generated by the sundry taxes levied there, but they increasingly shunned the responsibilities of direct management. In 1828 the city council began leasing the right to collect levee duties on pirogues and other small river craft to the highest bidder on a yearly basis. In 1845 the Third Municipality sold the entire income of its waterfront at auction, and the purchaser assumed all of the wharfinger's


65 "An Ordinance for imposing a levee duty on pirogues and other crafts and to farm out the collection of said Duty," December 1, 1828, A General Digest of the Ordinances and Resolutions of the Corporation of New Orleans, 1831, 103-4.
authority. However, these actions were merely preludes to the one taken soon after the city's reunification on September 21, 1852. On that date the council divided the port into six sections and ruled that on October 1, 1855 control of and profits derived in each of them would be farmed out to whomever offered the best price. This indeed brought private enterprise to the waterfront, but it requires little imagination to realize that lessees strove first to recover their investment and then to secure the largest possible profits for themselves. They spent the least the law allowed on maintenance and improvements, and there was little chance for the development of adequate facilities within the confines of this arrangement. Yet, the port endured in this way until 1896 when supervision of it reverted to the state under the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, or the Dock Board.

The Crescent City compensated for its insufficient port facilities and attracted shippers because it offered

66 "Ordinance relative to the Leasing of Certain portions of the Revenue of Municipality No. Three," September 29, 1845, A Digest of the Ordinances and Resolutions of the Council of Municipality No. Three, 1846, 142-44.


them an abundance of cargo. Though these figures seem almost trivial by modern standards, from 1821 to 1860 New Orleans exported $1,515,000,000 worth of goods compared to New York's $2,065,000,000 and $6,531,000,000 for the nation as a whole. During this same period the Louisiana metropolis imported commodities valued at $408,000,000, while New York received $3,742,000,000 and the entire country took in $6,273,000,000.\textsuperscript{69} As was pointed out in Chapter III, entrances and clearances of tonnage reflected this same trend, and there was an obvious imbalance in New Orleans' trade. The port was, first and foremost, an export center for American agricultural produce, and southern staples came to monopolize its wharves as interior farmers found safer and more reliable routes than the Mississippi to alternative markets in the North and East.

Even if the Crescent City's trade was one-sided it still was immense, and by 1846 the metropolis was the fourth busiest commercial city in the world.\textsuperscript{70} Comparative analyses of several representative years perhaps best

\textsuperscript{69} Calculated from U. S., Secretary of Treasury, Reports of the Secretary of the Treasury on Commerce and Navigation, 1821--1860. Serial and document numbers for these numerous reports may be located in Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789--1909. Congressional: to Close of Sixtieth Congress; Departmental: to End of Calendar Year 1909 (3rd ed.; rev. & enlarged; Washington, 1911), T.37.1.

illustrate the magnitude and pattern of its trade. In the last boom year before the Panic of 1837 Louisiana exported $37,179,828 worth of goods, or over $8,000,000 more than second-ranking New York which shipped out $28,920,638. However, by receiving cargoes totaling only $15,117,649 in value, the Pelican State trailed both New York with $118,253,416, and Massachusetts, with $24,619,665, in imports. The southern giant also was third in both tonnage entered and cleared in 1836 after New York and Massachusetts. In the former category it registered 146,127 tons as opposed to the 962,826 and 295,023 of the other two states. In the latter column it dispatched 195,948 tons compared to the 833,115 and 274,705 that departed from the two rival shipping centers.71

By the time the nation began to recover from the depression of the late 1830's the pattern remained about the same. In 1841 Louisiana still exported a greater value of commodities than any other state. Some $34,387,483 worth passed out of the Mississippi, while New York narrowed the gap separating it from the Bayou State by sending forth $33,139,833. The Empire State continued in its dominance of imports with receipts of $75,713,426, and Louisiana now ranked fourth with its $10,256,350. Both Massachusetts and Pennsylvania surpassed it by taking in

$20,318,003 and $10,346,668, respectively. Again, Louisiana stood third in tonnage entered with 26,637, in the wake of New York's 1,111,680 and Massachusetts' 354,402 tons, but it occupied the second position with respect to clearances. A total of 317,565 tons of shipping departed from its harbors, while 965,548 left New York.  

Eleven years later the tide definitely had begun to turn. Although all statistics increased considerably, Louisiana no longer was in serious contention with its competitors in the Northeast. It was second to New York in the value of exports, with $49,058,885, as opposed to $87,484,456. By importing goods assessed at $132,329,306 and $33,504,789, New York and Massachusetts dwarfed it in this category as well; cargoes unloaded onto the levee brought only $12,057,724. With 424,281 tons of entrances, the richest state in the South meekly trailed the same two northeastern members of the union which recorded 2,900,062 and 645,944 tons, and the story was the same concerning clearances. A total of 544,482 tons of shipping set sail from the Mississippi. But 2,477,720 tons departed from New York, and 657,513 began voyages on Massachusetts' coast.

In the last, and busiest, antebellum year the Bayou

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State's exports amounted to $108,417,798, and only New York's embarkation of goods valued at $145,555,449 exceeded them. Louisiana's 894,353 tons of clearances likewise topped all real and imagined rivals, save the state traversed by the Hudson river which had 4,574,285. However, again the South's commercial hub fell behind both New York and Massachusetts in the value of its imports with $22,922,773 compared to $248,489,877 and $41,187,539. Predictably, those two states also overshadowed Louisiana in the amount of commerce entered with 4,836,448 and 849,449 tons to its 635,500.  

Thus, New Orleans increasingly ceased to vie with New York in its total volume of commerce and shipping, and Boston and Philadelphia eclipsed it in imports. But it led the nation in exports for the decade that began in 1834, and it was the second largest outlet for American commodities in all other antebellum years. The steady growth of the Crescent City's trade and its rivalry with the great ports of the Atlantic seaboard were all the more significant because, as discussed in Chapter III, its harsh summers restricted its active season to a duration of little more than six months per year. The entire deep South suffered from this disadvantage, and in 1859 the New York Times boastfully editorialized:

Nothing that we know of Southern habits, or Southern enterprise, leads us to the conclusion that a Savannah or Charleston merchant working two thirds of the year in loading and unloading handy craft of 1,000 tons burden and under can accomplish as much as the unflinching New Yorker who never quits his post from January to December in loading and unloading craft of a larger size.\(^75\)

Despite this handicap, New Orleans' location at the base of the Mississippi drainage system enabled it to capture first the produce of the interior valley and then the bulk of the cotton and other staples grown on the lower reaches of the river and its tributaries. In so doing it surpassed all other southern, and all but one northern, shipping centers in aggregate mercantile activity.

None of the 550,000 immigrants who ended their voyages in New Orleans made statistical surveys of its economic development or critically studied its port and harbor facilities. Most neither had the leisure nor the ability to do so. But the city drew a number of highly articulate visitors in the prewar years who captured the essence of its waterfront in frequently elegant prose. Through their eyes, to a much greater extent than by perusing tables of tonnages and charts revealing the enormity of the city's commerce, one may at least partially visualize the teeming scenes along the levee that greeted new Americans.

As early as 1801 John Pintard, a Huguenot and New York merchant, noted the "tremendous number" of riverboats

\(^75\) New York Times, April 23, 1859.
lying next to the quay, the fierce competition between local businessmen, and the lack of a central exchange like the Tontine Coffee House in New York. Seven years later Christian Schultz saw ships from all corners of the world in the port, and he said that between 100 and 200 flatboats always occupied its upper area. Soon after Andrew Jackson's victory at Chalmette the German-born Mississippi trader, J. G. Flügel wrote that "There are at present about 400 ships here, which, of course causes a great deal of activity," and he pointed out that the levee was the seat of the city's mercantile activity. At roughly the same time former U. S. Army Surgeon Jabez W. Heustis warned prudent people to avoid the port in the summer 'on account of the offensive odor of miasmatic exhalations of the corrupting filth left upon the banks after the falling of the water, and accumulated by constant addition from the city.'

Writing early in the century's third decade especially for the benefit of potential immigrants, Isaac

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77 Schultz, Travels on an Inland Voyage, II, 200-4.


79 Heustis, Physical Observations and Medical Tracts and Researches of the Topography and Diseases of Louisiana, 26.
Holmes, a British merchant, asserted that 1,200 to 1,300 flatboats landed at New Orleans between November and June of each year and that square-riggers from all civilized nations carried out the profusion of cotton, tobacco, flour, molasses, pork, lard, and beef that those arks' crews piled on the levee. In 1826 another Englishman, Charles Sealsford, declared that after twenty-three years of American rule the city was "inhabited by 40,000 people, who trade with half the world. The view is splendid beyond description, when you pass down the stream, which is here a mile broad, rolls its immense volume of waters in a bed above 200 feet deep, and as if conscious of its strength appears to look quietly on the bustle of the habitations of man. . . ." The 1,500 flats and keels that annually drifted down the Mississippi to the port awed him, and he saw 100 schooners, brigs, and sloops resting at anchor there. He also noted that the various types of vessels occupied specific locations along the quay, flats mooring in front of its upper section followed by keelboats, steamers, coasting craft, and finally brigs and ships. Genuinely impressed by all of this, he concluded that "What in Philadelphia and even in New York is dispersed in several points, is here offered at once to the eye—a truly enchanting

Captain Basil Hall of the British Royal Navy was a contemporary of both Holmes and Sealsford. Looking out over the levee on a spring Sunday morning in the late 1820's, he beheld "numberless boats that had arrived during the night from plantations, both above and below the city," and, along the waterfront, "A dense grove of masts formed the background, from which the flags of all nations drooped listlessly in the calm." Geographer Timothy Flint drew a similar analogy when he pointed out that the port bristled with a "forest of masts" in the busy season. He claimed that as many of 1,500 flatboats, with crews totaling up to 6,000 men, as well as fifty or more steamers, often crowded the quay and that in the hectic winter months cotton bales overflowed from it into the streets, blocking some of them.

The port continued to impress travelers in the same way throughout the final thirty antebellum years. Alexis de Tocqueville first saw it on the morning of January 1, 1832 when "the sun rising in a brilliant tropical sky revealed to us New Orleans across the masts of a thousand

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81 C. Sealsford, The Americans as They Are; Described in a Tour Through the Valley of the Mississippi (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1828), 144-47, 166.

82 Hall, Travels in North America, II, 286.

83 Flint, A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, I, 357-58.
ships."84 Late in the following year Samuel Eastman Crocker, a New England real estate agent, observed that the levee functioned as a wharf and an open-air exchange, and he surmised that

... there are more vessels in this port now than I ever saw at any two ports before in my life and all arranged in regular order, the ships and barks being at the lower end of the city, ... Next come the brigs, arranged and stored with the same degree of compactness as the ships. Next in order are the schooners and sloops, which are so numerous that after the one tier has been arranged as the larger vessels, they lie in any direction that will suit themselves and the harbor-master, whose duty it is to regulate the port.

And last, though not least, are steamboats, which occupy a vast extent of the river. ... Notwithstanding the great length of the city and the vast space that can be occupied by shipping, still at this time vessels are obliged to lie from one weeks' end to the other, before they can get in near enough to the shore to unload their cargo or take in one. Many times it is necessary to receive or discharge a cargo over one or sometimes two other vessels.85

Almost simultaneously, Robert Baird penned a nearly identical account,86 and James R. Creecy recalled:

What with astonishment did I for the first time view the magnificent levee, from one point on the horn of the bounteous crescent to the other, covered with active human beings of all nations and colors, and ... goods, wares and merchandise from all ends of the earth! ... and the wharves lined for miles

86 Baird, View of the Valley of the Mississippi, 278-81.
with ships, flat-boats, arks, & c., four deep.\textsuperscript{87} British traveler C. D. Arfwedson counted fifty steamboats in the harbor on a single day in the winter of 1832-33. He maintained that from January through March 1,000 flatboats generally nudged the shore, and he lyrically depicted the panorama on the levee by stating:

Here the fruiterer exhibits a variety of fruit, and raises pyramids of oranges, bananas, lemons, pineapples, & c. See with what voracity these South Americans, stretched on the ground devour the half-ripe fruit. There, an Italian is performing on a miserable organ, while two monkeys are dancing on the top. Yonder, again, an itinerant Yankee spreads out a thousand different articles on the ground, explaining that he sells them at a loss, merely for the sake of ensuring custom. Here coffee is sold by Negro women; there oysters are swallowed; there Indians are draining their whisky-bottle, after having given a small quantity to their wives and children. There, again, is a countryman from Kentucky, who just sold his crop, and has his pocket full of money, which he is anxious either to lose or to double at a gaming-house as soon as evening arrives. Finally, listen to the noise of the Mulatto, Negro, and Irish women, offering their goods for sale, and the rolling of carts and wagons, sinking under the weight of produce from all parts of the world. Who will deny that these afford innumerable subjects for the painter and the poet.\textsuperscript{88}

A decade later the French musician Henri Herz concluded that half of the nation's business transactions took place in this "world of commission men, speculators, and dealers who argue feverishly in the midst of piled up merchandise,"\textsuperscript{89} and when she first gazed at the port in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[87] Creecy, \textit{Scenes in the South}, 11-12.
\item[88] Arfwedson, \textit{The United States and Canada in 1832, 1833, and 1834}, 11, 57-58, 65.
\end{footnotes}
daylight on December 5, 1844 Mrs. Matilda Charlotte Houstoun exclaimed:

It was the busiest scene! Such forests of masts! Such flaunting colors with flags of every hue and every country! Really, as the Yankees say, 'Orleans may stump the universe for a city.' Five tier of shipping in the harbour! This is the busiest time for taking cargo.90

The Reverend George Lewis, who was there for a few months before Mrs. Houstoun, fully agreed with her and ventured that "The shipping of Liverpool, half hid within its docks, is not so imposing a sight as this long line of vessels, forming the picturesque breastwork of the city." He further remarked that more than 2,000 rigged ships had called there in 1842-43 and that they "extended, in lines of four, five, six, and seven deep along the wharves, presenting a forest of masts . . . ."91

A. Oakey Hall and Alexander MacKay left the two most vivid descriptions of antebellum New Orleans, and both men based their accounts on visits there in 1846 and 1847. Hall, who as an ally of William Marcy Tweed later served as Mayor of New York, called the levee

. . . A modest commercial plain; pile-built, and earth filled; sloping gradually from the river; variegated as far as the eye could reach-- . . . with cotton bales, and sugar hogsheads, and molasses casks, and corn sacks, in quantities sufficient to gladden the vision of England's Prime Minister, in Ireland's

90 Houstoun, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico, 73.
blackest days of distress and famine; and bits of machinery, and ploughs, and oat bags, and hay bales, and staves, and wooden pails, and packages of hemp, and leviathan hogsheads of tobacco, which, to look at, made the stoutest mule shriek in agony, all mixed up, and in worse confusion than the streets about Essex Market, in Gotham, . . . 92

Ascending the Mississippi in front of the city he saw "sectarian assemblies of ships, fresh from prow contact with the sparkling waves and foaming billows of all known seas." Above them he beheld "water buildings, of three stories high, with cupolas and domes, . . ." and at the upper end of the port "angry crowds of flat boats."93 Gazing toward the city from the quay the New Yorker took in " . . . rapid streams of human heads and legs, . . . sailors; stevedores; steamboat hands; clerks; planters; wealthy merchants too; running to and fro with divers projects in their head, and all the solutions to end in quod erat demonstrandum of money."94

MacKay, a very perceptive British traveler who desired to depict American life and politics to the people of his country, noted the same tumultuous activity and arrangement of shipping in the port. However, he also indicated that "Midstream is crowded as well as the quays, some vessels dropping down with the current, and others being tugged against it-- . . . ferry-boats crossing and

92 Hall, The Manhattaner in New Orleans, 5.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 27.
recrossing at short intervals—small boats shooting in different directions; and barges, some full, some empty, floating lazily on the current." MacKay wrote:

"Look which way you will along this noble promenade, and the eye is met by articles of commerce, either imported or ready for export, indicating by their variety the many markets with which New Orleans is connected, and the extent of the business which it transacts. The busy throng of people well accords with the vast accumulation of merchandise. There they are, from morning till night, all active, bustling, and anxious; merchants, clerks, ship captains, supercargoes, custom-house officers, sailors, boatmen, porters, and draymen. The last-mentioned are busy with their carts, removing from point to point the different articles on the quays, . . . as if they had all been loitering and were now making up for lost time. Their constant succession in every direction, and the rattling, noise which they occasion, the perpetual movement, from and to every quarter, of human beings, and the incessant hum of human voices, the ringing of steamboat bells and hissing of steam pipes, the song of the sailor, and the clank of the busy crane, all combine to render the whole scene, taking river and shore together, one of intense interest and indescribable animation."

Thus, the half million antebellum immigrants who disembarked at New Orleans stepped into one of the most vibrant and bustling shipping centers in the world. Gorged with all types of vessels and overflowing with bulky cargoes, its deity was the dollar, and the thousands of individuals whose lives revolved around it feverishly dedicated

96 Ibid., 80.
themselves to that seemingly all-powerful lord.Ironically, however, the men who reaped vast fortunes on the waterfront and who ultimately made the policies that governed it rested content in the belief that nature had made the Crescent City a mercantile colossus and that nature would preserve it as such. They did almost nothing to protect or facilitate the convenient transfer of the valuable commodities that brought wealth to their metropolis, and they were exceedingly remiss in administering the port. Even though immigration was in many ways a by-product of trade, the new Americans who entered the nation by way of the Mississippi river were of extraneous importance to the commerce and maritime operations that sustained Louisiana's major urban corporation. Nevertheless, these essentially provincial people's encounter with the levee's tumultuous environment and with the incessant din that issued from the massive movement of goods was a significant and universally shared aspect of their journey over the southern route.
BACK DOOR TO THE LAND OF PLENTY:
NEW ORLEANS AS AN IMMIGRANT PORT, 1820--1860

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER VI

THE IMPACT OF NEW ORLEANS ON THE IMMIGRANTS

The most important aspect of New Orleans as the second American immigrant port prior to the Civil War was its role as a way station for those who followed the all-water southern route across the Atlantic and up the Mississippi river to the fertile regions of what was then the West. Yet, thousands of newcomers stayed in the Crescent City, and they significantly contributed to the nearly 1,000 percent increase in its white population between 1820 and 1860. The city had a tremendous impact upon these people. It awed, fascinated, and sometimes disgusted them just as it did virtually everyone who visited it. More importantly, it subjected foreign-born elements to its unique variety of nativism that had roots deep in its history and that survived the national anti-alien movement by over half a decade. These elements also bore the brunt of the ravages of yellow fever that swept away hundreds nearly every summer. Not only were they its chief victims, but some medical men and established residents, in their vain quest for the disease's cause, blamed immigrants for

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1 See table 7.
importing and fostering it as well. While New Orleans' initial impression on newly arrived immigrants symbolized the wealth and prosperity that the United States potentially offered, its total impact on them was very negative.

Many erudite travelers produced vivid sketches of the Crescent City during the antebellum period, and they depicted it as being dominated by the dollar and given to abandon. Wide open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, it thrived on commerce, and, during two-thirds of the year, it bustled with the incessant clamor of business transactions and the massive transfer of goods. Yellow fever and the oppressive climate brought mercantile operations to a standstill in the summer, and those who could afford it left town until the threat of the plague abated.

New Orleans' shipping was large in volume, and all types of

vessels from mighty square-riggers to elegant river steamers, ungainly flatboars, and multitudes of pirogues and bateaux clogged the waterfront. Heavy congestion frequently prevented ships from tying up directly to the levee. Instead, they anchored three and four deep along the quay, and longshoremen loaded and unloaded those farthest from shore over the decks of the others. Hardly a typical American city, New Orleans had a European air, decidedly French in character, though it appeared more like a Ville de Province than Paris. With incredible ethnic diversity and a veritable babel of almost all of the world's languages, it also was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the United States. Black slaves contributed to the racial diversity, and, though servitude declined in the city during the final three antebellum decades, most writers consistently condemned it. Moreover, New Orleans was, in essence, two municipalities that displayed great antipathy toward each other, and Canal Street divided the progressive American sector from the archaic French section where the six squares of the original town had been platted in 1718.  

3 See Chapter V for a discussion of the port's physical plant. This brief description of the city is based on accounts written by very articulate travelers. It is synthesized from the following works: Captain J. E. Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, Comprising Visits to the Most Interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies. With Notes on Negro Slavery and Canadian Emigration (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1833), II, 1149; C. D. Arfwedson, The United States and Canada in 1832, 1833, and 1834 (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1834), II, 52-98; Thomas Ashe, Travels in America, Performed in  

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Only a tiny minority of the home-seekers who used the Louisiana port as a gateway to the nation left written...
accounts of their initial reactions to the place. However, it mattered little whether one was a sophisticated excursionist or a tattered migrant; the city struck almost all in the same way. Quite naturally, what first caught immigrants' attention was the tremendous volume of shipping and the intense commercial activity on the levee that did not even slow its pace on the Sabbath. They marveled at the way vessels moored three and four deep for nearly four miles up and down the quay.4 Dr. Carl Eduard Vehse, who arrived early in 1839 with the Old Lutheran dignitaries


4 Rebecca Burland, A True Picture of Emigration, ed. Milo Milton Quaife, Lakeside Classics (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1936), 33-34; James Linforth, ed., Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley Illustrated With Steel Engravings and Wood Cuts From Sketches Made by Frederick Piercy, Including Views of Nauvoo and the Ruins of the Temple, With a Historical Account of the City; Views of Carthage Jail; and Portraits and Memoirs of Joseph and Hyrum Smith; Their Mother, Lucy Smith; Joseph and David Smith, Sons of the Prophet Joseph; President Brigham Young . . . Together with a Geographical and Historical Description of Utah, and a Map of the Overland Routes to That Territory from the Missouri River. Also, an Authentic History of the Latter-Day Saints' Emigration From Europe From the Commencement up to the Close of 1855, With Statistics (Liverpool: Published by Franklin D. Richards, 1855), 36-37.
aboard the Olbers, referred to the spectacle along the waterfront and remarked that his party had come "to the great trade center of New Orleans, into a forest of a half-thousand large seagoing ships and steamboats. . . ." An- other Saxon Lutheran, the Reverend Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, wrote his brother from New Orleans on January 15, 1839 saying:

'The immense array of vessels that are in port here, the large number of steamers that noisily puff to and fro, the colossal warehouses and numberless streets of the city, still more, the bustling crowds of black and white men that one sees, the abundance of fruits that are offered for sale,--all this is a spectacle for the eye. . . .'

Just about all immigrants who recorded their thoughts noted the Crescent City's torridity, no matter what time of the year they arrived. Frances Trollope, whose name found its way into the American vernacular as a term of considerable derision, landed in midwinter of 1827 and reported that both the heat and the mosquitoes made the


idea of permanent residence unthinkable.\(^8\) A Bavarian who spent Christmas there in 1853 complained of the unbearable heat,\(^9\) and Frederick Behlendorff, a well-educated "forty-eighter" who visited the city in the summer of 1859, compared the climate to hell. He further commented:

> There is no letting up of the heat, that prevailed during the day. The thermometer frequently ranges as high as 90 late into the night. The air is stifling and unfit to breathe; the miasma of the swamps, held down by the rays of the sun in daytime rises at night and poisons you.\(^{10}\)

Some judged that the city was immoral and crime-infested, and its failure to keep the Sabbath offended them.\(^{11}\) A German immigrant who engaged in the Mississippi river trade very early in this period wrote that he had firsthand knowledge of two robberies and one street riot that occurred between February 26 and March 18, 1817, and he added: "Such cases are heard of every day. . . . "\(^{12}\)

Frederick Behlendorff attributed the city's famed intemperance to the Mississippi's undrinkable water and the absence

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8 Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 8.


11 Burland, *A True Picture of Emigration*, 33; *An Immigrant of a Hundred Years Ago*, 32.

of import duties on wines and liquors prior to 1861.\textsuperscript{13} In this same vein, immigrants who wrote about their experiences usually condemned the institution of slavery as immoral, and, in so doing, they indicted the entire South. But they rarely campaigned against servitude or championed emancipation.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, migrants who traveled over the southern route and made notes about the Louisiana city usually commented on its cosmopolitan nature and the great variety of languages that they heard in the streets and on the levee. While the atmosphere was decidedly French and Spanish,\textsuperscript{15} the presence of large numbers of Indians, Negroes, Mulattoes, and Octoroos created a population "of such variegated shades as could probably nowhere else be seen."\textsuperscript{16}

Since so few common immigrants recorded their impressions of New Orleans, it is difficult to reconstruct

\textsuperscript{13} Behlendorff, "Recollections of a Fortyeightler," 322-23.

