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**Pistols and Politics: Planter and Plain Folk Relations in the Piney Woods South, the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1810-1899.  
(Volumes I and II).**

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(Volumes I and II)**

Hyde, Samuel Claiborne, Jr., Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1992

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Pistols and Politics: Planter and Plain Folk Relations  
in the Piney Woods South,  
The Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1810-1899

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

The Florida parishes of Louisiana experienced a peculiar pattern of development. Following successive periods of English and Spanish domination and an armed insurrection resulting in the shortlived Republic of West Florida, the region stabilized under the control of delta parish planters. A fierce tradition of Jeffersonian republican values encouraged the plain folk to assert themselves politically during the 1830's and 1840's. Yet by employing a series of enemies common to southern whites, and by expanding their control over the means of access to market, the planters stifled the aspirations of the plain folk insuring white unity on the eve of secession.

Throughout Reconstruction the planters continued to employ common enemies to maintain their dominance. Yet with the close of Reconstruction the plain folk rejected the authority of the planters. The construction of a railroad through the piney woods at the close of the antebellum period, and the concomitant social and economic transformation of the region, dramatically disrupted traditional patterns of stability. Moreover, the residents, imbued with a Jeffersonian tradition corrupted by the extremely brutal war and Reconstruction periods, rejected

governance and resorted to violence as the primary solution to conflict.

With no single faction strong enough to effectively govern the territory, and juries unwilling to convict accused criminals, the region degenerated into chaos. Multiple family feuds provided the only means of societal regulation. The failure of state and local government to control the violence, and the residents peculiar tolerance of homicide, produced some of the highest rural murder rates in the nation for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

## Chapter I

### To Live As Well As We Do

Thomas Green Davidson was surprised when he heard of the brutal murder in neighboring East Feliciana parish. Homicide was not unknown in the area, but a killing of this nature was certainly unusual. The reports told of a farmer shot in the back by an apparent lone gunman from ambush - a "bushwhacking." Though a peculiar occurrence in 1854, Davidson would live to see a day when such acts of violence would not only be common in this region, but would be a widely accepted means for settling differences.

Davidson served as representative from Livingston parish in the Louisiana legislature. Livingston comprised the lower central region of the area known as the Florida parishes, those parishes lying within the "boot" of Louisiana between the Pearl and Mississippi rivers. This territory acquired the name West Florida in 1800 when Spain retained it as part of Florida while retroceding Louisiana to France. Following a period of territorial ambiguity and an insurrection which resulted in the short lived Republic of West Florida, these parishes were incorporated into the territory of Louisiana in 1810.

Traditionally the Florida parishes have been regarded as a poor region of the state.<sup>1</sup> This assumption rested primarily on the relatively inferior quality of the soil in the eastern parishes, which resulted in low yields of staple crops, the sparse pattern of settlement, and a seeming absence of manufacturing capital. Moreover, the immense wealth of Louisiana's delta and sugar parishes, among the wealthiest regions in the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century, has made the Florida parishes appear impoverished by comparison. Yet recently compiled evidence suggests that the perception of even the eastern Florida parishes as poor should be qualified. Excepting cases of unmitigated poverty, definitions of wealth can be subject to social and geographical conditions. By utilizing a wider range of variables the value of resources in a given area can be more accurately determined. Numerous studies demonstrate that efforts to identify the true wealth of the South must incorporate an examination of livestock holdings.<sup>2</sup> Also, though a comparatively minor indication of overall wealth,

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<sup>1</sup> William Ivy Hair, Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics 1877-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Roger W. Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> Frank L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949) herein after referred to as Owsley, Plain Folk; Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," Journal of Southern History, XLI (May, 1975).

home manufactures should be included in any examination of resources. The value of home manufactures provides an indication of the local populations industriousness and their level of incorporation into the market economy.

Tables number one and two display the mean and per capita wealth of all Louisiana parishes in 1850. Excepting the large slaveholding parishes of East and West Feliciana, and the relatively urbanized East Baton Rouge, the mean wealth of the Florida parishes placed them among the poorest one third in the state. Per capita wealth statistics did not significantly raise their standing. Comparing parish tax assessment roles provides additional evidence for the relative poverty of the region. And yet, a comparison of resources invested in livestock would place the so called poorer regions of the Florida parishes near the middle of the state-wide scale in terms of assets allotted to animal holdings. Statistics on these parishes demonstrate significant capital invested in livestock, which indicates that the farmers in the area compensated for lower crop yields by investing in animals. Thus though less wealthy in terms of aggregate wealth, the Florida parishes should not be regarded as impoverished.

The delineation of regions within nineteenth-century Louisiana also obscures fundamental attributes of "West Florida." Typically, Louisiana has been divided into three general areas. The first, New Orleans and its urban

Table 1

PARISH	VALUE LAND ETC	HORSES	MULES	MILK COWS	Oxen	OTHER CATTLE	SHEEP	SWINE	VALUE SLAVES	MANUFACTURING CAPITAL	HOME MANUFACTURING	TOTAL	RANK
ASCENSION	87,121,495	845,978	881,317	816,187	89,015	820,190	82,359	820,336	87,266,000		819,300	814,422,836	6
ASSUMPTION	86,000,325	898,128	897,304	826,416	810,850	820,821	81,435	818,871	85,341,000		85,318	811,620,448	9
AUTELLES	81,409,239	893,956	871,326	850,196	813,183	871,088	85,980	848,076	85,161,000	825,500	88,522	86,978,016	28
BATON ROUGE, E.	2,458,884	80,221	74,631	54,254	15,525	79,787	5,617	90,142	6,351,000	-	-	9,210,083	18
BATON ROUGE, W.	2,291,125	52,040	75,630	11,779	5,449	13,116	1,499	4,525	4,350,000	17,300	327	4,822,800	25
BIBBVILLE	301,228	38,441	18,042	22,706	4,292	26,098	758	53,096	1,895,000	3,220	2,788	2,845,869	41
BOSSIER	808,483	54,380	63,255	35,590	6,596	48,583	1,458	71,236	4,255,000	-	345	5,344,926	28
CADDO	1,009,921	57,177	69,558	31,169	7,667	56,526	2,005	61,398	5,208,000	-	1,113	6,506,534	27
CALCASTEJ	157,328	426,036	10,529	69,228	7,896	747,372	3,882	32,288	957,000	-	4,943	2,415,692	40
CALDWELL	252,586	28,029	14,910	18,632	3,728	24,999	1,434	43,552	1,231,000	1,000	2,108	1,622,178	45
CARROLL	2,919,629	72,845	110,524	41,922	12,036	67,359	2,446	45,944	6,443,000	44,815	125	9,780,645	17
CATAHOULA	832,776	74,931	36,124	49,122	12,026	87,349	3,029	110,754	3,526,000	18,000	25	4,752,136	30
CLAIBORNE	460,573	69,284	35,201	37,974	6,252	55,142	2,773	102,636	2,522,000	7,200	3,416	3,302,451	35
CONCORDIA	2,790,830	68,827	102,915	18,426	12,322	27,943	2,782	32,594	6,934,000	-	-	9,990,639	14
DE SOTO	773,770	60,840	53,187	33,822	7,418	54,530	1,228	85,244	4,450,000	9,820	1,120	5,530,479	29
FELICIANA, E.	1,727,798	118,272	68,435	53,101	20,496	72,885	9,860	82,814	9,514,000	48,850	5,343	11,742,054	8
FELICIANA, W.	3,420,665	96,856	153,181	49,788	18,202	71,690	7,323	39,618	10,666,000	419,715	995	14,943,983	4
FRANKLIN	375,992	45,986	16,140	32,164	5,554	40,945	1,535	77,254	1,573,000	-	366	2,168,988	42
IBERVILLE	5,126,400	70,454	100,917	24,221	9,454	27,695	6,120	8,884	8,606,000	9,700	-	13,991,845	7
JACKSON	336,331	38,819	20,367	20,179	4,483	29,416	999	60,481	2,138,000	4,780	13,148	2,687,137	38
JEFFERSON	1,821,928	45,325	113,599	24,668	6,376	6,795	1,225	1,112	6,196,000	796,900	-	9,013,906	19
LAFAYETTE	413,430	538,458	57,952	55,849	27,475	286,302	16,190	21,222	3,170,000	-	12,586	4,593,448	31
LAFOURCHE	2,479,374	68,674	52,572	15,205	5,468	1,663	163	6,627	4,368,000	22,500	-	7,020,268	22
LIVINGSTON	246,808	40,085	3,535	47,906	7,781	48,622	1,873	76,215	842,000	79,495	934	1,395,274	46
MADISON	2,924,599	67,097	109,448	31,232	13,297	44,167	2,476	51,724	7,353,000	116,350	554	10,718,944	12
MOREHOUSE	368,705	35,456	24,441	24,442	4,444	39,033	1,402	52,347	2,806,000	8,800	4,020	2,569,310	39
NATCHITOCHES	1,689,635	143,606	125,512	82,218	9,636	92,856	5,936	119,170	7,881,000	17,200	6,089	10,172,838	15
ORLEANS	579,200	88,361	108,372	18,963	1,472	2,638	87	694	18,068,000	2,969,660	-	21,837,447	1
OUNCHITA	695,285	40,594	34,740	21,269	4,531	36,844	1,995	51,386	2,708,000	11,750	5,505	3,411,899	33
PLAQUEMINES	5,669,150	50,361	94,998	31,690	13,240	27,341	1,828	3,002	4,779,000	-	50	10,670,460	13
POINTE COUPEE	2,547,777	72,438	107,834	27,664	10,066	26,490	5,394	12,222	7,811,000	-	1,950	10,622,835	14
RAPIDES	3,202,225	100,875	160,253	42,648	18,881	81,317	9,494	67,460	11,340,000	42,000	6,795	15,071,958	2
SABINE	262,923	55,651	14,833	44,354	6,644	57,082	1,512	109,239	1,148,000	5,800	4,380	1,730,518	43
ST. BERNARD	1,211,034	9,105	42,349	4,073	3,766	4,665	52	-	2,323,000	-	-	3,596,053	34
ST. CHARLES	2,362,000	36,880	87,082	9,300	12,141	6,567	1,219	1,904	4,132,000	5000	-	6,654,099	26
ST. HELENA	310,769	59,619	8,838	28,816	8,728	46,404	5,217	64,274	2,196,000	17,575	5,335	2,751,575	37
ST. JAMES	3,096,155	69,742	129,278	15,047	11,127	12,762	1,320	2,826	7,751,000	57,900	-	11,115,157	11
ST. JOHN BAPTIST	2,367,300	50,768	74,784	12,868	12,016	6,099	1,155	3,286	4,540,000	31,200	-	7,099,476	21
ST. LANDRY	2,184,748	545,580	156,025	155,957	41,041	788,862	18,062	100,566	10,871,000	54,500	11,280	8,659,860	20
ST. MARTIN	1,635,127	171,330	114,444	68,070	38,641	112,941	10,057	20,250	6,489,000	-	-	8,659,860	20
ST. MARY	4,710,920	84,920	246,951	30,111	23,747	72,139	2,099	11,250	9,850,000	-	-	15,032,119	3
ST. TAMMANY	157,889	23,451	10,145	33,680	7,026	65,208	1,986	18,702	2,363,000	429,944	229	3,111,260	36
TENNESSEE	2,683,517	76,457	148,109	22,184	15,018	36,002	4,141	44,661	8,188,000	14,100	923	11,183,122	10
TERREBORNE	2,397,939	37,236	72,171	16,547	4,292	11,060	1,563	7,617	4,328,000	7,000	-	6,883,425	24
UNION	522,312	79,204	45,885	42,711	6,386	51,260	775	115,412	3,425,000	1,000	5,794	4,295,739	32
VERMILLION	144,978	175,735	7,609	28,469	11,921	220,291	2,424	12,380	1,067,000	-	3,521	1,674,348	44
WASHINGTON	127,975	40,289	2,690	27,316	5,372	73,124	2,305	44,654	1,037,000	-	-	1,360,725	47



Table 2

PARISH	MEAN WEALTH	NO. FAMILIES	PER CAPITA	PER CAPITA
ASCENSION	14,622,336	755	19,367	8
ASSUMPTION	11,620,468	926	12,549	18
AVOYELLES	6,978,016	792	8,810	23
BATON ROUGE, E.	9,210,083	1044	8,821	22
BATON ROUGE, W.	6,822,800	438	15,577	13
BIENVILLE	2,365,869	571	4,143	38
BOSSIER	5,544,926	478	11,600	20
CADDO	6,506,534	747	8,710	24
CALCASIEU	2,415,692	626	3,858	42
CALDWELL	1,622,173	300	5,407	34
CARROLL	9,780,645	582	16,805	11
CATAHOULA	4,752,136	679	6,998	31
CLAIBORNE	3,302,454	842	3,922	41
CONCORDIA	9,990,639	221	45,206	2
DE SOTO	5,530,479	692	7,992	26
FELICIANA, E.	11,742,054	712	16,491	12
FELICIANA, W.	14,943,983	617	24,220	4
FRANKLIN	2,168,938	346	6,268	33
IBERVILLE	13,991,845	640	21,862	6
JACKSON	2,687,137	632	4,251	37
JEFFERSON	9,013,906	3961	2,275	46
LAFAYETTE	4,593,464	630	7,291	28
LAFOURCHE	7,020,248	938	7,484	27
LIVINGSTON	1,395,274	480	2,906	44
MADISON	10,713,944	448	23,915	5
MOREHOUSE	2,569,310	393	6,537	32
NATCHITOCHE	10,172,858	1432	7,103	29
ORLEANS	21,837,447	19765	1,104	47
OUACHITA	3,611,899	449	8,044	25
PLAQUEMINES	10,670,660	615	17,350	10
POINTE COUPEE	10,622,835	760	13,977	15
RAPIDES	15,071,958	1032	14,604	14
SABINE	1,730,518	636	2,720	45
ST. BERNARD	3,598,053	283	12,713	17
ST. CHARLES	6,654,093	191	34,838	3
ST. HELENA	2,751,575	390	7,055	30
ST. JAMES	11,147,157	591	18,861	9
ST. JOHN BAPTIST	7,099,476	530	13,395	16
ST. LANDRY	14,927,621	2910	5,129	35
ST. MARTIN	8,659,860	952	9,096	21
ST. MARY	15,032,119	752	19,989	7
ST. TAMMANY	3,111,260	786	3,958	40
TENSAS	11,183,122	244	45,832	1
TERREBONNE	6,883,425	550	12,515	19
UNION	4,295,739	942	4,560	36
VERMILLION	1,674,348	406	4,124	39
WASHINGTON	1,360,725	406	3,351	43

TABLE 3

PARISH TAX ASSESSMENTS 1852

PARISHES	TOTAL AMOUNT OF TAXES ASSESSED	TOTAL AMOUNT PAID TO 31st DECEMBER, 1853	BALANCE OF TAXES DUE ON 31st DECEMBER, 1853
ASCENSION	\$13,936.00	\$13,936.00	\$-----
ASSUMPTION	\$15,258.43	\$15,258.43	\$-----
AVOYELLES	\$ 8,064.69	\$ 8,064.69	\$-----
BIENVILLE	\$ 4,764.36	\$ 4,764.36	\$-----
BOSSIEUR	\$ 7,542.07	\$-----	\$ 7,542.07
CADDO	\$10,125.98	\$10,125.98	\$-----
CALCASIEU	\$ 2,165.77	\$ 2,165.77	\$-----
CALDWELL	\$ 2,323.19	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,823.19
CARROLL	\$12,644.15	\$12,644.15	\$-----
CATAHOULA	\$ 6,244.78	\$ 2,602.11	\$ 3,642.67
CLAIBORNE	\$ 5,482.47	\$ 5,482.47	\$-----
CONCORDIA	\$16,831.57	\$16,831.57	\$-----
DeSOTO	\$ 7,568.20	\$ 7,568.20	\$-----
EAST BATON ROUGE	\$14,326.92	\$14,326.92	\$-----
EAST FELICIANA	\$14,508.91	\$14,508.91	\$-----
FRANKLIN	\$ 3,056.78	\$-----	\$ 3,056.78
IBERVILLE	\$19,004.43	\$19,004.43	\$-----
JACKSON	\$ 4,841.05	\$ 4,841.05	\$-----
JEFFERSON	\$31,828.97	\$31,828.97	\$-----
LAFAYETTE	\$ 5,088.03	\$ 5,088.03	\$-----
LAFOURCHE	\$13,087.10	\$13,087.10	\$-----
LIVINGSTON	\$ 2,263.41	\$ 2,263.41	\$-----
MADISON	\$12,442.36	\$12,442.36	\$-----
MOREHOUSE	\$ 3,623.97	\$ 3,623.97	\$-----
NATCHITOCHES	\$10,354.46	\$10,354.46	\$-----
ORLEANS, RIGHT BANK	\$ 4,059.32	\$ 4,059.32	\$-----
ORLEANS, 1st DISTRICT	\$87,645.32	\$87,645.32	\$-----
ORLEANS, 2nd DISTRICT	\$52,172.09	\$52,172.09	\$-----
ORLEANS, 3rd DISTRICT	\$15,367.30	\$15,367.30	\$-----
PLAQUEMINES	\$10,438.61	\$10,438.61	\$-----
POINT COUPEE	\$13,849.28	\$ 5,074.02	\$ 8,075.26
RAPIDES	\$22,452.42	\$10,370.44	\$12,081.98
SABINE	\$ 2,437.45	\$ 2,437.45	\$-----
ST. BERNARD	\$ 4,672.06	\$ 4,672.06	\$-----
ST. CHARLES	\$ 7,612.29	\$ 7,612.29	\$-----
ST. HELENA	\$ 3,609.50	\$ 3,609.50	\$-----
ST. JAMES	\$15,068.10	\$15,068.10	\$-----
ST. JOHN BAPTIST	\$ 9,015.02	\$ 9,015.02	\$-----
ST. LANDRY	\$16,652.68	\$-----	\$16,652.68
ST. MARTIN	\$10,838.56	\$10,838.56	\$-----
ST. MARY	\$21,772.35	\$21,772.35	\$-----
ST. TAMMANY	\$ 3,940.56	\$ 3,940.56	\$-----
TENSAS	\$15,014.84	\$15,014.84	\$-----
TERRABONNE	\$12,260.53	\$12,260.53	\$-----
UNION	\$ 4,292.82	\$ 4,292.82	\$-----
VERMILLION	\$-----	\$-----	\$-----
WASHINGTON	\$ 2,109.93	\$ 2,109.93	\$-----
WASHITA	\$ 5,547.11	\$ 5,547.11	\$-----
WEST BATON ROUGE	\$10,217.29	\$10,217.29	\$-----
WEST FELICIANA	\$15,729.01	\$15,729.01	\$-----
WINN	\$ 1,284.09	\$ 1,284.09	\$-----

environs, traditionally considered unique not only to Louisiana but to the nineteenth-century South in general. Second, Acadiana or the bayou country also emerged as a peculiar region to both the state and the South. Settled primarily by French Catholics, Acadiana has been regarded as unique both for its population and topography. The third region may best be called upstate Louisiana. This area typically encompasses all the remaining portion of the state north of the town of Alexandria, as well as the region along the Sabine River and the Florida parishes. More typical of the South as a whole, this region contained considerable numbers of Protestant yeoman farmers. By 1850 the white population of upstate Louisiana consisted largely of immigrants of Scotch-Irish ancestry from Georgia and the Carolinas. Though upstate farmers also maintained significant herds of livestock, particularly in the north central region, cotton farming dominated.<sup>3</sup>

The Florida parishes do share many of the characteristics of upstate Louisiana, but they also differ in some fundamental areas. First, though home to large numbers of Scotch-Irish settlers, immigrants of English descent predominated among the Anglo-Celtic group. Following the American Revolution significant numbers from the Tidewater region of Virginia and the Carolinas, many of them Tories

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<sup>3</sup> Milton B. Newton, Atlas of Louisiana: A Guide For Students (Louisiana State University, School of Geoscience Misc. Publication 72-1, 1972).

fleeing persecution, migrated to the Florida parishes.<sup>4</sup> The attraction inspiring the major migrations in the first decade of the nineteenth century centered on the relative isolation and abundance of cheap available land. Also, many Tories seem to have considered this territory a refuge from lingering persecution present in many American controlled areas.

Cultural distinctions separated the Florida parishes from upstate in other ways. Unlike upstate, the southeastern parishes attracted considerable numbers of a variety of ethnic groups. Spanish efforts in the late eighteenth century to build a barrier against the encroaching Americans led to a scattering of small yet significant settlements in lower Livingston and St. Tammany parishes. Under the direction of Governor Bernardo de Galvez, immigrants from the Canary Islands, known as Islenos, located along the Amite River and its environs with their primary settlement appropriately named Galvez-Town. In their effort to increase

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<sup>4</sup> Amite City News Digest, March 13, April 17, and May 1, 1959; Stanley C. Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion (St. Francisville: St. Francisville Democrat Printing, 1935) pp. 14-15; Alvin Bertrand Many Louisiana's: A Study of Rural Social Areas and Cultural Islands (Department of Rural Sociology, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 496, 1955) p.19; John H. Napier III Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods, Its Land and People (Oxford: University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1985) p.28; Folklife in the Florida Parishes, Louisiana Folklife Program Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development and Center for Regional Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University, 1989 (herein after referred to as Folk life in the Florida Parishes) p.15.

the Catholic population in the region, Spanish authorities at New Orleans also directed German Catholic immigrants and recently displaced Acadians to the Florida parishes. In 1785 over 200 Acadians settled at Manchac on the south pass which connects lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain. In the same year another group of Acadians located at Thompson Creek in the Feliciana district above Baton Rouge.<sup>5</sup>

French immigrants continued to trickle into the Florida parishes in the first decades of the nineteenth century. By 1810 French speaking communities flourished at Port Vincent and French Settlement in Livingston parish. Other French speaking peoples settled along the lakeshore in St. Tammany Parish where they participated in the shipping of goods to and from the markets of New Orleans. These French, German, and Isleno settlers not only separated the Florida parishes from the more homogeneous pattern of settlement occurring in upstate Louisiana, but they also provided the region with a strong Catholic minority.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, February, 21, 1892, p1; Gilbert Din, "Early Spanish Colonization Efforts in Louisiana," Louisiana Studies, XI, No.1 (Spring, 1972); Folklife in the Florida Parishes, p.39.

<sup>6</sup> H.M. Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana; Together With a Journal of a Voyage Up the Missouri River in 1811 (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear and Eichbaum, 1814) p. 281 (hereinafter referred to as Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana); Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi (Reprint, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968) pp. 216-217; After seeing the large number of Catholic churches in the western Florida parishes Flint asserted that the relative absence of Protestant churches produced, "a painful sensation in the

In the late nineteenth century other immigrant groups came to southeast Louisiana. Like their predecessors, the new settlers would have a significant social and political impact on the region. Principal among these were the Sicilians, who by the late 1880's had established numerous truck farms along the Illinois Central Railroad. By 1920, Independence, in present day Tangipahoa parish, emerged as the largest rural Italian community in the United States. Likewise Hungarian immigrants, though far fewer than the Sicilians, migrated to Livingston parish in such numbers in the early 1890's that they established one of the largest rural Hungarian settlements in the United States. Originally named Arpadhon for the Hungarian hero who united the Magyars in 800 A.D., this community is presently known as Albany.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these differences the Florida parishes and upstate shared many similarities, particularly in terms of topography and relative wealth. Both contained wealthy delta parishes bordered by less affluent piney-woods parishes. Farming patterns were similar. Each area invested heavily in cotton and livestock, though farmers in the Florida parishes devoted far more resources to the cultivation of rice. Five

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mind of a serious Protestant."

<sup>7</sup> John V. Baiamonte, Immigrants in Rural America: A Study of the Italians of Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana (New York: Garland, 1980); Alvin Bertrand, Many Louisiana's, pp. 23-25; Ginger Romero, "Hungarian Folklife: The Sweet Taste of Yesterday" Florida Parishes of Southeast Louisiana Series (Hammond: Center for Regional Studies Southeastern Louisiana University, 1987).

of the seven Florida parishes appear among the fifteen top rice producing parishes in the state, with Washington, St. Tammany, and Livingston producing about 100,000 pounds each annually.

Yet the Florida parishes did have greater ethnic diversity as well as a larger Catholic minority than upstate.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as late as the middle of the 1830's the Florida parishes remained a distinctive region in the eyes of the state legislature. The constitution adopted in 1812 did not include the Florida parishes as a part of Louisiana. Therefore over twenty years later in apportioning representation and other issues West Florida continued to be treated as a separate seemingly ambiguous portion of the state.<sup>9</sup> Identifying the differences between these two regions could be interpreted as an effort to declare the southeastern parishes as more aligned to Acadiana. This assumption is certainly not the case as the minority features of the Florida parishes are the majority features of

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<sup>8</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853) Population and Compendium; upstate Louisiana did contain some ethnic diversity, but the degree of influence the Catholic minority exerted in the social and political development of the Florida parishes remained far greater than upstate, as is substantiated by events in the 1860's and 1870's.

<sup>9</sup> For a good example of the legislature's treatment of the Florida parishes as a distinctive region of the state, see Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the Select Committee Making An Apportionment of Representation in the House of Representatives," December 20, 1833, pp. 15-19.

Acadiana. Yet as previously shown, the evidence suggests that the southeastern parishes exhibited characteristics similar to both upstate Louisiana and Acadiana, as well as some of the ethnic blend of New Orleans. The Florida parishes might best be regarded as a blending of the diverse regions of Louisiana, sharing similarities and differences with each. By delineating this area as a separate or fourth region of the state, its specifics of development can be more easily identified.

Like upstate Louisiana, the southeastern parishes contained both plantation and piney-woods regions. Though a few plantations operated in the piney woods, family farming dominated. Yet in the Florida parishes, the social and political interaction between the planters and the piney-woods dwellers played a central role in the region's peculiar pattern of development. The primary difference between the people in the plantation and piney-woods sections centered on economic wealth and political philosophy. These same characteristics were initially influenced by geography. As in many other regions, land served as the originating source of wealth and power.

The Florida parishes contain three distinct topographical areas: pine hills, bluffs, and pine flats. Pine hills cover the northern portion from central West Feliciana to the Pearl River. Excepting small bands of Mississippi and Amite River alluvium, the bluff lands cover



that portion of the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge south of the pine hills and Livingston parish eastward to the Tickfaw River. The pine flats comprise the region south of the pine hills between the Tickfaw and Pearl rivers. Of the three, bluff lands are the most fertile. The pine hills also provide choice farm land while the pine flats contain land of lower quality.<sup>10</sup>

The fertile bluffs along the Mississippi attracted the initial settlers. Boasting some of the best farm land in the Gulf South and a ready access to market, West Feliciana and East Baton Rouge parishes, like their neighbors across the river, soon supported huge plantations. Several villages arose along the Mississippi. Baton Rouge, with a population of 3905 in 1850, emerged as the largest town.<sup>11</sup> As cotton prices soared in the 1830's, the plantation culture expanded outward into the pine hills. The completion of a railroad in 1840 from Port Hudson on the Mississippi above Baton Rouge, to Clinton in East Feliciana parish, provided that territory with the direct link to the Mississippi it needed to prosper. East Feliciana emerged as an extension of the delta

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel Dennett, Louisiana As It Is (New Orleans: Eureka Press, 1876) herein after referred to as Dennett, Louisiana As It Is; W.W. Clendenin, "A Preliminary Report Upon the Florida Parishes of East Louisiana and the Bluff, Prairie, and Hill Lands of Southwestern Louisiana" (Geological Survey of Louisiana, Bureau of Agriculture Report, 1896); United States Department of Agriculture, Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Soils for 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905) p. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850.

plantation culture and trading center for the piney-woods regions to the north and east. Small-scale industries, such as engine repair shops, emerged in conjunction with railroad and shipping interests at Baton Rouge and Clinton as well as at Bayou Sara and St. Francisville in West Feliciana parish. A few brick yards and saw mills arose to facilitate construction of the emerging villages and farms.<sup>12</sup>

The plantation culture of the Felicianas and rural East Baton Rouge differed significantly from the eastern Florida parishes. The Felicianas in particular ranked among the wealthiest and most powerful parishes in the state both economically and politically. This region clearly reflected the dominance of Anglo-Saxon culture and architecture. Clinton and the nearby village of Jackson boasted well established banking and commercial centers. Sophisticated theatrical productions were commonplace, as were society balls and gatherings. Clinton alone supported two theatrical corps, a Shakespearean Society, several poetry reading

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<sup>12</sup> Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, December 24, 1833, "Report of the Civil Engineer of the State," pp. 24-25 and "Report of the Board of Public Works," p. 32; Diary of Eli J. Capell, November 21-24 and December 24, 1842, in Eli J. Capell Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Department of Archives Louisiana State University (herein after referred to as LLMVC); Diary of William Y. Dixon, August 14, 1860, in William Y. Dixon papers, *ibid*; Duncan W. Taylor to Eugene Hunter September 13, 1856, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers, *ibid*; DeBow's Review, XI, p. 265; Folklife in the Florida Parishes, p.46.

circles, and a Thespian Orchestra.<sup>13</sup> Noted American and European actors and musicians frequently performed. Religious tolerance, which typically existed between Catholics and Protestants through most of the Florida parishes, in this area also included Jews. Small but influential Jewish communities developed at St. Francisville and Clinton. A comparatively generous system of poor relief, by Louisiana standards, extended to both destitute whites and free blacks.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, by 1850 East Feliciana supported educational institutions unsurpassed by those in any other parish in the state. These included Centenary College at Jackson and the Silliman Female Institute at Clinton. In short, a genteel attitude permeated a progressive society supported by a prosperous cotton economy.<sup>15</sup> Writing in the Fall of 1855, Mary E. Taylor, the wife of a prominent Clinton minister and planter, summarized

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<sup>13</sup> Clinton American Patriot, November 3, December 15 and 29, 1855; Clinton Feliciania Democrat, April 14 and 21, 1855, June 2, 9, and 30, 1855, October 20, 1855.