\textsuperscript{14} Daniel O'Connell actually chided the Irish in America for treating Negroes worse than they (the Irish) were treated, and he had no sympathy for his countrymen who acted in this manner. See The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), September 12, 1843; Burland, A True Picture of Emigration, 34; Lawrence S. Thompson, "German Travellers in the South from the Colonial Period through 1865," South Atlantic Bulletin, XXXVII (May, 1972), 64; Earl Francis Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862" (Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1961), 197-98; Arndt, ed., "A Bavarian's Journey to New Orleans and Nacogdoches in 1853--1854," 494.

\textsuperscript{15} Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans, 7; Burland, A True Picture of Emigration, 33; An Immigrant of a Hundred Years Ago, 32.

\textsuperscript{16} An Immigrant of a Hundred Years Ago, 32.
their image of it. Even though most of them had a great deal in common, they still were individual personalities. The fragmentary evidence that exists must qualify generalizations as to any collective concept of the city. Yet, the bits and pieces of available data indicate that these people probably regarded it in much the same way as did the highly articulate travelers who penned graphic portraits. Much more important were the two major features of the city's impact upon foreigners--nativism and yellow fever.

Writing in 1856, Samuel C. Busey represented a view that was then very popular in the United States when he contended that immigration was a threat to the "homogeneity of the nation" and that the government should take firm steps to stem its tide by lengthening the time required for naturalization. He said that nativism was an inherent part of the American way of life and that it was an essential doctrine of the constitution.17 He claimed that German organizations in the major cities intended to undermine the fundamental law of the land and "abrogate all laws relative to the observance of the Sabbath."18 The number of paupers and criminals who annually swarmed ashore and who placed tremendous burdens upon charitable and penal institutions incensed him. He asserted that one of every thirty-two

18 Ibid., 10.
foreigners was destitute and that one of every 154 was a criminal.19

Busey expressed further alarm over the political power that these people had amassed simply by virtue of their numbers. Citing the Census of 1850, he pointed out that potential foreign-born voters outnumbered natives in St. Louis, Chicago, and Milwaukee and that they nearly equaled lifelong Americans in New Orleans, Detroit, New York, and Cincinnati.20 Thus, something was wrong with the system that allowed this sort of thing to occur, and Congress was duty-bound to enact stringent measures to reform it.

In the same year that Busey made these observations Henry Mills Fuller, a Pennsylvania Whig, reported to the U. S. House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs concerning the burdens that foreign criminals and paupers imposed on the nation. After reviewing similar previous investigations21 and the 1850 Census' statistics, he too

19 Ibid., 108-17.

20 Ibid., 143. For census statistics see J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, Embracing its Territory, Population--White, Free Colored, and Slave--Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census, to Which are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning with 1790, in Comparative Tables, With Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information (Washington, 1854), 399.

21 U. S., Congress, Senate, Report from the Secretary of the Treasury Relative to the Deportation of Paupers
concluded that the presence of large numbers of impoverished immigrants, especially in metropolitan areas, constituted a grave threat to the republic. While opinions varied over congressional authority to regulate immigration, Fuller declared that there was no doubt about the internal police power of the states. The only question was to what extent the states could push it. Whatever the case, the United States no longer could afford to accept hordes of foreigners. 22

By the time Busey and Fuller issued their alarming appeals the American, or Know Nothing, party had peaked in strength and was beginning its decline, 23 but the anti-alien


movement antedated that party by many years in the United States. First organized on local levels, it dated back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Philadelphia hosted its first national convention in 1845. At that time the state of New York counted 48,000 nativists, and it sent six of them to Washington as Congressmen. Pennsylvania had 42,000 who elected two Congressmen; Massachusetts contained some 14,000, and there were 6,000 in the other states. The Louisiana Native American Association emerged in New Orleans in 1835, \(^{24}\) and it made its overt position very clear four years later by stating:

Such it may be said is the present condition of our beloved country—so long as foreigners entered in moderate numbers into the states and territories of the United States, and became imperceptibly merged and incorporated into the great body of American people, and were gradually imbued, and indoctrinated into the principles of virtue and patriotism, which formerly animated the whole American community, so long their advent was an advantage and a benefit to our country, but when we see hordes and hecatombs of beings in human form, but destitute of any intellectual aspiration— the outcast and offal of society—the pauper, the vagrant, and the convict, transported in myriads to our shores, reeking with the accumulated crimes of the whole civilized and savage world, and inducted by our laws, to

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A Reappraisal (New Orleans: The Louisiana Historical Association, 1961).

equal rights, immunities, and privileges with the noble native inhabitants of the United States, we can no longer contemplate it with supine confidence. We feel constrained to warn our countrymen, that unless some steps be speedily taken to protect our institutions from these accumulated inroads upon our national character, from the indiscriminate immigration and naturalization of foreigners, in vain have our predecessors whether native or naturalized, toiled and suffered, and fought and bled, to achieve our liberties, and establish our hallowed institutions.25

Early in 1839 the Louisiana association petitioned Congress to modify the existing naturalization laws, this being a major demand of all nativists during this period.26 The Pelican State's petitioners said that the statutes no longer worked to the "advantage of our common country and her immigrant citizens," and they denounced the system under which masses of foreigners poured into American ports and quickly achieved equal status to lifelong residents.27 The ensuing summer Dr. J. S. McFarlane, a celebrated New Orleans physician, began publishing the Native American as the voice of the association, though only two issues of the paper have survived to the present day.28


28 The Daily Picayune, September 19, 1839. The

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foundations established, two political events occurred in the early 1840's that further convinced New Orleans' nativists that their cause was not only just and right but that the situation called for quick and drastic action. These events were the fraudulent naturalization of hundreds of aliens by Lafayette City Court Judge Benjamin C. Elliott in the fall of 1843 and the so-called "Plaquemines Frauds," perpetrated by John Slidell and the local Democratic party in the election of 1844.

Both of these incidents are discussed in detail in Chapter VII. Suffice it to say here that in return for fees from the Democratic party, Judge Elliott illegally naturalized almost 1,800 immigrants. He had issued fraudulent papers to lesser numbers in 1841 and 1842. But in 1843 he literally made people citizens on the streets, and the clerk of his court routinely Americanized foreigners even when the judge was away. Because of the utterly blatant nature of these abuses, the Louisiana House of Representatives voted to impeach Elliott late in February

Library of Congress has the issue of McFarlane's paper of August 30, 1839, and Tulane University's Howard-Tilton Library has that of February 29, 1840.

29 S. D. 173, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., 1845, 144-202. This document contains not only all depositions taken at New Orleans concerning the Elliott case, but the Louisiana House and Senate reports and proceedings on the impeachment. All references to the Louisiana documents will be from the Berrien report. See also Overdyke, The Know-Nothing Party in the South, 8-9; Cole, "Nativism in the Lower Mississippi Valley," 263-64; Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862," 193-97.
1844, and the Senate removed him from office on April 6. Nevertheless, his actions caused considerable turmoil in the state election of July 1, 1844, and on July 3 a mass meeting of concerned New Orleanians expressed outrage and resolved that any future attempts on the part of illegal voters to interfere with elections would be "met and repulsed."

The presidential election of the following November gave rise to misdeeds equally as infamous. John Slidell, a cunning Democratic politician who later gained fame as President James K. Polk's envoy to Mexico on the eve of the war with that nation, boarded some 600 "naturalized citizens," who had been denied the franchise in New Orleans, onto the steamers Planter and Agnes and transported them downstream to Pointe 'a la Hache. There they not only cast Democratic ballots, but they prevented Whigs from participating in the election. Technically legal under the provisions of the 1812 state constitution, this tactic resulted in violence, intimidation, and outright fraud, and it aroused strong public indignation.

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30 Ibid.; Niles' Register, LXVI (March 23, 1844), 64 & LXVI (June 29, 1844), 277-78.

31 The Daily Picayune, July 2, 1844; The New-Orleans Bee, July 3, 1844.

32 The New-Orleans Bee, July 4, 1844; Niles' Register, LXVI (July 20, 1844), 325-24.

As a result of the Plaquemines Frauds and Henry Clay's defeat, Louisiana's two Whig Senators, Henry Johnson and Alexander Barrow, asked the Committee on the Judiciary to investigate and to deliberate the possibility of extending the time required for naturalization to prevent similar incidents in the future.34 On January 23, 1845, the Louisiana House approved a resolution beseeching the state's entire congressional delegation to push for this.35 Answering these and numerous other calls for action the Senate Judiciary Committee commissioned investigators to gather evidence of abuses at New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans. Based on their findings, the committee's chairman, John MacPherson Berrien, a Georgia Whig who later became president of the American party in his state, drafted a bill that would have required immigrants to register with collectors of customs upon their arrival and, after three years, to file declarations of their intent to become citizens in U. S. Circuit and District Courts. Two years later they could petition the courts for citizenship.36 This measure was rather moderate in comparison to the dominant demand to set foreigners' proba-

34 Johnson made his request on December 16, 1844, and Barrow his on January 2, 1845. See the Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., 19, 67.

35 Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, Seventh Legislature, First Session, January 23, 1845, 34; Niles' Register, LXVII (February 15, 1845), 384.

tionary period at twenty-one years, and it never became law.

War with Mexico and the dispute over slavery in the territories acquired as a result of American victory temporarily diverted the nation's attention from nativism. However, a great revival accompanied the huge influx of foreigners in the early 1850's. This resurgence was particularly keen in the South, since the virtually open nature of the Port of New Orleans fostered the arrival of the poorest classes of immigrants. Moreover, it was no small coincidence that the rejuvenation of politically organized nativism coincided with the decline of the Whig party below the Mason-Dixon line, and especially in New Orleans, after the Compromise of 1850. In the first years of the final antebellum decade the American party solidly entrenched itself, and by 1854 it was a potent force in the Crescent City where it outlived the movement nationally and in the state of Louisiana by some six years.

Both overt and covert reasons underlay the rise of Know Nothingism. Samuel Busey voiced the most obvious overt motive when he pointed to the 1850 Census figures

37 Ibid., 1.
showing heavy foreign populations in major metropolitan areas. The proportion of non-natives grew from slightly over 11 percent of the nation's total number of whites in 1850 to 15.34 percent a decade later.39 Especially in areas of heavy concentration, these people ostensibly held considerable political power. They burdened charitable and social institutions and competed with lifelong Americans for jobs. They also committed far more crimes per capita than did natives, and a few German radicals drew grave public suspicion. Furthermore, many Southerners correctly regarded the tremendous influx of immigrants as an added threat, because most of them settled in the North, thereby increasing that section's population and bolstering its congressional representation.40

Immigrants' "un-American" religion provided another blatant cause for anti-alien activity. The majority of them were Roman Catholics. The American party opposed that religion, allegedly because those who practiced it were


political allies of the Pope first and of the United States second. The eighth article of the platform adopted by the Know Nothing national convention in June 1855 pledged:

Resistance to the aggressive policy and corrupting tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church in our country by the advancement to all political stations--executive, legislative, judicial, or diplomatic--of those only who do not hold civil allegiance, directly or indirectly, to any foreign power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and who are Americans by birth, education and training--thus fulfilling the maxim 'Americans only shall govern America.'

In actuality, however, the party was antagonistic toward Catholics merely because they belonged to that denomination, and in this capacity it rested on a long tradition of campaigns for Protestant purity in the United States.

Obviously, this position could not benefit the association in predominantly Catholic New Orleans, and the organization's stand on this issue made it unique there.

Initially, prominent Catholics such as Charles Derbigny and J. V. Duralde joined it as a replacement for the defunct Whig party and in opposition to the Democrats' manipulation of the foreign vote. Charles Gayarre, the renowned historian, was a member of Louisiana's five-man delegation to the 1855 Know Nothing convention in Philadelphia. Not only did

41 Quoted in the New-Orleans Commercial Bulletin, June 23, 1855.


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that meeting refuse to seat him because of his religion, but it also denied him the right of addressing it. Upon the immensely popular Gayarre's return to the Crescent City he resigned from the party, and this act devastated it in Louisiana, though not in its largest city. From July 2 to 4 members of the New Orleans American faction assembled, and they repudiated the religious plank of the Philadelphia platform while endorsing all other aspects of it. On January 10, 1856, George Eustis, Jr., a Know Nothing who claimed world attention along with John Slidell in the Trent affair of 1861, clarified the state association's "new" position on religion in an impromptu address to the U. S. House of Representatives. He said that "We hold . . . and I hope to God that it will be held in every state of this Union— that religious faith is a question between each individual and his God . . ." and that the eighth article of the party's national platform was a "concession to the prejudices of one class of religionists. . . ." Nevertheless, Democrats wasted no opportunity to remind New Orleans' Catholics what the Know Nothings stood for


45 Congressional Globe, 34th Cong., 1st sess., January 10, 1856, 166.
throughout the nation, and they condemned the local organization's disavowal of the religious plank as equivocal.46

These overt motives masked the stronger underlying factors that sustained and propelled the anti-alien movement. In reality, immigrants rarely had any significant independent political power in the United States before the Civil War. However, as Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts pointed out in 1854, if properly organized they were numerous enough to provide the balance in some elections.47 Opposition to immigration and demands for strenuous naturalization requirements stemmed from ongoing battles within the American political arena. In New Orleans, as elsewhere, the newly arrived people easily identified with the word "democrat." The Democratic party capitalized on this and attracted the bulk of them to its banner. It held them until its vociferous defense of slavery and opposition to the Homestead Act drove them elsewhere. As the Whig party disintegrated, many of its former members joined the Know Nothings for a variety of reasons ranging from hatred of Democrats and their use of foreign-born voters to the desire to secure nominations and gain office. In the South this new party was particularly appealing as the debate over slavery reached the boiling point. Because it remain-

46 The Louisiana Courier (New Orleans), March 29 & November 26, 1854; October 16 & 21, 1855.

47 Congressional Globe, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., December 18, 1854, 52.
ed silent on the peculiar institution and offered an alternative emotional issue, it provided a refuge where Southerners could escape, for the time being, from the paramount political question of the day.48

The whole picture took on a much deeper perspective in New Orleans, and this explains the American party's longevity there. Long before the Irish and Germans began arriving in large numbers the Louisiana metropolis had been essentially two cities in one. From the time the United States took possession old Creole elements had been hostile toward Americans. As Yankee business interests filtered in they tended to establish themselves in the northwestern part of the city, above Canal Street. That area quickly took on the visage of a northern commercial emporium, and it handled the bulk of the Crescent City's trade. Its streets were wider, better paved, lighted, and cleaned than those in the French Quarter. Red brick buildings, English signs and billboards, and large modern shops characterized

Below Canal Street New Orleans was "a dirty, confined town with narrow unpaved streets, often impassable with mud, the principal of which, Rue de Chartres, is only forty feet wide." Architecture had a decidedly French and Spanish flavor, and most buildings were white and yellow stucco. The atmosphere was much more relaxed, and French was the dominant language. Long-established Creole families controlled the area. Extremely conservative and resentful of the progressive Americans, they resisted change and strove to maintain their identity.


50 G. W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States From Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; With Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (2 Vols.; London: John Murray, 1844), II, 259. See also Marigny, Memoire, 2-8.

Tensions between these two sections mounted to such an extent that on March 8, 1836 the Louisiana legislature officially divided the city into three separate, virtually self-governing, municipalities, loosely bound together by a common council. The First Municipality was the old "dark and dirty" French Quarter, bounded by the river, Canal Street, and Esplanade Boulevard. The Second Municipality, or the new American city, resembled Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Felicity Road and Canal Street were its upper and lower limits. The third borough lay below Esplanade. Chiefly inhabited by Irish and German immigrants with "the usual accompaniments of flaxen-p polled babies and flaxen-tailed pigs," it looked French and was "half village and half city."53

Such an arrangement had obvious economic disadvantages in an urban center almost totally devoted to commerce, and early in 1852 the legislature consolidated New Orleans, nominally keeping it divided into three "school districts." The First District was the former Second Municipality. The Second consisted of the French Quarter, and the Third was

52 "An Act to amend an Act entitled an 'Act to incorporate the City of New Orleans,' approved February the seventeenth, eighteen hundred and five; and other acts amending the same," Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Twelfth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1836), 28-37; The New-Orleans Bee, March 10, 16, 1836.

53 Ibid. The characterizations of the municipalities are Hall's in The Manhattaner in New Orleans, 35-36.
the "residue" of the city. This was, at best, a "paper reunification." Hot animosities still raged, immigrants siding with the Creoles against the Americans. The central issue was which group would dominate the city, and intense cultural differences fanned its flames. These hostilities provided the seedbed for the growth of the American party in New Orleans.

Partisan politics took on new significance in the Crescent City after reunification, because then all components of the population engaged in open competition for municipal offices. Creoles tended to be Democrats, and newly arrived immigrants readily associated with them. Together the Second and Third Districts held a population advantage, and they threatened to control the entire city. Anglo elements, above Canal Street, predominately pledged allegiance to the Whigs, and they fully realized that they had to organize into a cohesive bloc if they seriously in-

54 "An Act to consolidate the city of New Orleans, and to provide for the government and administration of its affairs," February 23, 1852, Acts Passed by the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1852), 42-55.

tended to counter their opponents. They fought to maintain solidarity within their ranks and vehemently opposed splinter factions or "Independent Reformers" that could split their vote.56

As the Whig party withered the Know Nothing program attracted many of its New Orleans constituents, and the steadily mounting number of immigrants that augmented the increasing Creole-Democratic dominance of the city pushed them in that direction. After a resounding Democratic victory in the municipal elections of March 1853, Whiggery ceased to be a potent force in the Crescent City. With the advent of the following year's contests former leaders of that party employed the tactic that they earlier had denounced by nominating an "independent" ticket. Flatly opposed to the Democrats' practice of paying "grogshop rowdies, gutter scrapers and levee rats" (i.e. the Irish) to vote fifteen or twenty times and to what they regarded as the veritable foreign mastery of their city, those who made up this movement founded the New Orleans American party. This was only logical, because the overt Know Nothing principles constituted a sharp-edged, nationally recognized weapon ideally suited to the purpose of neutralizing the numerical superiority of the Democratic opposition.57

56 New-Orleans Commercial Bulletin, February 18, 27, 28, March 16-18, 1852; The Daily Crescent, February 16, 24, 28, 1852.

57 New-Orleans Commercial Bulletin, March 14, 16,
Both sides employed high-handed methods and resort-
ed to violence in the election of March 27, and the Demo-
crats carried the day. However, they had been seriously
challenged, and they identified the true nature of the
force they faced. Their primary organ reported that "The
election of Monday last shows that the old Coon is literal-
ly dead and buried, and that he has risen from the grave,
in the shape of a Reforming Native." It further asserted
that the new faction had been "founded on a basis of polit-
ical intolerance and religious fanaticism" and that it in-
tended to bring about "reform" "by force of arms, by vi-
olence, by intimidation, and a total subversion of the
law." 

The Democrats were correct in this assessment.
Mere nativist ideology was not enough to insure American
victories and suzerainty in the city. The municipal elec-
tions of 1854 set the pattern for the remainder of the

1854; The Daily Crescent, March 29, 1853; March 29-30,
1854; September 7, 14, 1857; The Louisiana Courier, March
15, 1854; The Daily Orleanian (New Orleans), March 15-17,
1854; Daily True Delta (New Orleans), March 15, 1854;
Soule, The Know Nothing Party in New Orleans, 47-52;
Overdyke, The Know-Nothing Party in the South, 59; Niehaus,
"The Irish in New Orleans, 1803-1862," 219; Cole, "Na-
tivism in the Lower Mississippi Valley," 271.

58 The Daily Crescent, March 16, 28, 1854; The
Louisiana Courier, March 19, 28, 1854; Soule, The Know

59 The Louisiana Courier, March 29-30, 1854. The
Daily Orleanian, March 22, 1854 (the official journal of
the Third District) also recognized this and agreed with
the Courier.
decade. Violence, browbeating, and unmasked dishonesty scarred even seemingly unimportant races. From 1854 through 1858 there were five major election riots. Drunken gunmen openly terrorized naturalized citizens, even when their papers were perfectly valid, and generally made a mockery of the democratic process. The environment thus created had a ruinous effect on New Orleans' reputation, stifling business and hindering progress. Both Democrats and Know Nothings participated in these injustices, but superior organization gave the American party undisputed dominion over the Crescent City until Union Troops occupied it in May 1862.60

All of this had a tremendous impact on the immigrants. Not only did the Democrats use and often dupe them, but Know Nothings put them in fear of their lives when they attempted to exercise their franchise. Once firmly in control the American party exacerbated their condition even more by depriving them of desperately needed municipal jobs. It fired long-experienced Irish policemen, put foreign-born street sweepers out of work, and dismissed school teachers who happened to be of alien extraction.

This avalanche of abuse caused New Orleans' sons of Erin to contemplate colonizing in Latin America, and late in 1856 a society of Irish Catholics petitioned the Mexican government for permission to settle in that country.61 Utterly alienated by nativism, the few German liberals who became permanent residents in the 1840's and 1850's remained very introverted and refused to assimilate.62 In essence, immigrants endured the ultimate wrath of a conflict that pre-dated their presence in Louisiana's major urban area by many years. But the true source of the harassment mattered little. Anti-alien activity before the Mexican War as well as the Know Nothing resurgence after the Compromise of 1850 made newcomers' stay in the Crescent City harrowing. However, the greatest impact of New Orleans on immigrants was much more ominous than political and social persecution, and it literally threatened their existence. It was the city's cancerous and enduring plague--yellow fever.

Throughout the antebellum period and far beyond it New Orleans was, for all practical purposes, a pesthole. Yellow fever probably first appeared there in 1769, and it attacked on a limited scale again in 1791, 1793, 1794, and


1795. From the initial epidemic of 1796 until 1905 the Crescent City suffered from onslaughts of this deadly scourge practically every summer, though in some years its intensity mitigated to a sporadic level. As the metropolitan population increased so too did the fury of each succeeding pestilential siege, and Louisiana's chief urban


corporation acquired a reputation as "the city of death" and the "wet grave." Statistics vary with the sources, but in each of twelve years during the three and one-half decades between 1825 and 1860 close to or over 1,000 people succumbed to the disease. From 1822 to 1871 Charity Hospital alone treated 29,974 cases, and almost 50 percent of them died. During the entire 109 years from 1796 to 1905 the city recorded 38,771 deaths, and this figure probably is low. Over the course of the forty-three years following 1817, when local authorities began keeping records, 28,172 people lost their lives, and 18,069 of them did so between 1853 and 1858.

More specifically, truly horrendous epidemics struck in the summers of 1819, 1832, 1847, 1853, 1855, and 1858. In 1819 over 2,000 of the city's 27,176 inhabitants,


or one of every twelve, perished with the malady. In 1832 New Orleans endured the ravages of both Asiatic cholera and yellow fever. Mortality figures are somewhat confused, since the diseases occurred almost simultaneously. These twin plagues probably killed 8,000 of the 55,000 citizens, cholera taking the overwhelming majority of them. Fifteen years later the Crescent City lost over 2,300 of its 108,700 denizens to "yellow jack," and the thousands of soldiers garrisoned there awaiting transportation to Mexico were ripe targets.

67 Augustin, History of Yellow Fever, 869, cites the exact death total as 2,190, and he incorrectly states that the city's population was 26,183. See U. S., Secretary of State, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820: Book I, Table 35. The actual population of the city was 27,175. See also Fossier, "History of Yellow Fever in New Orleans," 207.

68 Augustin, History of Yellow Fever, 869; Carrigan, "The Saffron Scourge," 67. Excellent descriptions of the city's agonies during this year are in Niles' Register, XLIII (November 24, 1832), 201-3 and John B. Wyeth's utterly fascinating Oregon; or A Short History of a Long Journey From the Atlantic Ocean to the Region of the Pacific, by Land Drawn up From Notes and Oral Information of John B. Wyeth, One of a Party Who Left Mr. Nathaniel J. Wyeth, July 28, 1832, Four Days' March Beyond the Ridge of the Rocky Mountains, and the Only One Who Has Returned to New England (Cambridge: Printed for John B. Wyeth, 1833), 72-77.

However, 1853 witnessed the most gruesome cataclysm in the history of the Louisiana metropolis or, for that matter, any American city. After an unusually cool spring and during a particularly wet and mild summer between 7,800 and 9,000 New Orleanians fell prey to the "black vomit." The disease proved fatal to approximately 40 percent of those who contracted it, and daily death tolls mounted from just a few early in June to 245 on August 21, 254 on August 22, and 234 on the twenty-third. Thereafter they steadily diminished until the first days of October when the pestilence had run its course. Unlike earlier assaults, this one spread throughout the city's hinterland, smashing into Baton Rouge, Thibodaux, and Opelousas. Most observers noted that the Crescent City was uncommonly filthy during this summer. Yet, the epidemic unfolded in the midst of thriving commerce and while immigration through the port was at its peak. Some 150,000 people probably had been in town during the previous winter, and close to 100,000 remained to face the plague as the warmer months approached.70

Those who survived could assert that they had attended a "real theatre of horrors" where "the king of terrors held full sway."  