<sup>14</sup> Clinton Feliciania Democrat, May 28 and November 24, 1855; Clinton American Patriot, January 10, 1855, March 14 and 21, 1855; F. Jay Taylor (ed.), Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1959) p.10 (Herein after referred to as Taylor (ed.) Reluctant Rebel); East Feliciana Parish Police Jury Minutes, Vol.8 Folder Group 1853-1859, January 1, 1855 p.134 (LLMVC).

<sup>15</sup> F. Jay Taylor (ed.), Reluctant Rebel, p.10; Seventh Census, 1850; James William Mobley, "The Academy Movement in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXX (July, 1947) p.821.

the comfortable existence of the planter class in the western Florida parishes by declining to attend a bountiful dinner in the country, "there was no inducement at all [to go]; for when people live as well as we do at home they never care about going elsewhere."<sup>16</sup>

Despite the grandeur of the western "aristocratic" parishes, the core of the Florida parishes centered on the eastern piney-woods area. Far less affluent in goods and resources, this region stood in sharp contrast to the plantation culture of the western parishes. As a result, a different set of incentives and convictions shaped the lifestyle, labor, and outlook on life of the people in the region. As late as 1852 this area remained virtually isolated from the outside world. Most of the few reliable roads crossing these parishes had served previously as military highways, many constructed by Andrew Jackson's troops and laborers nearly forty years earlier.<sup>17</sup> Extremely shallow or otherwise unnavigable streams characterized this territory, making access to market difficult.<sup>18</sup> Yet the majority of the piney-woods dwellers in this area did produce

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<sup>16</sup> Mary E. Taylor to B. Hunter, October 19, 1855, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>17</sup> Powell Casey, "Military Roads in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana," Louisiana History, XV No.3 (Summer, 1974), (herein after referred to as Casey, "Military Roads").

<sup>18</sup> House Journal, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the Civil Engineer of the State," December 24, 1833, pp. 21-28.

marketable products. Whether they raised beef cattle, produced milk, harvested timber, or more likely grew cotton or rice, most of the plain folk required a ready access to market. Census statistics demonstrate that farmers in the region produced far more goods than would be necessary for home use.<sup>19</sup> Yet the limited number of towns and trading centers inhibited local commercial development. The scarcity of retail stores made for primitive commercial conditions in the eastern Florida parishes. Drummers, travelling salesmen who carried essential products such as coffee, pots, pans, and sugar through rural areas, frequently visited the piney woods. Yet drummers and other travelling merchants seldom purchased the goods produced in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Compilations in the 1850 and 1860 Agriculture Census demonstrate that the majority of farmers in the piney-woods parishes produced considerably more than necessary for home use. Moreover, piney-woods representatives to the state legislature typically focused considerable effort on securing funding for roads, bridges, and clearing obstructions from waterways in their districts. Journal of the Senate of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans: Emile LaSere, 1853) herein after referred to as Senate Journal, First Session, First Legislature of 1853, April 22, 1853; Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans: Emile LaSere, 1852) herein after referred to as House Journal, First Session, Fourth Legislature of 1852, March 12, 1852; House Journal, First Session 1854, March 10 and 11, 1854; House Journal, First Session 1856, March 1, 1856; House Journal, First Session 1857, March 14, 1857; Seventh Census, 1850 Agricultural Statistics; Eighth Census, 1860 Agricultural Statistics.

<sup>20</sup> Louisiana Legislative Documents, First Session, Fifth Legislature, Address of Governor Robert C. Wickliffe, January 1860; Journal of the Senate of the State of Louisiana, Seventh Legislature, First Session, November 24, 1824 (refers to a bill respecting peddlars and hawkers); John Inscoe, Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis

The South's one great metropolis New Orleans, less than fifty miles away across Lake Pontchartrain, fundamentally shaped the trade and transportation of the Florida parishes. Despite the isolation, economic development in the Florida parishes depended directly on the great Mississippi River port. Farmers in the central parishes of Livingston and St. Helena found access to the New Orleans markets through the small river port at Springfield on the Tickfaw River. Steamers crossing lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas deposited and collected goods at Springfield. Oxen-pulled wagons provided the connection to the interior. The only other viable route, to Port Hudson on the Mississippi via Clinton, consumed both more time and resources. Both routes were tedious, demanding, and hazardous.<sup>21</sup>

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in Western North Carolina (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) p. 40; Steven Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry 1850-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Lacy Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 81; New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 9, 1897; Raleigh Suarez, "Bargains, Bills, and Bankruptcies: Business Activity in Rural Antebellum Louisiana" Louisiana History VII, No. 3, Summer 1966, pp. 191-192.

<sup>21</sup> House Journal, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the Civil Engineer of the State," December 24, 1833, pp. 21-22; Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Flier 1850, in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Eli J. Capell, November 21 and 24, 1842, Capell Papers, *ibid.*; Amite Navigation Company Document, group of farmers who banded together to promote the clearing of the Amite River to improve trade access to New Orleans, 1818, *ibid.*; Amite City News Digest, October 2, 1959; William Darby, Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana (Philadelphia: John Melish, 1816) pp. 174-175 (hereinafter referred to as Darby,

Though less developed than the central region, the eastern parishes of Washington and St. Tammany fared a little better in terms of access to the markets of New Orleans. Some commercial traffic took place on the Pearl River, but the primary route lay over the Jackson Military Road, which traversed the region from the Mississippi border to Madisonville on Lake Pontchartrain. Steamers then completed the connection with New Orleans. Yet this route also constituted a slow and tedious journey; oxen teams often took as long as six days to travel from Madisonville to the St. Tammany parish seat at Covington.<sup>22</sup>

Recognizing the relative isolation of this territory is central to understanding the outlook on life of the people who lived there. As late as 1852 the Florida parishes remained surrounded on the north and east by vast expanses of sparsely populated pine forests and on the south by virtually impenetrable swamps. Geographical isolation directly affected social as well as economic development. Like the

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Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana) Taylor (ed.), Reluctant Rebel, p.9.

<sup>22</sup> St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, June 16, 1825; P.L. Bonny Letter, May 5, 1864, Bonny to Cousins, Jones, and J.A. Leblanc, April 23, 1864, in P.L. Bonny Papers (LLMVC); Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana, p. 285; Darby, Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana, p. 175; Amite City News Digest, October 2, 1959; Casey, "Military Roads" p.234; Amy Quick, "The History of Bogalusa, The Magic City of Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXIX No.1 (January, 1946); Robert J. Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi" Mississippi Folklore Register, X, No.1, Spring 1976 (Hattiesburg: Mississippi Folklore Society of the University of Mississippi, 1976) p.15.

lifestyles of the residents of the pine flats of Mississippi, hill country Alabama, Georgia, and Kentucky, and even the mountain regions of Tennessee and North Carolina, the lifestyle of the people in the eastern Florida parishes appeared peculiar to their more cosmopolitan neighbors. Typically many planters and urbanites referred to these regions as "backwoods," a term they employed as a synonym for "backwards." Many outsiders generally regarded these isolated rural dwellers as poor, neglectful, non-materialistic, and lazy.<sup>23</sup> This description doubtless applied to many piney-woods folk. Yet this perception of the isolated rural dwellers seems as negative as the term "backwoods" seems derogatory. It originated in the outlook of the planter class, who having reached the top, either ridiculed or failed to understand those who did not appreciate their values or aspire to be like them.

This lack of understanding often bordered on contempt. Writing his sister in July of 1856 concerning a political barbecue in the piney woods, Augustus Carpenter, a wealthy planter from Clinton, complained that he did not enjoy himself because he was "amongst the piney woods folks." Robert Patrick spent much of his youth in St. Helena parish but aspired to join the planter elite. After his father

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<sup>23</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Back Country (New York: Mason Brothers, 1863) p. 237 and 297; Frank Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949) pp. 1-3; Taylor (ed.) Reluctant Rebel, p.9.



moved the family to neighboring East Feliciana in 1842, Patrick described the piney-woods people as virtually without culture, claiming that his family had "blessed little to do with them."<sup>24</sup> A more balanced observation of these rural dwellers would combine the perspective of the elite with an understanding of how these people viewed themselves.

Historians of the piney woods typically assign a variety of other characteristics to the piney-woods regions and residents. They include: relatively low agricultural production with an emphasis on sweet potatoes, endemic drinking and gambling, hospitality, ranging livestock, and violence.<sup>25</sup> Others, though viewing the piney-woods inhabitants as proverbially poor, note more positive qualities, such as honesty, high moral standards, and a virtuous lifestyle. The editor of the Amite City Democrat, a rural newspaper, described the typical piney-woods home:

the piney woods home is often a log hut plastered with mud or boards enclosed by a rail fence, a general air of thriftless, careless management around the place,

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<sup>24</sup> Augustus Carpenter to Sister, July 9, 1856, in George H. Carpenter Family Papers (LLMVC); Taylor, (ed.) Reluctant Rebel, p.9.

<sup>25</sup> J. William Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985); Grady McWhiney, "Antebellum Piney Woods Culture: Continuity Over Time and Place," in Noel Polk (ed.) Mississippi's Piney Woods: A Human Perspective (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986); Owsley, Plain Folk.

an ox wagon in front outside an insecure looking gate, three or four hungry looking dogs which bark and whelp at your entrance, a lean, woe begone looking horse grazing in the yard; a few flowers which tell of a womans presence, as the pipes and tobacco which lie upon the portice surely betoken the masculine element.<sup>26</sup>

The article continued with a dreamy blissful sounding description of the piney-woods existence, as if the author wished to say it was the closest thing to utopia.

Other contemporary observers noted that the piney woods consisted of many little communities bound together by kinship or long friendship. F.M. Kent, an antebellum immigrant from New England, marveled at how friendly the people seemed, noting that "as guests you are expected to make yourself at home and no one accepts payment even from strangers." He added that "hospitality is looked upon as a virtue and it generally extends to friend and stranger." Kent continued that though the people appeared less educated than in New England, they possessed considerable "general information" and a keen interest in politics.<sup>27</sup>

In making perceptive observations of the region as a whole, Kent provided a basis for understanding many of the

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<sup>26</sup> Amite City Democrat, October 2, 1875.

<sup>27</sup> Dennett, Louisiana As It Is p.31; F.M. Kent to "Uncle Moody," February 19 and June 2, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC).

traits which characterized southerners in general. He noted that the law commanded less respect than in New England and that a "service of honor" proved as binding as a written obligation. Religion, though significant Kent surmised, played less of a role in the daily lives of the residents than in the older states of the northeast. Ministers exercised influence only if the people agreed with the clergyman's position. Also, he observed that the people seemed more independent in thought and action and he speculated that a want of energy on their part resulted from the presence of slavery.<sup>28</sup>

A significant body of evidence suggests that many among the piney-woods folk of the Florida parishes aspired to improve their own personal financial situation as well as the economy of their region. Numerous well attended barbecues, the principal mechanism for social and political gatherings, took place in the piney woods to encourage the construction of railroads and plank roads. On an excursion through the piney woods in the summer of 1854 a reporter for the Baton Rouge Daily Advocate expressed shock at the number of people willing to sell land to the railroad and opportunistic businessmen surveying possibilities along the proposed road. A farmer in Montpelier, a village in the heart of St. Helena's pine forest, argued that the trees themselves were the

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<sup>28</sup> F.M. Kent to "Uncle Moody," February 19 and June 2, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC).

region's greatest asset. Promoting the establishment of a turpentine industry in St. Helena, he predicted, "this will yield in a few years a larger profit to the owners than do the well cultivated cotton lands of Mississippi."<sup>29</sup>

Despite the willingness of some to improve the transportation network as well as economic conditions, many more appeared ambivalent about change, and others, as railroad promoters would soon learn, would violently resist it. Efforts to assign specific traits to these people prove misleading. The piney-woods dwellers should not be regarded as monolithic in thought and action; some were opportunistic, some lackadaisical; some were outspoken, others more reticent. Yet a unique piney-woods culture did exist. The piney-woods dwellers shared certain general qualities, the sum of which embodied their culture. Contrary to the superficial stereotypical generalizations assigned to them by outsiders, the presence of these qualities prompted the emergence of a distinctive way of life. Words such as

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<sup>29</sup> Amite City Times, July 27, 1867; Clinton Feliciano Democrat, May 5, July 28, and August 18, 1855; William Pike to Henry Marston, September 10, 1852, in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Delta, December 14, 1854; Official Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, First Session, Fourth Legislature, March 12, 1852, First Session, 1854 Legislature, March 10 and 11, 1854, First Session, 1856 Legislature, March 1, 1856, First Session, 1857 Legislature, March 14, 1857; St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, Second Session 1851, December 1851, First Session 1852, January 1852; Harry H. Evans, "James Robb, Banker and Pioneer Railroad Builder," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXIII No.1 (January, 1940) p.199; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 22, 1854; Greensburg Imperial, April 25, 1857.

laziness, hospitality, and violence describe the symptoms of behavior, not the cause. An examination of the results of behavior should incorporate an understanding of the sources of that behavior to explain it successfully. What separates the seemingly derogatory descriptive term "backwoods," from the potentially positive term "piney woods," is an understanding of the motivating forces which made these rural dwellers who they were. These inspirational qualities or forces gave shape to their conception of the order of society, their perceptions of the outside world, and their understanding of the sources of wealth, happiness, and security.

Independence, self-sufficiency, and honor, served as the principal qualities motivating the piney-woods dwellers or plain folk. Though independence and self-sufficiency appear, and certainly are related; the two terms focus on distinctive matters. Self-sufficiency connotes an economic condition while independence more often involves political status. Both concepts, which typically complement one another, remained fundamental to the piney-woods existence.

Primarily yeoman farmers, the plain folk valued independence in a way that is difficult for us in our automated, regulated society to comprehend. In his introductory remarks preceding the Seventh United States Census in 1850, prominent New Orleans editor and promoter J.D.B. DeBow lamented, that in 1840, in many regions of the

South objections loomed so strong to the searching nature of the questions that several counties and parishes refused peremptorily to answer them. DeBow continued that though fewer such problems occurred in 1850, in several cases, "it was necessary to call in the services of the district attorney to enforce the requisitions of the law."<sup>30</sup> Mistrust of a meddling or energetic government remained central to the piney-woods existence. The Livingston Parish police jury solved the perennial problem of forcing rural farmers to honor their obligations to maintain public roads by appointing them overseers with independent control over designated sections of the roads. Each specific section of the road would theoretically belong to the farmer and typically would be named for him. This system relied on peer pressure rather than legal coercion to ensure road maintenance.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of personal independence involved not simply freedom from government interference, but included the ownership of productive resources and a lack of subservience to outsiders or outside forces. F.M. Kent noted "the people here are more independent in thought and action than in New England, none of the isms can find a foothold here." The piney-woods folk readily resorted to violence if deemed

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<sup>30</sup>           Introductory Remarks, Seventh Census 1850, Compendium p. 12.

<sup>31</sup>           Livingston Parish Police Jury Minutes, June term 1875, pp.10-13 (LLMVM).

necessary to maintain their independence, even from their neighbors.<sup>32</sup> Yet traditionally, in the Florida parishes as in many other regions of the South, the piney-woods dwellers appeared to see no inconsistency in their surrender of political control to the planters.<sup>33</sup>

Self-sufficiency proved central to this perception of independence. Inadequate primary evidence exists to indicate whether self-sufficiency, in most cases, resulted from need or choice. Yet the propensity of the piney-woods dwellers to locate in regions which would obviously require a degree of self-sufficiency lends credence to the assumption that they opted for an economically autonomous lifestyle. Whether self-sufficiency resulted simply from an absence of available trading centers, or from a political or philosophical conviction, it remained a fundamental aspect of the piney-woods existence.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the relative nearness of New Orleans eroded the likelihood of a truly hermetic existence in the Florida parishes. Most piney-woods

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<sup>32</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, September 16, 1891; Clinton American Patriot, December 15, 1855; Edward Stewart to John Gurley, April 22, 1859, in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); F.M. Kent to Uncle Moody, February 19, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers *ibid*; Steven Hahn, "The Yeomanry of the Non-Plantation South: Upper Piedmont Georgia 1850-1860," in Orville Burton and Robert McMath (ed.), Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed discussion of the political interaction between the planters and plain folk see chapter three.

farmers participated in or contributed to an annual market excursion to Madisonville, Springfield, or accompanied their crops or livestock to New Orleans. This allowed the plain folk to secure goods such as salt and gunpowder which often proved difficult to obtain in the piney woods. Though this attachment to the New Orleans market seems to contradict the traditional interpretation of self-sufficiency, by the mid-nineteenth century this denoted the manner of self-sufficiency existing in the Florida parishes, much as it exemplified the manner evident in many other areas of the rural South. The piney-woods dwellers continued to produce virtually all their own food, manufactured their own homespun clothing, and fashioned many farm implements. Staple crops remained secondary to food production throughout the antebellum period.<sup>34</sup> Under these circumstances, and in the absence of local retail establishments, maintaining that the limited procurement of necessities proved tantamount to negating a condition of self-sufficiency would obscure a fundamental aspect of life in the eastern Florida parishes. Understanding the importance of self-sufficiency, although by traditional definitions an abbreviated version, is essential to explaining the course of events in the late nineteenth century. Thus, though seriously truncated by the 1850's,

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed discussion of the emphasis on foodstuffs and staple crop production see chapter two.



self-sufficiency remained an integral component of the piney-woods existence.

The plain folk felt pride in their ability to "manufacture all that they wear and produce all they consume."<sup>35</sup> Typically they had plenty to eat, albeit a monotonous fare consisting mostly of corn, pork, beans, and sweet potatoes supplemented by wild game. Moreover, by raising a few bales of cotton, some extra rice or cattle for market, the piney-woods folk often enjoyed luxury items such as coffee. In the absence of state assistance, the plain folk frequently took the initiative to build a levee to preserve their homestead or a crude road to provide easier access to friends and family.<sup>36</sup> Self-sufficiency afforded them a level of control over their own lives that poorer urban dwellers would never experience and heightened their sense of honor.

Like the planters, the plain folk adhered to a rigid code of honor, albeit one peculiar to their circumstances. Yet unlike the planters, who often resolved affairs of honor in prearranged duels, the piney-woods dwellers usually settled affronts to honor spontaneously. Every man knew that

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<sup>35</sup> Comment of historian J.F.H. Claiborne, 1862, quoted in Polk (ed.) Mississippi's Piney Woods p.ix.

<sup>36</sup> Senate Journal, First Session, First Legislature 1853, March 9, 1853; House Journal, First Session, Fourth Legislature 1852, February 21, 1852; House Journal, First Session 1854, March 7, 1854; Kentwood Commercial, July 25 and August 8, 1896.

he risked his life by insulting another. Upon learning in April 1876 that Francis Bardwell issued statements the previous evening which could be interpreted as insulting to his neighbor Fayette Wells's wife, Wells promptly tracked him down and emptied his pistol into the unarmed and unsuspecting Bardwell. To have done any less would have invited shame and ridicule upon the Wells family. As with the elite, the consequences of such actions remained secondary to the fear of public and private humiliation.<sup>37</sup>

The end result of the motivating qualities of independence, self-sufficiency, and honor, often appeared to outside observers as simple laziness, pointless violence, or some other misunderstood behavior. Without a proper understanding of the social mores of the plain folk, Wells' killing of Bardwell appears to be only a heinous cold-blooded murder. That it certainly was, but it was also a culturally conditioned response condoned by the local populace. Appreciating that murder, under certain circumstances, served

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<sup>37</sup> Amite City Democrat, April 22, 1876; F.M. Kent to Uncle Moody, February 19 and June 2, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC); Clinton Feliciana Whig, December 15, 1842; Serrano Taylor to Adeline, November 27, 1857, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Robert Barrow Letter, January 15, 1858 *ibid*; Edwin A Davis (ed.), Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1836-1846, As Reflected in the Diary of Bennett H. Barrow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) March 1, 1842, herein after referred to as Davis (ed.) Diary of Bennett Barrow; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Honor and Violence in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Grady McWhiney, Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988) p. 160.

as not merely an accepted but an expected response, remains central to understanding the course of events in the late nineteenth-century Florida parishes.

Like the planters, most other contemporary observers made little effort to understand the motives behind the behavior of the plain folk. Visitors to the piney woods often arrived with pre-established notions about the rural South. Northern and European travellers frequently compared the piney woods to their own societies, rather than making unbiased observations. As many piney-woods farmers allowed their livestock to graze unattended in the open pine forests, many outside observers miscalculated and incorrectly reported the aggregate wealth of rural regions.<sup>38</sup> Many visitors arrived with pre-arranged agendas, rather than attempting to seek out and understand events peculiar to the rural South. Frederick Law Olmsted carefully scrutinized the living conditions of the plain folk while focusing his questions primarily on their attitudes toward slavery. The Englishman William Howard Russell saw little in the culture of the piney-woods dwellers, except perhaps crudeness.<sup>39</sup> Such

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<sup>38</sup> Where to Locate New Factories in the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana on the Line of the Southern Division of the Illinois Central Railroad, ICRR pamphlet (Cedar Rapids: Republican Printing Co., 1892) pp. 122-124; John H. Napier III "Piney Woods Past: A Pastoral Elegy," in Polk (ed.) Mississippi's Piney Woods, p.17.

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American States (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953); William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South (New York: Harper

observations enhance our awareness of the appearance of the piney woods, but contribute little to our understanding of why events developed as they did. Recently the work of historians like J. Mills Thornton and James Oakes, have demonstrated the importance of understanding the forces which determined behavior in the plain folk.<sup>40</sup>

First and foremost, the motivating force behind these qualities, which played so central a role in the piney-woods culture, can be traced to a tradition of Jeffersonian republicanism. The ideal which envisioned the self-reliant yeoman farmer as the very foundation of American liberty. To a far greater degree than the planters, who so often boasted of their adherence to republican principles, the piney-woods folk embodied the spirit of the Jeffersonian ideal.<sup>41</sup> They lived their lives as proud, independent, and self-sufficient farmers shunning an urban, industrial lifestyle and the complexities that often accompanied it. Rarely attempting to justify their lifestyle, the piney-woods dwellers constituted the offspring of Jefferson's philosophy, simply living the life he outlined with or without an awareness of his teachings. As with the Jacksonians who modified republican

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and Row, 1954).

<sup>40</sup> J. Mills Thornton, Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York: Knopf, 1982).

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed explanation of the application of republican ideals see chapter 2.

principles to fit their needs, here was an adaptation appropriate to the needs of the piney woods in the backyard of the South's largest market. It adhered to that peculiar blend of southern republicanism which incorporated white independence with an acceptance of black slavery. Yet it was a perversion of the Jeffersonian ideal.

Jefferson viewed independence and self-sufficiency as an integral component in the making of good citizens. The good citizen would take advantage of this independence to become educated and thus capable of voting in a rational manner which served his own interests best. Moreover, independence would allow the farmer to sell and purchase goods from whomever he chose, free from the restraints imposed by an employer or landlord. Jefferson viewed independence as merely a step in the process of creating good citizens. Yet, among the piney-woods dwellers of the Florida parishes, independence became an end unto itself, not a part of a process towards good citizenship. This interruption of the process circumvented the end product envisioned by Jefferson. As a result, it would eventually emerge as a corrupting influence, promoting, in the aftermath of war and defeat, a contempt for authority and traditional mechanisms of restraint. This half-way embrace of the republican ideal would contribute directly to the chaotic conditions of the late nineteenth century.

The presence of slavery in the antebellum South reinforced an acute awareness that independence demanded constant vigilance.<sup>42</sup> The shifting political patterns in mid-nineteenth century Louisiana served to augment the necessity of vigilance and suspicion of government. The famous statement attributed to Jefferson, "I am not a friend to an energetic government, it is always oppressive," appeared to warn of political tendencies in late antebellum Louisiana. As commercial and political interests in New Orleans cooperated with delta planters to control state government, the political position of the plain folk seemed in doubt. Replacing the state constitution of 1845, which allowed for an expanded franchise, with the more restrictive one of 1852 appeared to threaten the role of the plain folk in state politics. The new constitution nullified the provision present in the Constitution of 1845 which prohibited the counting of slaves in apportioning seats for the House of Representatives. This dramatically diluted the voting strength of the piney-woods parishes while doubling the representation of the plantation parishes. Democratic Governor Robert Walker, who aggressively opposed the new constitution, warned that "the hardy yeoman, the iron framework of a democratic republic" must safeguard their liberty from the designs of the millionaire. Walker and

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<sup>42</sup> William J. Cooper Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics To 1860 (New York: Knopf, 1983).

other Democratic leaders warned of the anti-republican elements of the new constitution.<sup>43</sup> The rancor created by the perception of constitutional maneuvering to serve narrow interests contributed to the emergence of a deep mistrust of politics and government.<sup>44</sup> This mistrust in turn affected social and political relations between the planters and the piney-woods folk, many of whom began to question the planters' desire to safeguard their interests. Suspicion of the motives of the planters and their urban allies would lead many piney-woods voters to seek alternative political leaders. As a result, the early 1850's witnessed the first cracks in the traditional social order of the Florida parishes. These changing circumstances accompanied by war and defeat, climaxed by the late nineteenth century in a chaotic situation of perverted Jeffersonianism run riot.

An awareness of the values which motivated the lifestyle and development of the piney-woods dwellers is central to an understanding of social and political development in the

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<sup>43</sup> Message of Governor Robert Walker, Senate Journal, First Session First Legislature, January 17, 1853, p.3; Clinton American Patriot February 7, 1855.

<sup>44</sup> The Louisiana Constitution of 1852 did make a few democratic reforms, such as making most state offices elective. Yet the direct assault on the political power of the piney-woods parishes coupled with the "sellout" election of 1855, in which Democratic leaders in New Orleans and the delta parishes reneged on a deal to support piney-woods candidates for governor and lieutenant governor, created deep mistrust in the piney-woods parishes. Report of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution of 1852, Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1852 (LLMVC).

Florida parishes. Though an independent lifestyle necessitated vigilance, the vast majority of the plain folk appeared content with their lives. Like the planters, some piney-woods folk possessed considerable resources while others had little. Each group contained varying degrees of wealth and power within itself. Yet in general the piney-woods dwellers lived free of the expenses and complexities inherent in the lifestyle of many planters.<sup>45</sup>

The plantation and piney-woods regions of the Florida parishes shared many of the characteristics and peculiarities of life in the South. Slaves made up twenty five to fifty percent of the population in all of the piney-woods parishes.<sup>46</sup> Likewise each of the plantation parishes contained significant numbers of plain folk who shared the lifestyle and the values of the piney-woods dwellers. Like the shared characteristics, a degree of shared values necessarily followed. In the postwar period however, the differences would overwhelm the similarities. The dominant element in one section embodied a perverted form of the republican ideal, while in the other, republican principles often seemed significant only as long as they appeared to be

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<sup>45</sup> Davis (ed.) Diary of Bennett Barrow; provides a good example of the constant state of debt endured by many planters in order to maintain their lifestyle, see pp. 20-22.

<sup>46</sup> Seventh Census, Population Statistics, 1850; The number of slaves in the population of the piney woods parishes ranged from a high of almost fifty percent in St. Helena to a low of twenty five percent in Livingston.



the means to an end.<sup>47</sup> As one region stabilized, the other degenerated into chaos - the social and political values of the residents in each being fundamental to the outcome.

The qualities independence, self-sufficiency, and honor, embodied the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian spirit. Yet these same qualities would also prove to be central to the region's undoing. Unrestrained, the manifestation of these values proved as destructive as they were virtuous. The introduction of outside forces and events beyond the control of the local residents transformed the region. The same values which once were an integral component of stability and tranquility became essential elements of the nightmare. As the nation grappled with the political crisis of the 1850's, the Florida parishes experienced the first tremors of the storm to come.

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<sup>47</sup> Planters appeared to rely heavily on republican appeals at election time and during the prelude to secession. Republican rhetoric directed to the plain folk in the antebellum period, would contribute to a state of affairs the planters would find themselves unable to control in the postwar period.

## Chapter Two

### A Brief Moment of Security

In his travels through the backcountry South in the early 1840's, the Mississippi historian and editor J.F.H. Claiborne described some of the subtle differences between the plantation and piney-woods regions of southeastern Mississippi. Finding it unnecessary to provide details on the apparent contrasts of life in each section, Claiborne instead focused on less obvious yet significant differences, such as foods consumed and leisure time activities. In one instance he contrasted the "glorious supper" of oysters, chicken salad, turkeys, terrapin, and champagne he received in Wilkinson County, in the lower Mississippi delta, with a meal he received in the piney woods. The piney-woods repast, though abundant according to Claiborne, contained numerous dishes all composed of potatoes prepared in a variety of ways. He and his companion feasted upon baked potatoes, fried potatoes, bacon and potatoes boiled together, a hash of wild turkey garnished with potatoes, potato biscuit, coffee, "strong and well flavored," made of potatoes, and finally, potato pie and a tumbler of potato beer.<sup>48</sup> Claiborne

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<sup>48</sup> J.F.H. Claiborne, "A Trip Through the Piney Woods" in Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society (Oxford: Printed for the Society, 1906) IX, 1906, pp.491 and

appeared to prefer the finer dining found in Wilkinson County. As with many travellers in the rural South, the relative splendor of the plantation setting and the delicacies provided overshadowed the comfortable but seemingly bland existence of the plain folk. Yet his observations provide important evidence concerning conditions in the antebellum rural South. The amount and quality of foods consumed indicates that in the late antebellum period prosperous times prevailed in both the plantation and piney-woods regions. Though the nature of foods in each area differed, sustenance was abundant and in keeping with local crops and conditions.

The term prosperity often appears in conjunction with stability when discussing conditions in the antebellum South. In 1852, the Florida parishes and environs constituted a highly stable region. This pattern of stability resulted from economic prosperity and the compatible condition of mutual dependence existing between the planters and plain folk. Shared interests based on similar agricultural pursuits and political fears allowed for the temporary availing conditions in the Florida parishes. This beneficial state of affairs is of particular significance, not only because it contributed directly to the secession appeal, but also because stability had proven antithetical to the history of the Florida parishes.

The initial French efforts to colonize West Florida ended abruptly in 1763 with their defeat at the hands of the British in the French and Indian War. In 1764 British troops occupied the fort at Baton Rouge and established additional fortifications on Thompson's Creek, in the Feliciana district, and at Fort Bute near Manchac on the north shore of Lake Maurepas. In an effort to solidify their control of the territory, the British offered very liberal land grants to retired soldiers. Officers received from three to five thousand acres, while privates could claim up to three hundred acres. The beneficiaries of this land policy, supplemented by British Loyalists who migrated from the Atlantic seaboard to the Florida parishes during the American Revolution, placed a strong pro-British element among the few scattered French settlers remaining in the area.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the intensive colonization efforts, British control constituted only a brief interlude. In 1779 Spain, under the direction of the Governor of the Orleans Territory Bernardo de Galvez, seized West Florida from the British in a military expedition designed to support the American Revolutionists. The new Spanish overlords graciously allowed

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<sup>49</sup> Amite City News Digest, August 7, 1975; Stanley C. Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion (St. Francisville: St. Francisville Democrat Printing, 1935) pp.14-15, hereinafter referred to as Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion; John Hebron Moore The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) p.2, hereinafter referred to as Moore The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest.

the British to remain with their land claims intact, provided they swore loyalty to the Spanish Crown and embraced Catholicism. These conditions, for some, proved a bitter pill to swallow. Yet the prospect of losing one's homestead and being uprooted induced many to stay.<sup>50</sup>

Like their British predecessors, the Spanish also offered large tracts of land to those who would settle in West Florida. Yet in many cases, the Spanish grants conflicted with, or overlapped, the earlier British grants which Spain had promised to honor. Further complicating the situation, both the British and Spanish grants were almost always vague and confusing. The lack of precision inherent in the British titles is exemplified by a 1776 grant on the Amite River which read that "Elihu Bay recieves all that tract of land situated on the east side of the River Amit about four miles back from said river upon a creek called the Three Creeks butting and bounding southwesterly unto land surveyed out to Joseph Blackwell and on all other sides by vacant land." Similarly, an 1804 Spanish grant read that "Luke Collins claims four hundred superficial arpents nine leagues up the east bank of the Tickfaw River, bounded on one side by William George and by public land on the other two."

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<sup>50</sup> The stipulation requiring residents to convert to Catholicism appears to have been a token gesture rather than a realistic matter of policy. Little evidence exists to indicate that the Spanish made more than token efforts to enforce the decree. Moreover, as will be demonstrated in chapter 3, religion played an insignificant role in the lives of most residents.

Disputed land claims created tension between pro-British and pro-Spanish factions in West Florida.<sup>51</sup>

From the outset the Spanish government appeared weak and corrupt to the inhabitants of West Florida. Not only did the Spanish make little if any effort to resolve the conflicting land claims, but they also failed to appoint district courts to deal with growing criminal activity in the territory. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the scattering of French and Isleno settlers migrating to West Florida was abruptly augmented by large numbers of Americans encouraged by the United States' claim to the region presumed in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Many army deserters and criminal elements counted among these Americans seeking a safe haven in West Florida. The territory quickly became infested with undesirables who disrupted settlement patterns and waylaid wagons and travellers on the trails and highways. In addition, considerable numbers of American Filibusters, adventurers inciting revolution in Spanish held areas, also counted among these migrants. Spanish inability to control marauding, resolve internal disputes, and control seditious elements, created a volatile mix in West Florida. Official

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<sup>51</sup> John H. Napier III, Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods It's Land and People (Oxford: University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1985) hereinafter referred to as Napier, Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods p. 31; "Documents Covering a Royal Land Grant on the Mississippi and Amite Rivers," reprinted in Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XII, No. I, p. 638; Amite City News Digest, August 7, 1975; Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion, p.16.

communications and settler petitions demonstrate that a perception of neglect and vulnerability promoted a general feeling of discontent among the population.<sup>52</sup> Napoleonic Bonaparte's manipulation of the Spanish Crown further exemplified Spain's weakness and heightened the belief among some elements, that Spain could never adequately police and promote the territory.

An abortive 1804 attempt to overthrow Spanish control and bring stability to West Florida originated with Reuben Kemper of Pinckneyville, Mississippi and his brothers. The Kempers, like many of their neighbors just across the border in the Mississippi Territory, acted to secure their property rights in West Florida as well as out of the belief that increasing instability in West Florida could eventually destabilize their own region. The brief Kemper Rebellion failed because its leaders miscalculated the strength of pro-French, British, and Spanish elements, all of whom felt threatened by the pro-American faction the Kempers represented.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> DeBow's Review, XI, p. 256; Thomas D. Clark "The Piney Woods and the Cutting Edge of the Lingerin Southern Frontier" in Noel Polk (ed.) Mississippi's Piney Woods: A Human Perspective (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986) p.64; Amite City News Digest, August 7 and 14, 1975; James A. Padgett (ed.) "The Constitution of the West Florida Republic" Louisiana Historical Quarterly XX, No.4, October 1937.

<sup>53</sup> DeBow's Review, XI, p. 264; Arthur, The Story of the West Florida Rebellion p.29; Amite City Progress, July 12, 1945; Amite City News Digest, August 7, 1975; St. Francisville The Louisianian, November 6, 1819, demonstrates

By 1810 virtual chaos prevailed in West Florida. Spanish authority rarely extended beyond the fort at Baton Rouge and the nearby river towns of Bayou Sara and St. Francisville. Rising criminal activity in the absence of district courts and increasing turmoil resulting from disputed land claims propelled the territory to the brink of anarchy. The chaotic conditions intensified as increasing numbers of army deserters and other fugitives exploited West Florida's weakness, settled in the eastern parishes, and added to the factional tension. William C.C. Claiborne, who would later become the first American governor of Louisiana, observed that many desirables were coming to the territory but added that, "among them are many adventurers of desperate fortunes and characters."<sup>54</sup> By the Fall of 1810, contempt for the ineffectiveness of the "pukes," a derogatory name applied to the Spanish officials, exploded into the West Florida Rebellion.<sup>55</sup>

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that Kemper had good reason to fear for the security of his property holdings in West Florida. Included in this edition is a description of property in the Feliciana district recently lost by Kemper.

<sup>54</sup> Dunbar Rowland (ed.) Official Letter Books of William C.C. Claiborne (Madison: Democrat Printing Co., 1917) V, pp. 56-57 (hereinafter referred to as Rowland (ed.) Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne).

<sup>55</sup> Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Twenty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, Document No. 463 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832) hereinafter referred to as U.S. House Documents; Amite City Progress, July 12, 1945; Amite City News Digest, April 10, 1959, August 14 and 21, 1975; Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion, p.29.



Large numbers of American settlers, concentrated primarily in the Feliciana District, and others contemptuous of Spanish authority called for armed rebellion. Following a surprise raid which led to the capture of the fort at Baton Rouge, the rebels moved rapidly to consolidate their control of West Florida. Two groups of citizen militia forming in support of the Spanish in the Springfield and Tangipahoa regions dispersed before rebel contingents arrived. The removal of this threat allowed the rebels to proclaim the territory the Republic of West Florida. The independent republic endured for seventy-four days before its president, Fulwar Skipwith, reluctantly allowed William C.C. Claiborne to take control of the territory for the United States.

American control did not bring immediate stability to West Florida. Claiborne reorganized the territory into four parishes but failed to address aggressively the disorder in the less populated eastern region. He defended his failure to appoint judges for the two eastern parishes, St. Helena and St. Tammany, by arguing that "there is in that quarter a great scarcity of talent, and the number of virtuous men (I fear) is not as great as I could wish."<sup>56</sup> The new American officials aggravated the dispute over land claims by

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<sup>56</sup> Amite City News Digest, September 11, 1975; Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion, p.141; the state legislature delayed for six years before moving to effectively organize the judicial system of the Florida parishes thereby aggravating the chaotic conditions there, see House Journal Third Legislature, Second Session, January 14 and 15, 1818.

confering a blanket recognition of existing claims, while issuing new land grants themselves.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the seemingly ambiguous status of the territory created further problems. An 1811 bill providing for the attachment of West Florida to Mississippi Territory failed in Congress. When in the same year Congress made provisions to admit the Orleans Territory as a state without including West Florida, rebellion flared anew. On March 11, 1811 rebellious elements again raised the lone star flag of the West Florida Republic, forcing Claiborne to dispatch troops to enforce his authority. On April 12, 1812 Congress admitted Louisiana to the Union. Nearly four months later on August 4, 1812 the state assented to the inclusion of West Florida, from the Mississippi to the Pearl River, as part of the new state.<sup>58</sup>

Despite lingering legal problems concerning the status of West Florida, statehood allowed for a degree of territorial certainty but not for internal stability in the

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<sup>57</sup> William C.C. Claiborne to Secretary of State Smith December 2, 1810, in U.S. House Documents, Twenty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, Document No. 463 (concerning territory south of the thirty-first parallel north latitude).

<sup>58</sup> William C.C. Claiborne to Secretary of State Smith December 16, 1810, in U.S. House Documents, Twenty-Fifth Congress, Second Session, Document Number 463; Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the Select Committee Making An Apportionment of Representation in the House of Representatives," December 20, 1833, pp. 17-18 (hereinafter referred to as House Journal); Clinton, The Semi-Weekly Patriot Democrat August 28, 1880; Arthur The Story of the West Florida Rebellion, p. 141; Amite City News Digest, September 18, 1975.

Florida parishes.<sup>59</sup> Disputed land claims, resulting from the conflicting grants of the various governing powers, continued to create problems. As late as 1844 the state legislature implored Congress to resolve the disputed land claims which continued to impede settlement.<sup>60</sup> Yet the primary problem continued to lie with the people themselves. Composed of various antagonistic ethnic groups, many containing hostile internal social and political factions, the Florida parishes constituted a volatile melting pot. Lingering British, French, and Spanish loyalties, coupled with land disputes and continuing rampant criminal activity, inhibited the establishment of an effective American system of justice. Addressing Congress concerning complaints he had received regarding the turbulent conditions in the Florida

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<sup>59</sup> As noted in chapter one, the Constitution of 1812 did not include West Florida as a portion of Louisiana. This continued to create problems for the legislature which persisted in treating the region as distinctive into the 1830's, see House Journal, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, December 20, 1833, pp. 15-19; the first legislative session of 1823 became embroiled in a bitter controversy over the status of West Florida: legislators from Orleans Parish and the sugar parishes bloc voted to deny the representatives from West Florida their seats on the grounds that they were not recognized as a part of Louisiana under the Constitution of 1812; see Senate Journal Sixth Legislature, First Session, January 20-22, 1823.

<sup>60</sup> American State Papers, Legislative Documents of the Congress of the United States in Relation to Public Lands, Nineteenth Congress, First Session, No.'s 455-457, January 24, 1826 (Washington: Duff Green, 1834) pp. 336-338; Ibid., Twenty-Second Congress, First Session, No. 1072, July 11, 1832 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1860) pp. 506-509; House Journal, Sixteenth Legislature, Second Session, 1844, see annual message of Governor Alfred Mouton, January 2, 1844; St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, February 5, 1824;

parishes, Governor Claiborne asserted that, "civil authority has become weak and lax in West Florida particularly in the parish of St. Tammany in which the influence of laws is scarcely felt."<sup>61</sup> Claiborne's dilemma seemed compounded by his awareness that many of the residents came to the territory specifically because no effective legal authority existed. These migrants aggressively resisted the implementation of American authority. The regional patterns of settlement illustrate the significance of the continuing disorder in the Florida parishes.

Though the number of settlers coming to West Florida increased significantly in the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, the population remained relatively sparse. By contrast, in Mississippi Territory, the counties bordering the Florida parishes typically contained populations three or four times the number in West Florida. Likewise the parishes to the west and south had considerably larger populations.<sup>62</sup> These regions, particularly the southeastern counties of Mississippi, had benefitted from the disorder in West Florida. Many planters, such as William Dunbar, removed their operations from West Florida to southeastern Mississippi either to avoid the instability and

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<sup>61</sup> Rowland (ed.) Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne VI, pp. 161-162.

<sup>62</sup> Third Census of the United States, 1810 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1811) pp. 82-84; William Darby, Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana (Philadelphia: John Melish, 1816) p. 175.

legal confusion prevailing in West Florida, or simply to live in territory under American control.<sup>63</sup> Since the Florida parishes comprised the area just north of the largest market in the South, and possessed soil and natural resources very similar to the adjacent counties in Mississippi Territory, the region's instability had clearly served to inhibit settlement.

Beginning in the 1830's, an intricate combination of politics and economics ushered in a new era in West Florida. The virgin pine forests, numerous clear running streams, and the expanding and increasingly profitable market for staple crops, virtually necessitated the advent of stability in the Florida parishes. Indeed agriculture, and the introduction of political dominance by delta planters, led to a state of equilibrium in West Florida.

The seeming inability to find a profitable crop in the first decades of development retarded progress in the Florida parishes nearly as much as did territorial instability. Initially, the French encouraged tobacco and indigo farming in the lower Mississippi Valley. When tobacco farming proved to be a moderate success, numerous plantations emerged along

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<sup>63</sup> Eron Rowland (ed.) Life, Letters and Papers of William Dunbar (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Historical Society, 1930) p. 10 (hereinafter referred to as Rowland (ed.) Life, Letters and Papers of William Dunbar).

the Mississippi and environs between Baton Rouge and Natchez.<sup>64</sup> Under British and later Spanish direction tobacco farming remained modestly successful. Yet in 1790 Spain withdrew its tobacco subsidy, which many planters relied on, forcing most of them out of business.<sup>65</sup> A different set of problems hampered indigo production.

The French introduced indigo to Louisiana in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Initially, Louisiana indigo appeared to be of high quality encouraging further production. When the British assumed control of West Florida in 1763, indigo remained the primary crop, though financial returns proved disappointing. With the advent of Spanish rule, indigo declined in importance. Spanish trade policy which insisted that Louisiana indigo be shipped only to Spanish ports created delays which incurred additional expenses and hastened deterioration. Moreover, the Spanish procured higher quality indigo from Guatemala, Caracas, and even the Spanish Main. Thus, the new masters of West Florida exhibited little interest in promoting indigo cultivation. Crop destroying insects and blight further eroded the prospects for Louisiana indigo. By 1797 these problems,

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<sup>64</sup> Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 V.I (New York: Peter Smith, 1941) pp. 333-335; DeBow's Review, XI, pp. 252-253.

<sup>65</sup> Moore The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p.4; Henry E. Chambers A History of Louisiana (New York: American Historical Society, 1925) p.144.

coupled with competition from the British East India Company, served to obliterate indigo farming in West Florida.<sup>66</sup>

Despite this setback, in the first decade of the nineteenth century good fortune finally arrived for the delta planters of West Florida. Facing financial ruin, as a result of the failure of tobacco and indigo as marketable crops from their region, the farmers turned to cotton. The introduction of the cotton gin in the lower Mississippi valley around the turn of the century stimulated this transformation. Planters in the Feliciana district and East Baton Rouge experimented with an upland cotton of the Siamese black seed variety which proved adaptable to the Louisiana environment. Fortunately for these planters the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue, occurring at virtually the same time, deprived European manufacturers of their principal source of this fiber. As a result, cotton prices skyrocketed to unprecedented levels creating an economic boom for the emerging cotton planters of West Florida. By the 1830's, the delta region of Louisiana and Mississippi had surpassed Georgia and South Carolina as cotton producers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jack D.L. Holmes "Indigo in Colonial Louisiana and the Floridas," Louisiana History VIII, No. 4, Fall 1967 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Historical Association, 1967) pp.331-333 and 338-343; Moore The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p.4; Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, p.294-297.

<sup>67</sup> Gavin Wright The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978) pp.13-22; Moore The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p.6;

High prices encouraged the expansion of the cotton economy. Yet the piney-woods territory of the eastern Florida parishes appeared unfit for cotton farming. Typically the piney-woods regions of the Gulf South contained a sandy soil, deposited when the area comprised a part of the Gulf of Mexico. Moreover, pine needles did not produce the deep rich loess covering above the soil which the remains of rotting hardwood leaves created. But the eastern parishes, like most of Louisiana and southeastern Mississippi, contained numerous rivers and streams. By the late 1830's, industrious farmers had demonstrated that cotton could be profitably raised in the river bottoms and creek beds of the piney woods.<sup>68</sup>

The introduction of successful commercial agricultural pursuits in the piney woods encouraged many Florida parish farmers to experiment with crops other than cotton. Experiments with rice began as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the 1830's enterprising farmers had demonstrated that the marsh lands

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Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, p. 687-689.

<sup>68</sup> Sixth Census of the United States, Compendium, 1840, (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1841) p.240 (hereinafter referred to as Sixth Census of the United States, 1840); Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest p.7; Amite City Progress, June 25, 1937; Robert J. Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," Mississippi Folklore Register X, No.1, Spring 1976 (Hattiesburg: Mississippi Folklore Society of the University of Mississippi, 1976) p.3 (hereinafter referred to as Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi").



along the north shore of lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain as well as the abundant swamp lands along the Pearl, Amite, and other rivers, proved conducive to rice farming. Rice required minimal capital in its cultivation making it a viable alternative crop for middling and poorer farmers. Yet rice production often produced handsome returns with minimal labor. Simply by erecting a system of levees to hold back the river and control the water level in the fields, and constructing ditches to regulate the water supply and facilitate harvesting, farmers could produce a ready food source and marketable crop.<sup>69</sup> By 1840, rice farming also constituted a popular and profitable business in the eastern Florida parishes as well as in the southwestern counties of Mississippi.<sup>70</sup> Despite the presence of a few sugar cane fields, located primarily in East Baton Rouge Parish, the

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<sup>69</sup> Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, U.S. House of Representatives Executive Document, Fortieth Congress, Second Session, pp. 174-175 (hereinafter referred to as Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867); J.D.B. DeBow The Industrial Resources, Etc., of the Southern and Western States (New Orleans: Published by DeBow's Review, 1853) vol. II, pp. 426-427; H.M. Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana; Together With a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River, in 1811 (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear and Eichbaum, 1814) p. 285 (hereinafter referred to as Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana); Darby, Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana, pp. 141-142.

<sup>70</sup> Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, pp.244-246; Amite and Pike counties Mississippi produced about 150,000 pounds of rice each annually. Marion, Hancock, and Wilkinson counties also cultivated rice, though to a far lesser extent.

Florida parishes remained outside the sugar producing region.<sup>71</sup>

This pattern of growing cotton along the fertile stream beds and rice in the swamp lands continued in the piney-woods parishes through the end of the antebellum period. Although by the mid-1850's the increasing profitability of cotton and the expanding availability of machinery to process it caused production of that staple to increase dramatically and rice production to decline. (see table #4). Census figures demonstrate that though cotton remained the crop of choice of piney-woods farmers throughout the antebellum period, many also planted rice, and some, particularly in St. Tammany Parish, planted rice exclusively. This configuration deviated from the pattern in the delta region of the Florida parishes where, excepting a few isolated fields of sugar cane and some scattered patches of rice, cotton dominated. Moreover, while it is likely that delta planters employed the limited amount of rice they produced to feed their own slaves, piney-woods farmers almost certainly raised it for market.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, p.240; F.F. Hansell (ed.), Commercial and Statistical Almanac: Containing a History of the Epidemic of 1878 (New Orleans: James Gresham, 1879) p.22 (hereinafter referred to as Hansell (ed.), Commercial and Statistical Almanac).

<sup>72</sup> Figures compiled in the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, indicate that almost 400,000 pounds of rice were produced annually in the four eastern parishes. An amount far more than necessary for home consumption.

Table 4

## AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AS A MEASURE OF PROSPERITY

PARISH	COTTON PRODUCED (IN BALES)		RICE PRODUCED (IN POUNDS)		PERCENT WHO INCREASED COTTON PRODUCTION	PERCENT WHO INCREASED LIVESTOCK HOLDINGS	PERCENT COTTON FARMERS WHO INCREASED LANDHOLDINGS
	1850	1860	1850	1860	1850-1860	1850-1860	1850-1860
EAST BATON ROUGE	1,346	11,621	4,009	0	INSUFFICIENT DATA	50	50
EAST FELICIANA	9,967	23,332	4,675	17	75	25	66
WEST FELICIANA	18,291	21,331	8,000	0	33	66	33
LIVINGSTON	265	1,563	83,480	1,060	91	50	50
ST HELENA	1,284	6,484	54,868	11,772	80	60	40
ST TAMMANY	41	200	97,793	22,049	INSUFFICIENT DATA	-	-
WASHINGTON	693	2,735	159,750	27,340	90	60	80

In 1860, ninety-one percent of Washington Parish farmers planted cotton. Twenty-five percent of the same farmers planted rice. In neighboring St. Tammany Parish, thirty-three percent of the farmers planted cotton while another thirty-three percent planted rice. Few if any farmers in St. Tammany planted both cotton and rice. In Livingston Parish fully seventy-five percent of the farmers planted cotton. Among this group slightly over twelve percent also planted rice. Essentially the same pattern held true for St. Helena. Ninety percent of St. Helena farmers grew cotton, ten percent of the same group also planted some rice.<sup>73</sup>

Among the heads of households in the piney-woods parishes who listed their occupations: seventy-three percent in St. Helena, seventy-two percent in Livingston, thirty-six percent in St. Tammany, and fully eighty-six percent of the respondents in Washington declared themselves farmers or planters. As the vast majority of these farmers planted staple crops, the piney-woods parishes seemed to be fully incorporated into the cotton economy. Yet unlike the plantation parishes, East and West Feliciana and East Baton Rouge, where typically larger farms averaged between fifty and two hundred bales of cotton annually, farms in the piney-

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<sup>73</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 (Reprint, New York: Norman Ross, 1990) These figures are based on a three percent sample survey of the heads of households of each individual parish.

woods parishes usually averaged ten bales or less.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, shared investments and a mutual dependence on the success of the cotton crop, emerged as an important bond between the planters and piney-woods dwellers. Cotton, corollary agricultural pursuits, and the politics of slavery, would serve as the cornerstones for stability in the Florida parishes.

Despite the strong ties to the cotton economy, lower crop yields, the limited availability of quality land, and the ravages of the army worm and rot due to the damp climate, encouraged a diversified economy in the piney-woods parishes.<sup>75</sup> The virtual necessity of, and passion for self-sufficiency, prompted most farmers in the eastern parishes to devote considerable portions of their land to foodstuffs.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Eighth Census of the United States 1860; In the planter parishes the figures range from a low average of near fifty bales in East Baton Rouge to a high of almost two hundred bales in West Feliciana. By contrast in the piney woods figures range from a low average of less than three bales in Livingston, to a high of almost forty bales in St. Helena. Land holdings contrasted widely. Holdings in the wealthiest planter parish, West Feliciana, averaged about 1800 acres, in the wealthiest piney-woods parish, St. Helena, about 1350 acres. Holdings in the remaining piney-woods parishes averaged notably less: 390 acres in Livingston, 294 in St. Tammany, and 400 in Washington.

<sup>75</sup> Greensburg Imperial October 10, 1857; Clinton Feliciana Democrat September 15, 1855; New Orleans Daily Picayune September 28, 1852; Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," p.3.

<sup>76</sup> Clinton, East Feliciana Patriot April 27, 1867; provides an excellent example of the intensity of the belief among many piney-woods farmers that independence was directly related to self-sufficiency.

In 1860, the average farmer in Washington Parish owned 278 acres. On average, slightly less than twenty-five percent of this land, or nearly seventy acres, constituted improved acreage. Of the improved land, the farmer usually devoted a portion to cotton and possibly some rice. The average Washington farmer produced 11.7 bales of cotton typically weighing about four hundred pounds each.<sup>77</sup> Statistics concerning the yield of cotton per acre are at best, speculative. Yet considerable evidence indicates that in 1860, one acre of Louisiana farm land could yield approximately 250 pounds of lint cotton. The Report of the United States Commissioner of Patents for 1850, demonstrates that cotton production in neighboring Marion County, Mississippi, a piney-woods county with similar topographical features to Washington Parish, ranged from an average of 400 pounds of lint cotton in the bottom lands to 150 pounds on uplands.<sup>78</sup> This ratio would of course vary with the quality

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<sup>77</sup> Average number of bales produced derived from a three percent sample of farmers cultivating cotton, taken from Eighth Census of the United States, 1860. The 1850, 1860, and 1870 census stipulate four hundred pounds as the average bale weight of cotton.

<sup>78</sup> United States House of Representatives Executive Document No. 32, Thirty-First Congress, Second Session, Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the Year 1850 (Washington: House Printers, 1851) pt. II, "Agriculture," (hereinafter referred to as Report of the Commissioner of Patents, 1850) p. 257; Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, pp. 414-416; Ibid, 1862, Thirty-Seventh Congress, Third Session, pp. 105-106; E.J. Donnell, Chronological and Statistical History of Cotton (New York: James Sutton Co., 1872) pp. 370-371. William J. Cooper, Jr., "The Cotton Crisis in the Antebellum South: Another Look,"

of the land, but it provides further evidence to support the 250 pound average. Based on these average figures, one bale of lint cotton could be produced on slightly more than an acre and a half of land.<sup>79</sup> Under ideal crop conditions, about twenty acres would be necessary to reach the average of 11.7 four hundred pound bales. These figures indicate that the average Washington Parish farmer, ninety-one percent of whom raised some cotton, devoted barely one-third of his improved acreage to the production of the great staple.<sup>80</sup>

The remaining cleared land, excluding possible wet lands producing rice, constituted acreage devoted to foodstuffs, primarily corn, peas, beans, sweet potatoes, and Irish potatoes. Virtually all Washington farmers raised significant amounts of corn; some produced a considerable surplus. The heavy emphasis on sweet potatoes also made them

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Agricultural History XLIX, No. 2, April, 1975, p. 389; The Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for 1862 demonstrates that the seeds constituted fully sixty percent of the weight of unginned "seed cotton;" thus I have employed the stated or approximate weight of ginned lint cotton (see page 106).

<sup>79</sup> This figure indicates that on average Louisiana cotton production lagged behind that of Mississippi's Yazoo River floodplain which averaged production of slightly over a bale per acre (see Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p. 122).

<sup>80</sup> These figures, particularly those concerning the amount of cotton produced per acre, are based on evidence which among other problems, provide only a general average with no consideration for the different levels of production certain to be present among varying qualities of land. They do, however, provide evidence of the level of emphasis on cotton production in each region.

a mainstay of the piney-woods diet, while Irish potatoes, peas, and beans appeared to be of lesser significance.<sup>81</sup> This pattern of land ownership and cultivation typified the piney-woods parishes, though overall landholdings were considerably larger in St. Helena Parish and somewhat less in St. Tammany and Livingston. Delta planters typically directed their resources more exclusively toward the production of staple crops and corn, though some, particularly in East Feliciana Parish, cultivated considerable quantities of potatoes and beans.<sup>82</sup> Those planters who failed to produce adequate amounts of foodstuffs either relied on the New Orleans markets or purchased vegetables directly from the plain folk.

Row crop farming played an important role in the piney woods. Yet perhaps the most important resource of the piney-woods farmer, and indeed a significant asset of many planters, could be found roaming in the thickets of their unimproved land. The importance of livestock herding to the

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<sup>81</sup> Eighth Census of the United States 1860, all figures based on a three percent sample of the individual parish statistics.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. The delta parish planters typically sought to maximize the amount of land dedicated to staple crops. While most produced considerable amounts of corn, the cultivation of other foodstuffs was typically less diversified and often disproportionately below the levels produced in the piney-woods parishes.



southern economy has long been established.<sup>83</sup> The piney woods of eastern Louisiana and southern Mississippi produced huge amounts of beef and pork in the antebellum period. Visitors to the region frequently expressed surprise at the number of cattle and hogs they observed roaming through the forests. Timothy Flint described the hundreds and even thousands of cattle he observed grazing unattended in the woods. J.F.H. Claiborne noted not only hundreds of cattle and hogs ranging about in the pine thickets, but also large numbers of sheep. Following a tour of the region in 1813, Dr. James Perry United States Naval Inspector concluded that, "cattle are reared here to as great a perfection, and to perhaps as great an extent, on the waters of the Pearl River, and particularly in the Choctaw nation of Indians, as in any part of the United States."<sup>84</sup>

In both the plantation region and the piney woods, livestock, made identifiable by branding or ear cropping, typically roamed free in the forests. Fences served only to

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<sup>83</sup> Frank Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949); Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," Journal of Southern History XLI, No.2, 1975 (hereinafter referred to as McDonald and McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman"); John Inscoe Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

<sup>84</sup> Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Valley of the Mississippi (Reprint, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1968) pp.236-237; J.F.H. Claiborne, "A Trip Through the Piney Woods," pp. 514-515.

protect crops from the foraging animals. Opposition to the fencing of livestock rested not only on a strong tradition of open grazing rights, but also on the lingering problem of disputed land claims. As prosperity in the territory increased, most residents appeared willing to accept vague property lines in the woodlands in order to preserve the peace. Efforts to further the emerging pattern of stability necessitated a compromising attitude on the part of local farmers. Establishing fences along supposed property lines could have reignited old disputes concerning land claims, a situation the tumult weary residents seemed eager to avoid.