Two years after the 1853 disaster yellow fever killed between 2,598 and 2,670 people even though a stringent quarantine was in effect. These figures probably belie the actual number of fatalities, because health officials wanted to protect the city's image that the earlier epidemic had done so much to destroy. Finally, in 1858 fever took 4,845 of the nearly 162,000 residents, and this was the last major onslaught before the Civil War.  

So frequently did yellow fever recur in New Orleans that long-established citizens came to regard it as an inevitable fact of life, and they accepted its almost yearly ravages with fatalistic complacency. Because the plague paralyzed commerce and caused customers to look elsewhere, local newspapers and municipal authorities ignored and


downplayed epidemics until mortality rates rose to the point that they demanded recognition. Immigrants were yellow jack's chief victims, and, to a certain extent, they shouldered the blame for it as the idea that it was contagious evolved. A review of that concept's history clearly bears this out.

No one knew for certain what caused yellow fever, but numerous travelers commented on the Crescent City's infestation with mosquitoes. Charles Sealsford observed in the late 1820's that droves of those insects generally forewarned residents of approaching epidemics. Recalling his visit to the city late in August 1831, Captain J. E. Alexander wrote that "... mammoth mosquitoes [sic] ... rushed into the dreary apartment, and made such a buzzing
around my ears, that it resembled the noise of the wind among the cordage of a vessel.  

Some eighteen years later Sir Charles Lyell asked a local Irishman if he found the summer heat intolerable, and the man replied: "'You would have something else to think of in the hot months, for there is one set of mosquitoes who sting you all day, and when they go in toward dusk, another comes out and bites you all night.'" 

A. Oakey Hall agreed that these pests worked in two shifts, and he warned:

Woe to that person who becomes immersed in thought, or interested in conversation, or overcome by drowsiness in exposed situations. In ten minutes time mosquitoes have duly marked him as a rash man; and on the morrow his mirror will become suggestive of small-pox.

In 1848 a Mobile, Alabama, physician, Josiah Clark Nott, even correctly guessed that this "little winged cannibal" was the vector of the disease, and he nearly embraced the germ theory when he suggested that microscopic insects possibly transported illness. Some six years later Dr. Louis Daniel Beauperthuy of Venezuela made a similar discovery, but these ideas never gained general acceptance.

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76 Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, II, 13.
77 Lyell, A Second Visit to the United States, II, 97-98.
78 Hall, The Manhattaner in New Orleans, 56.
80 Josiah C. Nott, "Yellow Fever Concentrated With
Prior to the widespread adoption of the germ theory in the United States and sophisticated research into the pathology of yellow fever most speculations as to its cause and prevention were very juvenile by modern standards. Yet, virtually every medical man in New Orleans attempted to solve this malady's riddle, and they searched in all conceivable places to do so. They wrote thousands of pages and postulated hundreds of hypotheses, but the essence of the entire argument was whether the plague was imported, and hence contagious, or whether it was of local origin and bred in the noxious filth of the city. Supported by commercial interests, anti-contagionists initially prevailed, though not without penetrating attacks. But after the 1853 tragedy their opponents held sway. Mounting evidence upheld the point of view that the disease was communicable, and, out of desperation, public opinion endorsed this idea.81

Speaking for the anti-contagionists, in 1845 Dr. William P. Hort declared that disease followed civilization and that "great physical changes brought about by industry, and agricultural pursuits" caused it. People did not transport it from place to place. He maintained that yellow fever was indigenous to New Orleans. Since no one could identify it with a specific foreign fever and because lifelong residency seemed to render one immune, it could not have been imported. On the basis of his experience, he bolstered his argument by pointing out that frequently a single person in a crowded household fell victim to black vomit while the others remained in perfect health. Hence, any effort to protect the city with a quarantine was an exercise in futility. In 1846 the Medical Society of New Orleans officially subscribed to this position.82

Dr. Edward H. Barton carefully studied yellow fever over a long, productive career in the Crescent City, and he held the Materia Medica and Therapeutics chair in the University of Louisiana from 1835 to 1840.83 He was also very close to the business community, and in 1851 a number of


83 Aiken, "Medical History of New Orleans," 213.
its leaders, including James Robb, William Freret, and Samuel J. Peters, called on him to 'remove the unfortunate impression existing in regard to the health of this section.' He responded by expounding on his well-known theory that climate had a definite bearing on health and that fever most often struck in places that had hot summers. While the plague also seemed to be connected to the breaking of virgin soil, he believed that local improvements that required this, such as canals, were necessary for commercial prosperity. Most properly undertaken in the winter, these projects helped to tame the elements, and thus they tempered disease. Warning that capitalists would not invest in a place where hundreds died annually, he advocated the immediate cleaning and paving of the streets, removal of cemeteries from town, installation of covered sewers, emptying of privies, and strict prohibition against accumulations of stagnant water.

Even more strongly allied with the city's mercantile magnates than Barton, Dr. Bennet Dowler began studying

84 Quoted by Barton in the preface to his Report of the Louisiana State Medical Society on the Meteorology, Vital Statistics and Hygiene of the State.

the sanitary history of New Orleans in 1836. In 1852 he contributed "Tableaux, Geographical, Commercial, Geological, and Sanitary . . ." to Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette Directory. Rejecting the idea that yellow fever was imported, he regarded quarantines as useless. He pointed to the fact that those who had lived in the Crescent City all of their lives rarely contracted it, and he said that it was almost exclusively a strangers' disease. The thousands of Irish and German laborers who succumbed to it gave the metropolis an undeserved bad reputation. Ignoring the plague's history, Barton concluded that "This disease . . . has prevailed only for a short time, and has caused but few deaths compared with many other cities." After the 1853 epidemic he reviewed the history of fever and held to his stand against importation and contagion. He continued to argue the case of "city immunity," though he conceded that it usually took five to ten years to acquire it. Again, he asserted that the ailment most often afflicted foreigners, and Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright elaborated on this view by

86 Dowler, Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853, 4.
88 Ibid., 36.
89 Dowler, Tableau of the Yellow Fever of 1853, 4-38.
postulating that

Experience proves that the newly arrived northern emigrants laboring in the sun, especially if their habits be bad and their lodging apartments close and unventilated, can generate the yellow fever anywhere in the South--on barren rocks or sandy plains. That disease is not inherent in the soil of any particular locality, but is an artificial complaint, like typhus or camp fever, which can be driven out from any locality whatever, by a wise and cheap republican government--not only seeking the greatest good for the whole number, but the greatest good of every class. . . .

Finally, in the wake of the 1853 pestilence the proprietors of the Daily True Delta published a list of interments from May 1 to November 1, and they rounded out the anti-contagionist platform. They condemned quarantines, the removal of decaying matter, and sewers as fatuous, and they complacently maintained that the only real option New Orleanians had was to endure deadly assaults of the plague. The city should undertake no rash (and expensive) programs to combat it.

Daniel Drake and Dr. Erasmus Darwin Fenner occupied the middle ground between the anti-contagionists and those who believed the malady to be communicable. Drake called

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91 The Epidemic Summer. List of Interments in All the Cemeteries of New Orleans From the First of May to the First of November, 1853, Together With the Names and Ages of Deceased, Places of Nativity, Causes of Deaths, Date of Interment and Name of Cemetery in Which Interred. Alphabetically Arranged. To Which is Added a Review of the Yellow Fever, Its Causes, etc., and an Interesting and Useful Abstract of Mortuary Statistics (New Orleans: Published by the Proprietors of the True Delta, 1853), xii.
it "A summer and autumnal epidemic fever," generally confined below the thirtieth parallel. While it rarely occurred outside of cities, he noted that it frequently broke out on ships at sea. Vaguely associating it with the commerce of Havana and other annually infested ports, he joined just about every medical practitioner in the nation by regarding people unacclimated to tropical and semi-tropical climates as its easiest victims. Drake did not believe one person could transmit the disease to another, but he said it originally had been imported from Africa and that ships repeatedly brought it to American ports.92

Fenner was one of the most eminent physicians in New Orleans, and he was an editor of The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal. Early in 1847 he maintained that fever primarily attacked unacclimated elements—especially Irish and German immigrants.93 After 1853 he fully realized that established natives also suffered from it, and he linked it to great accumulations of filth in the streets. He felt that paving and regularly cleaning all of the city's thoroughfares would be a step in the direction of prevention. However, squalor alone did not cause black


vomit, because if it did there would have been an epidemic every year. Fenner believed that atmospheric conditions also contributed to its origins, and he denied that any vessel carried it in from abroad. Despite all of this, he never categorically denied that yellow fever was contagious, and he did not object to the establishment of a quarantine, provided that this was not done at the expense of properly cleaning, draining, and ventilating the city. 94 Several years later he shifted nearer to the contagionist camp and declared that he represented the views of most New Orleans doctors when he concluded that under the right circumstances men could convey fever to other men. Nevertheless, he continued in the credence that acclimated persons had at least partial immunity and that newcomers were yellow jack's principal targets. 95

Notwithstanding these vacillations, the anti-contagionist view prevailed prior to 1853, but it did not go unchallenged. In 1844 Dr. W. M. Carpenter went on record against it, and he called for an effective quarantine. He found it amazing that a community almost totally dependent upon free-flowing commerce would fail to protect itself and its reputation in this way. Elaborating on this

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94 Fenner, History of the Epidemic Yellow Fever at New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1853, 56, 72-76.

95 Fenner, Report of the Epidemics of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, for the Years 1854 and 1855, 9-17. See The Daily Picayune, August 11 & September 4, 1853 for reports on the shifting opinion of New Orleans physicians concerning contagion.
refutation, he logically showed that yellow fever was not indigenous to New Orleans or any place else in the western hemisphere. Since no affliction resembling it existed in this part of the world before Europeans ventured across the seas, Carpenter reasoned that these people brought it with them. Dense populations, filth, heat, moisture, and miasmas did not cause it, because if they did it invariably would occur where they existed. The facts simply did not bear this out. Much to the horror of local business interests the doctor concluded that the disease followed the flow of commerce and that ships brought it to New Orleans from foreign ports.96

After the epidemic of 1853 the Crescent City's new board of health appropriated $2,500.00 for a five-man sanitary commission, consisting of Drs. E. H. Barton, A. F. Axson, S. D. McNeil, J. C. Simonds, and J. L. Riddle, to investigate the origin and "mode of transmission" of yellow fever, to survey the city's sanitary condition, and to study the adaptability of sewers, drains, and a quarantine to local conditions.97 The commission's report on the origin and spread of the plague proceeded from the assumption that it was contagious. It denied the assertion, put

96 Carpenter, Sketches From the History of Yellow Fever, 3-8, 47-48.

forth by some, that the 1853 pestilence came from Rio de Janeiro and directly tied it first to the immigrant ship Northampton that had docked from Liverpool on May 9 with 300 passengers. That vessel arrived in exceedingly putrid condition, and her hospital contained traces of black vomit. An Irish immigrant who had sailed aboard her, one James McGuigan, was the first to succumb to yellow jack, and he did so on May 28. 98 The commission concluded that "The outbreak of yellow fever on shipboard, from foul holds or from ballast in a decaying state, or holding organic matter in a process of decay is a fact too well attested to require any argument." 99 The Northampton had been towed to New Orleans alone, but on May 17 the Augusta, direct from Bremen with 200 steerage passengers, and the Camboden Castle, out of Jamaica in ballast, shared the same towboat. Before she left Kingston the Camboden Castle had lost her captain and seven crew members to yellow fever, but despite this she had sailed with a clean bill of health. As these two craft proceeded upstream those on board them openly communicated with each other. Once in port, they docked thirteen wharves apart, and the Augusta moored very near the Northampton. Shortly thereafter several members of the Augusta's crew contracted fever. 100 The commission


99 Ibid., 483.

100 Ibid., 485-87.
surmised that the outbreak on the Augusta could not have originated from her contacts with the Camboden Castle, because no other cases had links with the latter ship or with any of the vessels near which she docked. Thus, either the Northampton and the Augusta brought the fever with them or they caught it from some unknown source operating in the area where they berthed. The commission opted for the second explanation, because a man had evidenced signs of the malady in the vicinity in question a few days before McGuigan became afflicted and prior to the first Augusta case. Therefore, the official view held that even though the disease was contagious, it was not imported in 1853. It germinated within the city.101

The most pressing question with which the sanitary commission dealt was how the plague spread from its initial area of confinement along the waterfront. The doctors toyed with the notion that something in the air carried it and that those stricken transported it throughout the municipality. Although they could not firmly escape from the latter conclusion, they ultimately resolved that "atmospheric predispositions" most likely were to blame.102 They then attempted to weave this stand into the contagionist theory by declaring: "If then it be contagious it must be so in a sense so restricted as to modify most essentially the meaning of the term. That the body of one sick with

101 Ibid., 487-93. 102 Ibid., 493-96.
yellow fever gives out miasms [sic] we have abundant evidence in our minutes. . . . "103

Dr. Barton wrote the commission's "Report upon the Sanitary Condition of New Orleans," and he disagreed, in part, with the atmospheric supposition. Elaborating on his earlier theory, he contended that epidemics occurred only when meteorological influences interacted with the proper "terrene conditions" which included "every species of noxious affluvia."104 While man could do nothing about the climate, he could control yellow fever with a rigid sanitation program. The continued wealth and prosperity of the city depended upon this,105 and Barton resolved:

Disease and crime have a similar paternity. They are twin sisters; as exists the one so flourishes the other, and there is not a doubt in my mind that the most effective means of advancing the cause of morals and religion among us, would be the establishment of sanitary measures! 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.'106

Finally, Dr. J. C. Simonds summarized the commission's views on quarantine, and he surveyed the entire history of yellow fever in the Crescent City. While the evidence indicated that quarantine could bar the door to cholera, smallpox, scarlet fever, and typhus, the most rigid measures never had prevented invasions of yellow fever.107 Nevertheless, the five investigators unanimously

103 Ibid., 497. 104 Ibid., 215.
105 Ibid., 216-22. 106 Ibid., 223.
agreed that the city should detain and inspect all incoming vessels. Almost all large ports did this, and even if the practice did nothing to lock out yellow fever it promised to protect New Orleans from other infectious illnesses and from "moribund emigrants." Hence, the sanitary commission urged the Louisiana legislature to enact a quarantine—and to fund it with state money.108

Despite archaic phraseology and the lack of substantial knowledge concerning the disease's pathology, the sanitary commission's findings were remarkably accurate. The problem was that these doctors tried to build a syllogism without the essential middle term. Their conclusions closely approached the truth, but they had no comprehension of the underlying reasons for their accuracy. Furthermore, even if one ignores Dr. Josiah Nott's sagacious mosquito conjecture, the most farfetched of the antebellum explanations for the cause and transmission of epidemic yellow fever held grains of reality. There was no question that it could be transported from one place to another, both overland and overseas, and that quarantine alone could not prevent it. There was no question that it moved through the atmosphere and that it had definite links with stagnant water and filth. There was no question that it was primarily an urban malady. There was no question that newcomers to an area often attacked were its ripest targets and that

108 Ibid., 515-16.
established residents of places like New Orleans could become acclimated or immune.

In 1900 Dr. Carlos J. Finlay, a member of Dr. Walter Reed's yellow fever commission in Cuba, discovered that during the initial stages of the disease victims' blood contained the virus that caused it. He further found that the Aedes aegypti mosquito transmitted that virus from those afflicted to others, thus spreading the malady. This and subsequent research determined that there are two major types of yellow fever, one being a jungle variety that rarely infects man and the other almost exclusively an urban plague carried by the domestic Aedes aegypti. This insect probably evolved in Africa, and it primarily breeds in artificial water containers. Undoubtedly, it spread throughout the world with trade, infesting the water casks of sailing vessels--especially slavers. It also may have come to New Orleans in the filthy bilge water of ships from the West Indies ballasting in the round cobblestones used to pave some of the city's streets.109

After the virus, technically known as one of the Group B Arboviruses, infects the mosquito that insect retains the ability to communicate it for the remainder of


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its life. Thus, the *Aedes aegypti* is a "reservoir as well as a vector," and, under laboratory conditions, one can live for three to four months. All Group B Arboviruses cause fever in man, and an individual who contracts yellow fever may react in a number of ways ranging from a mild period of sickness followed by lifelong immunity to gastric hemorrhages (i.e. black vomit), loss of blood pressure, delirium, and death. The disease is usually somewhat moderate among members of the black races and children.\textsuperscript{110} Hence, those who had "city immunity" in New Orleans and who were "seasoned" or acclimated actually had had a bout with yellow jack, probably during childhood. These fortunate people may have been totally unaware of this. While diagnosis is easy during epidemics, it is very difficult to accurately detect isolated or unusual cases of low intensity.\textsuperscript{111}

Prior to the acceptance of the germ theory the concept of a virus—to say nothing of a Group B Arbovirus—was alien to New Orleans' doctors. Before the Reed commission's work in Cuba the city's physicians did not suspect that mosquitoes transmitted yellow fever. One can find very little fault with them for their ignorance in the former


\textsuperscript{111} Clark and Casals, "Arboviruses; Group B," 612.
case. However, perhaps they should have recognized the "little cannibal" at least partially as a contributor to the plague. As has been pointed out, numerous travelers regarded these insects as one of the city's major menaces, and before 1830 Charles Sealsford observed that droves of them usually foreshadowed epidemics. Furthermore, two medical men, long-experienced in dealing with the disease, made the connection, and there is no reason to believe that their speculations were not well known in the Crescent City. Had local authorities endorsed this view, one of the two major methods of preventing yellow fever--mosquito control--would have been within their grasp.112

In groping for explanations of and cures for yellow fever the New Orleans medical community always noted that some were more likely to contract it than others and that Creoles and long-term residents generally remained free of it. When it did attack them their cases usually were mild. More than any other segment of the population, these people apathetically accepted nearly annual plagues as a fact of Crescent City life.113 Because of this the argument

112 The other method is, of course, vaccination. See Clark and Casals, "Arboviruses; Group B," 614, and Smithburn, "Immunology," 173-74.

113 "Health of the City," The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, II (November, 1845), 399; Cable, The Creoles of Louisiana, 292; William L. Robinson, The Diary of a Samaritan (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 17; Carrigan, "Privilege, Prejudice, and the Strangers' Disease in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," 569; Carrigan,
developed that once one became acclimated to the local climate he no longer was vulnerable to the summer pestilence. However, after the epidemic of 1853, when no one seemed immune, this point of view underwent a good deal of revision.114

The doctors also concluded that the disease always seemed to originate amidst squalor and filth, and this same opinion prevailed concerning cholera. The poor and lower orders of society residing in the most unwholesome sections of the city felt fever's ravages more than any other groups, and the bulk of New Orleans' paupers were immigrants.115


As The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal declared in 1853,

The habits of these people, (being chiefly Irish and German laborers) notoriously negligent and filthy and utterly indifferent to all those precautionary measures which a limited knowledge of the laws of hygiene should suggest served only to add fuel to the conflagration which was destined to extend its ravages to every portion of our devoted city.116

Just about everyone recognized that yellow fever rarely, if ever, struck an individual more than once. If one survived an infection he no longer was subject to it.117 Furthermore, Negroes seemed to have fairly substantial resistance to the disease, and they tended to suffer less severely from it than did whites. This partial inherent immunity lent credence to the theory that the malady originally had been imported from Africa.118

116 "Health, Mortality, & c.," The New-Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, X (September, 1853), 275.
118 Carrigan, "Privilege, Prejudice, and the Strangers' Disease in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," 576; Drake, A Systematic Treatise, 201; Hardenstein, The Epidemic of 1878, 41; A. De Puy Van Buren, Jottings of a Year's Sojourn in the South; or First Impressions of the Country and its People; With a Glimpse at School-Teaching in that Southern Land, and Reminiscences of Distinguished Men (Battle Creek, Michigan: n. p., 1859), 150. The medical community also modified this idea after 1853. See "Edito-
Even if they regarded themselves as acclimated, many New Orleanians refused to take any chances with the city's deadly summers. Those who could afford it left town as the sickly season approached, and they did so in droves.  

When he arrived in the Crescent City in August 1831, Captain J. E. Alexander remarked that "all respectable inhabitants" had deserted the place, and nearly twenty years later Alexander MacKay noted that more than one-fifth of the population was "peripatetic" and sought more healthful climates during the hot months. Their favorite retreats were the Louisiana pine barrens where, as one commentator remarked, "limpid streams, flowing over a pebbly bed, and a terebinthine atmosphere are enjoyed."

In 1853, if not in other years, these exoduses contributed to the spread of the plague as many of those who quit the

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120 Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches, II, 12.


city unknowingly carried it with them.\(^{123}\)

Obviously, such a situation had a disastrous effect upon commerce and the overall prosperity of New Orleans. Not only did recurrent infestations of "the dreaded vomito of the West Indies"\(^{124}\) confine heavy arrivals of immigrants to, at most, nine months of each year, but the "unofficial quarantine"\(^{125}\) imposed by them brought business operations to a costly halt in the summer.\(^{126}\) Compounded with this, yellow fever's predictable annual pillages prevented substantial mercantile interests from making the Crescent City their permanent residences and headquarters and therefore from having enduring associations with it. The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin editorialized in 1855:

> No place in the world is more dependent for its growth and prosperity upon its sanitary condition than New Orleans. Enterprise and capital may be expended without stint in improving our physical condition; we may have railroads diverging to every point of the

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124 This term is used by Nichols in Forty Years of American Life, I, 197.

125 This is Carrigan's term. See "Saffron Scourge," 406.

compass; thousands may be spent upon our rivers, streets and thoroughfares, and by opening new avenues of trade we may be the entrepot for the commerce of the entire West; but without health we cannot secure what is an indispensable essential of a growing and flourishing city, a permanent resident population. It is passing strange that this one thing HEALTH has not been over all others the paramount consideration, the object to which the concentrated mind of the public authorities should have been particularly in the summer months chiefly directed.  

Four years earlier the *Concordia Intelligencer* put it this way:

"Unfortunately for New Orleans, she is lacking in the right kind of public spirit,—in that unity of feeling necessary to make her population one people. Still worse: The men who create and direct her commerce are strangers, who have no permanent stake in her future destiny. . . . Capital does not accumulate, because its resources are drained by a ruinous absenteeism."  

In 1852 Dr. Bennet Dowler conceded "that summer absenteeism, the neglect of manufactures, and the great preponderance of the planting interest in the South, tends to repress the growth of Southern cities."  

And, in 1858 *The New-Orleans Bee* remarked that

Everyone is aware that the prevalence of yellow fever in our city is the chief drawback to our prosperity; that but for this haunting apprehension our summer population would not be materially reduced, nor would the tide of business recede from our shores. The progress, the wealth, the development of New Orleans, already so marked, would be decapled [sic] if our...  

\[\text{127 June 5, 1855.}\]

\[\text{128 Quoted in "The Destiny of New Orleans," DeBow's Review, X (April, 1851), 441.}\]

\[\text{129 "Tableaux, Geographical, Commercial, Geological, and Sanitary of New Orleans," 4.}\]
city were absolutely free from the terrors of the epidemic.130

Because of the paralyzing consequences of yellow fever, New Orleans' promoters and apologists tried to show that, in essence, the city was a very healthy place and that it was not at fault for the pestilence that annually assailed it.131 They associated the malady with foreigners and those otherwise alien to the local climate. Indeed, from the city's earliest history virtually everyone who wrote about it correctly maintained that strangers and immigrants fell to yellow jack more often than any other class of society.132 Reporting on the epidemic of 1819, Niles' Register asserted that "The deaths were about 20 per day--some say 60!--It is peculiarly fatal to strangers."133

130 October 22, 1858.


133 Niles' Register, XVII (October 23, 1819), 128.
In October of the following year the same journal noted that the plague had waned and that most thought it soon would be over "if there was no influx of strangers." 134

On October 25, 1822 The Louisiana Courier related that

The board of health have seen, with regret, that several strangers have had the temerity to come into the city within the last week, and fallen victims to the fever, which, notwithstanding the cool weather, unhappily continues to prevail. The sudden decrease in the number of deaths, is believed to be owing more to the absence of proper subjects, than to any change in the character of the disease. Strangers are therefore admonished to avoid the city, until the board of health shall redeem the pledge made to the public to give the earliest information when they may enter with safety. 135

This attitude remained dominant throughout the remainder of the antebellum period, and, more and more, the term "stranger" came to stand for Irish and German immigrants. In the mid-1840's Thomas L. Nichols warned that no stranger was safe in New Orleans. 136 Near the end of the 1850's Frederick Behlendorff recalled that "The most deadly fevers attack a stranger from the north, a greenhorn, within a few days of his arrival . . . I was hardly one week in New Orleans when I was struck down by a vicious kind of malaria fever, which they call down there 'breakbone fever.'" He exhorted those thinking of traveling there that

134 Ibid., XIX (October 28, 1820), 142.

135 This article was reprinted in Niles' Register, XXIII (November 30, 1822), 203, though Niles incorrectly stated that the Courier ran it on the twenty-sixth.