To make the forests more accommodating to the needs of foraging livestock, farmers employed a practice established earlier by local Indian tribes, which involved the annual controlled burning of woodlands to keep undergrowth down, reduce pests, and enhance grass production. Cattle survived in this environment by ranging far and wide in search of additional sources of grass. The constant movement in search of sustenance created the reality of the lean and muscular piney-woods cattle. Visitors to the region often expressed surprise at the appearance of the piney-woods livestock. General Cuvier Grover commanding a United States Army expedition through Washington and St. Tammany parishes in the Winter of 1864 observed that, "the cattle and sheep are very lean and poor, hardly worth driving, they are nevertheless the best the country affords." Like many other observers

unfamiliar with conditions in the piney woods, Grover vastly underestimated the value and significance of piney-woods livestock.<sup>85</sup>

Two categories of hogs constituted the bulk of the swine population in Louisiana and southeastern Mississippi. The wild razorback, which legend maintains escaped from the swine herds accompanying DeSoto's Spanish explorers, likely gave rise to the piney-woods rooter, which remain abundant in this region. These wild pigs intermingled with Berkshires and other hogs purchased and released into the forests by local farmers. Swine, too, roamed unattended in the woods. Yet hogs differed from cattle in that they tended to concentrate more in the hardwood bottom lands and creek beds where acorns, roots, and grubs flourished in abundance. During times of scarcity, farmers frequently released their hogs into picked over potato patches or corn fields.<sup>86</sup> Abundant

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<sup>85</sup> Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," p.12; McDonald and McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman," p.164; Napier, Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods It's Land and People, pp.26-27; Daily Picayune May 9, 1855; "Report of General Cuvier Grover On Expedition From Madisonville to Franklinton and Vicinity," in Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Volume 34, pt.I, p. 104-106.

<sup>86</sup> Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, November 19, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (LLMVC); Thomas Ellis to Martina Ellis, October 27, 1889, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Eli Capell Diary for 1842-1850, November 24, 1842, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 12, 1858; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p.1; McDonald and McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman," p.147.

and available pork proved essential to southern farmers' ability to maintain their independent lifestyle.

As a foodstuff, pork proved indispensable to rural southerners. Yet swine and cattle also served as the chief marketable resource of many piney-woods farmers. This dual purpose made livestock production vital to the economic development of the rural South. In 1850, the United States Patent Office reported that a two hundred square mile section of piney woods in eastern Louisiana, southeastern Mississippi, and western Alabama had produced more than one million head of cattle annually over the past twenty years. The cattle in this region typically went to market at three or four years old, selling for from ten to twelve dollars per head. In an average year, anywhere from ten to twelve million dollars in cattle went to market from this single twelve county region. This enormous source of wealth was frequently underestimated by census officials distracted by the seemingly squalid living conditions of many piney-woods farmers, and often by the farmers themselves. During the period 1850-1860 livestock holdings in the Florida parishes dramatically increased. By 1860, the Florida parishes and the southeastern counties of Mississippi contained some of the heaviest concentrations of livestock, particularly cattle, in the South.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, p.250; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, pp. 66-67; Report of the Commissioner of Patents, 1850, p. 260; Sam B.

The increasing popularity and profitability of livestock cultivation in the late antebellum period, resulted primarily from the shortfall in food production affecting many local planters, and the accessibility of the New Orleans markets. In their zeal to maximize their yield of profitable staple crops, many planters failed to produce enough food to feed their families and their slaves. Considerable numbers of these planters relied on piney-woods herders to compensate for their deficiency in meat production, particularly beef.

This situation provided the piney-woods cattlemen with a steady localized demand for their product. Acute shortages in food production often occurred on the plantations when cotton prices remained high for an extended period.<sup>88</sup> As a result, cotton prices directly impacted the profitability of livestock herding. In 1860, approximately sixty-five percent of farmers in the piney-woods parishes possessed levels of livestock large enough to indicate herding.<sup>89</sup> Thus, whether they farmed a few acres of the great staple or not, piney-

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Hilliard, Atlas of Antebellum Southern Agriculture (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984) pp. 48-50; Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, p. 832; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p. 116.

<sup>88</sup> Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, pp. 836-837; Hilliard, Hog Meat and Hoe Cake, pp. 191-192.

<sup>89</sup> This figure is based on a three percent sample taken from the United States Census, 1860. The percentage is an average compiled from the parishes of Washington, St. Helena, St. Tammany, and Livingston.

woods herders also participated in an industry directly affected by the cotton economy. Selling their livestock to local planters required minimal time and effort. Yet the most exciting manner of marketing their stock remained the cattle drive.

Prior to the arrival of the railroads, herding livestock to market served as the highpoint of the year for many piney-woods farmers. Occasionally individual families would act alone to drive their own animals to market. More frequently, several neighbors banded together for a communal drive. Neighboring farmers cooperated in rounding up each other's herds and providing the manpower necessary to make the drive successful. Unlike the pickled beef and pork which reached New Orleans in ever increasing amounts from the slaughter pens at Louisville, Cincinnati, and Nashville, the product from the Florida parishes and southeastern Mississippi made the relatively short journey arriving fresh and on the hoof.<sup>90</sup>

The drives themselves could be both tedious and hazardous. The animals were first located, no easy task in the vast expanses of pine thickets, and then driven to a predetermined spot for penning. Typically farmers contributed not fewer than six, nor more than forty of their own stock in each drive. As a result, drives seldom numbered more than

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<sup>90</sup> Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1850, p. 841.

100 to 150 head. The relatively low numbers helped to facilitate the need for constant vigilance in the forest, not only to prevent the loss of strays and stragglers, but also to curb attrition due to possible wolf attacks and poaching. The herders typically travelled on horseback with at least one ox cart to carry provisions. In this manner cattle, swine, and even poultry eventually arrived at the loading point for transport to New Orleans, the one exception being that turkey and other poultry drovers typically travelled on foot using long poles to keep the birds together.<sup>91</sup>

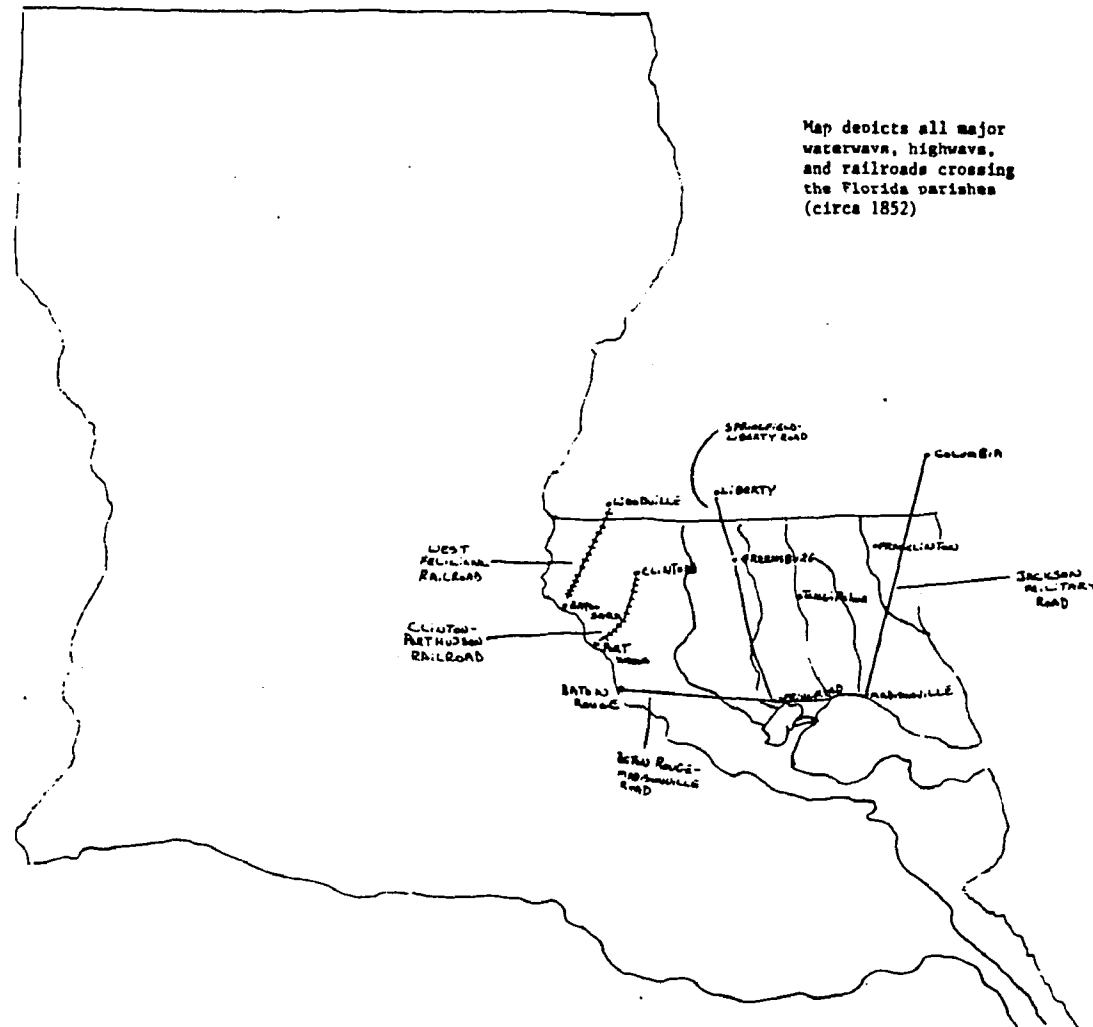
Unlike the heavily travelled livestock trails of the upper Piedmont and hill country Carolina and Georgia, few inns and holding pens existed along the market trails in the Florida parishes. As a result, preventing the loss of animals in the dark proved to be an exhausting process. Drovers typically assumed that a small percentage of their herds would stray, drown, or simply disappear before they reached the port of departure.

Madisonville, on Lake Pontchartrain, served as the primary terminus for livestock drives from the upper Florida parishes and southeastern Mississippi; considerably fewer drives culminated at Springfield. Upon arrival at the port,

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<sup>91</sup> Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," pp. 6-12; Arthur Turner, "Turkey Drives: South Mississippi, Greene County," Mississippi Folklore Register III, No. 2, Summer 1969, pp. 31-32; Amite City News Digest, August 14, 1975.

# Map 1





the animals were loaded on steamers or schooners bound for New Orleans. The drovers frequently accompanied their stock to New Orleans, not only to insure a fair sale, but also to procure supplies and enjoy a bit of relaxation and revelry at the close of the strenuous drive.<sup>92</sup> One such drive originating in Marion County, Mississippi destined for Madisonville in the late 1830's, demonstrates the taxing nature of herding cattle in the piney woods.

Following a difficult and time consuming crossing of the Pearl River at Ford's Ferry in Washington Parish, the drovers proceeded southward to Ben's Ford, near present day Bogalusa, where they turned southwest to reach a suitable crossing of the Bogue Chitto River at Alton's Ferry. Each river and stream crossing constituted an exhausting process, yet managing the herd in the vast expanses of pine forest proved even more difficult. Each straying cow had to be pursued and returned to the herd, lest the high rate of attrition make the drive unprofitable. Unmarked strays were typically sold by the local people who captured them to the detriment of the drovers. In addition to containing the straying cattle, the drovers maintained their guard against gangs of poachers rumoured to be operating in the area. All this served to wear down the cattlemen physically and mentally. Near the

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<sup>92</sup> Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1850, p. 840; Darby, Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana, pp. 173-175; Hilliard, Hog Meat and Hoe Cake, pp. 193-194; Amite City News Digest, August 14, 1975; Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," p. 15.

close of the drive in the vicinity of Madisonville, one drover lost his life when his horse stumbled as he attempted to retrieve some strays. The remaining cattleman buried their unfortunate comrade along the trail leaving his wife and eleven children to mourn their loss.<sup>93</sup>

The vast expanses of pine forests provided a natural habitat for livestock cultivation. Livestock herding proved central to the piney-woods residents' ability to maintain their independent lifestyle and to regional prosperity. But the stands of virgin long leaf pine contributed to the emerging state of prosperity in a more fundamental sense. Following a survey of the eastern Florida parishes in the Fall of 1833, state engineer Charles Crozet reported that the section had "a character of richness which it derives from the growth of pine timber, for which there is always a ready market at hand."<sup>94</sup> By 1850, lumbering proved to be the most readily available means of economic advancement.

Timber harvesting began in the Florida parishes as early as the last decades of the eighteenth century. Enterprising lumbermen took advantage of the increasing demand for wood necessary to facilitate the construction of New Orleans. By 1820, numerous crews were employed cutting timber in the

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<sup>93</sup> Baxter, "Cattle Raising in Early Mississippi," pp. 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> House Journal, Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the Civil Engineer of the State," December 24, 1833, p. 27.

territory surrounding many of the abundant streams in the Florida parishes. Lumbermen hauled the logs to the banks of a nearby stream, cut them into squared timbers, formed the timber into rafts, and floated them to Lake Maurepas or Lake Pontchartrain where crews on schooners collected them for the trip to New Orleans. By the 1840's, timber harvesting emerged as a locally controlled industry of increasing potential. Planters as well as plain folk engaged in the profitable enterprise. Numerous small family owned sawmills arose across the piney-woods parishes and East Feliciana. In 1860, twenty-eight sawmills employing 187 laborers, with a total capital investment of \$289,900 operated in the parishes of St. Helena, St. Tammany, and Washington. Another four, valued at \$20,200, employed twenty eight workers in West Feliciana Parish. By 1880, thirty water-powered sawmills operated in St. Helena Parish alone.<sup>95</sup> Although most of

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<sup>95</sup> Map of the Line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad From Canton, Mississippi to New Orleans, circa 1861, lists all sawmills and other industries in the vicinity of the railroad in 1861, located in the Illinois Central Railroad Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago (hereinafter referred to as Map of the Line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, 1861); Eighth Census of the United States, Manufactures, 1860, pp. 197 and 201 (no figures are provided for the parishes of East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, and Livingston); Amite City News Digest, September 18, 1959; Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 Vol.II (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1933) p. 936, hereinafter referred to as Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States; Milton B. Newton, Jr., "Water-Powered Sawmills and Related Structures in the Piney Woods," in Noel Polk (ed.) Mississippi's Piney Woods: A Human Perspective (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986) pp. 156 and 164 (hereinafter referred to as Newton, "Water-Powered Sawmills and Related Structures in the

these mills constituted smaller concerns with limited processing capacity, some, such as the huge Burton Lumber Company of East Baton Rouge Parish produced over sixty thousand feet of refined lumber daily.<sup>96</sup> Daniel Addison, a Livingston Parish farmer, summarized the significance of timber to those participating directly in, or on the fringe of the cotton economy, "timber is far better business than cotton, you can always get something that will bring cash."<sup>97</sup> Harvesting timber not only provided the owners and harvesters of the trees with additional funds, but it also made available newly cleared land for planting. Planters frequently employed their slaves cutting timber during the winter months prior to spring planting. Many among the plain folk also cut timber during the off season, while others engaged in lumbering year round.<sup>98</sup>

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Piney Woods").

<sup>96</sup> George A. Coulon 350 Miles in a Skiff Through the Louisiana Swamps (New Orleans: Published By The Author, 1888) p. 26.

<sup>97</sup> Daniel Addison to Jephtha McKinney, July 17, 1848, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>98</sup> Edward Stewart to John Gurley, April 23, 1859 and January 18, 1860, in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); DeBow's Review, XIX, 1855, pp. 611-612 and XX, 1856, pp. 354-357; R.E. Foster to Asa Hursey, October 29, 1848, in Asa Hursey Papers (LLMVC); Letter of James O. Cosby, St. Helena Land Commissioner, to U.S. Land Commissioner Josiah Meigs, November 18, 1820, reprinted in Amite City News Digest, July 17 and 24, 1959; Newton, "Water-Powered Sawmills and Related Structures in the Piney Woods," pp.165-167; John Eisterhold, "Lumber and Trade in the Lower Mississippi Valley and New Orleans, 1800-1860," Louisiana History XIII, No.1, Winter 1972, p.72 (hereinafter referred to as Eisterhold, "Lumber and

The expansion of the timber industry not only promoted prosperity directly, but also contributed to the growth of corollary activities. Lumber distributing firms arose, such as the Killian and Harry Company of St. Helena Parish, which produced precision cut timber and some furniture. This firm employed common laborers, skilled craftsmen, and provided a delivery service. A small yet ambitious turpentine industry developed which began optimistically only to be destroyed by the war a few years later. Yet while it lasted, the turpentine industry proved to be lucrative. After boxing, making a single chop in the tree just above the swell of the roots, and draining the pines of their sap, the exhausted trees were of nearly equal value in the production of tar. In 1860, one such turpentine distilling firm in St. Tammany Parish employed twenty-six laborers and boasted a net profit of \$20,750 after expenses. Some lumbermen also produced charcoal to be used as heating fuel in New Orleans. With the coming of the railroad in 1854, numerous brickyards emerged in conjunction with the sawmills. In 1861, at least four brick yards operated in St. Helena and one in Livingston. William Dixon supplemented his meager finances while a student at Centenary College in Jackson, Louisiana, by working at a nearby brickyard for seventy-five cents a day. The four functioning brick factories in St. Tammany Parish in

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Trade in the Lower Mississippi Valley"); Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, pp. 150-151.

1860, employed 115 laborers with a total capital investment of \$208,700.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, the lumber industry stimulated, and in turn was stimulated by the emergence of a small ship building industry along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Ship building began as early as 1797 in the vicinity of Madisonville. By 1813 the United States Navy Department had recognized the value of Madisonville as a ship-building center. In January of that year, a naval inspector wrote that the north shore "is understood to be chosen by the agent of the Navy Department for repairing and even building small vessels of war for the southern station; and it seems peculiarly adapted to these purposes: the vicinity abounds with oak, pine, and cypress: here also tar is made in great abundance, with as great a facility as in any part of the union." The growing shipping and ship building concerns along the north shore not only increased the demand for local lumber, but also helped to free planters and farmers in the Florida parishes from the exorbitant shipping rates charged by many New Orleans shippers. Like

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<sup>99</sup> Greensburg Imperial, April 25, 1857; Killian and Harry Account Books, 1839-1852 (LLMVC); Daniel Addison to Jephtha McKinney, July 17, 1848, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (*ibid.*); DeBow's Review XIV, 1853, p. 181 and XI, 1851, pp. 303-305; Eighth Census of the United States, Manufacturers, 1860, p. 201; William Y. Dixon Diary, August 14, 1860 in William Y. Dixon Papers (LLMVC); Map of the Line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, 1861 (Newberry Library, Chicago); Amite City NewsDigest, September 18, 1959; Napier, "Piney Woods Past: A Pastoral Elegy," p. 18; Eisterhold, "Lumber Trade in the Lower Mississippi Valley," p.78.

many other north shore firms, Christian Koch, who operated a shipping service out of Madisonville and nearby Pearlington, Mississippi always charged reasonable rates for his services. Yet as a result of his successful shipping concerns Koch's family enjoyed a comfortable living. The growth of shipyards and port facilities along the north shore also encouraged the development and expansion of summer resorts at Mandeville and neighboring towns which pumped additional sums into the piney-woods economy. By the early 1850's the north shore resorts attracted hundreds of New Orleans residents each month. Roundtrip steamship tickets to Madisonville, Mandeville, or Lewisburg could be purchased for fifty cents, allowing the New Orleanians to enjoy a day or weekend "in one of the most healthful regions our citizens have available."<sup>100</sup>

As with livestock herding, the cotton economy influenced the fortunes of the timber industry. The temporary decline in cotton prices in the early 1850's dramatically affected the timber industry, which already suffered from waning demand in New Orleans. High freight charges inhibited the

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<sup>100</sup> Letter of Dr. J. Perry U.S. Navy, January 12, 1813, located in Brackenridge, Views of Louisiana, pp. 285-286; William G. Stovall to Christian Koch, June 1854 and Christian Koch to Annette, April 16, 1863, in Christian D. Koch Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 17, 1853, May 26 and August 28, 1855; St. Tammany Historical Society Gazette, IV, Madisonville Issue, p.75.

shipping of lumber to northeastern ports where demand remained high, forcing woodcutters to rely more exclusively on local purchasers. Local planters had always accounted for a significant proportion of purchased lumber. Andrew McCollam, a wealthy planter who owned a sawmill near Donaldsonville below Baton Rouge in Ascension Parish, sold virtually all of his processed lumber to regional planters. This trade proved to be so lucrative that McCollam abandoned plans to buy an additional plantation and instead determined to erect a second sawmill under the belief that "it will bring more money than planting." John Gurley, absentee owner of Oak Lawn Plantation in lower Livingston Parish, instructed his overseer to purchase all of his lumber from local mills, bartering on some transactions with tobacco purchased in New Orleans. In the winter of 1831 the Baton Rouge Gazette called for the construction of a railroad into the piney woods to supply Baton Rouge with turpentine, charcoal, and the thousand cords of wood which could be sold there annually. Yet low cotton prices also discouraged many planters and other local residents from buying wood products for personal use or as an investment. As cotton prices recovered in the middle of the 1850's timber prices also rebounded.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> R.E. Foster to Asa Hursey, September 1, 1849, and Foster to Hursey October 23, 1853, John Henderson to Asa Hursey, August 19, 1850, all in Asa Hursey Papers (LLMVC); Diary and Plantation Record of Ellen McCollam, in Andrew and Ellen E. McCollam Papers (LLMVC), Vol. III, pp. 237, 245,



As the prosperous economic conditions which had characterized the delta parishes for decades spread into the eastern Florida parishes the need for labor also increased dramatically. Cotton and rice farming, livestock herding, and activities associated with the timber industry all depended on large numbers of reliable laborers to insure the levels of production necessary to turn a profit. The sparse pattern of settlement in Louisiana necessitated the importation of foreign laborers. As a result, chattel slavery proved central to the emerging prosperity in the piney woods.

By the time large numbers of African bondsmen were introduced as laborers in the piney woods, slavery had long been established in Louisiana. The earliest French settlers brought slaves into the Florida parishes to compensate for the absence of white labor in the territory. Unlike the initial Atlantic coast settlers, little evidence exists to indicate that the early pioneers in West Florida made an effort to enslave the local Bayou Goula, Acolapissa, or

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247, 262a, 266, and 268; Edward Stewart to John Gurley, March 27, 1859, March 5, 1860, and undated letter 1858? (see folder 1), all in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); Receipt for lumber purchased by Lewis Stirling, a West Feliciana planter, December 1850, in Lewis Stirling Family Papers (LLMVC); Duncan W. Taylor to Eugene Hunter, September 13, 1856, indicates cost differentials in lumber operations piney-woods parishes and plantation parishes; Baton Rouge Gazette, January 29, 1831; Donnell, Chronological and Statistical History of Cotton, pp. 388, 425, and 447; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p. 153; Eisterhold, "Lumber and Trade in the Lower Mississippi Valley," p. 77.

Choctaw Indians. French designs to clear and settle the territory, in the absence of adequate numbers of European laborers, therefore necessitated the introduction of a foreign labor force. In the 1750's African slaves comprised a part of the first lumbering crews engaged in cutting timber along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and on the banks of the Mississippi. Yet, it remained for the early British settlers to introduce large numbers of Africans and establish an enduring system of slavery.<sup>102</sup>

When the first group of Africans arrived in West Florida, slavery had existed in the British Atlantic colonies for over 100 years. Retired British army officers staking claims in West Florida viewed the slaves as a ready source of labor and as a sign of social status. Many of the initial slaves brought to Louisiana came from the sugar islands of the British West Indies. The North American climate proved to be more salubrious than that of the Caribbean, and conditions, which permitted slaves to have families, allowed for procreation reducing discontent. Clearing land and

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<sup>102</sup> Eron Rowland (ed.) Life, Letters and Papers of William Dunbar pp. 9-10; Joe Gray Taylor, Negro Slavery in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963) p.8; James McGowan, Creation of a Slave Society: Louisiana Plantations in the Eighteenth Century (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Rochester, 1976) p.24; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, pp. 73-74; Holmes, "Indigo in Colonial Louisiana and the Floridas," pp. 331-333.

tending crops, slaves labored on the early tobacco and indigo plantations along the Mississippi.<sup>103</sup>

With the successful introduction of cotton to the region, the number of slaves increased dramatically. By 1820, the slave population of East Baton Rouge and the combined Feliciana parishes slightly outnumbered the total white population there. As cotton production expanded into the piney woods parishes so did the slave system. In 1850, the slave population of the Florida parishes numbered 32,969, greatly exceeding the white population which totalled 22,767. The proportion of slaves in the population ranged from a high of almost eighty percent in West Feliciana to a low of twenty-four percent in Livingston.<sup>104</sup>

During the 1850's slavery flourished in the Florida parishes (see tables 5 and 6). As cotton prices climbed in the middle of the decade, and emphasis on cotton production increased, the advantages of the slave system increased as well. In the piney-woods parishes slave holding extended beyond merely the cotton farmers. Slaves served as lumbermen felling trees and working in sawmills. They also functioned as herdsmen rounding up livestock and participating in

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<sup>103</sup> Rowland (ed.), Life, Letters, and Papers of William Dunbar, see diary pp. 23-74; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, pp.73-74.

<sup>104</sup> Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, p.31; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, pp.246-249; In the remaining Florida parishes in 1820 the slave population numbered 2,020, the white population 10,887.

Table 51860 ELECTION RESULTS

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>BRECKINRIDGE</u>	<u>BELL</u>	<u>DOUGLAS</u>
EAST BATON ROUGE	490	569	136
EAST FELICIANA	377	277	131
LIVINGSTON	425	249	117
ST. HELENA	331	292	18
ST. TAMMANY	164	243	132
WEST FELICIANA	272	188	33
WASHINGTON	387	112	5

Table 6POPULATION STATISTICS 1860

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>WHITE</u>	<u>SLAVE</u>	<u>FREE BLACK</u>	<u>PERCENT OF SLAVES IN POPULATION</u>	<u>TOTAL POPULATION</u>
EAST BATON ROUGE	6,944	8,570	532	53.4	16,046
EAST FELICIANA	4,081	10,593	23	72	14,697
WEST FELICIANA	2,036	9,571	64	82	11,671
LIVINGSTON	3,120	1,311	0	29.5	4,431
ST. HELENA	3,413	3,711	6	52	7,130
ST. TAMMANY	3,153	1,841	412	34	5,406
WASHINGTON	2,996	1,690	22	35.8	4,708

Table 7SLAVEHOLDING

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>PERCENT HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNING SLAVES 1850</u>	<u>PERCENT HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNING SLAVES 1860</u>	<u>PERCENT OWNING SLAVES IN 1850 WHO INCREASED HOLDINGS IN 1850-1860</u>
EAST BATON ROUGE	29	17	50
EAST FELICIANA	76	68	66
WEST FELICIANA	55	57	60
LIVINGSTON	28	16	50
ST. HELENA	66	58	80
ST. TAMMANY	37	22	66
WASHINGTON	50	31	90

drives, often mounted on horseback.<sup>105</sup> As a result, high rates of slaveholding existed in all the piney-woods parishes. In 1850, the number of piney-woods heads of households owning slaves ranged from a high of sixty-six percent in St. Helena, to a low of twenty-eight percent in Livingston. (see table 7).

The piney-woods folk often worked side by side with their slaves felling timber, herding cattle, or increasingly as the 1850's progressed, picking cotton. Numerous letters of the period indicate that despite increasing racial sensitivity, many piney-woods farmers considered their slaves to be an extension of their family, a phenomena shared by many planters.<sup>106</sup> Many northerners, versed in the abolitionist preachings evident in many Yankee newspapers, were baffled by the close relationship existing between many

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<sup>105</sup> Diary of Eli Capell, January 13, 1850 and second week of September 1850, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC); Edward Stewart to John Gurley, April 22, 1859 and March 5 and 25, 1860, describes the lease and management of slaves cutting timber, in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); Eisterhold, "Lumber and Trade in the Lower Mississippi Valley," p. 79; Milton Newton, "Water-Powered Sawmills and Related Structures in the Piney Woods," pp. 165-166; Roger Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939) pp. 157-163; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, p. 152; Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States, p. 936.

<sup>106</sup> Mary E. Taylor to Stella Hunter, February 9, 1856 and July 22, 1856, in Hunter-Taylor Family Collection (LLMVC); Diary of Eli Capell, April 21, 1861, in Eli Capell Papers (Ibid); John Houston to William Allen, September 29, 1861, in William Allen Papers (Ibid); John Ellis to Mother, November 16, 1860, in Ellis Family Papers (Ibid).

masters and slaves. Emma Lay Lane, a recent emigrant to the Florida parishes from Connecticut, described the condition of slaves to a friend in New England; "they are just as merry a set of beings as you ever saw." Lane continued that she had never seen so many milk cows in her life, "the negroes all have all the milk and butter they want, which accounts for it."<sup>107</sup> F.M. Kent, writing to his family in New Hampshire, argued that the cruelest masters were Yankees who failed to understand the mutual dependence between masters and slaves inherent in the philosophy of southerners.<sup>108</sup> Yet that the close relationship between master and slave remained tempered by racial sensitivity is exemplified in a letter of Eugene Hunter, an East Feliciana Parish attorney, to his wife. Hunter noted that, "in your last letter you say the servants all send love and kisses. Now I am fond of kissing as a general thing but am very particular whom I kiss. Politeness however would require that I return the love and kisses. You need not do so if this was a mistake of your pen which I suppose it was."<sup>109</sup>

The slave system increased the contact and reduced the divergence in lifestyle between the planters and plain folk.

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<sup>107</sup> Emma Lay Lane to "My dear Mrs. Rogers," October 6, 1857, in John Q. Anderson Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>108</sup> F.M. Kent to Uncle Moody, May 17, 1858, in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>109</sup> Eugene Hunter to Stella, October 22, 1864, in Hunter-Taylor Family Collection (LLMVC).