136 Forty Years of American Life, I, 197.
they faced almost certain death if they could not secure adequate care.\textsuperscript{137} James R. Creecy probably summarized this viewpoint better than anyone else, though he limited his remarks to the Irish. In 1834 he wrote:

For many years the annual influx of the lowest order of Irish into New Orleans has been immense, and the number who are buried in the 'swamp,' subjects of yellow jack and cholera, are astonishing; and yet their places are instantly filled up, as are the ranks of well-disciplined troops in destructive battle. Eight out of ten who are attacked by these diseases become victims; and perhaps at least one-third of every importation have one or the other or both of these dreadful diseases. Nine-tenths of all the diseased poor immigrants who find shelter and attention in the numerous hospitals are foreigners, by far the greatest number of whom are Irish of the lowest and worst character.\textsuperscript{138}

Statistical evidence substantiated the argument that immigrants and others alien to the Crescent City constituted the overwhelming majority of yellow fever's victims. For example, in 1853 only 3.58 of every 1,000 natives of Louisiana and New Orleans perished with it. As indicated in Table 6, corresponding mortality rates were vastly higher for people hailing from all other regions, with the logical exceptions of the West Indies, South America, and Mexico.\textsuperscript{139} Furthermore, less than 10 percent of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Behlendorff, "Recollections of a Fortyeighter," 324.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Creecy, Scenes in the South, 24-25. See Chapter VII for a detailed discussion of the impact of foreigners upon the city's hospitals and other institutions.
\end{itemize}
### TABLE 6
COST OF ACCLIMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Nativity</th>
<th>Population 1850</th>
<th>Estimated Population 1853</th>
<th>Estimated Mortality Yellow Fever</th>
<th>Ratio Per 1,000 of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans &amp; La.</td>
<td>38,337</td>
<td>46,004</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ark., Miss., Ala., Ga., S.C.</td>
<td>2,655</td>
<td>3,176</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C., Va., Md., Tenn., Kty.</td>
<td>4,160</td>
<td>4,984</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>30.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Y., Vt., Mass., Me., R.I., Conn., N.J., Penn., Del.</td>
<td>8,898</td>
<td>10,751</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>32.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh., Ind., Ill., Mo.</td>
<td>1,693</td>
<td>2,030</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>45.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British America</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52.49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indies, South America, Mexico</td>
<td>1,693</td>
<td>1,790</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>3,832</td>
<td>4,598</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>52.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>22,093</td>
<td>26,611</td>
<td>3,569</td>
<td>137.87*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark, Sweden, Russia</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>163.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prussia, Germany</td>
<td>14,765</td>
<td>17,718</td>
<td>2,339</td>
<td>132.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland, Belgium</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>328.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Switzerland</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>220.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8,506</td>
<td>9,967</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>48.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain, Italy</td>
<td>1,848</td>
<td>2,217</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27.51*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Corrected total: 109,879* 131,764* 7,847* 59.55*  

all interments in the city's twelve cemeteries between May 1 and November 1 were lifelong Louisianians.140 Similarly, in 1858 only 12 percent of the 3,414 cases treated by the Young Men's Howard Association had been born in the United States.141

Indeed, everything pointed to yellow fever's being almost exclusively a strangers' or immigrants' disease. It was remarkably easy to proceed from the fact that poor immigrants were its chief sufferers to the conclusion that they were to blame for this bane of New Orleans, thereby exonerating the city from any guilt.142 This was a natural development, because, especially when they are ignorant of

140 The Epidemic Summer. List of Interments in All the Cemeteries of New Orleans, xiv.

141 "Report of the Howard Association of New Orleans--Epidemic of 1858," in Robinson, The Diary of a Samaritan, Appendix. The Howard Association will be discussed in Chapter VII.

their true nature, people's attitudes about diseases develop with a distinct bearing on the segment of society most frequently afflicted with them. Oddly enough, one of the strongest statements of this view came from a leading humanitarian and a prominent member of the Young Men's Howard Association, William L. Robinson. In 1860 he wrote:

The mortuary statistics of all sea-port towns furnish us with the fact that the poor immigrants introduce, or, if not generate and disseminate disease among assimilating elements in all of them. The cities, per ipsis, or their inhabitants are healthy.

This argument never dominated local opinion, and the sanitary commission repudiated it in 1853. However, it did exist. It made the immigrant a convenient scapegoat, and it bore the brutal visage of what has been called "medical know nothingism."

Thus, the two greatest aspects of New Orleans' impact upon the thousands of immigrants who used its port and opted to settle there were very negative and deadly. They suffered abuse from a unique and rampant nativistic movement, though it arose, in part, to mask the real cultural and ideological cleavages that divided the metropolis. Far


144 Robinson, The Diary of a Samaritan, 85.


146 Roger W. Shugg coined this term in Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 55.
more than any other portion of the population they felt the
ravages of the almost annual plagues of yellow fever that
swept away nearly 30,000 people before the Civil War. Not
only were they the overwhelming majority of its victims,
but, as the debate over the nature of this dreaded killer
unfolded, some came to hold them responsible for it as
well. After dehumanizing ocean voyages of over two months,
the Crescent City hardly offered immigrants a warm welcome.
It greeted them with an atmosphere of hostility and the
threat of agonizing death.
CHAPTER VII

THE IMPACT OF THE IMMIGRANTS ON NEW ORLEANS

It is impossible to determine exactly how many of the 550,000 immigrants who used the southern route to the United States intended to make New Orleans their permanent home. Inconsistent and very vague as to ultimate destinations, the official passenger lists offer insufficient factual evidence for a categorical answer to this question. Undoubtedly some immigrants sailed to the Crescent City with the resolution of living out the remainder of their lives there, and a whole series of factors, ranging from reluctance to undertake a second journey to illness and utter poverty, prevented others from leaving. Whatever their motives or hardships, those who tarried or took up residence in the city had a profound impact upon it, and they significantly contributed to its cosmopolitan character. Their presence made its free white population soar, and they heavily burdened social and charitable institutions. Out of desperation newcomers committed the lion's share of the crimes that plagued the metropolis and gave it the reputation as one of the most lawless urban centers in the nation before the Civil War. As their numbers swelled they exerted a decided influence upon local politics, and they

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readily allied with the Democratic party that manipulated them to its own ends, often with little respect for the law. Because of limited economic opportunities and the indigent condition of so many migrants, established German and Irish citizens organized benevolent societies that made concerted efforts to transport legions of them upstream and to find employment for those who stayed behind. In short, the thousands of expatriated people who poured into and through New Orleans during the forty years before the Civil War strained and rocked virtually all of its fibers, and they engendered political and social ferment that left an enduring imprint upon it.

While there is no reliable record of how many immigrants entered the nation through the Port of New Orleans with the motive of settling in the city, diverse circumstances constrained thousands to do just that. As was the case at all major reception centers, many people who otherwise would have moved on immediately after debarkation had no choice but to remain, at least temporarily, and struggle for subsistence due to their lack of funds.  

J. Hanno Deiler, who was a leading authority on the subject, esti-
mated that prior to 1855 about one-fifth of all Germans stayed and that a quarter of them did so after that year.2

When they began landing in large numbers, especially with the onset of the potato famines of the mid and late 1840's, almost all of the Irish stepped ashore in dire economic straits, unable to continue up the Mississippi. However, few of these people had the necessary skills, knowledge, or capital to become agricultural pioneers. They knew how to raise potatoes and to care for a swine or two, but nothing in their backgrounds had prepared them for the rigorous and regimented demands of semi-isolated life on the interior prairies and plains. Nor did they desire such an existence. Densely populated cities where they could mingle with others of their nationality and be near a church and priest attracted them. As discussed in Chapter VIII, the Irish found fairly steady employment as laborers and in the service trades in New Orleans and its immediate vicinity, though they frequently worked under life-threatening conditions. They also rather quickly established their own neighborhoods, and subsequent entrants naturally gravitated to them. Traveling in haste and fear, many sons of Erin had no real idea of where they ultimately wanted to settle, and their information about the United States extended little beyond a vague familiarity with their ports of debarka-

tion. Hence, they avoided the risks of the unknown and tended not to venture out of the cities that received them.  

Whether their reasons stemmed from premeditation or necessity, thousands of immigrants made the Crescent City their permanent abode. Until 1850 United States Census Reports did not segregate people according to their places of nativity. Nevertheless, earlier compilations indirectly indicate the numerical impact of foreign-born elements upon New Orleans, especially when studied in conjunction with statistics detailing the number of passengers who arrived from abroad. Table 7 sets forth the total population of the city and the numbers and percentages of whites, slaves, and free blacks as well as decade totals of passengers from 1810 to 1860. These figures shed a great deal of light on slavery in Louisiana's major municipal corporation and thus on patterns in its labor force, and the ensuing chapter addresses these topics. What is of greatest importance here is that between 1830 and 1860, or during the intermediate and heavy periods of antebellum immigration, New Orleans' overall population grew by some 366 percent, but its white segment multiplied at double that rate. Without doubt

immigration was in large part responsible for this increase as is attested to by the progressively mounting totals of passengers coming from abroad.4

Data from the Census of 1850, the first taken by the Department of Interior, makes it possible to be more precise. Midway through the century 2,210,878, or 11.08 percent, of the United States' 19,948,333 free inhabitants had been born outside the nation. Natives of Ireland amounted to 961,719, or 44 percent of the foreign total; those from the German states numbered 573,225, or 26 percent; and England provided 278,675, or 12 percent.5 Louisiana, with between 66,413 and 67,308 hyphenated Americans, ranked seventh among the thirty-one states and the District of Columbia in this category. It contained the eighth largest number of Irish, with 24,266, and it was the ninth most


popular home for Germans, with 17,507. The bulk of the Pelican State's immigrants resided in New Orleans. Some 20,200 of its 24,266 Irish lived there, and they made it the nation's fourth Hibernian city behind New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. These people constituted 17 percent of the population—a greater portion of it than either slaves or free blacks. The Crescent City also gave shelter to 11,220 of the state's 17,507 Germans, and it stood behind only New York, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Baltimore in this vein. In all, the metropolis counted 43,601 people of alien extraction in 1850 who represented 42 percent of its population and who made it the fourth city in foreign-born population in the United States

6 Ibid., 18-19 reported Louisiana's foreign-born population as 66,413, and, hence, ranked it seventh among the thirty-one states and the District of Columbia. However, the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, 474, listed the nonnatives in Louisiana at 67,308, and it reported the other statistics referred to here on page xxxvi.


8 Ibid.
behind New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati.9

A decade later 4,136,175, or 15.34 percent, of the
nation's 26,957,471 free inhabitants hailed from foreign
shores. Ireland had supplied 1,611,304, or 39 percent;
Germany 1,301,136, or 31 percent; and England 431,692, or
10 percent of them.10 Louisiana's 81,029 immigrants placed
it thirteenth among the thirty-four states and the District
of Columbia in this respect. It was the eleventh state in
terms of Irish population, with 28,207, and it stood thir-
teenth in German residency, with 24,614.11 Again, the ma-
jority of the state's foreigners had settled in its primary
urban center. In 1860 over 86 percent, or 24,398, of its
Irish made their homes there, and only New York, Philadel-
phia, Brooklyn, and St. Louis counted more Hibernians.
These people comprised almost 15 percent of New Orleans'
population, and they outnumbered both slaves and free
blacks combined. Nineteen thousand, seven hundred and
fifty-two, or over 80 percent, of the state's Germans dwelt
there. Twelve percent of the total population, they made
it the eighth ranking city in the country in this respect.12

9 DeBow, Statistical View of the United States,
399.

10 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Popu-
lation of the United States in 1860, xxii, 592-93.

11 Ibid., xxix.

12 Ibid., xxxi; Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the
Confederacy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 1940), 9.
TABLE 7

THE COMPONENTS OF NEW ORLEANS' POPULATION AND ARRIVALS OF PASSENGERS FROM ABROAD, 1810--1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total pop. New Orleans</th>
<th>% of Whites --pop.</th>
<th>% of Slaves --pop.</th>
<th>Free % of Blacks --pop.</th>
<th>Passengers during preceding decade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>17,242</td>
<td>6,331--37</td>
<td>5,961--34</td>
<td>4,950--29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>27,176</td>
<td>13,584--50</td>
<td>7,355--27</td>
<td>6,237--23</td>
<td>11,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>46,082</td>
<td>20,044--43</td>
<td>14,476--31</td>
<td>11,562--26</td>
<td>53,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>102,193</td>
<td>57,519--56</td>
<td>23,448--23</td>
<td>19,226--21</td>
<td>164,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>116,375</td>
<td>89,459--77</td>
<td>17,011--15</td>
<td>9,905--8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>168,675</td>
<td>144,601--85</td>
<td>13,385--8</td>
<td>10,689--7</td>
<td>298,953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final antebellum census revealed that the Crescent City contained 64,621 immigrants who represented 38.31 percent of its population, and it lined up behind New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, St. Louis, and Chicago as a haven for hyphenated Americans.  

Considering the fact that New Orleans primarily served as a way station for immigrants who pushed on upstream, it is not surprising that, while it was the nation's second largest reception center, it fell behind the other major ports of debarkation in total foreign-born population. Yet, the foregoing statistics indicate that many migrants indeed did settle there, and they had a tremendous quantitative impact on the metropolis. A great many of those who stayed on were destitute, and, as indicated in Chapter III, some used the "back door to the United States" because they knew that they would have been denied admission elsewhere. Others remained merely because they could not accumulate the necessary funds for transportation to and a real start in the interior or because they did not have the talent or desire for an agrarian life.

The thousands of foreigners who made the Crescent City their domicile and who amounted to 42 percent of its total population in 1850 and nearly 40 percent a decade later placed a terrific strain upon local institutions, and the one that they burdened the most was Charity Hospital.

Virtually as old as the city itself, from its very beginning this unique infirmary had been designed to aid the poor and to offer relief to impoverished strangers. A boat builder who had served as a sailor in the Company of the Indies, one Jean Louis, took the first step toward founding it on November 16, 1735 when he wrote and signed his will which bequeathed the parish church £200 and the city's paupers £300. He then dictated:

'My debts being paid and the above bequests distributed, with the remainder of my small lot of ground I will a pension to serve perpetually for the founding of a hospital for the sick of the city of New Orleans. . . .'14

This donation amounted to 10,000 piasters, or about $2,500, and when Louis died on January 21, 1736 it became available. The first hospital opened in 1737. Dubbed "The Hospital of St. John" and "The Hospital of the Poor," it was located in a marshy area on Rampart Street between St. Peter and Toulouse, and it immediately began serving five patients. One of its primary goals was to relieve stranded Germans who had been lured to Louisiana by John Law's Company of the West.15

14 Quoted in "Sidelights on Louisiana History," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, I (January, 1918), 95.

15 Ibid., 95-97; John J. Castellanos, "The Early Charity Hospital" (reprint of an article that appeared in Vol. L of The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, 1897, in the Louisiana Collection, Louisiana State University Library, Baton Rouge), 1-6; Stella O'Conner, "The Charity Hospital at New Orleans: An Administrative History," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXXI (January, 1948), 9-23; Elizabeth Wisner, Public Welfare Administra-
In 1779 a disastrous hurricane destroyed the hospital and much of the city. Five years later Don Andres Almonester y Roxas, a former war clerk and civil notary and one of the most outstanding philanthropists in the history of New Orleans, contributed 114,000 piasters for the construction of "The New Charity Hospital of San Carlos," and he endowed it with 1,500 piasters annually. Completed in 1786, this structure occupied the same square and operated under the same guidelines as the original establishment.¹⁶

The eighty-ninth statute of its 1793 constitution stated that its purpose was to treat poor patients in genuine distress at no charge. Everyone else was subject to a daily physician's fee.¹⁷

From 1792 until 1795 Almonester waged a legal war with Governor Francisco Luis Hector, baron de Carondelet over control of the sanitarium, and the Spanish king ultimately substantiated the philanthropist's claim. Upon his death the institution nominally passed into the hands of his infant daughter, Michaela, and it entered a time of troubles during which its operations stagnated. On

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¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Constitution for the New Charity Hospital, New Orleans, Constructed by Don Andres de Almonester y Rojas, 1793, trans. Wiley D. Stephenson, Works Progress Administration, Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana (New Orleans, 1941), 41.
September 23, 1809 fire destroyed the building, and for the next six years a series of temporary quarters housed it. Finally, on March 17, 1813 the new state of Louisiana assumed administrative authority over the facility, and to this day Louisiana remains the only state that sustains not only a general hospital but an entire system of them. In 1815 operations began in a new physical plant on the square bounded by Canal, Common, Baronne, and Dryades (University Place) Streets, and in 1832 "The New Charity Hospital" opened on grounds surrounded by Gironde, Gravier, St. Mary, and Common Streets. Located on the site of the present unit, this structure cost $150,000, and it could accommodate 400 patients.

Prior to 1842 most funds for the hospital came from fines, sales of gambling and theater licenses, and taxes on amusements. During the territorial period the legislature came to its aid by giving it the fines collected for


violations of the harbor master's orders and half of those paid by convicted keepers of gambling houses along with all money confiscated on gaming tables. Because it proved impossible to prohibit games of chance in New Orleans, on March 7, 1814 the general assembly amended its earlier act and authorized the city council to license betting establishments, all fees going to the hospital. It also received fines imposed on those found guilty of operating without a permit and one-third of all other amercements and forfeitures. This was a very lucrative arrangement. Numerous commentators noted that, despite its voluminous commerce, gambling was the paramount business in the Crescent City.


24 G. W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion Through the Slave States From Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; With Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices (2 Vols.; London: John Murray, 1844), II, 264; Timothy Flint, A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley (2 Vols.; Cincinnati: E. H. Flint, 1828), I, 556; John B. Wyeth, Oregon; or A Short History of a Long Journey from the Atlantic Ocean to the Region of the Pacific, By Land Drawn up From Notes and Oral Information of John B. Wyeth, One of the Party Who Left Mr. Nathaniel J. Wyeth, July 28th, 1832,
and in 1823 licenses for gaming houses went for $5,000 each. In March 1814 lawmakers modified the hospital's council of administration and supplemented its income by rendering to it the revenue from a new $10.00 tax on public and subscription balls. They further appropriated $1,500 for its "most pressing and present wants" and required all public theaters to stage four benefit performances per year for it. Twenty-four years later the state's solons altered that part of the 1814 ordinance dealing with theaters, and they imposed annual taxes on each of them as well as on circuses, menageries, and other types of shows. They also earmarked $3,000 of every $4,000 theater license fee for the infirmary. Beginning in 1835 other proceeds came from taverns, grogshops, coffeehouses, and exchange brokers, each of which paid $100.00 per annum. Retailers similarly contributed $25.00, slave traders $290.00, agents of foreign insurance companies $1,000, and there was a $100.00 duty on every billiard table in the city.

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25 Niles' Register, XXV (November 29, 1823), 208.
26 "An Act to regulate the Administration of the Charity Hospital of the City of New-Orleans," March 7, 1814, Acts Passed at the Third Session of the First Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1814), 82-88.
28 "An Act for the relief of the Charity Hospital
Prior to 1844 direct state appropriations to the hospital were sporadic and uncertain. In 1822 the legislature allotted it $4,000,29 and from April 1, 1839 to March 1, 1840 it received $2,000 per month.30 On March 28, 1840 a $40,000 allocation went to it. However, $25,000 of this was intended for the construction of an insane asylum, since the New Orleans facility cared for all of the state's mental patients at this time.31 Annual consignments commenced in 1844, and from that year through 1849 they totaled $80,000.32 During the ensuing six years the state treasury

of New-Orleans, and for other purposes," Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Twelfth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1836), 146.

29 "An Act for the relief of sick and distressed strangers," March 22, 1822, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Fifth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1822), 68.


32 "An Act for the Relief of Charity Hospital," March 25, 1844, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Sixteenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1844), 63 appropriated a total of $10,000 for 1844; "An Act for the Relief of Charity Hospital," March 10, 1845, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Seventeenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1845), 68 appropriated $15,000 for 1845; "An Act for the Relief of Charity Hospital," June 1, 1846, Acts Passed at the First Session of the First Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1846), 155 appropriated $10,000 for 1846; "An Act for the relief of
dispensed no funds to it, because taxes paid by debarking passengers adequately met its needs. Once the tide of immigration began to ebb, Louisiana's lawmakers budgeted fairly substantial amounts for it every year. These sums were $10,000 in 1856, $27,000 in 1857, $22,000 in 1858, and $40,000 in 1859.

When immigration through the Port of New Orleans was at its peak taxes levied on passengers became the hospital's most remunerative sources of revenue. As was pointed out in Chapter III, on March 26, 1842 the legislature passed

Charity Hospital," May 3, 1847, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the First Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1847), 190 consigned $20,000 for 1847; and "An Act Relative to Charity Hospital," March 16, 1848, Acts Passed at the First Session of the Second Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1848), 123-24 gave it $10,000 in 1848 and the same amount in 1849.


34 "Report of the Board of Administrators of the Charity Hospital, to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana. January, 1858," Documents of the First Session of the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, 1858 (New Orleans, 1858), 10.


"An Act to Provide a Fund for the Support of Charity Hospital," and it required masters of vessels conveying passengers from foreign ports to pay $1.00 for everyone traveling first class and 50¢ for each in steerage. The rates were $1 and 62% for those hailing from Gulf ports, 25¢ and 62% for people shipping from the Atlantic Coast, and $1 and 62% for those arriving on steamboats. In 1844 these amounts increased to $2.00 for cabin and $1.50 for steerage passengers from abroad, $1.00 and 50¢ for those from other American ports, and 50¢ and 25¢ for people aboard steamers. However, during its January 1849 term the United States Supreme Court heard cases involving similar taxes in New York and Boston, and it declared them unconstitutional. Since this decision also struck down the Louisiana statutes, the general assembly had to devise another means of maintaining this valuable income. It did so on March 21, 1850 with a new act that merely changed the letter of the old one, hardly trifling with its spirit. It obliged captains of all vessels arriving from outside the

37 Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Fifteenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1842), 456.


state to report the names, nationalities, origins, ages, and occupations of their passengers in writing and under oath to the resident hospital commissioner. Each traveler over the age of fourteen had the option of doing one of two things. He could report to the hospital commissioner and post a $1,000 bond against his becoming any type of threat to the state or a charge of any of its charitable institutions for the next five years or, in lieu of this, he could pay $2.00 to the commissioner or the clerk or captain of his ship. Considering the financial status of the overwhelming majority of immigrants, the latter arrangement was almost obligatory. They merely paid the $2.00 to their captains who turned it over to hospital authorities, keeping 5 percent as a commission.\(^40\) In 1855 the legislature raised the commutation tax by fifty cents,\(^41\) and this continued in force throughout the remainder of the antebellum period.

These fees were absolutely essential to the solvency of the hospital. From 1842 to 1849 they amounted to $226,170 of its total operating expenses of $381,179, and they increased from nearly 15 percent of those expenses in

\(^40\) "An Act Relative to the Charity Hospital," March 21, 1850, Acts Passed by the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1850), 225.

\(^41\) "An Act for the Administration of the Charity Hospital at New Orleans, and to provide a revenue for its Support," March 14, 1855, Acts Passed by the Second Legislature of the State of Louisiana, at its Second Session . . . (New Orleans, 1855), 203.
the former year to 88 percent of them in the latter. More specifically, in 1843 $14,819.40 of the facility's $31,118.86 income came from the head tax. The following year passengers paid $16,668.79 of the $39,231.04 spent to keep its doors open, and nine years later they contributed $53,482.51, or 98 percent, of the $54,534.68 it expended to care for the sick. Quite candidly, funds from immigrants enabled Charity Hospital to operate in the black, and they relieved the state of a considerable portion of the burden of supporting it. Dr. A Forster Axon, vice president of its board of administrators, said in 1853:

It is the opinion of the Board, that this favorable change in its fiscal affairs might be made permanent, and thus relieve the state of all further demands upon its treasury and our citizens at large from an equivalent taxation . . . This opinion is predicated upon the fact that the change made by the Legislature at its last session, in the tax on passengers, will be fully adequate to meet all its expenses.

46 Ibid., 3.
It was only logical that Louisiana resorted to a tax on immigrants to maintain its sanitarium. They were the primary people that it served. Of the 54,790 patients admitted between January 1, 1830 and December 31, 1841 37,543, or 68 percent, were foreigners, and only 512 were natives of the Bayou State. In 1834 alone 4,287 of the 6,062 admissions were of alien extraction, and 2,354 of them were Irish. A joint committee of the state legislature that investigated this situation strongly suspected that many of these people were there under false pretenses. It reported that "the kindness of their treatment, and the comforts which they must enjoy here over the ordinary conveniences of private life; . . . induces a great many of this charity, who may not be the fair objects of its

47 "New Orleans Charity Hospital," DeBow's Review, 498. In A Systematic Treatise, Historical, Etiological, and Practical on the Principal Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America, as They Appear in the Caucasian, African, Indian, and Esquimaux Varieties of its Population, ed. Hanbury Smith and Francis G. Smith (2nd ser.; Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grabo & Co., 1854), 195-96 Daniel Drake offered slightly different figures. He contended that from 1830 to 1844 64,084 patients were admitted and that 8,604 were native Americans, 625 being Louisiana residents. Of the foreigners treated, 50 percent were Irish, 14 percent were German, 10 percent were English, 8 percent were French, and the remainder were from other nations. Hence, almost 86 percent of the hospital's patients were foreign-born, and Drake emphasized that most of them were newly arrived. Volume I (May, 1844) of The New-Orleans Medical Journal, 102 sets forth a "List of Admissions into the Charity Hospital of New Orleans from the 1st of January 1830 to the 1st of January 1843" that reported total admissions to have been 59,045. Almost 71 percent, or 41,853, of them were foreigners, 20,752 being from Ireland, 5,492 hailing from Germany, and 4,389 having been born in England. Only 556, or less than 1 percent, were natives of Louisiana.
attention. . . . "48 From 1842 to 1849 94,227, or 76 percent, of the 123,917 persons admitted had been born abroad, and only 1,293 Louisianians checked into the hospital.49 By 1850 Dr. Bennet Dowler called it little more than a "foreign institution."50 That year it treated 18,476 inpatients, and less than 1 percent of them were natives of the state. Some 16,598, or 90 percent, of them were immigrants.51

As the number of passengers arriving declined in the final antebellum years so too did Charity Hospital's earnings from the commutation fees. But, its expenses did not simultaneously decrease, nor did the high percentage of foreign-born patients. Increasingly, the state had to contribute more money for its support, and the burdens of a

48 "Report of the Joint Committee to whom was referred the examination of the Charity Hospital," Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana. First Session--Twelfth Legislature, 138-39; Niles' Register, XLIX (September 26, 1835), 62.


51 E. D. Fenner, "Report on the New-Orleans Charity Hospital," Southern Medical Reports; Consisting of General and Special Reports on the Medical Topography, Meteorology, and Prevalent Diseases of the Following States: Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, California, to be Published Annually. Ed. by E. D. Fenner, M. D., of New Orleans, TI (1850), 289.
large immigrant population became much harder to bear. In 1856, 9,432 people entered the facility, and 85 percent of them were nonnatives. That year's operating expenses totaled $73,328.11, but only $28,424.25 came in from the tax on passengers. The next year 82 percent of the 8,897 admissions hailed from other nations, and the impost paid but $30,201.75 of the $75,847.39 required to render service. By 1859 destitute strangers still constituted 85 percent of those ministered to, but only $14,130.10, or 18 percent, of the $76,895.94 spent by the institution came from arrivals at the port.

Treating all varieties of illnesses and functioning as a general welfare center, Charity Hospital was the immigrant's main sanctuary in New Orleans, and thousands sought and received refuge and treatment there. From the time the flow of human beings through the city took on flood-like characteristics until it began to diminish, by and large, these people paid their own way. But as living

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53 "Report of the Board of Administrators of the Charity Hospital, to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana. January, 1858," 2, 10, 14-16.


cargoes declined in number during the last antebellum years
foreign-born patients strained the infirmary to the limit
and forced the state of Louisiana to dig deep into its cof­
fers to sustain it.

Sick and poor strangers likewise saddled other in­
stitutions, and their presence gave rise to new ones that attacked problems improperly or only partially solved with existing machinery. One of the most notable of them was "The Insane Asylum of the State of Louisiana." Prior to its establishment Charity Hospital had had full charge of the state's legally committed lunatics. As pointed out above, in 1840 it received $25,000 for the construction of an addition to care for them more adequately. Quite obvi­ously, as the decade wore on the New Orleans clinic operated at maximum capacity, and on March 5, 1847 the legisla­ture took the initial step to relieve it of its mental pa­tients by appropriating $10,000 for the first year's main­tenance of an asylum specifically designed to deal with them at Jackson.56 Predictably, a high percentage of those subsequently confined there were of foreign origin. In January 1857 it housed 102 people, and 72 of them were of alien extraction.57 At the beginning of 1858, 87 of the


125 inmates were immigrants, and 37 of them hailed from Ireland. A year later 79 of the 137 interned there were nonnatives, 37 of them being Hibernians. While these figures seem trivial compared to corresponding ones for Charity Hospital, they clearly reveal that strangers heavily burdened the facility in East Feliciana Parish. As has been established, the bulk of these strangers resided in New Orleans, and in 1852 Mayor Abdiel Daily Crossman wrote that the sanitarium was inadequate to handle the city's numerous indigents in need of its services. These people paid no special tax to support this institution, and those locked away there were charges of the state.

Charity Hospital and the Insane Asylum stand as glaring examples of state-supported institutions that sick, impoverished immigrants encumbered, but these elements also burdened and inspired private sources of beneficence. Probably the most respected on them was the Young Men's Howard

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Society. Founded in 1837 and incorporated on March 20, 1840, its namesake was John Howard, a British philanthropist and reformer. Composed of thirty members, most of whom worked as clerks, this tightly organized Samaritan association specialized in aiding fever victims and relieving the poor. It divided the city into districts and actually solicited those in need. It also rendered assistance to the less fortunate in Algiers, Gretna, other Louisiana cities, Mississippi, and Texas. Operating out of offices first at 12 Banks' Arcade and later at 28 and 30 Camp Street, it met crises and onslaughts of yellow fever with


businesslike precision that never degenerated into panic. It collected large sums of money, opened infirmaries and orphanages, issued scrip honored by local merchants, and generally supplemented the work of the city's hospitals in times of pestilence. During the epidemic of 1847, when the town literally shuddered with despair and its medical facilities shut down, "The citizens ... looked to us [the Howards] alone to avert or mitigate the suffering reported in every quarter." It was the Howard Association's meeting of July 14, 1853 that ignored the business community's pusillanimity and proclaimed the most devastating plague in the city's history. That year it ministered to over 10,500 patients, spending an average of $14.53 on each, and for a time it even functioned as the municipality's board of health.


64 Robinson, The Diary of a Samaritan, 70.

Totally dependent upon public contributions to support their activities, the Howards were financially adept, and they repeatedly secured substantial donations from sources throughout the nation. In 1841 they collected and used over $5,000, and immediately after their July 14, 1853 meeting local citizens subscribed $15,000. In all the samaritans took in $228,927.46 during the severest plague year, and $125,475 of it came from Boston, Baltimore, St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Charleston. Some forty doctors volunteered their services to the association, and it spent $159,190.32 to relieve the suffering of the poor.

Since they were the bulk of yellow fever's impoverished victims, immigrants were the primary recipients of the Howard Society's benevolence. Indeed, their presence in large numbers brought about the organization's formation,


and in 1853 only 716 of its patients were native Americans. Five years later 3,005 of the 3,414 cases with which it dealt were foreigners. This remarkable league of dedicated young men truly was one of the newcomers' most munificent patrons in New Orleans. It more than did the city justice by rising to meet the needs of the downtrodden during all of the latter antebellum sieges of the dreaded disease that so frequently paralyzed it. Even more significantly, the association performed with candor and composure when panic-provoking adversity rendered other municipal agencies useless.

The thousands of immigrants who leaned so heavily on Charity Hospital, the State Insane Asylum, and the Howard Society, just as most other destitute individuals, experienced inordinate temptation to engage in criminal activities. Many succumbed to it and thereby became a prominent element in another of Louisiana's institutions--the State Penitentiary. The problem already was acute in early 1818, and Governor James Villere addressed it in two messages to the legislature. He remarked that strangers in New Orleans committed many petty offenses, and he advocated the creation of a special city court to facilitate handling such cases. Noting that many of these foreigners took refuge in the hospital almost immediately after their arrival,

he recommended that Louisiana follow New York's lead and require them to offer surety for their good conduct and against their becoming wards of the city or state.69

During the four antebellum decades as myriads of derelict foreigners gorged the city, disrespect for the law became distressingly commonplace. By the time of Fort Sumter New Orleans woefully had earned the reputation as one of the most unruly and dangerous municipalities in the United States, and immigrants and others with no permanent stake in its society perpetrated most of its crimes.70 Numerous travelers reflected on its felonious atmosphere. While he said that successful efforts recently had been undertaken to rid it of desperadoes and that he felt safe on the streets at night, Captain J. E. Alexander, of the Royal [British] Geographic Society, remarked that there had been two murders during the ten days he was there in August 1831.71 Writing of his visit in the winter of 1832-33,

69 "Messages of Governor James Villere to the Legislature, January 6 and March 5, 1818," Journal of the Senate, During the Second Session of the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans, 1818), 6, 41.


71 J. E. Alexander, Transatlantic Sketches,
321

C. D. Arfwedson, a somewhat obscure traveler of Scandinavian descent, recalled that "everyone" carried dirks, and Edward Henry Durell, a New Hampshire-born jurist who became mayor of New Orleans during Reconstruction, made the same observation two years later. Although Anglo elements had made considerable progress toward imposing order on the city, it had a tradition of violence and police corruption. "Didimus," as Durell styled himself, felt that the Irish had an inborn addiction to fighting, and New Orleans' Hibernians missed no opportunity to brawl in the streets. A decade later Alexander MacKay, a British journalist who toured the United States in 1846 to report on the controversy over Oregon's boundary, witnessed a public ball in the French Quarter, and he found many of the men there armed with "Bowie Knives" and more awesome "Arkansas Toothpicks." He said that these festivities were the "nuclei for every species of demoralization" and that they frequently degenerated into riotous imbroglios. Both Edward Sullivan, who was later Chancellor of Ireland, and James

Comprising Visits to the Most Interesting Scenes in North and South America, and the West Indies. With Notes on Negro Slavery and Canadian Emigration (2 Vols.; London: Richard Bentley, 1833), II, 18.


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Stirling, a British traveler who abhorred slavery and felt that the South was undemocratic, regarded the Crescent City as crime-infested and intemperate in the 1850's, though Stirling correctly associated much of this with the Know Nothing movement.75

Just as in every other city with a heavy concentration of them, the Irish were the most lawless component of New Orleans' population. This was only logical, because these people lived with the frustrations imposed by utter poverty. The men drank hard, fought at the slightest provocation, and often resorted to murder to settle disputes, while the women pandered and sold themselves as prostitutes. Many of both sexes made petty thievery a routine part of their way of life.76 In 1834 James R. Creecy, a self-styled "unknown traveler" from the North, called them "reckless, abandoned, drunken, lying, dirty, ignorant wretches, who are more at home in the police office than anywhere else,"77 and he was correct in his assertion that they came to the attention of the constabulary more than any other ethnic group. During a two-week period ending on August 3, 1855

75 Edward Sullivan, Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America (London: Richard Bentley, 1852), 225; James Stirling, Letters From the Slave States (London: John W. Parker, and Son, 1857), 139-40.


the city courts confined 108 people to the local workhouse, and ninety-two of them were foreigners, sixty being Irish.\footnote{U. S., Congress, House, Foreign Criminals and Paupers, by Henry Mills Fuller, H. Rept. 399, 34th Cong., 1st sess., August 16, 1856, 10.} Life in the parish jail was by no means pleasant. Though conditions improved after this time, in January 1832 Alexis de Tocqueville, who had been sent to the United States by Louis Philippe's French government to study penal reforms, said of it:

We would be unable to paint the dolorous impression that we received when, on examining the prison of New Orleans, we saw there men thrown in pell-mell with swine, in the midst of excrement and filth. In locking up criminals, no thought is given to making them better but simply to taming their weakness; they are chained like wild beasts; they are not refined but brutalized.\footnote{Tocqueville's little known impressions of New Orleans are edited by G. W. Pierson and translated by Paul Lambert White as "Alexis de Tocqueville in New Orleans," Franco-American Review, I (1936), 29.}

The Irish actually seemed to enjoy brawling, and their annual festivals, such as the Emmet Guards Ball and St. Patrick's Day, usually lapsed into violence. They required no special motives to employ fisticuffs, though they became particularly enraged over controversies in their homeland.\footnote{The New-Orleans Bee, December 14, 1831; The Daily Picayune, May 6-7, 1837, September 17, December 11, 1840; Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803-1862," 144-72; Gordy, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845--1855," 42-44.} On March 15, 1834 \textit{Niles' Register} reported:

The Corkonian and United Irishmen, laborers on the canal have had a terrible fight at New Orleans, in which several were killed and wounded, when the riot
was suppressed and many of the rioters arrested to answer for it. We wish that these people would leave their abominable local hatreds of each other, as well as their much celebrated desire of appealing to force behind them.81

Of course they continued to enter the nation with both their antipathies and methods of expressing them intact.

All of this made the ratio of foreign-born to native convicts in the state penitentiary considerably higher than that for the population at large. In 1850, 24 percent of all Louisiana residents had come from other nations, and ten years later the proportion was 11.4 percent.82 During the year ending September 30, 1848 fifteen of the forty-one new subjects sentenced to prison, or 37 percent of them, were foreigners.83 In 1850, 33 percent of the people locked inside hailed from abroad, and as of January 1, 1853, 41 percent of them were in this same category.84 Later percentages of aliens in custody were 37 at the beginning of 1854 and 38 at the end of both 1858 and 1859.85 From its

81 Niles' Register, XLVI (March 15, 1834), 35.

82 Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852 to Which is Appended the Report for December 1, 1851, 18-19; Eighth Census of the United States, 1850: Population of the United States in 1860, xxxi.


84 DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, 166; "Report of the Board of Directors of the Penitentiary of the State of Louisiana," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1852 (New Orleans, 1853), 5.

85 "Report of the Board of Directors of the Louisi-
foundation in 1835 until 1844 when the state first leased the penal facility with the intention of making a profit from it immigrant lawbreakers significantly burdened it. However, after Louisiana no longer directly controlled it neither the prison nor any group of inmates constituted a real encumbrance. Still, the number of foreigners housed there was disproportionately high.

Because of the tremendous strain that indigent and criminal immigrants imposed upon American institutions and eleemosynary agencies, many came to believe that European governments intentionally "dumped" their undesirables in this country. Closely associated with the nativistic movement, this imputation first became widespread in the early 1830's, and it led to a series of congressional investigations. Undoubtedly there was some truth in the charge, and guilt was not limited to any single nation. Due to the lack of solid statistical evidence there is no way to judge


86 Mark T. Carleton, Politics and Punishment, The History of the Louisiana State Penal System (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 3-32, discusses Louisiana's efforts to save money and then to turn a profit with its prison from 1835 to 1880, specifically addressing the leasing of the facility.

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how many people traveled under these circumstances. Nevertheless, New Orleans particularly was susceptible to dumping, because, as discussed in Chapter III, it barred the door to no one seeking to enter the United States. In 1851 a local newspaper accused England of intentionally dumping paupers and lamented the inhuman conditions that prevailed on the foul ships used to transport them. It editorialized: "How much more humane would it be for the Government of Great Britain to shoot its victims while on their native shores, than thus to slaughter them in detail on their execrable plague ships." 88

National in scope, this problem, or at least the turmoil engendered by fear of it, was not limited to any single port of entry, and the United States Congress addressed itself to it soon after it developed. On July 4, 1836 the Senate requested Secretary of the Treasury Levi Woodbury to look into it, and he sent inquiries to various U. S. consuls abroad. The report he delivered to the upper house on December 7 89 consisted of nineteen replies he had


88 Daily True Delta (New Orleans), April 4, 1851.

received. Joshua Dodge, the envoy at Bremen, wrote that many Germans embarked with little more than their passage money, but he cautioned that this did not mean that the government shipped out paupers. Quite the contrary, he maintained that the German states opposed the spirit of immigration and that before they received permission to set out those intent upon uprooting themselves had to prove that they had sufficient means to accomplish it.90 Answering from Hesse Cassel, Charles Graebe disagreed with his colleague at Bremen, and he claimed that Hamburg was the only German port not dispatching beggers at the direct behest of the ruling regime. Furthermore, even that city frequently offered convicted criminals the choice between punishment or banishment to America.91 Responding from Dublin, Thomas Wilson reported that the Irish poor had the dubious distinction of being in worse straits than those of any other country, but he did not believe that the government had intentionally exported any of them. Thomas Gilpin and Francis B. Ogden, consuls at Belfast and Liverpool concurred.92 Based on all of this information, Secretary Woodbury concluded that there was no foundation for the belief that Europe dumped its derelicts in the United States.93

This hardly settled matters or satisfied those who

90 Ibid., 2-3. 91 Ibid., 3-4.
92 Ibid., 4-11. 93 Ibid., 15.
cried out against what they saw as a horrible abuse of this nation's hospitality. Two years later a Select House Committee under David Abel Russell, a New York Whig, conducted a second investigation. With obvious nativistic inclinations, it gathered information from the mayors of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and New Orleans, as well as from the presidents of the Native American Associations of New York and the District of Columbia, concerning the quality of arrivals from overseas during the preceding decade. Its report opened by declaring that immigration was increasing at an "unheard-of rate" and that foreign governments financed the voyages of many "paupers, vagrants, [and] malefactors." Virtually as soon as they set foot on land these people became charges of American port cities.94 Citing a response to Levi Woodbury's circular from the U. S. consul at Leipzig, received three months after the Secretary issued his report of December 7, 1836, Russell charged that a certain Mr. De Stein, formerly in the service of the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, recently had offered to convey smaller Saxon states' criminals to Bremen and embark them for the United States for $75.00 a head. Maintaining that this was an extremely common practice in this area, the committee went on record favoring immediate legislation to put an end to it.95


95 Ibid., 54-55.
No such statute emerged, and in March 1845 the Senate's Committee on the Judiciary, after receiving numerous complaints about dumping and the use of foreigners to rig elections, looked into conditions at New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans. Conducted at the zenith of the pre-Mexican War nativistic movement, the major purpose of this study was to determine whether or not Congress should and could regulate immigration more stringently and extend the time required for naturalization to twenty-one years.\textsuperscript{96} As pointed out in the preceding chapter, the inquiry at New Orleans came directly on the heels of Lafayette City Court Judge Benjamin Elliott's fraudulent grants of citizenship to hundreds of aliens and the Plaquemines Frauds. These two events, as well as the fact that the three men who collected data there were Whigs, obviously colored the findings. The results of the probe in the Crescent City, as well as at the other three ports, strongly favored tighter naturalization laws, and the committee's chairman, John MacPherson Berrien of Georgia, submitted a bill designed to accomplish this end.\textsuperscript{97} However, again Congress failed to enact such a measure.

A definite manifestation of Know Nothingism, the final antebellum congressional investigation took place

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\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 198-202.
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in 1856, and it mainly summarized and reprinted portions of earlier ones. Writing for the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Henry Mills Fuller, a Pennsylvania Whig, decried crime and poverty as the twin curses of the nation, and he said both had been foisted upon it from abroad. Since the mid-1830's foreign governments had dumped their destitute and criminal elements in the United States to solve their social problems, and those countries added insult to injury when they claimed that they had a right to do this.

Intemperate and irreligious expatriates crowded into port cities where they disregarded laws, promoted vice, and drained treasuries by overburdening prisons and charitable institutions. Fuller recommended that the states use their police powers to protect themselves. But he revealed a legal enigma that pervaded the entire period under consideration when he recognized that they could come into conflict with congressional authority to regulate commerce if they overextended themselves in this respect.

Less than a fine line separated genuine protests over the rarely practiced policy of dumping and the exaggeration and exploitation of this abuse by American nativists. It was a dilemma faced by all reception centers alike, though it was perhaps of greater magnitude at the wide open Port of New Orleans than elsewhere. Obviously,

98 H. Rept. 359, 34th Cong., 1st sess., 1-6.
99 Ibid., 21.
100 Ibid., 25.
various European governments occasionally did send undesirables to America, and precedents for it extended back to the colonial era. Nevertheless, it was never a major program in any of the old countries during the four decades before the Civil War. Despite all of its debates over and investigations into the problem, Congress passed no ordinance concerning it. In essence, the entire issue was a by-product of the tremendous quantitative, social, and political impact of millions of foreigners on the nation, many of whom had ventured across the Atlantic with little more than a ticket entitling them to do so.

While native Americans lamented the strains immigrants imposed upon social and relief agencies in all major ports of entry and accused insidious foreign regimes of purposefully dispatching blighters and vagabonds to the United States, remonstrances were just as loud against the political repercussions brought about by the multitudes of newcomers. This was especially true in New Orleans. As pointed out above, 42 percent of the city's total residents and 54 percent of its whites were foreign-born by 1850, and a decade later those percentages were 38 and 45, respectively. These people did not acquire the suffrage simply by virtue of their being on American soil, but it was neither an especially time-consuming nor an excessively complicated process for them to become legal voters. Antebellum laws left almost all power governing naturalization in the hands of the states, and this virtually invited fraud. With the
exception of the infamous Alien Act of 1798 that required immigrants to live in the nation fourteen and in their state or territory for five years, all of the statutes that set policy for conferring citizenship on outsiders rested on that of 1795. It necessitated five years' total residence in the country at large, three of these transpiring after the candidate formally declared his intention of becoming a citizen, and one in his state or territory.

More importantly, even though U. S. circuit and district courts had the prerogative of handling naturalization cases, in the overwhelming majority of them state and territorial courts of record decided whether an individual had met the prerequisites for naturalization. They actually issued the final papers. Hence, if a political faction in a locality with a heavy immigrant population could attract the support of these people and simultaneously influence a

101 "An Act supplementary to and to amend an act intitled [sic] 'An act to establish a uniform rule of naturalization; and to repeal the act heretofore passed on the subject,'" U. S., Statutes at Large, I (1798), 566.

102 The major antebellum laws were "An Act to establish a uniform rule of Naturalization; and to repeal the act heretofore passed on that subject," U. S., Statutes at Large, I (1795), 415; "An Act to establish a uniform rule of Naturalization, and to repeal the acts heretofore passed on that subject," U. S., Statutes at Large, II (1802), 153; "An Act in further addition to 'An act to establish a uniform rule of Naturalization, and to repeal the acts heretofore passed on that subject,'" U. S., Statutes at Large, IV (1824), 69. See also the classic study of this subject, Frank George Franklin, The Legislative History of Naturalization in the United States From the Revolutionary War to 1861 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 33-183.
judge naturalization proceeded at a miraculous pace.

The first article of the federal constitution rendered authority to establish voter qualifications and the mode of elections to the states. All three of Louisiana's antebellum constitutions specifically stipulated who could vote, and the legislature further refined eligibility in the city of New Orleans. The state's initial charter, that of 1812, granted the suffrage to all free white male citizens over the age of twenty-one who had resided in their voting county for at least one year and who had paid their state taxes within six months preceding an election. In compliance with Article Six, Section 23 of that document the first session of the first legislature passed "An Act to determine the mode of Election of the Mayor, Recorder and other public officers necessary for the administration of the police of New Orleans and for other purposes" on September 1, 1812. This law generally adhered to constitutional specifications, but it further limited membership in the city's electorate to those who owned $500.00 worth of real estate for at least six months or who had paid a minimum of $50.00 in rent during the year leading up to a contest. It also allowed one to substitute payment of parish or corporate taxes for that of state duties in order to cast a ballot. Six years later the general assembly

103 La., Const. art. 2, sec. 8 (1812).
104 Acts Passed at the First Session of the First
lowered the city's residence requirement to six months, abolished the property and rent standards, and returned to the state charter's rule on taxes.\textsuperscript{105} This measure remained in effect until 1845.

By the time the convention met to write Louisiana's second constitution, that of 1845, immigration through the Port of New Orleans had moved into its heavy stage. That meeting evidenced the political impact of foreigners by hotly debating both qualifications for state representative and the question of naturalized citizens' voting. The committee entrusted with the former topic eventually reported in favor of doubling the necessary period of domicile for one to serve in the lower house and thus fixing it at four years, and it decided that this time span should commence for those born abroad only after they had been granted full citizenship. However, the assembly as a whole rejected this provision,\textsuperscript{106} and the final document settled on three

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  \item General Assembly of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1812), 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} "An Act to Amend an act entitled, 'An act to determine the mode of election of the Mayor, Recorder and other public officers necessary for the administration of the police of the City of New-Orleans, and for other purposes,'" March 2, 1818, Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Third Legislature of the State of Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1818), 38-40.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana Begun and Held in the City of New Orleans, on the 14th Day of January, 1845 (New Orleans: Besancon, Ferguson & Co., 1845), 16-18.
\end{itemize}
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years. Obviously moved by Judge Elliott's malfeasance and the Plaquemines Frauds, the framers recommended and the new charter included an extension of the residence requirement for the franchise to two years, though it abolished all property qualifications.