Despite the vast difference in mean slaveholding between the plantation and piney-woods parishes, which ranged from a high of 88 slaves per-household in West Feliciana to a low of 5.8 in Livingston, slave holding emerged as an important bond between the planters and plain folk. Slave transactions furthered this relationship. Although several slave auctions, such as the one at Bayou Sara, operated on a regular basis in the Florida parishes, the principal mechanism for purchasing slaves involved personal transactions between planters and farmers.<sup>110</sup> Though piney-woods farmers also occasionally purchased slaves in the markets at New Orleans, arrangements with local planters remained the primary means of obtaining bondsmen.<sup>111</sup> After purchasing the Roncal Plantation in northeastern St. Helena parish Charles Gayarre, a prominent New Orleans attorney and historian, secured the bulk of his slaves from local farmers and planters. John W. Gurley, an absentee owner of a Livingston Parish plantation, consistently endorsed his

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<sup>110</sup> H.J. Noble to Aunt Maria, May 20, 1853, in W.M. Barrow Family Papers (LLMVC); Edward Stewart to John W. Gurley, January 24, 1858, in John W. Gurley Papers (Ibid); Jefferson McKinney to Jephtha McKinney, April 21, 1856, (Ibid); Receipt of sale for two slaves purchased by Amos Kent, June 11, 1860, in Amos Kent Papers (Ibid); Edwin A. Davis, Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1836-1846, As Reflected in the Diary of Bennett H. Barrow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) p. 39; William Warren to D.L. McGehee, September 20, 1863, in D.L. McGehee Papers (LLMVC); Two receipts of sale for slaves in 1846, and receipt of sale for slave Joseph Bruin to Charles Gayarre, February 20, 1862, in Charles Gayarre Collection (Ibid).

<sup>111</sup> Amite City News Digest, August 14, 1975.

overseer's slave transactions with local farmers in the area. Though in at least one instance, Gurley complained that the sale price had been too low. Taking advantage of the state's indebtedness, Amos Kent purchased two slaves from the Louisiana Department of Internal Improvements later selling one at a profit to a local farmer. In April 1856, Jefferson McKinney wrote his brother Jephtha, a leading physician and farmer at Greensburg, that after saving for years he had finally purchased a prime negro girl from a local planter. He noted that the cost incurred would put him into debt and force him to do without many things for years, but would eventually serve to raise his status in life.<sup>112</sup> With the rising importance of the cotton economy in the piney woods, slaveholding increasingly came to be seen as the key to success. To accommodate farmers of little means, planters

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<sup>112</sup> Receipt for sale of six slaves Joseph Bruin to Charles Gyarre, February 20, 1862, also notes on purchases of slaves in 1859, see box 16 (LLMVC); Edward Stewart to John Gurley, January 24, 1858 and March 5, 1860, in John W. Gurley Papers, Ibid.; Reciept for sale of slaves to Amos Kent, June 11, 1860, located in miscellaneous file box, Amos Kent Papers, Ibid.; Jefferson McKinney to Jephtha McKinney, April 21, 1856, in Jephtha McKinney Papers, Ibid.; Official recording of sale of slaves between St. Helena Parish farmers and planters recorded by S.B. Draughon notary public for St. Helena Parish, includes slave sales: John W. Stigall to Hezekiah Thompson May 1, 1838, Jesse Hill to William Brown May 1, 1838, Reney Mercer to Rebecca Dikes June 1, 1838, Abner Womack to James Strickland September 22, 1838, Henry Strickland to Daniel Miller October 25, 1838, all in S.B. Draughon and Company Account Book, Ibid.; Slave Sale Broadside, lists eleven slaves to be sold at the plantation of Mr. Griffith near Plaquemines across the river from Baton Rouge, one, two, or three years credit offered as terms to potential purchasers, 1820, (in Misc. file LLMVC).

also leased slaves to their less wealthy neighbors. William Warren agreed to lease a female slave to D.L. McGehee, who farmed a modest tract near Greensburg in St. Helena Parish, for \$100 a year. The only stipulation being that McGehee himself would have to persuade the girl to accept the arrangement.<sup>113</sup>

As the slave system expanded in the piney woods, the influence of the delta planters increased among the plain folk. Many piney-woods farmers incurred debts to the planters by purchasing or leasing slaves. More importantly, as with cotton production, when the plain folk's involvement escalated, they increasingly looked to their powerful neighbors for guidance and leadership.

As abolitionist agitation increased in the North, the large slaveholders sought to insure southern unity at home. Many assumed that the best means to protect their peculiar way of life involved presenting a united front to the abolitionist menace. The New Orleans Daily Picayune emphatically argued that a natural unity of thought and conviction existed between the planters and the plain folk. Proslavery ideology increasingly stressed the connection between white freedom and black slavery. J. Mills Thornton

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<sup>113</sup> William Warren to D.L. McGehee, September 20, 1863, in D.L. McGehee Papers (LLMVC); Edward Stewart to John Gurley, February 19 and March 5, 1860; Diary of Eli Capell, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC), Capell kept meticulous records of the daily activities of his slaves, his records indicate that he often leased slaves to local farmers, see second week of September 1850.

has demonstrated that slavery insured that few whites would be entirely dependent on others for sustenance. Jacksonian ideology, which played a central role in the political perceptions of the plain folk, emphasized that freedom is autonomy, and black slavery helped insure the piney-woods dwellers autonomous existence. Proslavery advocates argued that support for slavery was concomitant to support for republicanism. An 1856 article in DeBow's Review noted "the perfect spirit of equality so prevalent among the whites of all the slaveholding states," a condition the author found absent in the class conscious North. The article continued "it is this spirit of equality which is both the generator and preserver of the genuine spirit of liberty." Abolitionist attacks on slavery were therefore equivalent to attacks upon the republican institutions of the South which insured white liberty. As a result, by the late 1840's the political rhetoric of the planters, which equated support for slavery with support for republicanism, greatly impacted the political philosophy of the plain folk. According to John Inscoe, slavery took on "a centrality in political rhetoric far out of proportion to any commitment which the extent of slave ownership alone would have justified."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 3, 1856; Drew Gilpin Faust (ed.), The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) pp. 10-21; J. Mills Thornton, Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) p. XVIII; DeBow's Review, XX, pp. 474-475; John Inscoe,

Increasing popular political participation beginning in the 1840's, forced the planters to rely more on persuasion to maintain their control of the mechanisms of government.<sup>115</sup> Concern that independent minded piney-woods farmers would either fail to understand the severity of the menace, or provide only lukewarm support for a cause which benefitted the planters far more than themselves, led to increasing amounts of proslavery rhetoric. This rhetoric often emerged as a defense of southern honor, or as a statement on the superiority of southern republican institutions which safeguarded the rights of all southern whites. But the underlying meaning usually remained a defense of the southern, slaveholding, way of life, and a reaction to threats against it.

Initially the pro-slavery rhetoric of the planters centered on the belief that North American slavery benefitted the slaves. Moreover, the proponents of slavery argued that only blacks could perform the type of labor on which southern prosperity depended. Alex Barrow, one West Feliciana's largest slaveholders, argued that "every man acquainted with the nature of our agricultural labours, and the destructive influence of our climate upon the white population must

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Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) p. 9.

<sup>115</sup> For a detailed description of the nature and evolution of planter dominance of the mechanisms of government see chapter three.

acknowledge that without our negroes, we should be **poor indeed.**" An attack on the hypocrisy of northerners whose economy allegedly depended on the products of slave labor often accompanied these arguments. In the summer of 1857, the New Orleans Daily Courier asserted that, "cotton cannot be raised profitably in the South by other than African slave labor. Without slavery the cotton growing region of the South would become a spiritless colony of the north."<sup>116</sup> This statement incorporated all the issues of persuasion employed by the proslavery advocates: loss of honor, economic chaos, and northern domination. These issues carried an immense appeal to piney-woods farmers motivated by concerns for honor, independence, and self-sufficiency.

Similar arguments could be found in local papers. The Feliciana Democrat defended slave labor as more efficient than free labor, and claimed that the entire economy of the North depended on the products of the slave system.<sup>117</sup> In the Spring of 1855, the same paper argued that if southerners did not present a united front to abolitionist attacks then, "our people are so dead to every feeling of independence and manly courage as to suffer themselves to be absorbed after a faint, and reluctant struggle, into the North, and to become

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<sup>116</sup> Alex Barrow to Colonel Hamilton, January 25, 1830, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); DeBow's Review, XXIV, pp. 477-491, XI, pp. 184-197, and XVI, pp. 524-528; provides examples of this manner of argument; New Orleans Daily Courier, August 1, 1857.

<sup>117</sup> Clinton Feliciana Democrat, May 5, 1855.

the ready and cringing slaves to all its arrogant and unreasonable demands."<sup>118</sup> Piney-woods newspapers also adopted the proslavery line. The Greensburg Imperial published articles praising North American slavery for liberating the blacks from heathen oppression in Africa, and arguing that the labor required of slaves "would, in nine cases out of ten, prove fatal to a white man."<sup>119</sup>

This propaganda blitz served two primary purposes. First, it helped convince the plain folk that their manner of republican lifestyle was under attack as a result of the increasing assaults on slavery. Furthermore, it encouraged the belief among piney-woods dwellers that the great planters championed their cause against their enemies. The history of the Florida parishes, which exemplified the relationship between ineffective leadership and instability, strengthened the appeal of determined leadership. In the legislative session beginning in January 1856, the messages of both outgoing Governor P.O. Hebert and incoming Governor Robert Wickliffe exemplified the determined leadership presented by the planter aristocracy in the mid-1850's. In reference to the growing political friction with the North, Hebert argued that "the time for concessions on our part and compromises has past." Similarly Wickliffe maintained that if the South

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, April 14, 1855.

<sup>119</sup> Greensburg Imperial, June 6, 1857 and May 29, 1858.

did not rise and present a united front to northern aggression "we shall have forfeited deservedly our heritage of freedom and the memory of our ancestors be but the brand of our own shame." In furtherance of this appeal Wickliffe argued for the sanctity of political participation and demanded that the laws to secure the suffrage "be stringent, stern and free from all ambiguity." The appearance of a strong reaction to external threats and seeming emphasis on securing the rights of the common man played well with the piney-woods dwellers. Local newspapers condemned the abolitionists and applauded the planter leadership who confronted the enemies of southern republicanism. The Feliciana Democrat commended "the old patriarchs of [St. Helena] Parish who are roused in opposition to this wild crusade against the Constitution and liberties of the republic." The Greensburg Imperial relentlessly attacked the enemies of the South and urged unqualified support for the proponents of southern rights.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Annual Message of Governor P.O. Hebert, January 22, 1856, and Inaugural Message of Governor Robert Wickliffe, January 28, 1856, both in Senate Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, 1856; The annual message of Governor Isaac Johnson, delivered January 21, 1850, also combines condemnation of abolitionist agitation in the North with an aggressive demand for unrestricted suffrage, further demonstrating the correlation of these two principles which Louisiana politicians increasingly advocated as the sectional crisis escalated, Senate Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, 1850; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, September 8, 1855 and December 29, 1855; Greensburg Imperial, April 25, May 30, June 6 and 13, 1857.



The appeal of determined leadership helped to insure that the planters would maintain control over the piney-woods regions even as the plain folk became increasingly politically active in the 1840's and 1850's. Proslavery ideology or defense of southern rights, coupled with increasing stability and prosperity, served to consolidate planter dominance in the piney woods.

The hysterics and seemingly logical arguments presented by the newspapers, combined with the persuasive power of local politicians and men of wealth and standing, had an enormous impact on the piney-woods dwellers.<sup>121</sup> By 1850, the combined effect of the intrusion of the cotton economy and fears of an abolitionist threat to their traditional way of life, encouraged the plain folk to defer to the wisdom and political skill of the planters, whose stake in the crisis appeared much greater. As a result, despite the liberalizing trend initiated in the 1840's, delta planters, who had always dominated the mechanisms of state government, maintained political dominance in the piney woods. Yet the political ascendancy of the planters was based on fear and economic

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<sup>121</sup> This is exemplified by the collapse of Jacksonian unionism and its replacement by the solid support for secession which emerged in the decade of the 1850's. For a description of the increasing intensity of the political appeal emphasizing the abolitionist threat to the southern way of life see - Annual Message of Governor Isaac Johnson, Journal of the Senate of the State of Louisiana, First Session, Third Legislature, January 21, 1850, and Annual Message of Governor Robert Wickliffe, Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, First Session, Fifth Legislature, January 1860.

exploitation. With the Constitution of 1845, the ruling aristocracy granted the plain folk of Louisiana a few of the basic rights which had been enjoyed by commoners in most of the other southern states for decades. These concessions, partially designed to insure the piney-woods dwellers continued support in the face of growing abolitionist sentiment, succeeded in sustaining the political status quo during the brief liberalizing trend of the 1840's and early 1850's. But during the early 1850's, their persistent success at the polls and resulting continued domination of the mechanisms of state government inspired a conservative backlash. The Constitution of 1852 restored unqualified political power to the planter aristocracy.<sup>122</sup>

The political dominance exercised by delta planters related directly to their increasing control over the economy in the piney woods.<sup>123</sup> Though the piney-woods folk pugnaciously retained their traditional values, the increasing prosperity and stability of the late 1840's and early 1850's, coupled with increasing agricultural ties and shared fears, made the planter appeal very attractive. The

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<sup>122</sup> Chapter three provides a detailed discussion of the political fluctuations and the ramifications of those changes up to the secession crisis.

<sup>123</sup> This statement conflicts with the interpretation presented by Steven Hahn in The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry 1850-1890. Hahn argues that though planters increased their contacts and political influence in the upcountry during the 1850's, their role in the economic life of the region actually receded.

sum of these circumstances combined to produce a brief moment of security in the Florida parishes. Unprecedented stability, prosperity, and governance by less than benevolent masters characterized all of the Florida parishes on the eve of disaster.

### Chapter Three

#### Government Behind the Times in Which We Live:

#### The Seeds of Chaos

As the residents of the Florida parishes struggled with the enormous problems facing them in the early years of the nineteenth century, a political system emerged in Louisiana which would shape the destiny of the state through the end of the antebellum period. A coalition of planters and their commercial allies in New Orleans created a constitution that ensured their absolute dominance of the mechanisms of state government for decades. As conditions stabilized in West Florida, the planters in the delta parishes became a vital component of the ruling coalition. The plain folk essentially remained outside the political realm. The expansion of the cotton economy into the piney woods allowed the delta planters to exercise increasing control over the means of access to market, thus diversifying their power and reinforcing their political dominance in the eastern parishes. Substantive politics remained behind closed doors, while the campaigns themselves constituted quiet affairs with limited participation. But in the last years of the

antebellum period this situation changed dramatically. In the first week of November 1855, J.B. Harris the editor of the Clinton American Patriot, asserted, "the political excitement between the two parties in this section for the last week has been too high for comfort. The election is over and we are glad at the returning prospect of peace and quietude."<sup>124</sup> The candidates endorsed by the American Patriot had been defeated in every major contest. Yet Harris' concern centered less on the defeat, and more on the highly charged atmosphere surrounding the election. The volatile nature of this election symbolized circumstances in the Florida parishes at the close of the antebellum period.

Intense political campaigns, such as the one which concerned Harris, were a relatively new phenomena in the Florida parishes. For over thirty years, following the incorporation of West Florida into Louisiana, politics remained in the realm of the privileged few, generating little interest among the plain folk. This retarded political development resulted from a combination of evolving, though inclusive, circumstances.

Initially, the chaotic conditions of the first two decades of the nineteenth century inhibited the development of an aggressive political system in the Florida parishes. Continuing uncontrolled criminal activity, disputed land claims, and the emerging prosperity accompanying agricultural

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<sup>124</sup> Clinton American Patriot, November 10, 1855.

success, interested the residents more than politics. The absence of effective means of communication and transportation in the sparsely populated parishes also contributed to this condition. More importantly, the popular perception of the role and nature of politics created by the restrictions inherent in the Louisiana Constitution of 1812 determined the course of political development.

The 1812 document, like many state constitutions of the period, served the interests of the elite. The right to vote extended only to those white males, twenty one years of age, who had resided in the state at least one year prior to the election, and had paid state taxes in the six months preceding the election. This restrictive constitutional provision, particularly the clause concerning the payment of taxes, served to prevent large numbers of residents from voting.<sup>125</sup> Yet the lack of interest in politics did not result solely from the constitutional limitations on the franchise. Despite these restrictions, most Louisianians, through the early 1840's, exhibited little interest in politics. In 1822, 47.9 percent of white males over twenty one qualified as electors. Barely 50 percent of this group typically voted. Over twenty years later little had changed. Of the 50,110 males twenty-one years and older in 1844,

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<sup>125</sup> Constitution or Form of Government of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans: Joseph Baird, Printer to the Convention, 1812), (hereinafter referred to as Constitution of Louisiana, 1812) Article II, Section VIII, pp.6-7.

32,508 or 64.8 percent qualified to vote. Yet only 43 percent of those qualified actually cast their ballots.<sup>126</sup> This trend continued through the middle of the 1840's. The percentage of qualified electors who actually voted ranged from a low of 19.2 percent to a high near 45 percent. The pattern established prior to 1845 contrasted with voter turnout in the late 1840s and 1850s when an average of nearly 55 percent of the electorate cast their ballots.<sup>127</sup>

The 1812 Constitution and the mechanisms of government it produced denied the masses of Louisianians any substantive political influence. Enormous power was concentrated in the hands of the legislature. As late as 1824 Louisiana remained one of only six states in which the legislature persisted in selecting presidential electors. The absence of popular participation in the selection of presidential electors so thoroughly exemplified the anti-democratic tendencies of

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<sup>126</sup> Figures for 1822 based on - Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana, (hereinafter referred to as House Journal) Fifth Legislature, Second Session, January 29, 1822, pp. 26-27; Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, "Compendium" (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1821) p. 31; Figures for 1844 based on - House Journal, Sixteenth Legislature, Second Session, January 9, 1844, p. 11; "Report of the Special Committee," Journal of the Convention Called for the Purpose of Re-adopting, Amending, or Changing the Constitution of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans: Besancon, Ferguson, and Company, 1845) p.56; Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Compendium (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1841) p. 60.

<sup>127</sup> Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970, pt.II (Washington: United States Government Printing, 1975) p. 1072 (hereinafter referred to as Historical Statistics).

Louisiana government that the St. Francisville Asylum urged its readers to follow the policy advocated in the Journal, another local newspaper, and write the name of their choice for president on their congressional ballot so that, "a tolerably correct idea of the public sentiment may be obtained." Moreover, the legislature enjoyed the privilege of selecting the governor from among the top two candidates in the general primary. Once installed, the governor exercised sweeping powers of appointment increasing the possibilities for patronage and cronyism.<sup>128</sup> A strong executive contrasted with government in many other states where concentrations of power continued to be viewed with suspicion. These features of the 1812 document not only denied the voters the right of popular election for statewide and national offices, but also further entrenched the power of the governing elite.

The safeguards erected to maintain the political dominance of the elite increased voter despondency. Strict property requirements insured that only men of means would seek public office.<sup>129</sup> Indeed the entire political

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<sup>128</sup> Constitution of Louisiana, 1812, Article III, Section 9 and 10, pp.13-14 and Article III, Section II, pp. 11-12; Historical Statistics, pt. II, p.1072; Emmett Asseff The History of the Government of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Legislative Council, 1964) p.53; St. Francisville The Asylum and Feliciana Advertiser, July 3, 1824.

<sup>129</sup> Constitution of Louisiana, 1812, Article II, Section IV, p.5 required that state representatives possess at least \$500 worth of property; Article II, Section 12, p.8 required state senators to possess \$1000 worth of property;



structure of Louisiana in the first half of the nineteenth century emerged as the exclusive domain of the privileged few. The coalition of delta planters and New Orleans commercial interests which dominated state government jealously guarded their power. This coalition initially developed as a result of the mutual economic interests shared by planters and their lawyers and factors in New Orleans. The efforts of this combination to protect their own economic position translated into unqualified political power. All efforts to liberalize the political system were rejected by the legislature. An 1824 bill entitled "An Act for Enlarging the Privilege of Voting," failed in the Senate by a nine to five vote. Excepting the vote cast by the senator from Lafourche, all votes in the affirmative came from piney-woods representatives from north Louisiana and the Florida parishes.<sup>130</sup>

The ruling politicians also secured and traded offices regularly, further entrenching their powers of patronage. In the fall of 1824, T.B. Robertson resigned as governor to accept a less demanding judicial position. Robertson's resignation occurred with the understanding that United States Senator Henry Johnson would resign and be elected governor. A candidate endorsed by both Robertson and Johnson

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Article III, Section IV, p.12 required the Governor to possess \$5000 worth of property.

<sup>130</sup> Senate Journal, Seventh Legislature, First Session, December 16, 1824.

would in turn receive the Senate seat. The collusion between these two powerful political figures exemplified the restrictive nature of office holding in Louisiana and earned them the nickname "willing despots." In response to those critical of his seeming absolute power Robertson asserted, "the people have no right to say who is to govern them - the constitution places the power in my hands." This manner of arrogance and seeming misappropriation of power served to weaken the planter elite in the last years preceding secession.<sup>131</sup>

Through the end of the antebellum period, despite efforts to the contrary, the eastern Florida parishes never secured the nomination of a local candidate for a statewide office. This contrasted sharply with the enormous political power exercised by the delta region of the Florida parishes. In the Summer of 1855, G.W. Munday, state senator from East Feliciana Parish, declined the nomination for state treasurer noting that the nominees for governor and state auditor lived less than twenty-five miles from his home and the ticket would therefore be "geographically imbalanced."<sup>132</sup> West Feliciana politicians in particular exercised immense power

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<sup>131</sup> House Journal, Seventh Legislature, First Session, November 1824, pp. 2-8; Quote of then Governor T.B. Robertson, found in letter John B. Dawson to William Hamilton, April 6, 1825, William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC), Dawson not only referred to Robertson and Johnson as willing despots but also as cowards.

<sup>132</sup> Clinton Feliciana Democrat, April 21, 1855 and June 23, 1855.

in state government. Two of the last four governors prior to secession, Isaac Johnson and Robert C. Wickliffe, hailed from West Feliciana. The political fortunes of the native sons of West Feliciana further demonstrated the correlation between financial success and political power.

Despite Louisiana's separate development under the French and Spanish, restrictive politics were not unique to the Bayou State in the early nineteenth century. Numerous southern and border states employed similar practices. South Carolina, in particular, employed the most restrictive political system in the nation. Yet with the exception of South Carolina, voter apathy remained far more pronounced in Louisiana than any other southern state through the 1840's. Voter turnout in Louisiana paled in comparison with Alabama, Mississippi, and other neighboring states. In the 1840 presidential election the turnout reached a high of 89.7 percent in Alabama and 88.2 percent in Mississippi while only 39.4 percent of Louisiana voters cast their ballots.<sup>133</sup>

The isolated condition of much of Louisiana, particularly the bayou and piney-woods parishes, certainly contributed to low voter turnout. No newspapers existed in the piney woods until the late 1830's. Their absence made it hard to advertise elections, and travel to the polls could be both difficult and dangerous. Yet during the 1820's and 1830's virtually all of the southern states contained

isolated regions facing similar problems. Moreover, voter turnout typically remained low in the delta parishes as well, even though newspapers there regularly advertised for candidates and elections. Though the seeming lack of interest in politics reflected the national trend in this period, several issues of particular significance to the regions development contributed to this condition in the Florida parishes.

In the same way they accepted vague land claims, emerging prosperity and stability encouraged the residents to avoid potentially divisive issues, politics being one of the most apparent. Into the early 1840's local political contests stimulated little public interest. This indifferent attitude contrasted sharply with the boisterous campaigns of the late 1840's and 1850's, which witnessed the aggressive courting of voters through heated political meetings, barbecues, and other practices associated with mass political processes. In the first decades after statehood politics followed a consistent pattern in eastern Louisiana. Gentlemen of means allowed their names to be placed before the voters with little if any indication of the candidates position on significant issues presented to the public. Regarding his decision to seek election to a local judicial post, West Feliciana planter and physician Thomas W. Chinn explained, "at first I thought it would be wrong for me to countenance the applications [to run for office] in my favor,

but upon more mature reflection, I concluded to let the thing take such a course as the people thought proper to give it."<sup>134</sup> Voters typically aligned themselves with the most powerful regional candidate regardless of his political views. To avoid offending candidates, newspapers such as the St. Francisville Louisianian repeatedly asserted the neutral nature of their politics. In the summer of 1824, another West Feliciana newspaper, the Asylum aggressively maintained its neutral position: "we shall not attempt, although in common with all thinking persons, we have our individual preferences, to draw any invidious comparisons between the candidates, or to bias the minds of our fellow citizens in their choice - the people have sufficient intelligence to choose for themselves." Though this noncommittal attitude likely related to their desire to sell more newspapers, the failure to take a firm stand discouraged both commitment among the voters and an interest in politics in general. Discouraged by the refusal of several planter candidates to campaign and the lack of voter interest in an 1824 election in the Florida parishes, a West Feliciana politician wrote "there seems to be a total absence of enthusiasm or even

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<sup>134</sup> Thomas W. Chinn to William S. Hamilton, August 9, 1823, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

public spirit here...what indifference will not take at this moment."<sup>135</sup>

Throughout the 1820's though they provided extensive coverage of congressional debates, local newspapers typically announced candidates and results, but said little if anything regarding the candidate's position on the issues. On October 2, 1819, the Louisianian announced a special election to replace a local member of the state legislature who had resigned to accept the parish judgeship. Not only did they fail to mention any specifics concerning the candidates, but in the weeks that followed the successful candidate was never identified. Similarly, in reference to a coming municipal election in the Spring of 1826, the Louisiana Journal asserted, "though we do not know who the candidates are we hope good men will be chosen." To fill the blank spaces created by their failure to stimulate public debate of significant issues, candidates often appealed to the baser emotions of the electorate. An 1822 election to the Louisiana House of Representatives in West Feliciana Parish focused exclusively on the honor of the candidates. The

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<sup>135</sup> St. Francisville Louisianian, October 2, 1819 and March 23, 1820; St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, March 2, 1826; St. Francisville The Asylum and Feliciana Advertiser, June 19, 1822 and July 3, 1822; DeBow's Review, XI, p. 266 notes the neutral political stance always taken by the Jackson Southern Mirror; John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) p. 145; John B. Dawson to Colonel Hamilton, July 3, 1824, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

substance of the contest centered on candidate Edward R. Chew's contention that his opponent Charles Woodrooff had, "refused after suitable application to render the author such satisfaction as one gentleman ought to render another." During the course of the campaign Chew distributed broadsides throughout the parish condemning Woodrooff's alleged cowardice and asking the voters if they could accept a man as representative "whose pusillanimity of public spirit tamely submits he cannot be expected to be a bold defender of public rights." Chew's allegations obviously carried weight with the voters as he led Woodrooff in the polling by nearly two to one.<sup>136</sup>

Actions of the state legislature also frequently received little if any special notice in the local papers. In the spring of 1820, numerous editorials in the Louisianian condemned the efforts in Congress to restrict the spread of slavery into Missouri. Yet the same paper shrugged off the actions of the state legislature noting that, "little of general interest" had occurred. Another article in the same issue acknowledged that a group of state representatives was visiting St. Francisville, but asserted that they had not

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<sup>136</sup> St. Francisville The Asylum and Feliciana Advertiser, June 19, 1822; see also Edward R. Chew broadside "To The Public," June 25, 1822, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); the feud between these two continued for years, Chew challenged Woodrooff repeatedly only to have Woodrooff accept then employ friends to mediate the dispute, see A. Harralson to Colonel Hamilton, June 17, 1826, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

revealed anything interesting concerning the actions of the legislature.<sup>137</sup>

The less the average citizen knew about the actions of the state legislature, the better for the planters and their allies who controlled the mechanisms of state government. As always, the absolute dominance of the rulers depended upon the ignorance of the ruled. Yet a precious few voices did urge the legislature to grant more power to the people. In the winter of 1824 one such appeal read, "we have been anxiously looking for some effort to be made in our Legislature, to place in the hands of the people, the election of electors of President and Vice President. As yet we have seen nothing of the kind attempted. The people should receive this inestimable right."<sup>138</sup> This entreaty, though extremely rare in the 1820s, foreshadowed the strategy of the planters in the 1850s.

The nature and substance of newspaper reporting in the first three decades after statehood suggested the designs of the controlling elite. As always, newspapers played a fundamental role in shaping the inclinations of the public.

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<sup>137</sup> St. Francisville The Louisianian, October 2, 1819, March 23 and 30, 1820; St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, July 22, 1824, March 2 and 9, 1826. Larger urban newspapers such as the Baton Rouge Gazette did provide details on significant debates in the state legislature. These papers, however, had few subscribers among the plain folk in rural areas.

<sup>138</sup> St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, February 5, 1824.



The power of newspapers is particularly significant in regions with high rates of literacy. By 1850, fully 82 percent of the white population of the Florida parishes over twenty years of age could read and write. Literacy extended to almost 90 percent of white residents in the plantation parishes and to slightly more than 77 percent of the residents in the piney woods.<sup>139</sup> As a result, the planters, who usually either owned or exercised direct influence over local newspapers, skillfully employed the press to arouse the plain folk against the growing menace to their way of life presented by an increasingly aggressive North. Of the five primary newspapers published in the Florida parishes in this period three belonged to planters. One of these the Louisianian, belonged to G.W. Munday who served repeatedly in the Louisiana legislature. The Asylum and the Louisiana Journal belonged to F. Bradford and William Hamilton, both prominent planter politicians. Each of the other two were heavily influenced by planter interests.

In summarizing the role played by the newspapers in a congressional race in the Florida parishes, one disgruntled supporter of the defeated candidate concluded "thus you see what means the holders of power have adopted to prolong the

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<sup>139</sup> These figures are based on a survey of the heads of households listed in the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Exact figures for each parish are as follows: East Baton Rouge 91 percent, East Feliciana 94 percent, West Feliciana 85 percent, St. Helena 84 percent, Livingston 74 percent, St. Tammany 74 percent, Washington 76 percent.

reign of their masters and what dreadful odds we have had to contend against."<sup>140</sup> Yet at the same time the planters, through the newspapers, sought not only to limit the commoners participation in politics, but also to contain their awareness of the actions of state government. The scarcity of reporting concerning state government, and the minimum of election coverage, likely contributed significantly to the piney-woods dweller's disinterest in politics. Not only did politics appear to be exclusively in the realm of the elite, but sparse coverage made it boring.