With nowhere near the endurance of its predecessor, Louisiana's second governmental blueprint lasted only seven years. Its replacement, despite having been drawn up immediately after the heaviest immigration year in New Orleans' history, was much more democratic in character. The convention that composed it debated both the requirements for state representatives and those for naturalized citizens' voting as they appeared in the 1845 document. Though many wanted to retain the old rules, the delegates eventually decided that the prerequisites for the franchise and for service in the most numerous chamber of the legislature should be the same. People so participating in politics merely had to be free, white, male citizens over twenty-one who had resided in the state for one year and in their voting parishes for six months preceding an election.

107 La., Const., Title 2, art. 6 (1845).
108 Ibid., art. 10; Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana, January, 1845, 41.
110 La., Const., Title 2, arts. 6 & 10 (1852).
Under authority granted in the eleventh article of the 1852 charter the general assembly passed "An Act Relative to Elections" on March 15, 1855. It stipulated that if an election commissioner suspected that any voter was an alien he could challenge that person and require him to take an oath affirming that he was a bona fide citizen. If the individual refused to so swear the law denied him the franchise, and if he lied he was guilty of perjury. Elaborating on the thirteenth article of the constitution, the ordinance further ruled that one could cast his ballot at any polling place within his parish. However, if he lived in a city divided into precincts he might only vote in the one where he actually made his home, and in New Orleans electors had to have lodged in their precincts for at least three months preceding a contest. An attempt to combat the frauds that plagued the municipality's politics, this statute remained on the books until Union troops occupied the Crescent City in 1862.

Thus, throughout most of the antebellum period an immigrant gained access to the ballot box in New Orleans


merely by convincing poll watchers that he was a citizen and a permanent resident of the municipality. It demanded no real effort or expense legally to meet either of these requirements. However, it was exceedingly tempting for the party that attracted the support of most foreigners to use every means at its disposal, whether legal or not, to naturalize these people as quickly as possible and to influence election judges to accept their citizenship papers with no questions asked.

As discussed in Chapter VI, the majority of immigrants found homes in the Democratic party in New Orleans as well as throughout the nation. While the Louisiana city was divided into three municipalities this was of little consequence in strictly local elections, though it was very important in races involving the total populous. In every possible way the Democrats made full use of their foreign-born allies, and they were by no means timid about resorting to outright fraud. The two most blatant examples before reunification and, indeed, during the entire antebellum period were the unlawful naturalization of nearly 2,000 aliens by Lafayette City Court Judge Benjamin C. Elliott from March 2, 1841 through the end of 1843 and the Plaquemines Frauds of November 1844.

On March 9, 1844 the Louisiana House of Representatives voted thirty-one to six to impeach Benjamin Elliott after a select committee investigated the case and reported in favor of removal. That committee found the jurist
guilty of ignominious fraud and corruption, and it marshaled cogent evidence, including much eyewitness testimony, to prove this.\textsuperscript{113} It discovered that he routinely naturalized foreigners who had made no declarations of their intent to become citizens without properly swearing them in court, that he had failed to maintain records of his actions as prescribed by law, and that his clerk had taken it upon himself to Americanize people when the judge was absent. Various recipients of Elliott's citizenship papers corroborated these accusations, but even more incriminating were the statements of two individuals, not personally connected with the affair, that the "democratic committee" had paid him to issue such papers.\textsuperscript{114}

Even though the committee unveiled additional testimony substantiating these charges from long-term residents and other legal officials,\textsuperscript{115} two of its members, James Taylor and Louis Shelby, refused to concur with its categorical condemnation of Judge Elliott. Conceding that he hardly ran his court with precision and that he obviously was guilty of negligence, they criticized the majority's

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana. Sixteenth Legislature--Second Session (New Orleans, 1844)}, 60-91. Though it does not contain the record of this vote, most Louisiana documents concerning Elliott and the Plaquemines Frauds are in the previously cited S. D. 173, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., January 27 & March 3, 1845. See 146-66.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} S. D. 173, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., January 27 & March 3, 1845, 170-81.
use of evidence. They emphasized that both parties had courted foreign support and that the Lafayette magistrate was a casualty of partisan warfare. Shelby raised an additional and very perceptive question. He pointed out that the U. S. Constitution granted the power of naturalization to Congress and that courts—not state legislatures—decreed aliens to be citizens. He believed that the select committee had the right to investigate a judge's conduct, but he maintained that the House of Representatives had no authority to test the validity of a court's decisions.

Nevertheless, on April 6, 1844 the state Senate, acting as a high court of impeachment, removed Elliott from office on the basis of four articles charging gross misconduct and abuse of authority. The first of these formally accused him of failing to keep a record of 1,748, "or thereabouts," foreigners naturalized in his court. Disregarding the possibility that he merely had been a careless bookkeeper, the second stipulation stated that he

'... corruptly caused and permitted seventeen hundred and forty-eight certificates, purporting to be certificates of naturalization, ... to be issued under the seal of the said court ..., by Abner Phelps, the clerk thereof, from the 2d day of March, 1841 to the 4th day of January 1844, ...' 

The following specification listed a number of the people the judge had Americanized, and the fourth article estab-
lished his motive. It declared that he had been "'moved by corrupt love of lucre, and a desire of unlawful gain; and that he has corruptly and unlawfully received, . . . divers sums of money for the certificates of naturalization illegally issued.'"118

Elliott faced no criminal charges for his misdeeds, and The Louisville Journal angrily editorialized on the irony of this situation:

'Is it not a shame, that, in a land full of penitentiaries, whipping-posts, pillories, and treadmills, a judge convicted of fraudulently making nearly two thousand illegal voters should be punished by a simple removal from office. A poor rascal convicted of casting a single fraudulent vote, is sent to the state prison, or whipped; but a public functionary, found guilty of subverting the very foundation and the superstructure of the elective franchise of a city by making 1,784 fraudulent voters, is suffered to go at large in the community with his head unshorn and his hack unscarred.'119

Sizable numbers of the 1,700 new Elliott citizens indeed did vote, and they voted Democratic. Though there was little outright violence, the state election of July 2, 1844 produced considerable excitement. Whig judges rejected ballots cast by immigrants using Elliott certificates to prove their citizenship, and Democratic poll watchers countered by turning away well-known residents who belonged to the opposition party. Because of this state of affairs several polls closed, and the whole democratic process

118 Ibid., 166-70.

119 Quoted in Niles' Register, LXVI (June 29, 1844), 277-78.
bogged down. This fanned the flames of nativism and brought about a mass meeting on the evening of July 3 in the St. Louis Ball Room. Those present elected William Freret president, and they appointed a committee to draft resolutions expressing the body's sentiments. Significantly, William L. Hodge was a member of it, and he had been one of the principal authors of the House of Representatives' select committee's report censuring Elliott. The commission resolved that the recent contest had severely stigmatized the American concept of suffrage in the Crescent City but that this could not be used as a pretext for denying the franchise to lawfully naturalized citizens. Cases where questions arose concerning a voter's qualifications had to be judged individually and fairly. However, these concerned New Orleanians concluded:

That we will not permit mercenary foreigners who have by fraud, corruption and perjury, obtained spurious certificates of naturalization, to interfere with our rights and franchises—bought with the best blood of our ancestors and secured to us by the constitution and laws of the state—and we solemnly warn them not to attempt to interfere with those rights—an attempt which they may be assured will be met and repulsed whenever and wherever it may be again tried.

This warning went unheeded and this threat unfulfilled. Almost exactly four months later the local Demo-

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120 The Daily Picayune, July 2, 1844; The New-Orleans Bee, July 3, 1844.

121 The New-Orleans Bee, July 4, 1844; Niles' Register, LXVI (July 20, 1844), 523.

122 Ibid.
ocratic machine made certain that the Crescent City's immigrants, turned away by Whig poll watchers, had the opportunity to cast ballots for the party's presidential ticket. At this time the first Louisiana constitution remained in force, and it specified that qualified individuals could vote at any properly designated place within their county.123 Orleans County extended down the Mississippi to the Balize.124 Thus, on November 4, 1844 party chieftain John Claiborne proposed to the Democratic Central Committee

', . . . that means should be offered to such democratic voters of the parish of Orleans as had been excluded, by any circumstances or under any pretext, from voting that day, to go to some other point within the county of Orleans, stating his entire belief that they had a right to do so under the Constitution of the State.'125

First District U. S. Congressman John Slidell collaborated with Claiborne and other politicos, and he agreed that this tactic was both justified and legal. On November 5 he wrote officials in Plaquemines Parish:

'The steamboat Planter will convey to Point 'a la Hache a number of legally qualified voters of New Orleans, who have been deprived of the opportunity of voting at New Orleans. I am sure that, being residents of the county, their votes will be received by you. The whig committee are collecting their votes, to be dispatched for the same purpose to some point of which we are ignorant.'126

123 La., Const., art. 2, sec. 8 (1812).


126 Ibid., 187.
The Democrats did just this, but they deployed two steamers instead of one. There is no way of knowing exactly how many people made the junket to Point 'a la Hache aboard the Planter and the Agnes. However, Plaquemines Parish recorded 1,044 votes in this election, and beforehand more than 350 or 400 never had been polled there. Only 400 ballots had been cast in the state contest of the preceding July. Hence, probably around 600 of the party's foreign friends supplemented the downriver parish's electorato, and numerous eyewitnesses testified that the bulk of them were Irish.127

Not only did these "floating voters" overwhelmingly carry Plaquemines Parish for James K. Polk and George M. Dallas, but their presence, as well as the means employed to secure victory by the Democratic bosses, engendered chaos and a plethora of abuses. A special committee of the Louisiana House that investigated the affair concluded:

'... that the election in Plaquemines, for electors of President of the United States, ... was conducted in a lawless and irregular manner; that it was accompanied with turbulence, disorder, threats, and violence, on the part of the public officers and others, with intent to intimidate and influence voters; and that it was fraught with illegal voters, with fraud and corruption, and with a fatal disregard of the laws of the land, of morality, and of religion.' 128

No one seriously bothered to deny this charge, and many who witnessed the balloting indicated that the committee's assessment of the situation was conservative. A

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127 Ibid., 184-96. 128 Ibid., 186.
large, bludgeon-wielding "Polander" greeted all who approached the poll, shouting "'Hurra for Polk and Dallas'" in their faces. Election judges opened all ballots and rejected those with Henry Clay's name on them. When one Joseph B. Wilkinson, a resident of many years who knew most legitimate voters by name, asked Victor Debouchel, a Democratic election judge, to challenge some of the strangers the Parish Sheriff, Charles Dutillet, exclaimed that "'he would be damned if any person should be sworn at that election.'" Sebastian Bruland, a well-known naturalized Plaquemines Parish citizen, attempted to cast a Whig ballot, and Sheriff Dutillet struck him in the face with a stick. Others in the crowded room pounced upon him, and someone fired a pistol in his direction before he could escape. Such abuses marred the entire contest.129

As John Slidell indicated in his letter of November 5, the Democrats resorted to these atrocities to counter similar measures on the part of the Whigs. Joseph Wilkinson later testified that Sheriff Dutillet told him "'that the Whigs had established a precedent in sending to the parish of St. James the steamboat Randolph, or Rodolph, with 720 voters; that every village in the United States had its Hickory club; and that they were only beating the Whigs at their own tricks.'"130 In fact, Clay supporters had dispatched the steamer Swiftsure to Point 'a la Hache

129 Ibid., 182-97. 130 Ibid., 192.
with a number of their own partisans to police the polls and prevent those aboard the Planter and Agnes from voting. The Democrats simply overpowered them.  

Indeed, the entire election exuded corruption and utter disregard of the law in and around New Orleans, and both parties were to blame. The leading Democratic organ said that the Whigs carried the city "by bare faced frauds and open bribery," and that

The Whigs of this city are loud in their denunciations of the attempt to increase the democratic vote in the parish of Plaquemines by the introduction of voters from this city. They forget in their holy horror, that the democrats in that [sic] are but attempting to do what they themselves have actually accomplished in the parishes above, in the parish of St. Bernard and in some of the election precincts of this city, where they voted captains of vessels that had but touched our shores.

It further charged that the opposition purchased votes with the promises of clothing and that it conducted a maleficent campaign in Baton Rouge. Then it rationalized:

We admit that there has been a strong increase in the vote in Plaquemines, but in doing so, we ought to attribute it to the fine weather which has prevailed for the last three days, which has permitted the pilots, the fishermen and the planters, the most remote, to repair to the polls with more facility than ever. What then so astonishing that the parish of Plaquemines which gave 600 votes, has given 1200, when the First

131 Ibid., 188; Louis Martin Sears, John Slidell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1925), 39.
132 The Louisiana Courier (New Orleans), November 5, 1844.
133 Ibid., November 6, 1844.
134 Ibid., November 7-9, 1844.
Ward of the First Municipality, which has never given over 400 to 450, has given the enormous number of 886.135

As these passages indicate, the Whigs reacted to the Plaquemines Frauds with intense rage and sanctimonious indignation, and they vowed to "wage war upon the present NATURALIZATION LAWS, and urge with what power we may possess, such a modification as will compel every foreigner who lands upon our shores to remain TWENTY ONE YEARS, and then receive his evidence of citizenship from the UNITED STATES COURT ONLY."136 Alexander Barrow decried the method used to elect Polk in his state before the U. S. Senate, and he welcomed the Louisiana legislature's investigation of it "for the purpose of showing to the people . . . the infamous and disgraceful means that were used by the democratic party, or a portion of the leaders of that party, . . . to carry the vote . . . in favor of James K. Polk."137

Reactions such as these, along with those to Judge Elliott's nefarious conduct, were volatile fuel beneath the nativistic caldron. But of central importance here is the

135 Ibid., November 7, 1844.
136 Daily Tropic (New Orleans), November 6, 1844, quoted in The Louisiana Courier, November 6, 1844. See also The Daily Picayune, November 6-7, 1844. Even though it was Whig in sentiment, this most sophisticated journal almost always refrained from name-calling and engaging in open hostilities. Hence, its remarks are much weaker than the brazenly partial Tropic's.
137 The Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd sess., February 3, 1845, 733.
fact that these are perhaps the best examples of how the Democratic party politically manipulated the foreigners who so readily allied with it. Though it hardly had a monopoly on corruption, as the preceding chapter pointed out, the numerical advantage that immigrants gave to the party of Jackson in New Orleans was enough to plunge Whigs into panic. There is not a finer illustration of the attitudes that prevailed in the city than a want ad that appeared in the Democratic Third Municipality's Daily True Delta on October 30, 1851. It read: "Voters wanted. 100 voters wanted for an adjoining parish, on Monday at 11 o'clock, giving ample time to cast votes for friends in the city first. One dollar for each will be paid, and transportation free. . . ."138 This advertisement almost unbelievably indicates, adherence to the principle of fair play and the concept of free elections was by no means a prominent feature of the Crescent City's political credo. Fought tooth and nail, partisan contests were unfettered, rough affairs in which the ends justified the means. Both parties used whatever methods they could to win, and the most effective weapons employed by the Democrats were the thousands of immigrants who called New Orleans their home.

After the reunification of the city in 1852 it became more important than ever for the Democrats to maintain their control of the foreign vote. Anglo elements above

138 Italics are this author's.
Canal Street fully realized this as well as the threat that their more numerous opponents posed to them. Therefore, they did everything in their power to insure and preserve their own solidarity, and especially to combat their foes' political manipulation of immigrants. They were remarkably successful in their efforts. Initially, the Democrats and their alien allies prevailed, but a significant outcome of the consolidation of New Orleans, the concomitant influx of new legions of strangers, and of the inveterate cultural cleavages that split the city was the rise of the American party. Superbly organized, that faction dominated local affairs from the mid-1850's until the spring of 1862, and it did so with militant tactics that provoked violent reactions.139

All of the overt motives that generated Know Nothingism existed in abundance in the Crescent City. Not only did thousands of foreigners encumber its institutions and infest it with crime, but under Democratic suzerainty they perpetrated one election fraud after another and veritably seemed to control the metropolis.140 In March 1854 a Whig organ rhetorically asked: "Is it fit that a populous and strong nation should, on its own soil, be governed by a comparative handful of foreigners, ignorant of its laws yet

139 See Chapter VI.

claiming to administer them, and seizing upon its offices while yet hardly speaking its language?" In answer to its own question it asserted: "Not unless the being born abroad confers some right over us: not unless we and our country belong to everybody but ourselves. . . ."\textsuperscript{141}

Of course the Democrats denied this, and they declared that their partisans, including Creoles, were thoroughly American. As the Know Nothing movement began to engulf the city they accused it of being anti-Catholic and abolitionist in sentiment, and they inveighed against its sinister secrecy, terror tactics, and physical vituperation of naturalized citizens who attempted to vote for the party of their choice. However, they admitted their adversaries' superior organization, and they pleaded with their foreign-born supporters to weather the storm of abuse and continue to cast ballots for Democratic candidates.\textsuperscript{142}

Throughout the final antebellum years almost all elections in New Orleans degenerated into outrageous theaters of frenzy in which both sides resorted to brutal coercion and indignation as they struggled for victory. On several occasions the city literally became a battleground.\textsuperscript{143} It is pointless to pose the question of whether

\textsuperscript{141} The Daily Crescent, March 21, 1854.

\textsuperscript{142} The Louisiana Courier, March 29, November 26 & 29, 1854, October 16 & 21, 1855; The Semi-Weekly Creole, October 31, 1855.

\textsuperscript{143} Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862,"
immigrants or Know Nothings instigated the violence. Each group enthusiastically participated in it. Had there been no large foreign population in the Crescent City this sort of turmoil still would have gripped it after consolidation because of the long-standing Anglo-Creole conflict. Undoubtedly, the alliance of thousands of Irish and Germans with the Democratic machine intensified the embroilment, and both naturalized citizens and newly arrived immigrants suffered more casualties in it than any other social group. But, in essence, the real victim was the city itself. Utter disrespect for the law and the constitutional rights of individuals further stigmatized its reputation, already badly tarnished by yellow fever and crime. Following the municipal elections of March 27, 1854 The Louisiana Courier predicted "dark and gloomy days for our city" unless the violence ceased. However, The Daily Orleanian summarized the situation much more accurately two-and-a-half years later. It editorialized:

Riots and bloodshed in election periods in New Orleans have a detrimental effect on its business and progress. The accounts of them are borne to all points of the earth; and if they are not exaggerated in heinousness, they are certainly not lessened in terpitude [sic], or rendered light and venial... Today New Orleans is made to rank as one of a trinity of the most


144 March 29, 1854.
reckless and rowdy cities in the world of America! 145

Thus, immigrants had a tremendous political impact on antebellum New Orleans, and it was generally detrimental. Yet, they were by no means to blame for this. Naturally drawn to the Democratic party, that faction used and manipulated them in its war with the Whigs and Know Nothings. As that war intensified after reunification the spirit of democracy deteriorated to an incredibly low level. This occurred simultaneously with the most serious commercial challenges the Crescent City ever had faced from its northern and eastern competitors. At this time, more than ever, the metropolis needed a sterling and friendly reputation. Instead it was known for its blatant abuses of constitutional freedoms and street riots.

Because of this hostile aura, the destitute condition of so many immigrants, and the limited economic opportunities available to them in New Orleans, established ethnic elements initiated programs to move these people on upstream and to find employment for and otherwise assist those who remained behind. The most notable agency that performed these tasks was the Deutschen Gesellschaft von New Orleans. On December 31, 1841 the ship Oceana became disabled off the coast of Jamaica, stranding her 241 passengers, most of whom hailed from the German states. Answering a plea from Alfred Schücking's new Deutsche Courier, 145 November 14, 1856. The other two cities in this trinity were Louisville and Baltimore.
a number of New Orleans' Germans planted the seeds for the Gesellschaft when they met at Firehouse Number Four on Old Levee Street and subscribed $817.00, as well as a quantity of clothing, for these unfortunate. A committee of doctors made arrangements to treat those suffering with yellow fever at Charity Hospital, and the assembly drew up plans to send some of the survivors north.146

After this initial endeavor the organization disbanded, but its spirit endured. As immigration through the port surged into its heavy phase the need for a permanent Bund to help the thousands of German arrivals forcefully asserted itself. Because the bulk of them spoke no English or French, they were easy marks for unscrupulous boardinghouse and steamboat runners. Many had been bilked into buying passages that included worthless tickets to the interior, and others who desired to go to Venezuela had been hoodwinked into sailing to New Orleans on the pretext that it was merely a stopover en route to that nation. Held in the city by poverty, they naturally looked to their kinsmen

On April 28, 1847 the Courier summoned Crescent City Germans to another meeting to deal with the mounting problems of newly arrived German immigrants. It convened on the evening of May 5 at the Conti Street Hotel, and its objective was to lay the foundation for a league modeled after the German Society of New York. Christian Roselius, a "redemptioner" who had risen to be one of the most prominent attorneys in Louisiana, presided, and those in attendance resolved that as soon as 150 people joined and after they had accumulated $2,000, the Gesellschaft could begin operating. In less than two weeks there were 397 members and the treasury contained $3,075. On June 4 the directors adopted a permanent constitution, rented an office on St. Louis Street, between Old Levee and Chartres, and hired J. U. Haussner as their agent and collector at $900.00 per year. Significantly, the association's first president was William Vogel, the consul of Prussia, Hamburg, and Oldenburg. Operations commenced on July 1, and one of the first orders of business was the distribution of 1,000 circulars explain-


ing the society's objectives to ship agencies, captains, and others involved with the immigrant trade in the major European ports.\footnote{149}

This new organization acted in every conceivable way to protect and sustain German immigrants. It educated potential migrants in the old country concerning travel methods and the items they would need to take with them. It campaigned against fraudulent tickets, and especially against the sale of Mississippi river steamboat passages, at ports of embarkation. Members met every vessel conveying Germans that docked at New Orleans in an effort to shield them from confidence men, and they found the newcomers lodgings in the city. The society obtained employment for literally thousands, as the figures in Table 8 indicate, and it maintained an intelligence office specifically for this purpose. Finally, it ministered to German yellow fever victims, and in 1853 it established four branch offices that coordinated medical services in various parts of the city.\footnote{150}

While all of these benevolent activities were in-

\footnote{149} Ibid. The society did not stay on St. Louis Street very long. By 1849 it was at 42 Toulouse. See Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette Directory, . . . for 1849 . . . (New Orleans: Printed by D. Davis & Son, 1849), 208.

valuable to the Germans who debarked in New Orleans, the league's major function was that of a travel agency. It strove to maintain and further the city's role as a way station and to keep immigrants moving toward the interior. Dealing directly with steamboat owners, it secured passages, many times at reduced rates, and it frequently purchased tickets for those devoid of funds. Between 1847 and 1887 it assisted 118,094 immigrants in reaching St. Louis, 39,372 in making their way to Ohio, and 21,838 in continuing their journey to Texas.151 More specifically, as illustrated in Table 8, of the 233,102 German arrivals recorded by the association between 1847 and 1860, it helped 155,225, or almost 67 percent, to wend their way out of the metropolis. Even more impressive is the fact that 85 percent of all Germans who sailed over the southern route during the thirteen final antebellum years made use of the society's services. Furthermore, the agency totally sustained itself, most of its revenue coming from contributions, interest on investments, and subscription balls and concerts.152

While this organization's programs were exemplary, they aided only Germans. Especially with the advent of famine immigration, the Irish who landed at New Orleans


152 Deiler, Geschichte der Deutschen Gesellschaft von New Orleans, 84.
### TABLE 8

**GERMAN ARRIVALS AT NEW ORLEANS SERVED BY THE DEUTSCHEN GESellschaft**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1847-48</th>
<th>1848-49</th>
<th>1849-50</th>
<th>1850-51</th>
<th>1851-52</th>
<th>1852-53</th>
<th>1853-54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landed at New Orleans</td>
<td>17,548</td>
<td>19,166</td>
<td>12,707</td>
<td>13,029</td>
<td>25,264</td>
<td>32,703</td>
<td>35,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to St. Louis</td>
<td>6,001</td>
<td>7,142</td>
<td>4,806</td>
<td>6,418</td>
<td>8,717</td>
<td>14,996</td>
<td>16,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to Ohio</td>
<td>3,892</td>
<td>4,655</td>
<td>2,921</td>
<td>3,362</td>
<td>4,791</td>
<td>5,157</td>
<td>6,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to Texas</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>1,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided with Employment</td>
<td>1,423</td>
<td>1,636</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>2,169</td>
<td>3,552</td>
<td>7,068</td>
<td>3,832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1854-55</th>
<th>1855-56</th>
<th>1856-57</th>
<th>1857-58</th>
<th>1858-59</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landed at New Orleans</td>
<td>27,010</td>
<td>10,752</td>
<td>12,642</td>
<td>13,912</td>
<td>6,549</td>
<td>6,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to St. Louis</td>
<td>11,037</td>
<td>6,046</td>
<td>8,476</td>
<td>9,796</td>
<td>4,557</td>
<td>4,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to Ohio</td>
<td>3,524</td>
<td>1,016</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent to Texas</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided with Employment</td>
<td>3,755</td>
<td>2,445</td>
<td>2,255</td>
<td>1,648</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>3,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were even more needful of this sort of assistance. Neverthe-
less, local sons of Erin never came close to matching
the record of their German counterparts in providing it.
The principal organization for aiding Irish immigrants was
the Hibernian Society of New Orleans. It was established
by Judge James Workman, the most prominent Louisiana Irish-
man of his day, in 1817, and he served as its president
until 1832. Officially incorporated on February 28, 1824
and again in 1842,153 it was basically a relief agency.
With no formal headquarters, its officers met in taverns,
and it was somewhat restrictive in that it charged members
a $10.00 initiation fee, plus another $10.00 per year.154
By the time convoys of ships began discharging masses of
starving potential recipients of its services, it was de-•
dunct, and it never performed with anything approaching the
effectiveness of the Deutscher Gesellschaft.

Because of the grim plight of these people, on
November 27, 1849 J. C. Prendergast, the Irish-born editor
of The Daily Orleanian, asserted the need for an intelli-

153 "An Act to incorporate the Hibernian Society
of New Orleans," February 28, 1824, Acts Passed at the
Second Session of the Sixth Legislature of the State of
Louisiana . . . (New Orleans, 1824), 30; "An Act to revive
an act entitled 'An Act to incorporate the Hibernian Soci-
ety of New Orleans' approved February twenty-eighth, eigh-
teen hundred and twenty-four," Acts Passed at the Second
Session of the Fifteenth Legislature of the State of Lou-
isia . . . (New Orleans, 1842), 386.

154 Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--
1862," 28; The New Orleans Annual Advertiser for 1832,
Annexed to the City Directory (New Orleans: Stephen E.
Percy & Co., 1832), 209.
gence office to direct and protect them in the Third Municipality. A week later he elaborated on this proposal and suggested the formation of a union, funded by subscriptions, that would purchase land in Arkansas and Texas and populate it with penniless Irish migrants. Initially the settlers would rent this acreage, but the ultimate object was for them to become independent farmers.

The short-lived Irish Union Immigrant Society emerged from these proposals on December 6 at a meeting called by Prendergast at the Marigny Building. Its goals paralleled those of the corresponding German organization, and the man who inspired it served as its president. Enduring for less than a year, it never purchased any agricultural real estate nor did it convey any significant number of Irish peasants out of New Orleans. Because of the destitute and diseased condition of the majority of them, it had no choice other than to confine its efforts to basic welfare services in the city. It went out of existence before the end of 1850 due to lack of financial support.

In addition to the decided burdens they imposed upon local institutions and the various reactions that this elicited, immigrants left another indelible mark on the Crescent City. For obvious reasons, from its earliest his-

155 The Daily Orleanian, November 27, 1849.
156 Ibid., December 4, 1849.
tory it had had a foreign air, and the massive influx of Northern Europeans in the four decades antedating the Civil War augmented this quality. They significantly contributed to its being one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the United States. As established in Chapter VI, virtually everyone who visited New Orleans noted that it was two, and perhaps three, cities in one, and they consistently marveled at the heterogeneous nature of its population. Indeed, it was the most European of American cities, and "badly paved, badly drained, [and] badly kept," it had the visage of a French provincial town.

During the first days of 1832 Alexis de Tocqueville correctly observed that the city's architecture was a unique blend of Spanish, English, and French. He said that the many different types of residents had "faces of all shades of color" and that they spoke English, French, Spanish, and "Creole." A year later British traveler C. D. Arfwedson


remarked:

A visit to the port offers a very interesting spectacle, both on account of the river, majestically washing its shores, and of the many different languages there spoken. One day I remarked individuals of the following nations: Americans, English, French, Scotch, Spaniards, Swedes, Germans, Irish, Italians, Russians, Creoles, Indians, Mexicans, and Brazilians.

This mixture of languages, customs, and manners, rendered the scene one of the most singular that I ever witnessed. . . .161

At roughly this same time Robert Baird compared the city market to babel,162 and Joseph Holt Ingraham, who coined the term "Crescent City," asserted:

If the market at New-Orleans represents that city, so truly does New Orleans represent every other city and nation upon earth. I know of none where is congregated so great a variety of the human species, of every language and color. . . .163

Charles A. Murray, a British lawyer, writer, and diplomat, concurred with this view and regarded the city's population as the "most amazing motley assemblage that can be exhibited by any town on earth. The prevailing language seems to be that of Babel. . . ."164

161 Arfwedson, The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834, II, 56.


164 Charles Augustus Murray, Travels in North America Including a Summer Residence With the Paunee Tribe of Indians in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri, and a
A decade later another traveler stated that New Orleans was ethnically sui generis, and he declared that upon entering it anyone would see that "There is . . . a mixture of the new and the old, and a variety of speech, manners, and costume, which forcibly strike him ere he penetrates to any great distance into the streets."\(^{165}\) In 1847 the urbane A. Oakey Hall of New York aptly dubbed it the "Calcutta of America,"\(^{166}\) and he commented:

> If there is ever to be a congress of nations, let it be held in New Orleans; there will be no mileage for delegates. Of all the crowd, perhaps not one calls the city his home, from birth or choice. . . .\(^{167}\)

Near the end of the period under consideration the editor of *Emerson's Magazine and Putnam's Monthly* asserted that "Nowhere, perhaps, is there to be found a more motley congregation of nations and languages" than in the Louisiana metropolis.\(^ {168}\) On the eve of the Civil War Frederick Law Olmsted doubted that there was a more cosmopolitan city in the world than the one that controlled the Mississippi's mouth.\(^ {169}\)

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Visit to Cuba and the Azore Islands (2 Vols.; 3rd ed.; London: Richard Bentley, 1854), II, 195-96. Murray was in New Orleans in 1834.

165 MacKay, *The Western World*, II, 80, 86.

166 A. Oakey Hall, *The Manhattaner in New Orleans; or, Phases of "Crescent City" Life* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1851), 23.

167 Ibid., 32.


169 Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom. A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the*
Long-established residents likewise were aware of the variegated nature of their city's population. In 1832 Etienne Mazureau, who had practiced law there since 1804, told Tocqueville that there was "'Not a country in America or Europe but has sent us some representatives. New Orleans is a patch-work of peoples.'"170 One of the most illustrative indigenous expressions of this state of society appeared in The Daily Picayune in 1843. With somewhat surprising pride it editorialized:

When we state that in no city in the New or Old World is there a greater variety of nations represented than in this, or a greater diversity of different and distinct races and people to be met with than here, we are but asserting an established truism. New Orleans is a world in miniature, subdivided into smaller commonwealths, in every one of which distinctive traits of national character are to be seen, and the peculiar language of its people to be heard spoken.171

It invited the reader to stroll through the streets and said he would "encounter as much novelty and as great a diversity of national character as if he made the tour of Europe, and took in the great lakes, the falls of Niagara and Bunker Hill in his route."172

Two years earlier the same paper dramatically commented on this diversity when it stated:


171 September 23, 1843.

172 Ibid.
To stand on the Levee for a day now, and witness the number of strangers arriving in the city, a person would conclude that they were acting in obedience to the orders of the general who gave the word 'Wheel by sections of countries!' . . . There disembark a shipload of Frenchmen, who look as if Dr. Sangrade himself could not extract an ounce of blood from the lot. Their baggage consists principally of empty wine bottles, a few fiddle cases, several green parrots, and six diminutive poodle dogs. There! a herculean Hoosier commits shoe-icide on one of the illustrious canine strangers . . .

Now lands an extensive lot of Low Dutch, many of whom appear to be rather high!--shade of Van Tromp--spirit of sour-krout [sic], but they are a strange looking set! . . .

Then comes a corporal's guard, as it were, of men, with quick dark eyes, rings in ear and unshaven faces. They are, we should judge, from Spain. . . .

But now! now, the town is taken--now the citadel is stormed!--Ten, twenty, forty, sixty men and their 'adjuncts' poured out of the same ship. All Irish, green as shamrocks, and as happy looking as potatoes and good humor can make them; . . . What a valuable acquisition will they prove in carrying out the 'internal improvements of the country.' 173

As the magnitude of immigration into and through the Port of New Orleans swelled from under 1,000 to more than 50,000 per year during the four decades prior to America's bloodiest war, uprooted foreigners profoundly upset the political and social equilibrium that existed there. Their impact upon the city was as deep-felt, yet hardly as deadly, as the city's impact upon them, and it essentially was negative. Beyond the facts that they were there in large numbers and in desperate straits, they did not shoulder the total responsibility for this undesirable effect. Louisiana and its chief urban center simply were ill-equipped to ac-

173 Ibid., November 7, 1841.
commodate and offer livelihoods to thousands of starving expatriates. Despite their paying a considerable proportion of what it cost to operate Charity Hospital from 1842 to 1856, newcomers strained this and all other eleemosynary and public institutions in the Crescent City and the state as a whole to the limits. Politically seduced and manipulated by the Democratic machine, they found themselves ensnared in a violent embroilment that would have taken place, though with less fury, in their absence. Whereas the bulk of those who debarked in New Orleans continued their journey up the Mississippi, some with precious assistance from local friends, those who stayed behind, whatever their motives, changed the river city markedly and colored its character.
CHAPTER VIII

IMMIGRANT RESIDENCES AND ROUTINES IN ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS

Immigrants who terminated their journeys in New Orleans and took up permanent or temporary residence there before the Civil War were by and large poor, provincial people with few skills. As has been established in preceding chapters, they heavily burdened the city's social and charitable institutions, intensified its political battles, and fanned the flames of the Anglo-Creole conflict that antedated their arrival in large numbers by many years. A well-established and somewhat unusual local nativist movement acrimoniously hounded and abused them, and onslaughts of yellow fever decimated their ranks more than those of any other segment of society. Quite obviously, simple survival on a day-to-day basis was a formidable challenge to these strangers in a strange land and in an even stranger city, and they spent the bulk of their time attempting to meet it. Even though the more prosaic aspects of their existence in the Louisiana metropolis were far less dramatic than the major features of the city's impact upon them or of their impact upon it, where and how they lived, their status in the labor force, and their social associations are significant components of New Orleans' history as a
reception center for new Americans.

Since the overwhelming majority of the immigrants who stayed in the Crescent City were impoverished, it goes without saying that they dwelt in its shabbiest quarters, or, as a leading student of Louisiana's past put it, in those neighborhoods "most shunned by decent feet and clean robes . . . ." While persons of foreign origin resided on virtually every block, the bulk of the newly arrived concentrated along the lower and upper reaches of the waterfront in close proximity to the heavy labor market created by the port. The area below Esplanade Avenue, or the Third Municipality and District, where many immigrant ships discharged their cargoes literally teemed with penniless Irish and Germans. Known as "Little Saxony" and the "Poor Third," this downstream section was one of the least improved and most squalid portions of the city.

2 The Daily Orleanian (New Orleans), November 27, 1849, January 30, 1850.
4 The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), September 23, 1843; The Daily Orleanian, March 2, 1849, April 25, 1850; A. Oakey Hall, The Manhattaner in New Orleans; or, Phases of "Crescent City" Life (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1851),
By the time New Orleans firmly held its position as the nation's second port of entry in the late 1830's large numbers of immigrants occupied the middle and uppermost zones of its American wing above Canal Street, and they practically dominated the suburb of Lafayette.\(^5\) In the fall of 1843 The Daily Picayune reported that in the Second Municipality's Third Ward, above Julia Street,

You will see nothing but Dutch faces and hear nothing but the Dutch language. . . . This part of the city is so thoroughly Dutch that even the pigs grunt in that language . . . . Come down to Girod street and the precincts thereunto adjacent, and you on every side hear 'illigant Irish,' in the mother tongue, and with as graceful a brogue as if you stood on the banks of the Shannon. . . .\(^6\)


6 The Daily Picayune, September 23, 1843.
Four years later an editorialist writing for DeBow's Review observed that Lafayette's population was only one-eighth slave, and he asserted that "This is owing to the fact that Lafayette has been chiefly settled by a laboring population, mostly German and Irish immigrants, who literally fulfill the scriptural command of eating their bread in the sweat of their brow [sic]." Equally if not more foul than its counterpart below the French Quarter, this locale was especially disease-ridden, and it was there that the catastrophic yellow fever epidemic of 1853 initially broke out.

As the Port of New Orleans expanded in the 1830's its most famous, or infamous, immigrant neighborhood, the "Irish Channel," grew up around the boisterous flatboat landing in its upper area. At no time in the antebellum period did all local Hibernians dwell in this or any other single district, but the geographically nebulous Channel

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9 Father Earl F. Niehaus correctly argues that the
attracted a great deal of notoriety. The exact etymology of its name is a mystery, and it had no precise boundaries. In general terms it spread up and downstream from Adele Street for about ten blocks in either direction, and it extended back from the river five to six blocks, Tchoupitoulas Street being its main thoroughfare. Hence, it included substantial portions of both Lafayette and the Second, or Anglo, Municipality. Dilapidated tenements and jerry-built shanties made of lumber from flatboats lined its unpaved streets that erupted into violence virtually every evening. St. Mary's Market, on North and South Diamond Streets between Tchoupitoulas and South Front, was the Irish answer to the French Market and a principal gathering place in the community. However, the Channel's major landmarks were the many dens of iniquity and grogshops that dotted all of its arteries, and saloon keepers were its leading citizens. Two of its most favored taprooms were Noud's Queen House at the corner of Tchoupitoulas and Adele and Bull's Head Tavern, located at St. Mary's and Tchoupitoulas, a block away. This neighborhood had the distinction of being the city's

Irish did not reside in a single section of New Orleans and that they were found in all areas of the city in "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862," 64-71. However, in his effort to make this valid point he contends that the Irish Channel was a mythical neighborhood that never existed as a cohesive unit, even though he clearly recognizes an Irish population shift to the upper portion of the city after 1830. Despite the fact that the Channel had no precise boundaries, as Niehaus asserts, there is no doubt that literally thousands of poor Hibernians lived in the general area usually understood to have comprised it.
vilest and most crime- and pestilence-infested slum, and it remains a blighted area to this day, blacks having replaced the Irish as its primary residents.

Especially after immigration through the port moved into its intermediate and heavy periods the indigent individuals who made their homes in these noisome environs found it very difficult to assume productive positions in the local economy or to improve their social status. Equipped to do little more than labor or work in the service trades, they sold the one commodity that they had to sustain themselves—the power that their bodies could generate. This is not to say that no newcomers enjoyed upward mobility. Despite the disadvantages and poverty that ensnared the majority of them, some with talent and ambition

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managed to occupy responsible and lucrative stations, though the likelihood of their doing so became more remote as the period progressed. Certain of these people came well-educated and with considerable wealth, while others rose from very humble beginnings. But, whatever their particular circumstances, most of them arrived before the great flood of humanity inundated the Crescent City during the final twenty-three prewar years.  

A perusal of any antebellum city directory reveals that Irish and German names studded the ranks of all professions. Representatives of those nationalities were prominent in commerce and finance, and some were physicians, attorneys, clergymen, and teachers. Others operated hotels,

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12 The official passenger lists are the most logical sources for determining how many immigrants entered New Orleans with any sort of wealth or education. Unfortunately, as pointed out in Chapter II, they become increasingly unreliable as to occupations and ultimate destinations as the period unfolds. Hence, they are of very limited value in these areas. Yet, the trends they reveal warrant the generalization that some wealthy and professional individuals did immigrate to New Orleans. See U. S., Secretary of State, Annual Report of Passengers Arriving from Foreign Countries, 1820—(National Archives Record Group 36, H. Q. Records, Bureau of Customs, 1815—1956; Microcopy 272, National Archives Microfilm Publications), reels 1-13. See also Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803—1862," 88-105; Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans," in Dufour, ed., St. Patrick's of New Orleans, 10-11; Gordy, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845—1855," 20-23; Nau, The German People of New Orleans, 1850—1900, 7, 51-70; Robert T. Clark, "The New Orleans German Colony in the Civil War," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XX (October, 1937), 991-92; J. Hanno Deiler, "European Immigration into the United States From 1820—1900" (lecture delivered before the Germanistic Society of Chicago, December 16, 1907, Louisiana Collection, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge), 2-6; Sarah Searight, New Orleans (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), 92-94; Reinders, End of an Era, 63-64.
ran small businesses, functioned as influential members of the Fourth Estate, and held down municipal jobs, especially with the police force. However, the directories do not specify how long such individuals had been in the city. Nor do they indicate which of them acquired their skills and wealth totally, or even partially, after arriving in the United States.\(^{13}\) Therefore, while the conclusion that foreign-born people had at least a limited opportunity to advance in New Orleans is valid, any estimate as to the percentage of plebeian immigrants who actually climbed the economic and social ladders must be tentative.

Nevertheless, the Crescent City's legions of poor newcomers could look to a number of eminently successful entrepreneurs and pillars of the community with ethnic backgrounds very similar to their own. Although there is no way of determining to what extent this operated, these exemplary figures undoubtedly bolstered their lesser brothers' morale and helped maintain their belief that America was a potential El Dorado. Two of the most outstanding of them were Christian Roselius and Maunsel White.

Born on August 10, 1803 in the village of Thedinghausen in Brunswick, near Bremen, Roselius received a pri-

\(^{13}\) See, for example, the names under the various professional categories in Cohen's New Orleans Directory for 1855: Including Jefferson City, Gretna, Carrollton, Algiers, and McDonogh... (New Orleans: Printed at the Office of the Picayune, 1855) and Cohen's New Orleans and Southern Directory for 1856... (New Orleans: Daily Delta, Print., 1855).
mary education while still in Germany. He migrated to New Orleans at the age of sixteen, arriving as a redemptioner on July 11, 1820. William Duhy, the publisher of the Louisiana Advertiser, paid his passage and hence bought his services for two and one-half years. In Duhy's office Roselius learned both English and the printer's trade, and after completing his indenture he went to work for The Louisiana Courier. During his tenure with that organ he edited Louisiana's first literary paper, The Halcyon, in association with Charles McMillen, and he independently read law. Increasingly he became more interested in jurisprudence than journalism, and he eventually left the press to study law full time in the office of Auguste Davesac. While he finished his training there he taught English to support himself, and on June 23, 1828 he was admitted to the Louisiana Bar.

Though he was not a great courtroom performer, Roselius had a tremendous aptitude for civil law. He developed into the state's foremost expert in that field, and he was Professor of Civil Law for twenty-three years in the University of Louisiana (now Tulane University). In

February 1843, while this former German provincial was a member of the general assembly, Governor Andre Bienvenu Roman appointed him attorney general, and after leaving that office two years later he was one of the framers of the state's 1845 constitution. Even though he enjoyed a highly rewarding career, Roselius did not forget his origins. He frequently rendered service to poor clients free of charge, and, fully aware of the plight of so many of his former countrymen in New Orleans, he was one of the organizers of the German Society that aided thousands of them after 1847. As he became older he grew very conservative politically, and he was an ardent opponent of secession. Yet, he remained one of the Crescent City's most influential citizens. When he unexpectedly died on September 5, 1873 it sincerely mourned his passing.15

Howbeit not as sweeping as Roselius' rags to riches story, that of Maunsel White was also quite significant. While still a youth he immigrated to the United States from Ireland, where he had been born into an old and venerable family late in the 1770's. With very little to his name he made his way to New Orleans on a flatboat, reaching the city in the first days of the nineteenth century. He married into Creole society and for more than fifty years was


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one of the most successful leaders of the business community. He made over $2,000,000 as a commission merchant, land speculator, and sugar planter, and he commanded respect for his honesty and integrity throughout the entire Mississippi Valley. During the British invasion of January 1815 he led one of the local companies of volunteers and developed a close friendship with Andrew Jackson. He was an administrator of the University of Louisiana, a member of the city council and chairman of its finance committee, a state senator from 1846 to 1850, and a financial supporter of the Irish Union Immigrant Society. A zealous proponent of the nation's "manifest destiny," and a confidant of Zachary Taylor, he wanted the Stars and Stripes to fly over both Havana and Mexico City, and he supported William Walker's abortive attempts to take Nicaragua in 1855.\textsuperscript{16} White's career spanned the entire period under consideration, and he effectively demonstrated how a newcomer from a distant land could prosper in New Orleans.

Both Roselius and White arrived long before hordes of hungry home-seekers invaded the Crescent City, and both were exceptional individuals with far more skills and opportunities than the rank and file immigrants who came

after them. Most of those people could do little more than dream of becoming jurists, lawmakers, or merchant princes while they bent their backs over picks and shovels or hewed wood and drew water for their bed and board. In order to obtain such menial positions in the metropolis they had to compete with slaves and particularly freedmen, but by the time of the Civil War whites had well-nigh displaced blacks in almost all laboring and service fields there. Indeed, the heavy influx of foreigners in desperate need of work together with the later antebellum period's inflated slave prices directly contributed to the drastic reduction of New Orleans' slave and free black population in the years following 1840.17

Rivalry between blacks and immigrants for servile jobs frequently boiled into violence, and each group developed rancid antipathy toward the other. The conflict also stifled the organization of labor in the city, because it

precluded unification of the workers. Contrary to the stereotype imposed upon them by the Know Nothing movement, the preponderance of aliens who stayed in New Orleans were anything but abolitionists. In fact they opposed emancipation, because they feared it would glut the labor force and threaten their livelihoods. A public meeting of approximately 150 "mechanics" that took place on August 30, 1835, blatantly illustrated this white proletarian attitude. Those in attendance sought to disallow slaves (and presumably free blacks) from learning any sort of "mechanical art." So emotional was this issue and so inflammatory were the speakers that the assemblage exploded into a riot that compelled Acting Mayor John Culbertson to proclaim a 10:00 PM curfew and to request that masters have their slaves off of the streets an hour earlier.

The fact that manual laborers made comparatively good wages in antebellum New Orleans added intensity to the struggle between newly arrived whites and blacks for this type of employment. Before immigration entered its heavy phase many such workers commanded $2.00 per day, and


19 The New Orleans Bee, August 31, 1835.
skilled craftsmen took home $1.00 more.20 Wages generally declined as the period unfolded and the number of people in need of jobs increased. By the 1850's the usual pay for a day of back-breaking toil was $1.00, and skilled workers pocketed double that amount.21 The several hundred Hibernians and Germans on the city's payroll did somewhat better than this. From 1847 through 1859 those saddled with the municipality's most menial chores had incomes varying from $1.15 to $1.53 per day, while carters and pavers usually earned $2.50.22 According to J. D. B. DeBow's compendium to the Seventh Census, at mid century the average Louisiana laborer made 73¢ with, and $1.04 without, board on a daily


basis. Although these sums seem meager, the state ranked ninth and fifth among all the states and territories in these respective categories. At roughly this same time the very limited number of laborers in New Orleans' major manufacturing concern, Leeds Foundry, received $1.50 a day, and the thirty-five employees of the Orleans Sugar Refinery drew $35.00 per month. Hence, newcomers who secured such jobs acquired a measure of economic stability as long as they were able to work.

In the city itself the numerous tasks adherent to the transfer of commerce required a substantial labor force. For this reason immigrants resided near the levee where they functioned as longshoremen, porters, draymen, and in related vocations. It was not unusual for them to force their way into these positions, nor were they timid in dealing with others who competed for them. Because of

23 J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, Embracing its Territory, Population--White, Free Colored, and Slave--Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census, to Which are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning with 1790, in Comparative Tables, With Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information (Washington, 1854), 164.

24 "Industry of the Southern and Western States," DeBow's Review, VI (October, 1848), 206.

25 The Daily Picayune, February 21, 1840; The Daily Crescent (New Orleans), August 3, 1854; The New Orleans Bee, October 5, 1850; Daily True Delta, August 3, 1854; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., A Journey in the Sea-board Slave States in the Years 1853-1854 (1856; rpt.
their increasing numerical strength and aggressiveness, by the early 1850's foreign-born elements monopolized certain of the port's principal service trades. Among the most important of them were the specialized craft of loading cotton bales into ships' holds and the draying and hack driving industries.