The election process itself did little to stimulate voter interest. Unlike other states of the Gulf South, notably Alabama and Mississippi, where universal white male suffrage often contributed to a festive atmosphere at the polls on election day, the restrictive nature of Louisiana politics in the early antebellum period did not encourage a jovial mood at the voting precincts. Election guidelines, which varied slightly concerning the specifics in each parish, contained detailed regulations backed by stiff penalties to ensure that only those qualified voted. These regulations encouraged those not qualified to avoid the polls on election day. The absence of large gatherings at the

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<sup>140</sup> P.K. Wagner to William Hamilton, July 30, 1826, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

precincts, particularly in the rural parishes, contributed to the somber atmosphere surrounding elections.<sup>141</sup>

The parish judge, who served as the overseer of each election, appointed three commissioners for each precinct. At each precinct the judge himself or a justice of the peace served as one of the commissioners to enhance the perception of legitimacy. Typically three sites in each parish constituted the only polling places. Public buildings and general stores served as precincts, as did the homes of prominent gentlemen. During an 1819 election in the Feliciana district, polling took place at "Wilsons Store in Bayou Sara, Evangelist Edwards house on the Comite, and at the Jackson Courthouse." Normally the sites selected as precincts were widely scattered to compensate for difficulties in travel. To give those qualified time to reach the polls, the election extended for a three day period. On the day of the election voters cast their ballots on one ticket listing the names of their preference in each race. The ballots could be either printed or handwritten with no apparent standard format required. By contrast, specific regulations controlled the construction and maintenance of the ballot boxes. The requirements stipulated that the boxes must contain a device which concealed the

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<sup>141</sup> A New Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Louisiana, From the Change of Government to the Year 1841, Inclusive (New Orleans: E. Johns and Company, 1842), herein after referred to as Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Louisiana, 1841.

ballots cast from the eyes of the commissioners. Three separate locks secured the ballot box with each commissioner given possession of one key. At 4:00 P.M. on the third day of voting, the commissioners would gather at the parish courthouse, open the boxes and count the ballots before the observers there gathered. Departures from this procedure constituted grounds to nullify the election. The use of a hat covered by a handkerchief at one precinct in St. Helena Parish during a legislative race, instead of the prescribed ballot box, provoked weeks of bitter controversy in the legislature regarding the legality of the election.<sup>142</sup>

Elections for state legislators, as well as those for Congress were held on the first Monday in July. The Creole politicians who dominated the 1812 constitutional debates insisted on this date to take advantage of many American residents' tendency to be absent during Louisiana's sultry, plague-ridden summer months. Upon arrival at the polls, voters typically encountered the most affluent and respected gentlemen each candidate could muster, who greeted them and solicited their support. The candidates dispatched carriages into the countryside to bring in their known supporters who

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<sup>142</sup> Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Louisiana, 1841, pp. 386-392; St. Francisville The Asylum and Feliciana Advertiser, June 26, 1824, provides a good example of a parish judges proclamation of election; St. Francisville The Louisianian, October 2, 1819, provides the example of the location of voting precincts; House Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, see February 16, 1856 for the majority and minority reports and conclusion of the controversy.

might otherwise fail to vote. Inside the precincts, the commissioners sat at tables observing the process and guarding against irregularities. Voters entered the precinct, announced their name and stated their qualifications to vote, which the commissioners verified by checking the tax rolls. Upon verification of eligibility, voters then placed their folded ballot in the box. Occasionally ballots were cast viva voce, particularly in the country parishes where ballots often proved scarce. Yet announcing one's choice vocally increased the opportunity for intimidation, which always remained a problem, particularly in New Orleans. In an effort to combat illegal practices the law dealt harshly with those who sought to purchase votes with whiskey or outright monetary gifts. Despite these efforts, both intimidation and buying votes constituted a common aspect of Louisiana elections. Yet election trickery remained even more common. An election seldom passed where assessors did not omit known political opponents from the tax rolls or fabricated rumors of yellow fever did not keep dozens of voters away from the polls.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> A.M. Harralson to Colonel Hamilton, July 15, 1826, and T.F. Hunt to Hamilton, July 30, 1826, both in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC), describe prominent gentlemen greeting voters at the polls; Digest of the Statute Laws of the State of Louisiana, 1841 pp. 386-392; St. Francisville Louisiana Journal, February 5, 1824; St. Francisville The Louisianian, October 2, 1819; Senate Journal, First Legislature, First session, February 1846; Joseph G. Tregle, "Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Study in Ego Politics" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1954) pp. 99 and 126; Clinton Felicianan Democrat, November 10, 1855,

In the first decades of the nineteenth century voter apathy in Louisiana, and the Florida parishes in particular, related directly to two additional and seemingly obvious aspects of the region's development. First, until Louisiana became a part of the United States, most of her citizens had no experience whatsoever with representative government. Unlike neighboring southern states whose dominant American majorities contained many who had experienced this type of government, most Louisianians enjoyed no tradition of political representation. Louisiana residents therefore required time to acclimate themselves to the significance of representative government. This delay assisted the better-educated and more worldly planters to establish political dominance. Rather than seeing planter political dominance as a threat, the commoners, lacking experience in such matters, instead welcomed this authority because of the unprecedented stability which accompanied it. Furthermore, as the cotton economy expanded, bringing prosperity with it to the piney woods, the farmers there naturally sought economic security first. Full stomachs and a self-sufficient lifestyle free of the economic exploitation Jefferson warned about, not politics, dominated the thinking of the plain folk.<sup>144</sup>

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provides a good example of a calculated effort on the part of a political party to create a yellow fever panic in Jackson, Louisiana in order to keep voters away from the polls.

<sup>144</sup> Perry Howard, Political Tendencies in Louisiana 1812-1852 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957) hereinafter referred to as Howard, Political Tendencies

Yet as the region stabilized and increasing numbers of piney-woods farmers achieved economic security, Louisiana's antiquated political system came under increasing attack. Jacksonian politics which emphasized the threat to republican institutions posed by the monster bank and other sources of undemocratic privilege, stimulated many Louisiana farmers to reassess their fealty to the existing political order. Increasing migration of settlers from other states already accustomed to democratic privilege furthered this transformation. As both the Whigs and Democrats canvassed the state insisting that their program constituted the best means to preserve republican ideals, increasing numbers came to recognize the restrictive nature of Louisiana's political system. The inconsistencies between the republican tradition they held so dear and their state's political structure became ever more apparent to many commoners. The removal of the state capital from Donaldsonville and its return to New Orleans in the early 1830s prompted one embittered farmer to write the Baton Rouge Gazette:

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in Louisiana, pp. 25 and 49; Roger Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939) hereinafter referred to as Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana, p. 31.

For many years the Aristocrats have given law to the state - they can not bear the idea of sharing the government with honest farmers and mechanics of the country. They are aware that should the seat of government be permanently fixed out of the vortex of their intrigues, the good sense of the country members of the Legislature will enable them to introduce reform into the state. This may be emphatically termed the time for asserting the rights of the people - for laughing unto scorn the machinations of those knots of Aristocrats who regard the working man as nothing. And it will be disgraceful to the people of Louisiana if - at a time when the popular cause is so nobly progressing in France and the Netherlands, it should cower to a band of Aristocrats on the banks of the Mississippi.<sup>145</sup>

Increasing agitation for political change, led in part by Soloman W. Downs of Ouachita Parish, swept the northern part of the state. Initially the representatives of the eastern parishes, including the piney-woods region of the Florida parishes, did not take part in this movement. The plantation system which had developed and the level of

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<sup>145</sup> Baton Rouge Gazette, January 1, 1831; Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957) pp. 8-9; James K. Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XII, No. 1 (hereinafter referred to as Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861") p. 409.



planter dominance there, prompted these representatives to vote with the delta planters. On several crucial votes at the 1845 constitutional convention the piney-woods delegates from the Florida parishes demonstrated their reluctance to support substantive reform. Most significantly two of the four piney-woods representatives voted against the abolition of property requirements for office holding.<sup>146</sup>

The failure of the piney-woods representatives from the Florida parishes to vote as a bloc in support of democratic reform contrasted sharply with their position twenty years earlier. In the 1820's and 1830's the representatives from the eastern Florida parishes, along with those from northern Louisiana, unanimously supported the few bills presented advocating democratic reform.<sup>147</sup> This change of attitude exemplified the significance of the expansion of the plantation economy into the piney woods and its impact on political ideals. Indeed by the late 1840's the representatives from the piney woods of the Florida parishes

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<sup>146</sup> Journal of the Convention Called for the Purpose of Re-Adopting, Amending or Changing the Constitution of the State of Louisiana, 1845 (New Orleans: Besancon, Ferguson and Co., 1845) hereinafter referred to as Journal of the Constitutional Convention of 1845, p. 63; Minnie Ruffin and Lilla McClure, "General Solomon Weathersby Downs, Democratic Leader of North Louisiana, 1840-1854," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVII, No. 1, pp. 11 and 14 (Downs served as a principal proponent of the constitutional convention of 1845 and as a leader of the reformers at the convention); Howard, Political Tendencies in Louisiana p. 67.

<sup>147</sup> Senate Journal, Seventh Legislature, First Session, December 16, 1824; House Journal, Tenth Legislature, First Session, February 2, 1831.

frequently voted with the planter representatives, often at the expense of the plain folk in their own region. An 1850 bill designed to exclude from sheriff seizure the property or home of a debtor whose total estate did not exceed \$450 would have served to protect large numbers of Florida parish farmers from possible confiscation of their homesteads. Yet the bill failed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 58 to 21. All of the piney-woods representatives from upstate Louisiana voted in favor of the bill while their counterparts in the Florida parishes unanimously opposed it.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the stiff opposition to change, the momentum for political reform continued to increase. Twice in the late 1830's the Senate rejected proposals made by the lower house authorizing the calling of a constitutional convention. By the early 1840's the ruling elite could no longer ignore the increasing voices demanding political reform. In his annual message to the Louisiana legislature, Governor Alexander Mouton noted that "an entire revolution in public opinion" had occurred. Mouton continued:

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<sup>148</sup> House Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, March 12, 1850; Ibid., Fourth Legislature, First Session, February 21, 1852; Senate Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, February 14, 1850; Ibid., February 27 and 28, 1854; Ibid., Session of 1848, February 16, 1848 and March 3, 1848; Milton Rickels, "Thomas Bangs Thorpe in the Felicianas, 1836-1842," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXXIX, No. 2, pp. 175-176.

it must fill the Patriot's heart with joy to behold people peaceably assembling in the exercise of their natural rights and Sovereign Power; to alter or abolish their government when necessary: and to institute a new government - in such a form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. It would be a degrading reverence for the darkness of antiquity, to adhere to governments far behind the times in which we live. Let us organize a government for ourselves, adapted to the virtuous and enlightened state of society to which we are elevated, and framed by the high political wisdom to which we have attained.<sup>149</sup>

The 1844 election called to determine popular support for a constitutional convention resulted in a massive outpouring of support for pro-convention forces. Nearly 80 percent of those voting cast their ballots in support of a new constitution. In the piney-woods region of the Florida parishes support for the convention ranged from 100 percent in Livingston to 93 percent in St. Helena. Though less so than in the piney woods, the plantation parishes also provided large majorities in support of the convention. The vote in favor of the convention totalled: 95 percent in East

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<sup>149</sup> Annual Address of Governor Alfred Mouton, House Journal, Sixteenth Legislature, Second Session, 1844, pp. 2-5; James K. Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XII, No. 3, p. 409.

Feliciana, 86 percent in West Feliciana, and 89 percent in East Baton Rouge. The plantation parishes around New Orleans and the sugar belt parishes returned the only significant anti-convention majorities.<sup>150</sup>

The resulting 1845 constitutional convention overcame bitter rivalries between New Orleans and the country parishes and made sweeping democratic reforms in the organic law of the state. The new constitution curtailed the power of the legislature and prohibited monopolies and special charters, long sources of abuse of legislative power. Other features provided for the establishment of free public education and for the protection of basic civil liberties. Perhaps most importantly, the changes made in the election laws created unprecedented opportunity for the mass of plain folk. The new constitution forbade all property tests for voters and candidates for public office. This provision dramatically expanded the franchise and allowed men of modest means to seek public office. The level of democratization of the state law was exemplified by the preamble of each document. Whereas the 1812 document began with "We the representatives of the people," and ended with "do mutually agree with each

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<sup>150</sup> Figures derived from percentages of total vote listed by parish in House Journal, Sixteenth Legislature, Second Session, January 9, 1844; numbers in support of the convention from the remaining piney-woods parishes totalled 98% in Washington and 95.8% in St. Tammany. Significant majorities against the convention were recorded in: St. Charles, St. John, St. Bernard, Lafourche, Terrebonne, and Iberville.

other to form ourselves into a free and independent state," the new constitution exemplified the democratic spirit which produced it. The preamble to the 1845 document read, "We the people of the state of Louisiana do ordain and establish this Constitution."<sup>151</sup>

The new constitution fulfilled the democratic aspirations of the vast majority of Louisianians. Opposition to the new document, found primarily among Whig planter and commercial interests, received a devastating setback on February 18, 1845 when the convention voted 38 to 28 to remove property qualifications for officeholding. Recognizing defeat, the opponents of the constitution found solace in the argument that their economic power could be translated into political power, thereby negating the need for property requirements.<sup>152</sup> Senator Soloman Downs and other supporters of the new constitution repeatedly reminded the recalcitrants that property had always been capable of taking care of itself regardless of who dominated the mechanisms of government. Downs insisted that in his judgement poorer whites had always been and would continue as the protectors of the property of the rich, and therefore it

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<sup>151</sup> Constitution of Louisiana, 1812, p. 1; Constitution of the State of Louisiana, 1845 (Herein after referred to as Constitution of Louisiana, 1845) found in Journal of the Constitutional Convention of 1845, p. 342.

<sup>152</sup> Journal of the Constitutional Convention of 1845, p. 63; Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana, p. 127.

remained for the ruling elite to grant the commoners the political rights they so earnestly desired.<sup>153</sup>

Downs comments foreshadowed developments in Louisiana through the end of the antebellum period. Increasing economic control over the plain folk would prove even more beneficial to the planter elite than had simple political control. Though forced by popular demand to relinquish some political power, their increasing control over the economy in the piney woods not only abrogated the lost political ground, but also served to make the plain folk ever more dependent on services provided by the planters.

Whether piney-woods farmers raised surplus vegetables, herded livestock, or cut timber, large planters had always constituted a significant market for their goods. This relationship between the planters and the plain folk, though beneficial to both, gave the planters a degree of economic leadership over the piney-woods farmers. Planters frequently allowed farmers to grind corn in their mills or transported goods to market for their less wealthy neighbors. Yet the growing emphasis on cotton, during the 1840's and early 1850's, provided the planters with an unprecedented

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<sup>153</sup> Journal of the Constitutional Convention of 1845, This argument served as a constant theme in Downs repeated efforts throughout the convention to persuade the old guard to accept reform as inevitable and just. For a brief synopsis of Downs argument see Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana, p. 127.

opportunity to increase their influence in the piney-woods parishes.

To be profitable, cotton production required both capital and machinery. As farmers invested their limited resources in land and labor, most lacked the means to purchase gins, oxen, and other essentials necessary to process and transport the precious fibre to market. As a result, a system developed whereby farmers, lacking sufficient resources, would sell their cotton to a nearby planter to be ginned and transported to market. This process allowed the planters a direct influence over the economic fortunes of the smaller cotton farmers. Planters either purchased the farmers cotton outright, or charged a fee or percentage to gin the cotton and an additional amount to transport it to market. This arrangement, allowing the planter to act as factor for the small farmer, benefitted both parties. The farmer profited from the immediate cash payment he usually received for his crop. Though the payment he accepted typically remained below the premium market value. The planter in turn benefitted from the markup on the farmer's cotton, or from fees charged for ginning and transporting it. Yet the advantage clearly lay with the planter, not only in terms of profit, but in the increasing level of control he exercised over the farmer. Planters were not alone in procuring cotton from the smaller farmers. Many country merchants also purchased cotton. In larger towns

such as Clinton, numerous storeowners and commercial agents such as the firms of A. Levi and R.H. Draughon actively participated in the cotton trade. Most of these small town merchants, however, had direct connections to planter interests and in most cases, complemented rather than competed with the trade carried on by the planters.<sup>154</sup>

Abel John Norwood, a prominent planter and politician in East Feliciana Parish, epitomized the planter serving as factor for local farmers. Norwood's operations involved processing and transporting cotton for local farmers as well as buying crops outright which he later sold in the New Orleans markets. By the late 1840's his extensive purchases of the crops of local farmers, and of those in neighboring parishes and counties, gained him a partnership in a major New Orleans factorage firm. Norwood also translated his

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<sup>154</sup> S.M. Gafsarrray to A.J. Norwood, December 5, 1870, in Abel John Norwood Papers (LLMVC); List of five purchases of cotton ranging from 5 to 70 bales by Robert Barrow, October 1834 to February 1835, in James P. Bowman Family Papers, *Ibid.*; Receipt for \$53.50, Joseph Embree to Daniel Tousinau, July 10, 1851, in Joseph Embree Papers, *ibid.*; R.H. Draughon Record Book, 1860, one volume containing numerous entries winter and spring 1860; Ralph Haskins, "Planter and Cotton Factor in the Old South: Some Areas of Friction," Agricultural History XXIX, No. 1, p. 12; Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest, pp. 234-235; Harold Woodman, King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800-1925 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968) p.68; Lacy Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) pp. 65-66; Steven Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 33.



economic power into political fortune securing election as judge from East Feliciana Parish.<sup>155</sup>

As the demand for cotton increased, so did the need for reliable routes of access to the markets at New Orleans. This necessity required the construction of new roads into isolated areas and the clearing of obstructions from numerous streams and rivers. These necessary improvements created additional opportunity for the capital rich planter elite. Control of the routes of market access proved vital to the planters' ability to dominate the economy, and concomitantly, regional politics.

In the first decades after statehood, and into the early 1840's, the planters consented to the construction and improvement of numerous avenues of market access. On January 23, 1827 the state legislature approved, virtually without opposition, a bill appropriating state funds "to improve the road leading from Covington through Washington Parish to Holmesville, Mississippi." This measure marked one of the first state appropriations to improve roads in the piney-woods region of the Florida parishes. The substance of this bill also demonstrated the growing importance of the north

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<sup>155</sup> Receipt for purchase of 460 pounds of raw cotton from C. Morgan, September 1, 1849, receipt for \$149.50 for purchase of cotton from J.D. Nettles, February 1854, list of cotton shipped for John L. Lee, J. Robinson, John Pritchard, and Henry Scott, August 1855 to March 1856, all in A.J. Norwood account books (see ledger 3 and 4) in Abel John Norwood Papers (LLMVC).

shore of Lake Pontchartrain as a collecting and transporting center for the markets of New Orleans.<sup>156</sup>

During the 1830's, the state legislature appropriated large sums to promote the growth of the cotton economy in the piney woods. Following a report by the state engineer in December 1833, indicating that the wealth of the eastern Florida parishes remained virtually untouched due to the absence of reliable roads and obstructed streams, a flurry of bills of improvement were introduced in the legislature. In January 1834 the legislature overwhelmingly approved a bill appropriating substantial funds to "improve navigation on the Tangipahoa, Bogue Falaya, and West Pearl rivers," all major streams in the eastern Florida parishes. This bill constituted a major state appropriation. Clearing the waterways of obstructions involved employing significant labor on snag boats, an expensive and time consuming process. In addition to this major appropriation, the House, in the same session approved by voice vote a bill appropriating funds "to improve the road from Springfield to the line of St. Helena on the way to Mississippi." Each of these bills was specifically designed to improve market access and stimulate the growing cotton economy in the piney woods, and each passed with overwhelming support of the planters. In February 1846, State Engineer P.O. Hebert reported that as a

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<sup>156</sup> Senate Journal Eighth Legislature, First Session, January 15 and 23, 1827.

result of state appropriations, the West Pearl River and other regional streams had been cleared of their obstructions. Hebert continued, "these streams should remain so as they go through some of the richest cotton territory and best and most valuable timber regions. Steamboats can now carry 600 to 800 bales of cotton safely and receipts at New Orleans have demonstrated this."<sup>157</sup>

By the 1840's, the rapidly increasing volume of trade on the market trails and waterways in the Florida parishes inspired some enterprising individuals to seek a means to tap this lucrative source of profit. In antebellum Louisiana, as in much of the South, individuals had frequently opened privately operated bridges, ferryboats, or roads to the general public for a small user's fee. In the decade prior to secession private ownership of the mechanisms of travel would dramatically increase. Moreover, actions of the state legislature and local police juries made possible the transformation of public routes of travel into private ones.

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<sup>157</sup> House Journal Eleventh Legislature, Second Session, "Report of the State Engineer," December 24, 1833, in the same session a bill to improve the navigation on the various streams in the eastern Florida parishes received final approval on January 31, 1834; also in the same session see "Bill to Improve Springfield Road," January 24, 1834; ibid., Twelfth Legislature, First Session, March 10, 1835; Louisiana State Legislative Documents Fifth Legislature, First Session, 1860, "Report of the State Engineer," outlines the difficulty involved in clearing snags from the rivers, found in Louisiana State Secession Debates, 1859-1862 (New Haven: Research Publications, 1970); Senate Journal First Legislature, First Session, "Report of State Engineer P.O. Hebert," February 9, 1846.

The privatization of avenues of travel increasingly encumbered the means of access to market creating further economic burdens and sources of dependency for the piney-woods farmers. This privatization process exemplified the transition from political to economic exploitation of Louisiana's plain folk.

Essentially, privatization involved the selling of transportation improvements to wealthy individuals. Under the guise of relieving the state of a major financial burden, the legislature and most police juries typically assented to the privatization of roads, bridges, and ferryboats. Those wealthy enough to construct bridges and ferries, or to maintain roads, petitioned their representative with promises of support, and possibly bribes, to seek legislative sanction for their endeavor. The privatization process did serve to relieve state and local government of a major source of indebtedness. It also freed local residents and slaves from the necessity of maintaining public roads. But despite these obvious benefits, privatization allowed wealthy individuals to secure greater control over the means of access to market. Private control of the roads and bridges in the Florida parishes furthered the increasing economic power of the planters.

Notwithstanding the liberalizing trend occurring in state government, the legislature proved central to accommodating the privatization process. On February 1, 1850

Senator John P. Waddill, representing Rapides and Avoyelles parishes, introduced a bill granting Michael and Joseph Tarras "exclusive privilege of keeping a ferry across the Mississippi at Shreve's Cut Off in Pointe Coupee and West Feliciana parishes." Six days later Waddill introduced another bill granting "Joseph Kirk and his heirs exclusive privilege of operating a ferry across the Atchafalaya at the mouth of Bayou Des Glaize." By these measures Waddill, with the overwhelming assent of the legislature, placed into private hands the most direct connection between West Feliciana Parish and north-central Louisiana. This stratagem served not only to increase his own personal patronage but also to enrich the few at the expense of the many.<sup>158</sup>

The disposition of the legislature to support privatization became readily apparent in the first session of 1852. Legislative committees defeated efforts of opponents of privatization to strengthen an act to provide for the policing of public roads. This measure would have insured the standard of quality on public roads thereby reducing the

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<sup>158</sup> Senate Journal Third Legislature, First Session, February 1 and 7, 1850; House Journal Third Legislature, First Session, January 1, 1850; Ibid., Fourth Legislature, First Session, January 30 and February 3 and 10, 1852; Ibid., Sixteenth Legislature, Second Session, January 30, 1844 (bill to grant an individual the right to establish "toll gates" on a market road) see also Ibid., Tenth Legislature, Second Session, January 13 and February 9, 1832, and Ibid., Twelfth Legislature, First Session, March 4, 1835, for some earlier privatization bills; for an example of the problems associated with securing labor to work on public roads see James Turnbull to William S. Hamilton, August 27, 1823, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

chance for individuals to argue the need for private endeavors. In addition, proponents of privatization sought to strip from the various police juries the exclusive right to establish and regulate ferries and toll bridges, thus expanding and streamlining privatization efforts.<sup>159</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, rather than improving the means of transportation, privatization often resulted in inferior roads, bridges, and ferryboat service. In the winter of 1850 the state legislature succumbed to public pressure and revoked the privilege of maintaining a private road in Jefferson Parish, granted three years earlier to Solomon Cohn, due to the inferior condition of the turnpike. In September 1850, the West Feliciana Police Jury received a petition from residents of the fifth ward requesting an appropriation to improve access to their primary market at Jackson, in East Feliciana Parish. The petition noted the significance of Jackson to the residents of the fifth ward in terms of business, religion, and education. The petitioners begged for relief arguing that "the only way of travel to said town is by means of some paths and badly made private

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<sup>159</sup> House Journal Fourth Legislature, First Session, February 3, 1852; ibid., January 30, 1852. The bill to strip the police juries of their exclusive right to establish ferries and toll bridges naturally faced tough opposition from supporters of local government, yet this measure demonstrated the aggressive nature of the proponents of privatization; in the same session the Committee on Internal Improvements reversed a measure allowing for the construction of a public road in Catahoula Parish at the urging of several influential residents of that area, see ibid., February 12, 1852.

roads which are often difficult and **Dangerous** to travel." A similar petition presented to the West Feliciana Police Jury requesting the construction of a public road from Bayou Tunica to the Mississippi state line below Pinckneyville pleaded, "we respectfully represent that it is with utmost difficulty that they {residents} can now pass over on horseback and have no power to force hands to work on any of the roads."<sup>160</sup> This petition highlighted another problem inherent in privatization, the absence of state quality control over private endeavors.

Though they entertained requests for relief, local government also contributed to the privatization of the means of access to market. In the spring of 1846 the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury granted the right to build "a toll bridge across the Bogue Falaya River near Covington," to Abraham Penn and C.H. Allemand. In the spring of 1849 Allemand was granted the "exclusive right to a toll bridge across the Tchefuncte River near Covington." Penn and Allemand each possessed considerable resources. Penn not only remained one of the largest slaveholders in the parish, but had also served as state representative from St. Tammany. By its action the police jury had awarded two of the wealthiest planters in the parish exclusive control of the most

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<sup>160</sup> House Journal Third Legislature, First Session, January 24, 1850; West Feliciana Parish Police Jury Minutes, September Session, 1850, in W.P.A. Louisiana Police Jury Minutes Collection (LLMVC) hereinafter referred to as West Feliciana Police Jury Minutes; Ibid., June Session, 1847.

available means of access to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. This pattern continued through the end of the antebellum period in St. Tammany, though the financial crisis prompted by the war caused the police jury to place a ceiling on the amount that could be charged for the use of roads, bridges, and ferries.<sup>161</sup>

Privatization also inhibited government appropriations for public internal improvements. Public projects which frequently served to antagonize as many voters as they pleased, often were delayed or permanently tabled in response to private endeavors which carried rewards of patronage and political support. In the summer of 1847, the East Baton Rouge Parish Police Jury appointed a committee to change the direction of the Comite River Road so that it would intersect with a new private bridge being constructed across that stream. In approving this privatization measure, which directly benefitted several powerful planters in the region, the jurors altered the course of the road to serve special interests on the upper Comite to the detriment of the more

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<sup>161</sup> St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, May session 1846 and May session 1849, also see December session 1845, July session 1847, and January session 1852; a good description of the price ceiling enacted during the war can be found on March 17, 1862, all found in W.P.A. Louisiana Parish Police Jury Minutes Collection (LLMVC), hereinafter referred to as St. Tammany Police Jury Minutes; Police Jury Code for the Parish of East Feliciana, Louisiana, Containing a Digest of the State Laws Relative to Police Juries, and also a Digest of the Ordinances of East Feliciana Having the Force of Laws up to May 1, 1859 (Clinton: G. Wilson Reese Printing, 1859) herein after referred to as Police Jury Code for the Parish of East Feliciana.



populous lower Comite area. With this measure approved, a separate motion to build a public bridge across the Comite was defeated by more than a two-to-one margin. Moreover, in the same session the police jury proceeded to reject at least two motions to provide funding for bridges over lesser streams which could improve alternative routes to the proposed private bridge. Similarly the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury rejected a proposal to construct a new public road to Covington, which would necessarily compete with the existing private toll road.<sup>162</sup>

The privatization of transportation routes did not involve a calculated plan on the part of the moneyed elite. The trend emerged as both a money making-scheme and as a way planters could assure themselves the most direct access to market. As a result, an argument can be made that privatization actually benefitted the state. Private endeavors resulted in roads, bridges, and ferries which may otherwise never have existed, particularly so in a state notoriously deficient in the scope of its internal improvements. But like Louisiana's political system, privatization clearly served the interests of the elite.

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<sup>162</sup> East Baton Rouge Parish Police Jury Minutes, June Session 1847, in W.P.A. Collection, Louisiana Police Jury Minutes (LLMVC), see in particular June 7-8, 1847 and the scattered largely undated sheets following. The issue of the Comite River road and bridge had long been debated, it was one of the first major privatization efforts in the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge, see House Journal Tenth Legislature, Second Session, January 5 and 12, 1832; St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, January 5, 1860.

More often than not, private roads and bridges proved inferior to state-funded and maintained ones. Furthermore, because politicians granted individuals the right to build private toll roads and bridges, they were naturally reluctant to appropriate money to fund competing public endeavors. Though this underscored the power of patronage wielded by elected officials, it also often deprived the plain folk of adequate, inexpensive means of travel. Poorer farmers thereby became increasingly dependent upon planter interests who possessed the political clout and the resources to develop and maintain roads, bridges, and ferries.