Cotton screwmen were a singular breed of longshoremen who packed cotton into seagoing vessels, and most of them were Irish. So called because they used huge jack-screws to wedge the greatest possible number of bales between a craft's decks, their work was extremely taxing and dangerous. Prior to the Civil War there never were more than 500 of them, and they worked in gangs, or teams, of five. Highly cohesive and extremely proud of their occupation, in November 1850 they formed New Orleans' second and most powerful antebellum labor union, The Independent Screwmen's Benevolent Society. Just as did most similar associations, it charged an initiation fee and dues, offered its members paid sick and injury leave, established a burial fund, and held annual festivals complete with elaborate parades. More significantly, it was responsible for almost every improvement in the techniques of stowing the Crescent.


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City's most valuable export aboard ships. Though these "aristocrats of labor" never resorted to a strike, they progressively obtained higher wages. Gangs' daily incomes increased from $13.50 in 1850 to $21.00 in 1858. Therefore, the relatively few Hibernians who dominated this field enjoyed a secure foothold in the local economy and substantially greater salaries than their counterparts in other endeavors.²⁶

Many more newcomers found work as draymen and hack drivers. As pointed out in Chapter V, due to the lack of adequate warehouse facilities near the levee, these people played a crucial role in the movement of goods through the port. Until the early 1840's blacks chauffeured most of the city's cabs and operated the bulk of the carts that clattered over the streets and wharves. After that time foreign-born elements supplanted them. The knowledge that these industries were both lucrative and large motivated hyphenated Americans to fight for control of them. In 1837 alone there were 2,000 drays in New Orleans, and they earned $1,690,000,²⁷ thereby giving each of their owners


a relatively high daily wage of $2.31. Although Irish
draymen did not follow the screwmen's example and unionize,
their German colleagues did in 1854. But whether officially
organized or not, immigrants used whatever means that seemed
necessary to keep blacks out of the carrying trades. For
example, in February 1840 a Hibernian looked up from his
work with a street paving crew to see a black man preten­
tiously steering a wagon through the intersection of Camp
and Gravier. In order to make the driver aware that he
needed to find another calling the son of Erin heaved a
flagstone at him, knocking him from his rig and breaking
his arm.29

Gaudily attired alien teamsters veritably reigned
over New Orleans' thoroughfares and were notorious for
recklessly tearing about as if they held exclusive title to
the right-of-way. Despite their frequent arrests for care­
less driving, they saddled the city with a real traffic

28 The Daily Picayune, January 29, 1841; The Daily
Orleanian, November 28, 1849, April 15, 1855; Louisiana
Advertiser (New Orleans), December 28, 1830; Charles Lyell,
A Second Visit to the United States of North America
II, 125; Olmsted, A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States,
II, 237-39; Lonn, Foreigners in the Confederacy, 27; Conway,
"New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 115;
Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862," 118-21;
Nau, The German People of New Orleans, 1850--1900, 57;
Clark, "The New Orleans German Colony in the Civil War,"
993; Jeannette Katherine Laguait, "The German Element in
New Orleans, 1820--1860" (M. A. thesis, Tulane University,
1940), 31-32.

29 The Daily Picayune, February 21, 1840.
problem. In the fall of 1854 the nativist New-Orleans Commercial Bulletin condemned their effrontery, as well as that of foreigners in general, when it reported that an Irishman, madly careening down St. Charles on his dray, deliberately tried to trample two Second Municipality politicians in the process of crossing the avenue. The pedestrians scrambled out of his path, but, frustrated at having missed them, the driver stopped and proceeded to berate and threaten the men for having had the temerity to use the street.

Immigrants also vied with blacks for service jobs, and these positions were an important source of employment for women as well as men. In the same manner that they moved into the draying business, foreign-born people began unseating their black rivals after 1840 as chambermaids, hotel servants, waiters, and to a certain extent, as domestics. These trades drew the Irish more than any other group, and Irish housemen and women gained a great deal of notoriety for their independence and arrogance as well as their punctiliousness and savoir-faire. An Hibernian


32 Milton Mackie, From Cape Cod to Dixie and the
waiter in attendance at a lavish summer ball in 1848 illustrated the latter quality by being as fair-spoken as any of the dandies who made merry there. As a reporter for The Daily Picayune put it:

But, gallant as they [the dandies] were, I doubt if they were more gallant than an Irish waiter who took up refreshments for the ladies. He was met on the stairs, when taking up a supply of confectionery, by a gentleman, who told him to be sure to preserve some of them for him.

'O ye want me to presarve some of the presarves for ye, d' ye' said Pat.
'I do by all means,' said the gentleman.
'Nabochlish!' said Pat; 'faix, I'll keep them as safe for ye as I keep that lock of Nancy O'Brien's hair.'
'Well, be sure you do,' said the gentleman, walking off.

He returned some half hour afterwards, and called on Pat for the 'presarves.'
'O faix they wint, yer honor!' said Pat.
'Went!' exclaimed the gentleman, in somewhat of a passion--'Where did they go to--down the river, I suppose. What steamboat took them?'
'O faix, thin,' said Pat, half shutting his left eye and casting a roguish look at his interrogator, 'it was the Brilliant took them, and sure a beautiful craft she is; see her there, with her own brilliant countenance and her pierce-me-heart eyes, sailin' through the quadrille, just like one of May-o's or June-o's swans in the wather!--I forget which of the months it was that had swans. '

These figurative but complementary remarks of the waiter were applied to a young lady who might be certainly termed a brilliant beauty, even among the brilliant at that ball-room, and whose partner had presented to her the very confectionery which the waiter had been keeping in reserve in fulfillment of his promise.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\) The Daily Picayune, August 14, 1844.
By the mid-1850's "Pats" and "Bridgets" held full sway on the staffs of the elegant St. Charles and almost all other Crescent City hotels, and they received ample remuneration, maids taking home $2.50 per day.34

While they had to compete with resident blacks for all manner of menial jobs along the waterfront and as servants, immigrants encountered little competition in extremely heavy and dangerous occupations in New Orleans and its immediate hinterland. As the value of slaves increased in the latter antebellum years, employers found it much more practical and economical to pay eager recruits from among the numberless new arrivals $1.00 a day to dig canals, repair levees, and ditch plantations than to risk losing costly field hands in the malarial swamps or to the ravages of the sun.35 As a Virginia tobacco planter told Frederick


Law Olmsted in 1853 "... a negro's life is too valuable to be risked at it [such work]. If a negro dies, it's a considerable loss, you know."36

Though most Southerners did not consider foreign-born toilers as efficient as slaves and despite the fact that white workers were not particularly dependable due to their quarrelsome nature and tendency to tipple, literally thousands of them poured their lifeblood into improvement projects throughout all of the South's older regions and especially near its major reception centers. The Irish monopolized these tasks,37 and, reflecting on a series of drainage operations that vastly increased the value of his land, a Georgia planter explicitly outlined his caste's sentiments about immigrant labor in 1851 when he wrote:


37 Of course, this was true throughout all older sections of the nation in the antebellum period. See Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom, 70; The Daily Picayune, April 25, 1849; Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans, 90-91; Power, Impressions of America, II, 151; Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 93-94; Conway, "New Orleans as a Port of Immigration, 1820--1860," 11-12; Sillers, "Flood Control in Bolivar County," 9-10; Harrison, "Levee Building in Mississippi Before the Civil War," 70; Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862," 106-12; Gordy, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1845--1855," 16-20; Pinner, "A History of the Irish Channel, 1840--1860," 20.
'Negroes, it is said could have done the work cheaper; but governed by the maxim, 'ne sutor ultra credidam,' I confined the black man to the cultivation of the staple commodities. An Irish ditcher, brought up in a locality not larger than a pig-stye, with a rotten potato for his breakfast, and a yoke upon his neck, and a tax gatherer in his pocket, is to be excused if his relish for liberty be keen, and his devotion to that goddess profound and sincere.

When properly schooled in a little cisatlantic [sic] adversity, he becomes the finest laborer in the world.'38

Most immigrants who engaged in such perilous work did so in gangs. Some of them roamed the city and countryside in search of employment, but more sold their services through labor contractors in New Orleans. Those individuals frequently greeted potential pick and shovel men with offers of sorely needed jobs as they disembarked from their ships. Newcomers hired out by the day, the month, or on a yearly basis, and those fortunate enough to survive the debilitating rigors of this type of life stood the chance of advancing to the status of "boss contractor." In this capacity they both mustered their brothers for work on improvement projects and supervised their endeavors.39


Like every other urban center before the advent of the machine age, the Louisiana metropolis depended upon the power of men and animals for all public and private projects to maintain or modify the local environment. Legions of lowly immigrants provided the city with the bulk of that energy. They repaired and expanded its levees, built the few short-line railroads that served it, carried out the few badly needed attempts to drain it, and, in essence, executed virtually all other ventures necessitating the movement of earth. Thousands succumbed to utter exhaustion and all varieties of fevers in the process. Between 1831 and 1836 alone at least 3,000 Irishmen died digging the New Basin Canal from the rear of the Anglo section to Lake Pontchartrain.40 In February 1835, when that waterway neared completion, the famous Irish actor, Tyrone Power, witnessed operations there, and he lamented:

I only wish that the wise men at home who coolly charged the present condition of Ireland upon the laziness of her population, could be transported to this spot to look upon the hundreds of fine fellows


laboring here beneath a sun that at this winter season was at times sufficiently fierce, and amidst a pesti-
ential swamp whose exhalations were foetid to a degree scarcely endurable even for a few moments; wading amongst stumps of trees, mid-deep in black mud, clearing the spaces pumped out by powerful steam engines; wheeling, digging, hewing, or bearing burdens it made one's shoulders ache to look upon; exposed meantime to every change of temperature, in log-huts, laid down in the very swamp, . . . Here they subsist on the coarsest fare, holding life as a tenure as uncertain as does the leader of a forlorn hope, excluded from all the advantages of civilization; often at the mercy of a hard contractor, who wrings his profits from their blood; and all this for a pittance that merely enables them to exist, with little power to save, or a hope beyond the continuance of the like exertion.41

Power also pointed out that wives lived with their husbands in this squalor, "fondly remembering Ireland,"42 and they well may have done so in the pre-famine years. But by the mid-1840's, when the Green Isle offered them little beyond starvation and disease, this no longer held true. While steaming from Montgomery to Mobile, Alabama, during his visit to the United States in 1846-47, British traveler Alexander MacKay asked an Hibernian fellow passenger whether he believed that his countrymen improved their lot in America. With no hesitation and in all truthfulness the man replied "'Ah sure, but they do! Isn't anything an improve-
ment upon Ireland.'"43

41 Power, Impressions of America, II, 149-50.
42 Ibid., 150.
43 Alexander MacKay, The Western World; or, Travels in the United States in 1846-47: Exhibiting Them in Their Latest Development; Social, Political, and Industrial; In-
In rural areas outside of New Orleans immigrant laborers likewise went largely unchallenged in the performance of the same life-threatening tasks that occupied them in the city. Fairly constant levee work, ditching, and forest removal were essential prerequisites for the successful maintenance of sugar plantations, and beginning in the early 1840's faceless foreigners did the lion's share of this work. Distinguished from slaves only by their color and freedom, they received $1.00 a day to dig ditches and $5.00 an acre to drain land, and the fields in which they toiled became the final resting places of untold numbers of them. 44 Referring to John Burnside's Ascension Parish Houmas estate, which presently is a popular tourist attraction, The Times of London's military correspondent, William Howard Russell, noted in 1861:

The labor of ditching, trenching, clearing the waste lands, and hewing down the forests, is generally done by Irish laborers, who travel about the country under contractors, or are engaged by resident gangsmen for the task. Mr. Seal [an overseer] lamented the high...

prices of this work; but then, as he said, 'It was much better to have Irish to do it, who cost nothing to the planter, if they died, than to use up good field-hands in such severe employment.' There is a wonderful mine of truth in this observation. Heaven knows how many poor Hibernians have been consumed and buried in these Louisiana swamps, leaving their earnings to the dram-shop-keeper, and the contractor, and the results of their toil to the planter.45

Work as deck hands and stokers on steamboats, also sometimes considered too taxing and dangerous for slaves, drew other poor immigrants who remained in and around New Orleans. Throughout the entire antebellum period native Americans held all positions as officers and cabin stewards on these craft, and until 1840 they dominated deck crews as well. After that time they gave way to people of alien extraction in the latter category, and the overwhelming majority of them were Irish and German. By 1850, 63 percent of all men who labored on decks were foreign-born, and a decade later that percentage had increased by six points.46

Watching cotton loading operations in Alabama, Frederick Olmsted noticed that Irishmen rather than bondmen shouldered the heaviest burdens, and when he asked the mate in charge to explain this unexpected circumstance that worthy replied: "The niggers are worth too much to be risked here; if the Paddies are knocked overboard, or get their backs

45 Russell, My Diary North and South, 272-73.

broke, nobody loses anything!"47 Because of frequent boiler explosions the members of these vessels' companies most liable to lose their lives were those who fed the fires that kept them running. For this reason, especially on older boats, most stokers spoke with a brogue or guttural accent, and they generally received the standard $1.00 a day for their services.48

Immigrants who struggled for survival in the most menial of occupations and others who found no work at all and burdened New Orleans' charitable agencies and institutions lived rather shallow social lives. Aside from their inflammatory participation in local politics and somewhat wanton activities in the grogshops and streets of their neighborhoods, those affable associations and cultural experiences which the common mass of newcomers had revolved around their churches and took place at periodic ethnic or national celebrations. In these settings they met with their peers in a relaxed and congenial atmosphere, participated in the same ceremonies and convivialities they had known in their homelands, and they took pride in their identities.49


49 Nau, The German People of New Orleans, 1850-1900, 70-84, 121-22; Clark, "The New Orleans German Colony

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Ostensibly comfortable in predominantly Roman Catholic New Orleans, the Irish initially worshipped at St. Louis Cathedral, other smaller French churches, and at a chapel near the riverfront in the city's upper section.

Quite naturally, as their numbers increased they desired a congregation of their own, and in the spring of 1833 nine prominent Hibernian businessmen formed the second major parish in the rapidly growing metropolis. They appropriately christened it St. Patrick's, and two of them, Charles Byrne and Thomas Fitzwilliams, became its first trustees. The founders bought four squares of land on Camp Street between Girod and Julia, built a modest frame church there, and secured the services of Irish-born Father Adam Kindelon, who was then one of St. Louis Cathedral's assistant pastors. Though several other parishes grew out of it in later years, St. Patrick's remained the spiritual and social center of the Crescent City's Irish populace throughout the antebellum period and long after it.50

Kindelon was St. Patrick's rector for slightly over a year and a half, and late in 1834 James Ignatius Mullon replaced him. Until his death in 1866 Mullon was one of the Irish community's most revered leaders, and, indeed, he commanded respect throughout the entire city. Born in 1793, he was a native of Londonderry. At a very early age he immigrated to Emmitsburg, Maryland with his parents where his father was a schoolmaster. While still quite young the future priest saw action with the United States Navy during the War of 1812, and after several years of rugged living ruined his health he decided to devote himself to the church. Ordained at the age of thirty-five, he began his career in Cincinnati where he became president of that city's first Catholic college. At his own request he left that comfortable station to minister to New Orleans' poor Hibernians, and in short order he came to be their patriarch.51

Physically large, boldly aggressive, and brazenly proud of his heritage, Mullon looked like a longshoreman, and he was the perfect Irish priest. His amicable and gregarious nature gained him acceptance into virtually all of New Orleans' social circles, but more than anything else, he championed the immigrants' cause and endeavored to keep them true to the faith of their fathers. He was a dynamic

speaker, and his potent oratory and personal prestige made him a real nemesis to the Know Nothing movement.\textsuperscript{52} Always stressing the importance of the family unit, he channeled a major part of his energy into a rather successful temper-ance crusade. Under his influence scores of lowly sons of Erin flocked to St. Patrick's altar after mass, swore off of the bottle, and joined his "Total Abstinence Society."\textsuperscript{53} Early in 1842 the city's most nonpartisan newspaper praised the pastor's infusion of sobriety into his congregation when it reported:

Until we saw the procession of the 'St. Patrick's Total Abstinence Society' yesterday, we had no idea of the rapid strides which the regenerating cause of temperance is making in this city. The spectacle was a highly gratifying one. There, marched orderly along some three hundred and fifty persons who have banished forever from their presence use of the most insidious enemies to their health, prosperity, and domestic peace. They appeared to be exclusively composed of the honest, laboring class--men among whom the ravages of intemperance had made the most fearful inroads, inasmuch as their resources were drawn only from the sweat of their brow, and sums squandered on alcohol fell the more severely on their families.\textsuperscript{54}

Mullon also left New Orleans one of its singular and enduring landmarks. Less than four years after his arrival, he initiated construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.; Daily True Delta, March 23, 1854; The Daily Picayune, March 18, 1842.


\textsuperscript{54} The Daily Picayune, March 18, 1842.
on the site of the original church. Though plagued with architectural and financial troubles, when ultimately finished that Gothic temple was the city's most majestic house of worship, and it boasted the largest pipe organ in the South. However, it was more than a church. Its excellent music program that went far beyond playing masses made it one of the Crescent City's leading cultural centers. The Cathedral's frequent sacred and secular subscription concerts drew audiences of all nationalities and from all walks of life, and those performances were a major source of the parish's income.

Virtually all of New Orleans' Irish-born residents could identify with St. Patrick's, but for obvious historical and cultural reasons, their German counterparts lacked such religious unity. They attended various Protestant and Catholic churches throughout the city. However, the body that eventually styled itself the "Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul's Church" drew large numbers of common immigrants and functioned in much the same fashion as the Hibernian spiritual bastion on Camp Street. Always maintaining a


parochial school, it began as a nondenominational association of Protestants. In its early days it took the names "German Evangelical," "German Protestant," and "German Orthodox Evangelical Congregation of New Orleans," and the Reverend Christian Sans conducted its first service on August 3, 1840 in a Third Municipality firehouse located on Chartres Street between Clouet and Louisa. Though Sans and subsequent pastors periodically ministered to Lafayette's Germans, this church was and continued to be a product of the immigrant neighborhood below Esplanade Avenue. On October 1, 1843 its members dedicated their first house of worship at Port and Burgundy Streets. While the ravages of time and fire necessitated the construction of several new physical plants, St. Paul's remains at that address to this day.57

Sans served as the Evangelicals' pastor for three years, and until 1855 five other divines had brief tenures as their spiritual leaders. Since the group affiliated with no specific denomination, and because German Protestants


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from varying backgrounds joined it, divisive doctrinal disputes inevitably militated against its orderly growth. However, when the Reverend Christian Gottlieb Mödinger took charge in 1855 things began to change. Mödinger, who came to New Orleans from Galveston, was an unadulterated Lutheran, and for thirty-five years he imbued his Crescent City parishioners with that dogma. Under his tutelage they developed cohesion as a real Lutheran congregation, gradually adopted the English language, and ultimately joined the conservative Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. Always accessible as havens from their mundane drudgery and as arenas in which they received respect as individuals, St. Paul's, St. Patrick's, and other similar churches offered lowborn immigrants, and hence the majority of those who stayed in New Orleans, the bulk of their more rewarding social experiences.

In addition to the good fellowship that grew out of their religion, Irish and German elements, who relished celebrations of virtually any kind, avidly participated in a number of annual gala affairs in the Crescent City's streets. They turned out in force to commemorate national holidays such as Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of

58 Wegener, Kurzgefasste geschichte der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen St. Paulus--Gemeinde U. A. C. zu New Orleans, La., 6-13; Souvenir Book Published in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Ev. Lutheran St. Paul's Church, 1840--1940, 4-39; "Souvenir 100th Anniversary Homecoming Day Service of St. Paul's Lutheran School."
But they totally unleashed their enthusiasm at their own ethnic festivals, their two favorites being St. Patrick's Day and the yearly German Volksfest.

New Orleans' Hibernians began observing their patron saint's feast day as early as 1809 with banquets featuring toasts to their native land and to "American Independence--the proud boast of all true Irishmen." Restrained and semiformal fetes of this sort hardly appealed to the countless sons of Erin who inundated the city in the final two antebellum decades and who literally tried to make their homages reach St. Patrick's ears. With myriads of these people as residents each March 17 became an unbridled jubilee fraught with colorful parades, massive street demonstrations, and, of course, more than ample social lubrication. Until Know Nothing pressure rather successfully smothered them in the mid-1850's, every year's celebration outdid its predecessor's, and every self-respecting Irishman took part in them.

Beginning in April 1854, slightly more sedate

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59 The Daily Picayune, July 5, 1849; The Daily Orleanian, February 25, 1851, February 21, 1854.

60 Louisiana Gazette (New Orleans), March 21, 1809, March 18, 1811.

German springtime carnivals usually took place on plantations or large open areas adjacent to the city, and they continued into the twentieth century. With the end of raising funds for charities, some of which were non-German, Volks-und-Schützenfesten with dancing, marksmanship competitions, pole climbing, and horse racing drew people from all components of the population, and they were a boon to the whole community.\textsuperscript{62}

All of the Crescent City's immigrants could enjoy the social amenities afforded by their churches and annual celebrations. But many other ethnic associations of a more exclusive nature catered to the foreign-born bourgeoisie and second generation elements who had the leisure and capital required for membership in them. Middle class German Protestants zealously joined lodges, and by the mid-1850's they had their own Masonic and Druidic orders, all of which rendered charitable services to the city's needy.\textsuperscript{63} The Irish elite found great pleasure in forming military companies, the most prominent of which were the Montgomery and Emmet Guards, respectively dating back to the late 1830's


\textsuperscript{63} Nau, \textit{The German People of New Orleans, 1850--1900}, 89-91; Laguait, "The German Element in New Orleans, 1820--1860," 52; Clark, "The New Orleans German Colony in the Civil War," 991.
and early 1850's. Decked out in lavish regalia, the members of these units staged garish parades complete with brass bands on St. Patrick's Day and other red letter days. They frequently mustered for drills and target practice, and their magnificent subscription balls were highlights of the social year.64 Other Hibernians of slightly lesser means found similar comradery in organizations such as the Shamrock Benevolent Society and the Third Municipality's Irish American Association,65 but each of these leagues barred its doors to all but a tiny minority of New Orleans' newcomers.

During the forty years before the Civil War the thousands of expatriates who ended their escapes from want and despair in the Crescent City settled in anything but a promised land. By and large they led drab, brutal, frustrating lives in a barren environment that offered them virtually no alternative to unending toil for their daily bread. Though it was not totally beyond the bounds of possibility for them to advance both socially and economically,


65 The Daily Picayune, July 5, 1849, January 18, 1853; The Daily Orleansian, May 18, 1852, January 8, 1853, March 16, 1854, March 17, 1855, March 17, 1858; Niehaus, "The Irish in New Orleans, 1803--1862," 290-95.
for the most part they devoted the bulk of their time and energy to an often degrading struggle for existence. Relegated to the meanest slums, they made their beds in filth and squalor, and their daily routines included few socially edifying activities. While they were somewhat better off in New Orleans than they had been at home, most immigrants found all too familiar poverty rather than opportunity and abundance in the metropolis on the Mississippi.
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APPENDIX

Table Showing Total Yearly Arrivals of Passengers in the United States and Ports of Entry by Rank, 1820--1859.

Graphs Depicting Immigration into the United States and its Four Major Immigrant Ports, 1820--1859.

Graph Depicting Irish and German Immigration into the United States, 1820--1859.
Table Showing Total Yearly Arrivals of Passengers in the United States and Ports of Entry by Rank, 1820--1859

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*Indicates that available customhouse figures place New Orleans at a higher rank.
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ARRIVALS AT ALL U.S. PORTS, 1820--1860

THOUSANDS
ARRIVALS AT NEW ORLEANS, 1820--1860

THOUSANDS

20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200 220 240 260

1820-1824

1825-1829

1830-1834

1835-1839

1840-1844

1845-1849

1850-1854

1855-1859
ARRIVALS AT PHILADELPHIA, 1820--1860
VITA

Born in Kansas City, Missouri on August 18, 1946, Fredrick Marcel Spletstoser received his primary and secondary education in that city's public schools and in St. Paul's College High School, Concordia, Missouri. He took baccalaureates in history and philosophy from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in 1969 and 1971, respectively, and that same institution granted him the Master of Arts degree in history in August 1971. Currently he is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Louisiana State University's Department of History.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Fredrick Marcel Spletstoser

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: BACK DOOR TO THE LAND OF PLENTY: NEW ORLEANS AS AN IMMIGRANT PORT, 1820--1860

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

November 28, 1978

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