In sharp contrast to the trend evident in the 1830's, by the 1850's the state legislature repeatedly denied requests to improve or expand means of access to market. Planter interests, which increasingly controlled the routes of market access, aggressively sought to protect their investments by encouraging the legislature to defeat bills designed to improve existing public market trails or to create new ones. Powerful local figures such as Henry Marston, a prominent planter and commercial agent in East Feliciana Parish, exerted great effort to promote their own private ventures and to discredit public endeavors. Marston, a major stockholder in the Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Company and the Baton Rouge-Clinton Plank Road Company, tirelessly advocated support for these projects. One of Marston's biggest rivals, William Elder, a wealthy Clinton merchant and

slaveholder, promoted his line of stages and transport wagon teams with equal vigor. Both men encouraged state support for private endeavors. By the early 1850's efforts to create new market roads or improve old ones routinely failed in the legislature. An 1852 bill to provide funds to improve the market roads in Washington and St. Tammany parishes failed by a large margin. These roads, the same ones the legislature overwhelmingly approved in the 1830's, consistently failed to secure any state funds for maintenance, which in part demonstrated the shift away from public support for market trails. Throughout the 1850's efforts to improve existing public roads or to provide funds to develop new ones into isolated areas of the piney woods usually either died in committee or faced defeat on the floor of the legislature.<sup>163</sup>

By encouraging the restriction of funding for developing new public roads and for maintaining existing market trails and bridges, privatization financially impacted the region in another obvious sense. Tolls assessed for travel cut into farmer's income. With the price of cotton at eleven cents

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<sup>163</sup> Multiple items in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC), see Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Flier, 1850, William Pike to Henry Marston, September 10, 1852, numerous scattered receipts for transport of goods on railroad; also Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Company Records, Minute Book 1852-1879 (LLMVC), p. 4 provides list of stockholders; Clinton American Patriot, September 8, 1855 provides an example of the competing interests of Marston and Elder; House Journal Fourth Legislature, First Session, March 12 and January 26, 1852; ibid., First Legislative Session 1856, March 1, 1856; ibid., First Legislative Session 1857, March 14, 1857;

per pound in 1860, a poor farmer independently attempting to haul one four hundred pound bail of cotton across Washington and St. Tammany parishes had little to be optimistic about. The forty cent toll he paid to cross the Bogue Falaya River bridge on the military road to Madisonville, both coming and going, cut significantly into his profit. The St. Tammany Police Jury's inclination to privatize indicates several tolls likely encumbered travellers on the road to the vital collecting and transporting center at Madisonville. The cost incurred encouraged smaller farmers to sell their cotton to local planters at a reduced price to avoid the trouble and expense involved in transporting their own goods to market. This condition necessarily threatened the traditional lifestyle and independence of many piney-woods farmers.<sup>164</sup>

The privatization process contributed directly to a trend emerging in the Florida parishes and environs in the last decade before secession. Though prosperity continued to prevail, farmers found it increasingly difficult to break

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<sup>164</sup> Figures for Bogue Falaya Bridge toll based on St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, March 17, 1862; price of cotton found in E.J. Donnell, Chronological and Statistical History of Cotton (New York: James Sutton and Co., 1872) p. 498; also the New Orleans Price Current and Commercial Intelligencer lists the price of good middling cotton in 1860 at eleven cents per pound, middling at ten and a half cents, see December 31, 1859 and January 1, 1860; see St. Tammany Police Jury Minutes, December 1, 1845, May Session 1846, May Session 1849, January Session 1852 for further evidence of privatization in that parish; House Journal Twelfth Legislature, First Session, March 4, 1835, indicates an exclusive right to operate a toll ferry across the Bogue Chitto River in Washington and St. Tammany parishes was also in place; Amite City News Digest, August 14, 1975.

class lines and improve their socio-economic position. Parish tax assessment rolls demonstrate that excepting an unusual pattern of development in St. Tammany Parish, all of the Florida parishes flourished in the last decade before secession.<sup>165</sup> Following the boom years of the early 1850's, the relative wealth of each parish levelled off by the close of the decade. In addition, livestock and land holdings of the freeholders generally increased in the same period. (see table 8) Yet though the relative wealth of the region increased, social mobility actually stagnated. Despite the generally prosperous times, real wealth remained concentrated in the hands of the few. Indeed in the midst of abundance, aspiring farmers found it increasingly difficult to improve their socio-economic position.

Employing slaveholding as a measure of success, statistics indicate that excepting West Feliciana Parish, each of the Florida parishes experienced a decline in the number of freeholders owning slaves. But among those owning slaves in 1850, the vast majority in each parish increased

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<sup>165</sup> Though the exact reasons for St. Tammany's separate pattern of development remain unclear, it likely related to the environment there. Following the virtual collapse of rice production in the piney-woods parishes during the 1850's, St. Tammany alone among the eastern parishes proved to have soil inconsistent with the needs of cotton production (see Graph 4 in chapter 2). In addition, St. Tammany lagged behind most of the other parishes in livestock and timber production. For a good description of the prevailing prosperity of the period see Governor Alfred Mouton's farewell address in Senate Journal First Legislature, First Session, 1846.

Table 8RELATIVE WEALTH BY PARISH

PARISH	PERCENT WHO INCREASED LIVESTOCK HOLDINGS	PERCENT WHO INCREASED LANDHOLDINGS	PARISH TAX ASSESSMENTS		
	1850-1860	1850-1860	1852	1855	1858
ST. HELENA	58	20	\$3,609	\$7,198	\$8,787
LIVINGSTON	50	40	\$2,263	\$5,122	\$4,939
ST. TAMMANY	INSUFFICIENT DATA	-	\$3,940	\$7,695	*\$2,500
WASHINGTON	60	66	\$2,109	\$3,989	\$3,813
EAST FELICIANA	25	66	\$14,508	\$26,512	\$22,351
WEST FELICIANA	62	33	\$15,729	\$30,620	\$26,267
EAST BATON ROUGE	50	45	\$14,326	\$31,940	\$31,523

\* RELATED TO COLLAPSE OF RICE PRODUCTION AND FAILURE TO REPLACE IT WITH COTTON.

their holdings during the course of the decade (see table 7). Considering the popularity and profitability of slavery in the Florida parishes, and the virtual necessity of slave labor in a cotton-dominated economy, the evidence indicates a sharp contraction in social mobility in the decade before secession. In short, as the rich got richer the plain folk found it increasingly difficult to get ahead.

Just as substantive wealth and economic power remained in the hands of the planters despite the preeminence of the cotton economy throughout the Florida parishes, political control also remained in their hands despite the liberalizing trend. The consummation of the planter's political dominance in the piney woods, and the state in general, was realized in the Constitution of 1852. But even during the 1845-1852 interim, planter interests, partially due to their economic power, continued to dominate politics in the piney-woods of the Florida parishes as they would through the end of the antebellum period.

Initially, the restrictions inherent in the Constitution of 1812 limited officeholding to only the wealthiest residents. As a result, planter interests had always dominated politics in the Florida parishes. Though the elite dominated their respective regions in both the eastern and western Florida parishes, the piney-woods representatives frequently remained independent of the delta parish planter interests. The failure of the piney-woods legislators to

follow the "natural leadership" of the planter representatives from the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge frustrated the delta political leaders. Piney-woods opposition to bills of particular interest to large slaveholders, such as an 1818 measure entitled, "an act respecting [the ownership] of slaves imported into the state in violation of the act of congress" deeply concerned the planter representatives. Many planter politicians, recognizing both the importance of piney-woods voters and their willingness "to take their opinions from powerful others," encouraged efforts to secure greater influence in the eastern parishes. Appeals to increase the authority of the planter region in the piney woods of the Florida parishes circulated among the delta planters.<sup>166</sup> Simple discussion of the issue ended in 1823 when a potential crisis served as the catalyst inspiring the planters to assert their power aggressively in the piney woods.

As the increasing number of Americans migrating to north and central Louisiana steadily eroded their political strength, Creole politicians from the sugar parishes and New Orleans ventured a bold maneuver to preserve their power.

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<sup>166</sup> House Journal Third Legislature, Second Session, March 7, 1818; Isaac Baker to William S. Hamilton, December 26, 1822 and January 14 and 21, 1823, Senator A.M. Harralson to Colonel Hamilton, July 15, 1826, P.K. Wagner to Hamilton, July 30, 1826, F.H. Stackhouse to Joseph Johnson, June 3, 1822, all in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); for patterns of voting in the legislature in this period see House Journal Third Legislature, Second Session, January 19 and February 13, 23, and 27, 1818.



Believing they had the votes necessary, and with the apparent support of Governor Robertson, on January 20, 1823, the members of this coalition introduced a bill to remove the Florida parish senators from the legislature. This stratagem constituted an effort to eject a voting bloc often antagonistic to their interests on a constitutional technicality. The bill asserted that as the Florida parishes did not comprise a part of the state of Louisiana incorporated under the Constitution of 1812, the senators from that region "had been unconstitutionally elected and can no longer retain their seats." The proposal failed by the narrowest of margins, seven senators in favor and seven opposed. Though the coalition voting to reject the bill sustained itself, heated debate continued in the Senate for days. Despite the failure of the effort, the motion exacerbated the bitter feelings between the American and Creole factions in the legislature. Moreover, it highlighted the centrality of ethnic rather than party divisions within the Louisiana political establishment. The outrage generated by this maneuver prompted one indignant planter to write, "an effort was made yesterday in the senate to exclude the Florida members from that body on a constitutional scruple. No measure since we became a state has been so mischievous or smelled so strongly of treason. We are all horrified about it here." But even more galling to planter interests in the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge was the fact that Elisha

Clark, senator from the piney woods of the Florida parishes, failed to vote. In addition Clark, after condemning the measure as "repugnant to the honor of state government," departed the capital on a brief leave of absence. This flagrant disregard for responsibility proved unbearable to some. The same planter continued:

the measure was lost but it is to be revived today. Clark and McNutt are absent strolling around to some distant part of the state on private business - they deserve to be guillotined for it. After the dirt kicked up last fall every American at least in the legislature should have been at his post till he was certain that all was right. The conduct of some of the Florida folks in this particular was not right since nothing can justify the length to which the French seem disposed to go. Would to God you were here as a member of the lower house. Some leadership in Florida is greatly needed.

Clark's decision to avoid this crucial vote may have resulted from his desire to antagonize neither his American constituents nor the large bloc of Creole residents in his home parish of St. Tammany. It may also have been pure coincidence and poor timing concerning personal business. Regardless of his motives, Clark's action galvanized the planter politicians in the delta region of the Florida parishes who intensified their efforts to secure for

themselves control of the politically strategic piney-woods parishes.<sup>167</sup>

Throughout the 1820's and 1830's planters in the Felicianas' and East Baton Rouge endeavored to expand and secure their influence in the piney woods. The pretext being to unify American areas in opposition to their Creole antagonists. To do so, the planter politicians were forced to abandon their traditional distaste for electioneering and seeking favors. Prestigious delta planters such as Alex Barrow and Daniel Turnbull abandoned customary scruples to promote their interests in the piney woods. Timidly asserting the need to engage in this displeasing necessity, prominent West Feliciana planter-politician F.H. Stackhouse advised, "I would recommend to no honorable man a course of electioneering servility and I know your friend Colonel Hamilton would revolt at anything of the kind, but it will be highly important for him to visit immediately the parishes of St.Helena, Washington, and St.Tammany...and I do believe he may secure an interest in the eastern parishes that will

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<sup>167</sup> Senate Journal Sixth Legislature, First Session, January 20-22, 27 and 28, 1823; Isaac Baker to William S. Hamilton, January 21, 1823, F.H. Stackhouse to Major Joseph Johnson, June 3, 1822, Senator A.M. Harralson to Hamilton, June 17 and July 15, 1826, P.K. Wagner to Hamilton, July 30, 1826, Alex Barrow to Hamilton, April 22, 1830, Robert Fluker to Hamilton, June 30, 1830 (notes the power of Creole voters in St.Tammany Parish), all in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); Obviously stung by the criticism his actions produced, Clark returned to the Senate to participate in the last debates concerning this issue. Yet his inconsistency remained a bitter memory for many Feliciana planters.

render his election highly probable if not certain, by a proper exertion being made." In furtherance of this process the delta planters compiled a list of gentlemen of influence in the piney woods parishes who should be contacted to secure their support in each election.<sup>168</sup>

By the early 1830's this process had transformed politics in the piney woods. The delta planters boasted of their success in uniting the Americans of the eastern parishes behind their leadership. As political unity expanded among the Americans, party differences became increasingly significant as the rivalry between the Whigs and the Jacksonian Democrats intensified. The Jacksonians brushed off the Adams-Clay supporters and their Whig heirs as "yankees." Although the Jacksonian appeal dominated, the Whigs continued to draw significant support throughout the Florida parishes. The delta planters ability to secure backing across party lines in the piney woods, exemplified the strength of their increasing power in the eastern parishes. In the spring of 1830, prominent anti-Jackson agitator William Winfree of St.Helena Parish, though

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<sup>168</sup> F.H. Stackhouse to Joseph Johnson, June 3, 1822, A.M. Harralson to William S. Hamilton, May 13, 1822, in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); Both provide lists of prominent gentlemen to contact in the piney woods. Among the planter politicians advocating a calculated aggressive political effort in the eastern parishes were: Alex Barrow, Frank Hardesty, William Hamilton, A.M.Harralson, John Dawson, Daniel Turnbull, and William Boatner. The most comprehensive list of influential gentlemen in the piney woods can be found in the letter Stackhouse to Johnson, June 3, 1822, Hamilton Papers (LLMVC).

maintaining his opposition to Jackson, acknowledged the necessity of unity in the Florida parishes and offered his support to the Jacksonian candidate for governor. Other Adams supporters, such as Montgomery Sloan of East Baton Rouge, also sacrificed party solidarity in favor of ethnic unity.<sup>169</sup>

The burden of securing support across party lines was eased somewhat by the candidacy of native sons of the Florida parishes, such as perennial candidate William S. Hamilton of West Feliciana and John Dawson. Both enjoyed immense popularity in the piney woods. Drumming up support for regional candidates helped secure for the delta planters political dominance in the eastern parishes. Acknowledging the defection of Florida parish Whigs from the gubernatorial candidacy of the highly popular E.D. White to local favorite and Jacksonian John Dawson, the Whig Baton Rouge Gazette asserted, "this should not cause surprise when we reflect that General Dawson is personally acquainted and highly esteemed as a gentleman by three quarters of the residents,

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<sup>169</sup> Alex Barrow to William Hamilton, January 25, April 22 and June 4, 1830, William Boatner to Hamilton, June 4, 1830, John McNeil to Hamilton, January 25, 1830 (all boasting of their power and the unity in the piney woods), William Winfree to Hamilton, May 2, 1830, Montgomery Sloan to Hamilton, February 10, 1830, all in William S. Hamilton Papers (LLMVC); for patterns of voting and party support in this period see Baton Rouge Gazette July 3 and 10, 1830, and July 12, 1834.

and in addition to this a large number of the Whig party voted for him through sectional feelings."<sup>170</sup>

The calculated effort to secure their political base in the piney woods, coupled with their growing economic control of the region, created conditions favorable for delta planters to achieve absolute dominance in the eastern parishes. Yet the receptibility of local political figures proved to be the most decisive factor allowing the delta planters to dominate the piney woods. Almost to a man, the brokers of political power in the piney woods were themselves planters, and therefore natural allies of their counterparts in the delta parishes. Through the early 1850's, though planters constituted only a small fraction of the population in the piney woods, under the guidance of their delta allies they exercised virtually complete control of local politics.

Though separated by regional, cultural, and in some cases religious differences, the political leaders in the delta and piney woods of the Florida parishes shared two important determinants. In general, both sought to sustain American power in state government. The considerable numbers of Creole residents along the lakeshore in the eastern parishes did have a limited mitigating effect, but overall American sympathizers dominated in the Florida parishes. Second, and most importantly, they shared the bond of slaveholding. In the decade preceding secession every

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<sup>170</sup>

Baton Rouge Gazette July 12, 1834.

representative and senator elected to the state legislature from the Florida parishes owned slaves. Recognizing that in this same period the number of slaveholders substantially declined (see table 8) makes this a detail of particular significance. More importantly, virtually every piney-woods member of the state legislature in this period qualified as a planter.

In 1852 the legislative delegation from the Florida parishes exemplified the dominance of the planters (see table 9). Seventeen of the officials representing the Florida parishes in the early 1850's declared themselves to be planters or farmers. The remaining legislators who listed their occupations included: six attorneys, one sawmill operator, two physicians, and one engineer. While most of those engaged in other occupations also owned farms, all were slaveholders. Excepting one attorney from Livingston and a sawmill operator from St. Tammany, all of the piney-woods legislators declared themselves farmers or planters.<sup>171</sup>

The dominance exercised by planter interests in the piney-woods of the Florida parishes deprived the plain folk of an active voice in government. In the 1820s and early 1830s piney-woods representatives supported efforts at

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<sup>171</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; these statistics are based on the legislative delegation from the Florida parishes during the period 1850-1854. These years represented the period surrounding the implementation of the 1852 constitution, and in 1854 the opening of the New Orleans-Jackson railroad created an unprecedented challenge for the planters.

Table 9STATE LEGISLATORS FROM FLORIDA PARISHES 1852-1854

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>VALUE OF ESTATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF SLAVES</u>
ST. HELENA	H. THOMPSON	REPRESENTATIVE	\$25,000	39
	F.H. KEMP	SENATOR	\$16,000	37
LIVINGSTON	T.G. DAVIDSON	REPRESENTATIVE	\$88,550	60
	G.S. LACEY	SENATOR (E.B.R)	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
ST. TAMMANY	A.F. COOPER	REPRESENTATIVE	\$10,550	21
	R.H. KEMP	SENATOR (ST.HELENA)	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
WASHINGTON	J.F. ARD	REPRESENTATIVE	NOT AVAILABLE	21
	P.H. KEMP	SENATOR (ST. HELENA)	NOT AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
EAST				
BATON ROUGE	J.P. CHAPMAN	REPRESENTATIVE	NOT AVAILABLE	2
	J.M. McCUTCHEN	REPRESENTATIVE	\$ 5,000	43
	G.S. LACEY	SENATOR	NOT AVAILABLE	2
EAST FELICIANA	G.W. MUNDAY	REPRESENTATIVE	\$23,380	32
	WM. PATTERSON	SENATOR	\$42,500	19
WEST FELICIANA	V.B. PHILLIPS	REPRESENTATIVE	\$ 9,000	5
	R.C. WICKLIFFE	SENATOR	\$ 2,100	5



democratic reform. The failure of these same legislators to take the lead in promoting the reform constitution of 1845 exemplified the growing power of the planter elite in the piney woods. Recognizing the will of their constituents, the representatives from the eastern parishes did eventually support the new constitution. But the position taken by the piney-woods legislators on key votes in the late 1840's and early 1850's demonstrated the vacuous nature of their support for democratic reform and the excessive influence of planter interests.

Politically speaking, the control enjoyed by the coalition of delta and piney-woods planters served to injure the interests of the plain folk who constituted the vast majority of the region's residents. This situation in turn contributed to the piney-woods dwellers increasing alienation from government. The planter elite continued to present themselves as the defenders of southern rights against the threat posed by an increasingly hostile North, but their actions demonstrated that they took little interest in the basic needs of the commoners. Numerous bills passed by the legislature and local government exempting slave property from taxation and appropriating state funds as remuneration to owners of slaves convicted of crimes.<sup>172</sup> Though these

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<sup>172</sup>       Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, February 3, 1854; House Journal Fourth Legislature, Second Session, January 17, 1859 State Treasury report delineates ten thousand dollars paid out for "Refunds to owners of slaves convicted of criminal offenses;" St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes,

measures assisted the small slaveholder, they benefitted the planter far more. In supporting bills of this nature the piney-woods legislators demonstrated their fealty to the planters but contributed to the reduction of state funds available to improve the quality of life of the plain folk. In February 1850 the legislators from the piney-woods voted against a bill to establish free public schools statewide. This measure would have substantially increased funding for existing public schools and provided for the creation of new ones at a time when parish superintendents of education relentlessly bemoaned the absence of state support for education. (see table 10) The annual report of Henry Duncan, Livingston Parish superintendent of education, exemplified the deplorable status of public education in Louisiana and the increasing tendency in the piney woods to see government as abusive rather than ameliorative.

The general condition of our public schools is not very flattering, and there seems to be a strong sentiment prevailing in this parish against the whole system, and particularly as it works at present. Teachers manifest a strong desire to advance pupils, but I cannot say so much for parents; and the reason is obvious. The funds apportioned to this parish will hardly keep a school three months, and parents think they are oppressed, that

they have to pay their taxes and receive no benefit of any importance from it; what their children learn in one school, they forget before there is another school in operation. One thing is certain, this system of apportionment has reduced the number of schools materially, and retarded the progress of education.

In the same session the piney-woods representatives voted against a bill designed to protect the property of impoverished families from sheriff seizure. A similar bill dominated the first legislative session of 1853. This measure concerned swamp lands donated to the state by the federal government. The original bill allowed settlers to claim "not less than forty nor more than three hundred and twenty acres," provided the purpose of the claim remained cultivation, not speculation. But the point of contention in the 1853 session involved the clause requiring that the land be paid for within one year of the claim. Failure to complete payment within the allotted year would result in state seizure of the claim regardless of the improvements made. Supporters of a one year extension on the time for payment argued that "a refusal to grant the indulgence contemplated in the bill, will be to take from the hardy, honest and industrious settler his home, and to turn it over

Table 10EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS 1850

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>NUMBER OF OPERATING PUBLIC SCHOOLS</u>	<u>PRIVATE SCHOOLS</u>	<u>OTHER THAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF POSSIBLE PUPILS</u>	<u>CONDITION OF SCHOOLS</u>	<u>LEVEL OF MONETARY SUPPORT</u>	<u>PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION</u>
LIVINGSTON	5	0	0	613	POOR	INSUFFICIENT	VERY LOW
EAST FELICIANA	*	MANY	AT LEAST 3	676	*	*	HIGH
EAST BATON ROUGE	24	FEW	FEW	1259	FAIR	INSUFFICIENT	LOW
ST. HELENA	6	NONE LISTED	0	731	FAIR	INSUFFICIENT	IMPROVING
WASHINGTON	13	NONE LISTED	0		GOOD	INSUFFICIENT	GOOD
WEST FELICIANA	7	NONE LISTED	NONE LISTED	514	GOOD	FAIR	INDIFFERENT
ST. TAMMANY	15	NONE LISTED	0	780	NONE LISTED	NONE LISTED	NONE LISTED

\* PRESENCE OF MANY PRIVATE SCHOOLS PRECLUDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

to the hands of the public speculator." Sadly for those who supported the extension, Senator P.H. Kemp of St. Helena cast a crucial vote with the majority to limit that extension to only eight months rather than the requested twelve. These measures and others of a similar nature furthered the erosion of public confidence in government, which increasing stability from the late 1820's to the early 1840's had promoted.<sup>173</sup>

Throughout the 1850s the pattern of neglecting the needs of the plain folk in the Louisiana legislature continued. The nature of these bills ranged from removal of the restrictions on rates of interest money lenders could charge to conservative Governor Robert Wickliffe's program to reduce the amount of state expenditures in support of "objects of an educational and charitable nature."<sup>174</sup> Collectively these bills and others of a similar disposition served to make life more difficult for Louisiana's plain folk. In combination

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<sup>173</sup> House Journal Third Legislature, First Session, February 26 and March 12, 1850; Louisiana Legislative Documents Fourth Legislature, First Session, 1852 (New Orleans: Bee Printing, 1852) see "Report of Superintendent of Livingston," (submitted August, 1851) p. 27; Senate Journal First Legislature, First Session, February 4-March 10, 1853, see comments of Senator George Lacey in support of the extension, February 4, 1853 (in a compromise move the legislature later by voice vote agreed to the full one year extension, but the issue remains that the piney-woods senator from the Florida parishes voted with the moneyed elite against a proposal designed to benefit the majority of the constituency he represented); Ibid., February 28, 1854.

<sup>174</sup> Clinton American Patriot, February 28, 1855; House Journal Fourth Legislature, First Session, January 17 and 20, 1858.

with the planters' increasing control over the economy in the piney woods, these measures helped frustrate the plain folk's efforts to enjoy their fair share of the prosperity occurring in this period. More importantly to the region's pattern of development, the exploitation of the less privileged impugned the very value system of the piney-woods dwellers, creating a potentially destabilizing force in the secure yet planter dominated society of the Florida parishes.

By the mid-1850's three events of enormous consequence created a challenge to the planters dominance over and exploitation of the plain folk. This watershed in planter-plain folk relations in the Florida parishes resulted primarily from the social and political fallout associated with the construction of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, the "sellout" election of 1855, and the disillusionment created by the Constitution of 1852.

Perhaps more so than any other single issue, the Constitution of 1852 represented the presumptuous character of the delta planters' efforts to dominate state politics. Frustrated by the expansion of the suffrage and the commercial restrictions resulting from the Constitution of 1845, delta planters sought to compensate for the curtailment of their absolute power by creating a new constitution. In this effort they received strong support from Whig banking and commercial interests in New Orleans and from railroad promoters. The principle sources of contention involved in

the constitutional debates focused on the manner of apportioning legislative seats and on the granting of monopolies. When the debates ended, the planters had unquestionably obtained their goals. The new document allowed slaves to be counted as part of the population in apportioning seats in the legislature.<sup>175</sup> This measure dramatically increased the power of the delta parishes at the expense of the piney woods. The new constitution also allowed for the creation of certain monopolies which pleased banking and railroad interests.

During the campaign for ratification supporters of the new constitution, and correspondingly those favoring increasing the power of the delta planters, followed their typical electioneering practices. Opponents of the new constitution were depicted as traitors to the cause of the South. Supporters equated opposition to the constitution with resistance to the defenders of the South who defied the avaricious aggressions of the North. A few days before the election the Whig Baton Rouge Gazette accused opponents of providing northern abolitionists with propaganda to be used against the South. "They would say it is a Whig document and we must defeat it if possible...the very articles which have been penned against the basis of representation {in the new

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<sup>175</sup> Unlike the federal three-fifths basis of representation for slaves, the Constitution of 1852 allowed all slaves to be counted in apportioning representation, Constitution of Louisiana, 1852.

constitution} are taken hold of at the North and are republished and exulted over and commented upon as free soil principles. Not so with the articles penned in favor of the new constitution. Then citizens if the one are free soil principles the other must be the cherished principles of the South." The more moderate Baton Rouge Daily Comet asserted that after initially opposing the convention they now supported the new constitution as the product of labor of "many of our old and most respected citizens." In short, the Comet rescinded its opposition to the power play of the newspapers' planter patrons.<sup>176</sup>

Opponents of the new constitution condemned the perceived attack on republican institutions inherent in the document. Many argued that the new apportionment put slaves on an equal footing with white men or that it essentially extended the franchise to slaves. The New Orleans Daily Picayune, which supported the commercial aspects of the new document, conceded that its primary purpose "is to give the slaveholders the power to protect their own rights. This is a strong ground of defense for such a basis in a slaveholding state, but we still adhere to the opinion that the true, the just, and therefore the proper basis {of apportionment}, is that of the present constitution." The Clinton American Patriot argued that the new constitution represented a

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<sup>176</sup> Baton Rouge Gazette, October 30, 1852; Baton Rouge Daily Comet, October 20, 1852.



calculated effort to reduce the political power of regions where the black population remained sparse. "This is beyond a doubt a glaring political injustice. Negroes by this basis are openly recognized as a portion of the people which is not consistent with the spirit of southern institutions, and such an acknowledgement by our state is anything but comfortable. Negroes should only be looked on as property and if, under this view, they enter as a consideration into the basis of representation, why not allow all kinds of property, land, bank stock, etc. to be represented." Opponents railed against the "anti-republican elements" of the new document. A delegation of opposition legislators released a statement asserting that "the discrepancy in representation between the heavy slaveholding parishes and those where soil, locality, and atmosphere are more congenial to the laboring white man will not perpetuate the liberty of the yeoman and the people will not stand for it." This appeal made a strong impression upon many voters. Unlike the 1845 constitution which easily secured approval by an overwhelming majority of Louisiana voters, the 1852 document passed by a narrow margin.(see table 11) <sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 24, 1852; Clinton American Patriot February 7, 1855; "Report of the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution," in Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1852; Annual Address of Governor Joseph Walker to the Louisiana Legislature, 1852 and 1853, found in House Journal Fourth Legislature, First Session, 1852 and Senate Journal First Legislature, First Session, 1853; New Orleans Daily Delta November 11 and 27, 1845; Baton Rouge Gazette November 13 and 20, 1852.

Table 11CONSTITUTIONAL RATIFICATION ELECTIONS

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>CONSTITUTION 1845</u>		<u>CONSTITUTION 1852</u>	
	<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>	<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>
EAST BATON ROUGE	402	29	504	480
EAST FELICIANA	507	34	449	321
WEST FELICIANA	280	34	294	248
LIVINGSTON	222	2	73	320
ST. HELENA	312	1	246	191
ST. TAMMANY	201	8	280	163
WASHINGTON	275	0	140	237

NOTE: CONSTITUTION 1845 RESULTS TAKEN FROM NEW ORLEANS  
DAILY DELTA NOVEMBER 11 AND 27, 1845.

CONSTITUTION 1852 RESULTS TAKEN FROM BATON ROUGE  
GAZETTE NOVEMBER 13 AND 20, 1852.

The approval of the Constitution of 1852 underlined the power of the planters and their commercial allies in Louisiana. The permanence of their control of state government seemed assured when Governor Joseph Walker's effort to secure repeal of "anti-democratic" portions of the constitution failed in the legislature. But the large negative vote indicated that many electors opposed placing greater power in the hands of the planters. Large majorities against the constitution in the piney woods of upstate Louisiana were offset by strong support for the document in most of the delta parishes. The extremely close vote in the Florida parishes concerning a measure so obviously detrimental to the political power of the piney woods, exemplified the continuing strength of the planters in that region. But the close vote also indicated an erosion of the unqualified power of the planters. Excepting Washington and Livingston parishes which compiled large majorities against the constitution, the results proved to be very close in all of the Florida parishes including the delta.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Baton Rouge Gazette November 13 and 20, 1852; Senate Journal First Legislature, First Session, Annual Address of Governor Walker, January 18, 1853, Walker pleaded with the legislature to reverse the clauses in the new constitution allowing for slaves to be counted as a part of the population in apportioning legislative seats and permitting the establishment of certain monopolies. He argued that "after the next apportionment of representatives, based on this {new} provision, it may well be nigh impossible to effect what can now be done with comparative ease." The Constitution of 1852 did include some democratic measures, such as making almost all state offices elective and shortening the terms of office, but by far its most

The close vote returned in the Florida parishes in 1852 foreshadowed political contests in the area for the remainder of the decade. A once passive political arena developed a reputation for fiercely contested elections. This change resulted in part from the increasing significance of party politics, particularly so as the Whigs gave way to the vitriolic politics of the Know-Nothings. Moreover, by the 1850s Americans dominated their Creole adversaries in state government reducing the necessity of American unity behind a single regional candidate. But it also ensued from the political awakening of the masses. By the mid-nineteenth century the vast majority of Louisiana's residents were acclimated to the dynamics of representative government, and since 1845 the vast majority of white males could vote. Writing home to his family in Massachusetts, F.M. Kent marvelled at the extent and manner of electioneering in the Florida parishes in the late 1850s. "In political contests it is usual for men here who are prominent or well acquainted with the subject to take the stump and address the people, and as both sides of any question are argued men of good sense generally get very nearly correct ideas on any matter of public interest. This practice of stump speaking is

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significant contribution involved the apportionment of political power; Roger Shugg, "Suffrage and Representation in Antebellum Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XIX, pp. 398-403.

perused even by the parish/county candidates for every office."<sup>179</sup>

In the decade preceding secession spirited politics characterized every local and statewide campaign. Perhaps no single contest exemplified the tumultuous character of political campaigns in the mid-nineteenth century Florida parishes than did the 1855 election for statewide and congressional candidates. The local newspapers focused on the congressional race pitting Democratic candidate Thomas Green Davidson against the Know-Nothing Preston Pond. This very bitter contest incorporated all of the pertinent political issues of the day, including national issues, focusing on which party best represented the needs of the South, and local issues such as the railroad controversy. Furthermore, this election exemplified the breakdown of planter unity and the growing political power of the masses in the Florida parishes. But it also demonstrated that despite the erosion of planter solidarity due to the decline of Creole power and the increasing significance of party politics, planters continued to dominate the region politically. Both Pond and Davidson represented the elite of planter politicians in the Florida parishes.

Preston Pond, later to become Colonel Pond, epitomized the wealth and power of the political elite in the

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<sup>179</sup> F.M. Kent to "Dear Uncle," February 19, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC).

Felicianas. Though far from being one of the largest slaveholders in East Feliciana Parish, Pond came from a long line of politically prominent gentlemen. As with most of the affluent families in the Florida parishes, his personal wealth dramatically increased in the last decade before secession. In 1860 Pond owned thirty-six slaves and placed the value of his plantation at ten thousand dollars. Like his father Pond embraced the philosophy of the Whigs. But unlike many of the "old line Whigs," Pond enthusiastically made the switch to the Know Nothings as the Whigs began to fade. His frequent speeches indicate that this switch may have resulted as much from political opportunism as from conviction. Pond proved to be a brilliant orator, incorporating Whig ideas on internal improvements with the anti-immigrant bigotry of the Know Nothings.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Heads of Households; In 1850 Pond owned eight slaves and placed the value of his plantation at one thousand dollars, exemplifying the pattern which saw wealth increasingly concentrated in the hands of the affluent in the decade prior to the war. Many of the former Whigs in the Florida parishes joined the Democrats as Whig power declined and abolitionist agitation at the North increased. Others considered both the Democrats and the Know Nothings offensive and therefore continued to cling to the hope that the Whig party would be renewed, see W. Wall to Tom Ellis, March, 1856, John Ellis to Tom Ellis, June 11, 1856, Tom Ellis to J.J. Slocum, undated (1856?), John Ellis to E.P. Ellis, January 9, 1862, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Thomas G. Morgan to Henry Marston, October 23, 1859, in Henry Marston Papers (Ibid.); Baton Rouge Gazette, October 23, 1852; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, October 13, 1855; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, July 26, 1856; New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 28, 1857.

His opponent symbolized the power of the piney-woods planter aristocracy. In 1855, fifty year old Thomas Green Davidson owned sixty slaves, making him the single largest slaveholder in Livingston Parish. With an estate valued at more than \$88,000, Davidson constituted one of the preeminent power brokers in the piney-woods of the Florida parishes. A seasoned politician, Davidson served in numerous elected positions both in the state legislature and Congress before his political career ended in the late 1870s. Throughout his long tenure of public service Davidson proved to be a political chameleon, seemingly changing parties and philosophies whenever necessary to secure election. In 1855, Davidson headed the Democratic ticket for Congress.<sup>181</sup>

The congressional election focused on the character of the candidates, their position concerning the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad and its proposed branch lines through the region, and the increasing obsession with the issue of which

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<sup>181</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Heads of Households; Davidson was briefly a member of the Whig party and temporarily tested the political waters as a Know Nothing, but the strongest criticism of his role as a political opportunist came during Reconstruction. A good example of the anger and frustration many felt regarding Davidson's politically opportunistic behavior can be found in the Clinton American Patriot, August 18, 1855. Davidsons first position of public service appears to have been his 1833 tenure as a trustee of the Montpelier Academy in St. Helena Parish (see St. Helena Parish Records, LLMVC). He also served as representative from both Livingston and St. Helena parishes. His political career concluded with his 1878 defeat in a last bid for a seat in the legislature. (see B.F. Jonas to Hardy Richardson, November 7, 1878, in Hardy Richardson Papers, LLMVC).

party more aggressively promoted southern rights. Each party attacked the opportunistic behavior of the opposing candidate and the lukewarm position both took concerning support or opposition to the railroad. The Democrats condemned the anti-Catholicism of the Know Nothings and implied that in their secret circles the American Party actually supported the abolitionists. The Know Nothings in turn argued that foreign elements universally opposed slavery and suggested that many Democratic leaders lacked the intelligence to recognize this threat. Both sides hosted barbecues where prominent stump speakers praised the position taken by their favorite and condemned the opposition. In addition, several huge barbecues attended by more than one thousand people gave the masses an opportunity to hear both Davidson and Pond ramble for nearly three hours on their own qualities and their opponents' faults. The campaign concluded with a week of almost explosive tension, a yellow fever panic concocted by the Know Nothings to discourage voters, rampant accusations of fraud, and a narrow victory for Davidson.<sup>182</sup>

In itself the 1855 campaign contributed to the socio-political transformation occurring in the Florida parishes.

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<sup>182</sup> Clinton Feliciana Democrat, May 5 and 19, 1855, June 16, 1855, August 4, 1855, September 1, 1855, October 13, 1855, and November 10, 1855; political speech written by Thomas C.W. Ellis, dated July 20, 1856, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Clinton American Patriot, August 18, 1855, September 1, 1855, October 13, 1855, and November 10 and 24, 1855; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, November 10, 1855; Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, March 1, 1856.



This resulted in part from the acrimonious debate surrounding the congressional election, but primarily from a maneuver within the Democratic party which led the defeated faction to christen the election the "sellout of 1855." Believing the time had come to reward the piney-woods parishes for their loyal support of the Democratic party, politicians from upstate Louisiana and the Florida parishes determined that prominent men from their regions should head the state ticket in the 1855 gubernatorial election. Accordingly, in the two years preceding the state convention supporters of this proposition lobbied to have Colonel John M. Sandidge, a powerful north Louisiana politician, and F.H. Hatch, state representative from St.Helena, nominated for governor and lieutenant governor respectively. No apparent opposition to this proposal materialized and only weeks before the convention most state Democratic newspapers took their nominations for granted. But at the convention the power brokers in the delta parishes and New Orleans staged a coup and instead nominated Robert C. Wickliffe for governor and C.H. Mouton for lieutenant governor. Acknowledging the treachery seemingly inherent in this maneuver, the Clinton American Patriot asserted that the results proved "adverse to the arrangement that north Louisiana was to have the Governor in the person of the late speaker Colonel Sandidge. What must then be his disappointment and that of his section when they learn how they have been cheated." Noting also that Mr.

Hatch had been deprived of the nomination for lieutenant governor the same paper queried, "what will St. Helena and the other parishes which recommended him say and do? Grin and Bear it?" Attempting to minimize the damage to the party in the piney woods, the Democratic Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate expressed disappointment that the ticket was not more geographically balanced, but still urged Democrats to unite to defeat the menace posed by Know Nothingism. The same paper noted that after the election the delegates who remained unanimously nominated Wickliffe but failed to do the same for Mouton further dramatizing the disappointment associated with Hatch's defeat.<sup>183</sup>

The absence of a unanimous mandate in support of the delta parish favorite C.H. Mouton may have resulted from the sense of betrayal felt by many piney-woods delegates from the Florida parishes. The level of disappointment with the Democratic state ticket in much of the region became evident in the general election when Robert C. Wickliffe carried his home territory by only thirteen votes over the Creole Catholic Charles Derbigny.<sup>184</sup> More so than any other single

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<sup>183</sup> Baton Rouge Democratic Advocate, June 7, 1855; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, April 21, 1855, June 2, 1855, and June 23, 1855; Clinton American Patriot, June 23, 1855; Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, June 21 and 28, 1855.

<sup>184</sup> The 1855 governors race resulted in a 2277 to 2264 majority for Wickliffe in the Florida parishes. Large Know Nothing majorities in St. Tammany and East Baton Rouge were offset by large Democratic majorities in Livingston and Washington. In East Feliciana and West Feliciana the race was very close with only one vote separating the candidates

event, the 1855 political campaign manifested the lack of political influence wielded by the piney woods in state politics. After months of canvassing to secure the nomination of a favorite son for statewide office, the piney-woods delegates were rebuffed by a powerful coalition which included many delta planters from their own region. But even more frustrating to the piney-woods politicians from the Florida parishes, it highlighted their decreasing power in state government.

By the 1850's, the piney-woods residents of the Florida parishes were among the least represented of Louisiana citizens in state government. Though each parish received at least one representative to the lower house, the method of apportionment stipulated in the Constitution of 1852 allowing slaves to be counted as part of the population created excessive representation from the delta parishes. More significantly, as a result of the 1852 apportionment by the end of the decade the eastern parishes constituted the least represented region in the state senate.

During the course of the first half of the nineteenth century representation from the eastern parishes in the senate steadily declined. The 1852 apportionment

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in F.H. Hatch's home parish of St. Helena, Senate Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, 1856, p. 9; the damage to the Democratic party in St. Helena continued through the end of the decade, in 1857 St. Helena elected the only Know-Nothing representative from the Florida parishes, New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 15, 1857.

dramatically intensified this process. By 1854 the imbalance of senatorial representation proved to be painfully apparent to piney-woods politicians. One senator represented the 10,405 free white residents of Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, and Washington parishes. One senator also represented the 2,299 white residents of Tensas and Concordia parishes and the 3,670 citizens of St. Mary. At the close of the decade the eastern Florida parishes constituted by far the largest district to have only one senator both in terms of territory and population. The striking contrast between the level of representation in the delta and the piney woods, created deep resentment in the eastern Florida parishes. The piney-woods representatives led by F.H. Hatch of St. Helena aggressively denounced this system of misrepresentation designed to secure the dominance of the delta planters. To many piney-woods dwellers, the refusal to heed the call for fairness in representation exemplified the level of planter arrogance and disregard for the needs of the common man in Louisiana. Increasing voices addressed the perceived exploitation of the plain folk. Prominent attorney Thomas Ellis repeatedly condemned the lavish expenditures of the legislature which lacked all consideration for the wants of common people. But planter haughtiness had always been readily apparent in the Florida parishes. Whether it appeared in the form of Robert Barrow's obtrusive and unrepentant murder of a farmer who challenged the right of

Barrow's slaves to cross his land, or George Lacey's securing election as senator from Livingston and East Baton Rouge and promptly returning to more comfortable environs at his home in New Orleans. In whatever form, planters had frequently taxed the patience of the plain folk. But the Democratic refusal to allow a candidate from the piney woods a spot on the statewide ticket despite the region's traditional support for the party provoked surprise and disappointment in the eastern parishes. This rebuff, coupled with their decreasing influence in state government and the intensifying economic control of the planters, promoted increasing disaffection among the plain folk. With conditions favorable to change, a new element emerged in the early 1850's which provided the impetus to challenge the economic and political dominance of the planters. This implement of modernization created unprecedented opportunity in the Florida parishes. Yet it also produced a serious challenge to the value system of the piney-woods dwellers. The new element therefore provoked both adoration and condemnation and contributed directly to the circumstances which converged into the chaotic conditions of the late nineteenth century.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> House Journal, Session beginning January 1854, pp. 25-26; Ibid., Fourth Legislature, Second Session, February 18, 1859; as late as 1846 two senators represented the piney woods of the Florida parishes, see Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, February 1846; Clinton American Patriot, January 24, 1855; "Minority Report of the Committee Appointed to Apportion the Representation of the State," Louisiana Legislative Documents, First Session, Second Legislature, 1853; Howard, Political Tendencies in Louisiana,

Debate concerning the feasibility of constructing a railroad to join New Orleans with the interior had been a staple of Louisiana politics since the 1830's. Commercial interests in New Orleans argued that the survival of the great river port depended on the construction of a transportation network to expedite the shipping of cotton and other commodities to the Crescent City. Failure to do so the argument went, would result in the loss of cotton traffic to Mobile and other ports just as the construction of railroads and canals had redirected shipments of mid-western foodstuffs to Atlantic ports. The success of small independent lines such as the West Feliciana and Clinton-Port Hudson railroads encouraged support for this argument. But the initial major state-supported effort, the proposed New Orleans-Nashville line, failed after proceeding only 18 miles north of New Orleans. The New Orleans-Nashville Railroad Company collapsed for want of effective organization and backing, and as a result of its inability to overcome problems associated with crossing the swamps about New Orleans. Opening the legislative session which debated the wisdom of a new endeavor, Governor Joseph Walker acknowledged the loss to the state in connection with the New Orleans-Nashville line, but

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p. 72; Thomas Ellis to Father, February 10 and undated, 1857, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Robert Barrow Letter, January 15, 1858 (Ibid.); Edwin Davis (ed.) Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1836-1846, As Reflected in the Diary of Bennett H. Barrow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) see entry March 1, 1842.

demonstrated his support for a new effort asserting, "there is no one feature of the age in which we live more strikingly illustrative of its progress than this accelerated mode of travel and communication, and it is with no ordinary emotions of pride that our countrymen may point to their achievements in this valuable mechanic art."<sup>186</sup>

The legislature removed a powerful obstacle to the construction of new railroads when it approved the calling of a constitutional convention. The Constitution of 1845 prohibited the pledging of state support for internal improvements of this nature. The 1852 constitutional convention provided railroad supporters with an opportunity to reverse this prohibition. After a bitter debate, the Whigs secured approval of a measure allowing for state backing of railroads. The creation of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad Company later that year opened a veritable Pandora's Box of controversy.

Supporters of the New Orleans-Jackson line and the recently created New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad, continued to argue that railroads constituted the source of future prosperity. Under the capable leadership of

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<sup>186</sup> Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Flier, located in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC); "Tangipahoa Parish," unpublished manuscript located in Velmarae Dunn Collection (Center for Regional Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University); "Annual Address of Governor Joseph Walker," Senate Journal, Fourth Legislature, First Session, January 20, 1852; Merl Reed New Orleans and the Railroads: The Struggle for Commercial Empire 1830-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966) pp. 28-30.

James Robb, the New Orleans-Jackson and Great Northern Railroad Company received strong support from the New Orleans business community. Resolution of the controversy concerning the proposed route of the new railroad allowed plans to begin. The route finally agreed upon would depart New Orleans, pass through the Manchac swamp and cross the piney woods of the Florida parishes before arriving at the initial terminus at Canton, Mississippi.<sup>187</sup>

The primary motive for building the railroad remained the desire to increase commerce at New Orleans. But supporters also assumed that residents in the vicinity of the proposed line would recognize the prosperity it would create and thus enthusiastically support the endeavor. Considerable support did in fact materialize in the piney woods. But the primary supporters proved to be local merchants hoping to tap the lucrative business prospects the railroad would bring and speculators who recognized the opportunity the sudden intrusion of a railroad into a semi-isolated society would create. Noticeably absent among the declared supporters of the railroad were the vast majority of Florida parish planters. Their absence constituted a major source of concern for proponents of the railroad. In the past, efforts

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<sup>187</sup> "Southwestern Railroad Convention at New Orleans," DeBow's Review, Vol. X, 1851, pp. 690-694; strong support emerged to construct the new railroad via Baton Rouge to Jackson, or for a steamer connection to Madisonville linking with the railroad to Jackson, see ibid., p. 693; New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 6, 1852.



to develop railroads in the Florida parishes had failed because of the opposition of powerful planters. In the 1830s several planters had initially prevented and then reluctantly permitted the construction of the West Feliciana Railroad. Yet a small branch line dominated by local planter interests lacked the far-reaching implications a major trunk railroad supported by northern capital and controlled by city interests necessarily included. In particular, a major railroad would threaten the planters' control of the regional economy. Many planters resented the high costs associated with railroads while others opposed the disruption to their plantations created by the construction of a railroad. Yet by the early 1850s, much of the overt hostility exhibited by delta planters toward the railroads had abated. Throughout the controversy many planters remained uncharacteristically silent, as if torn by their recognition of the benefits a railroad would bring but reluctant to support an endeavor which they suspected would create a massive restructuring of their world. By their silence, they failed to provide the leadership expected of them at a critical moment when direction mattered most. But the legislature did act. On a crucial vote to provide state aid to the proposed railroads, all of the senators from the Florida parishes voted yes with the majority paving the way for construction of the line.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> "History of the West Feliciana Railroad," unpublished undated manuscript compiled by C.R. Calvert, located in James Stewart McGehee Papers (LLMVC); "Rules and

Despite the appearance of tacit approval on the part of the delta planters occasioned by the near unanimous support of the legislature, strong opposition to the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad developed in the piney woods. Though the trunk railroad would pass only through the eastern parishes, the controversy extended to the entire region. With the advent of construction on the trunk line, numerous calls were issued by railroad supporters to create branch lines connecting the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge to the mainline. The two most important of these proposals involved the connection to Clinton via Greensburg, and the Baton Rouge via Springfield connection. Local newspapers relentlessly promoted the trunk line and the branch railroads, frequently listing prominent supporters pledging funds. Those providing financial support included merchandising firms and factors

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Bylaws of the West Feliciana Railroad Company," demonstrates that local planters exercised absolute control over the branch railroads in the region, located in the West Feliciana Railroad Collection (Newberry Library); local planters' fear of constant expenses associated with the railroad were not unfounded as exemplified in the New Orleans-Jackson and Great Northern Railroad Ledger, Vol. I, June 1851-March 1858 (Newberry Library); the Southwestern Railroad Convention held at New Orleans in 1851 served as the catalyst to promote the New Orleans-Jackson line in the legislature and among business interests. Noticeably absent among the committee members and power brokers at the convention were representatives from the piney woods of the Florida parishes, the region which would experience the greatest disruption of its society and private property due to the railroad. Excepting Alfred Hennen, a New Orleans attorney who owned a cottage on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and therefore presumed to represent St. Tammany Parish, no representatives from the piney woods were evident, DeBow's Review, Vol. X, 1851, pp. 690-694; Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, April 22, 1853.

such as Abraham Levi, Bloom and Company, Robert Germany, and Levi Spiller, as well as prominent gentlemen such as John Bach, Cade Strickland, and Eli Capel. The lists of prominent supporters of the railroad demonstrate that the merchant community overwhelmingly supported the endeavor. But the same lists indicate that excepting a few individuals, the planters either remained silent or opposed the railroad.<sup>189</sup>

Political rhetoric during the railroad controversy demonstrated the planter's lack of leadership. Pressed to take a position concerning a branch railroad during a hotly contested election in East Feliciana, prominent planter and state representative Bythell Haynes responded, "should they {the people} be in favor of the road, and desire the state to subscribe for one fifth of the capital stock as provided for in the Constitution, and that knowledge is made known to me, in a tangible form, then I will support the measure; but on the contrary should the people be opposed to the road and against asking or receiving such assistance from the state, then I as their representative would oppose it and vote against it." Haynes further sidestepped the issue by adding, "the Democracy of the parish having as a party made nominations to be supported at the election in November next, by said party, it does not, in my opinion become those

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<sup>189</sup> Clinton American Patriot, August 4, 11, and 18, 1855; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, June 16, 1855; Greensburg Imperial, June 13, 1857; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 22, 1854; Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, May 10, 1856; New Orleans Daily Delta, December 14, 1854.

nominees to raise any side issues, on the railroad, or any other question, which may embarrass the voters in their choice." Haynes's position was indicative of the strength of opponents of the railroads. Though he indicated he personally favored the proposed line, he cautiously avoided being labelled a supporter or opponent of the railroad.<sup>190</sup>

Opposition to the railroad centered on different issues in different areas. Many planters feared that the power they exercised in a closed homogeneous society would decrease as a result of new opportunities created by the railroad. The fear that hordes of new residents unaccustomed to conditions in the Florida parishes would challenge their political power created alarm among some planter politicians. Many resented the arrogance exhibited by outsiders connected with the railroad. Commenting on the role of the company's leadership during the controversy, prominent New Orleans attorney and historian Charles Gayarre informed a piney-woods supporter, "the director is an utter stranger to Louisiana, and he ignores probably that there is a sensitiveness in this state which may not exist in the cooler atmosphere of Illinois, where he may have forgotten the habits, manners, and feelings of South Carolina which is said to be his native state."<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Bythell Haynes Letter, "To The Voters of East Feliciana," (LLMVC).

<sup>191</sup> Charles Gayarre to N.R. Jennings, November 20, 1859, in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (LLMVC); "Report of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1853.

Others among the elite feared the challenge to their political and economic power posed by merchants and opportunists certain to follow in the wake of the railroad. Positions created by the railroad provided many laborers with an opportunity to work for a company free of the economic control of the planters. Moreover, like the plain folk, many planters resented the increasing taxation the railroad represented. From the beginning, it appeared certain that to secure construction of the line, taxes would be increased to fund the state subsidy. In the winter of 1853 the New Orleans Daily Picayune reported that a lawsuit had been filed challenging the legality and constitutionality of the railroad tax. Four months later in an article urging people to demonstrate their support for the railroad, the same paper noted that opponents of the line "appear to have fearful strength at the polls." Attempting to contain the growing anti-railroad agitation in the piney-woods, Superintendent James Robb, in a series of letters to the New Orleans Daily Crescent addressed the opposition resulting from the increasing tax burden. Robb expressed sympathy for the country residents who "are already taxed oppressively and loudly object to it." He asserted that he had intended to visit every property holder along the proposed line but that illness had prevented him from "dissipating the objections which need only the assisting hand of truth to remove them." Railroad promoters further antagonized many citizens by

calling for a special tax to be placed on parishes along the proposed route which failed to raise sufficient funds through voluntary subscriptions. This proposal created outrage among country residents who already resented paying taxes in support of fundamental institutions such as schools.<sup>192</sup>

The financial burden created by the railroad angered many plain folk as well as planters. But in the piney woods, the core of the opposition rested in an inherent suspicion of outside interference into their affairs. To many of the piney-woods dwellers these suspicions proved well founded when their society and their value system came under immediate assault as a result of the intrusion of the railroad. Though qualified by the planter's economic and political control of the region, an independent lifestyle constituted the very essence of the piney-woods existence. This involved the freedom to travel, hunt, and fish where one pleased unencumbered by legal or physical restraints. It

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<sup>192</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 6 and October 12, 1852, May 22 and December 15, 1853, April 21, 1854, April 22, 1856; DeBow's Review, Vol. X, 1851, p. 692; "Report of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1853; Charles Gayarre to N.R. Jennings, November 20, 1859, in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Crescent, March 6, 7, 8, and 10, 1856; C.D. Strickland to John Calhoun, August 27, 1852, J.Y. Kilpatrick to A. Wang, March 10, 1857, both found in New Orleans-Jackson and Great Northern Railroad Collection (Mississippi State Archives); E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, November 3, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection (Newberry Library); Margaret L. Duval, "Legends of Wilkinson County and the Surrounding Area," Louisiana Folklore Miscellany III, No. 4, p. 47; Hahn, Roots of Southern Populism p. 34-37; Thornton, Politics and Power in a Slave Society pp. 305-311.

meant a farmer could raise crops on unoccupied land or allow his livestock to graze wherever they pleased in an environment which accepted these rights as fundamental. Though their independent and self-sufficient lifestyle had been redefined somewhat by modernization and the implications of a market intrinsically part of the cotton economy, their value system based on the primacy of honor and independence continued. But the railroad threatened this manner of existence. The railroad brought government directly into the lives of the piney-woods dwellers in the form of increasing taxation, stock laws, and legal hassles involving land claims.

Beginning with the surveys along the proposed route, long dormant land disputes came to the surface. Many residents deeply resented the encroachment of an outside force determined to complicate an aspect of their lives which had long appeared resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all. Even more menacing, the action of the Federal government donating to the railroad all public lands within six miles of either side of the line threatened to uproot hundreds of homesteaders residing on those lands. This donation not only created outrage among the squatters, many of whom farmed the land in the hopes of one day owning it, but it also disturbed nearby landowners who anxiously considered the prospect of

scores of uprooted landless families in their communities.<sup>193</sup>

Even more damaging to the traditional piney-woods existence, the railroad necessitated the fencing of stock. Promoters recognized the importance of the open range to piney-woods farmers. In an effort to reduce opposition to the railroad, they initially rejected the use of legal coercion to force farmers to fence in their livestock. But the earliest excursions along the road demonstrated that it would be impossible to allow livestock to range in the vicinity of the railroad. An outing designed to demonstrate the partially completed railroad's cotton carrying capacity in November 1854 ended in disaster when the train hit a cow overturning several cars and damaging much of the cotton. A few weeks later, a trip up the line attended by Governor Hebert and other state dignitaries proved less than satisfactory when the train again hit a cow forcing the passengers to wait for hours until another train could be brought up from New Orleans. The resulting restrictions on the open range assaulted a central component of the piney-woods economy. The constraints placed on their traditional

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<sup>193</sup> The reaction to the Federal grant and the implications involved with uprooting the homesteaders on the public lands, induced Governor Robert Wickliffe to urge the state legislature to petition the company to reject the donation, see Annual Message of Governor Robert C. Wickliffe, House Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 19, 1857; New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 17, 1855 and August 25, 1856.



way of life and disruption of their economy, coupled with the increasing influx of immigrants, all constituted a direct attack on the piney-woods existence.<sup>194</sup>

Yet in addition to the disruption of their traditional existence and economic livelihood, many residents of the Florida parishes and the southwestern counties of Mississippi considered the railroad a harbinger of death - death in the form of the plague of the period, yellow fever. Called by many names, the fever, yellow jack, or the black vomit, this seemingly incurable disease constituted the single greatest health fear of Louisianians in the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately for railroad promoters, some of the most severe yellow fever epidemics occurred in the early 1850's.

Physicians experimenting with the disease in the mid-nineteenth century never determined the correct cause or treatment for the fever. Most believed that yellow fever was introduced to Louisiana from abroad, most likely from the Caribbean islands, and that gases created by the swampy, often filthy conditions about New Orleans allowed it to gain a foothold and then spread. Despite the uncertainty surrounding its cause, no shortage of evidence existed to

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<sup>194</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 10, 1854; New Orleans Daily Delta, December 14, 1854; Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana p. 46; Folklife in the Florida Parishes, publication of the Louisiana Folklife Program, Office of Cultural Development and Center for Regional Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University, 1989, p. 32; Police Jury Code for the Parish of East Feliciana, describes open range stock laws.

demonstrate the panic yellow fever created. The horror associated with the fever is exemplified in an 1853 letter written by N.R. Jennings of St. Tammany Parish. In the letter Jennings confided to his friend that a close associate of his wife had recently died. The deceased woman's doctor assured his wife that her friend died of dropsie. Yet his wife and only one other woman attended this popular woman's funeral. While there, the attending physician informed Mrs. Jennings that her friend had indeed died of yellow fever. Mrs. Jennings confided that the physician appeared extremely agitated at his failure to determine a cause of the fever or prescribe any effective treatment. Before they departed the funeral, the doctor urged Mrs. Jennings to remain silent to prevent a mass flight of suffering people who were likely to die anyway. A sense of hopelessness and despair permeated Jennings' words. He closed the letter with a note of near panic concerning the health of his wife.<sup>195</sup>

The epidemics of 1853, 1854, and 1855 killed thousands in Louisiana. The epidemic of 1853 in particular depopulated whole regions of the state. One half the

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<sup>195</sup> Official Report of the Homeopathic Yellow Fever Commission, Ordered by the American Institute of Homeopathy For Presentation to Congress (New Orleans: A.H. Nelson Printing, 1879) herein after referred to as Report of the Homeopathic Yellow Fever Commission; W.B. King to E.P. Skene, September 15, 1897, and J.B. Kemp to E.P. Skene, September 15, 1897, both in Illinois Central Railroad Collection Overflow Reports, E.P. Skene Outletters (Newberry Library); "Report of the Joint Committee of Public Health," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1853; N.R. Jennings to Dimitry, 1853, in Hennen-Jennings Papers (LLMVC).

population of the villages of Port Hudson and Bayou Sara died from the fever. Panicked residents abandoned New Orleans and the surrounding parishes by the thousands, heading for drier cooler environs to the north. Clinton, Jackson, Greensburg, and other towns in the Florida parishes were almost universally abandoned by their residents. The sheriff of East Feliciana Parish succumbed to the fever; his replacement died in the same manner four months later. Work on the railroad came to a complete halt in the summer of 1853 when yellow fever decimated the labor force and most of the survivors fled for their lives. Sadly, during each of the epidemics all efforts to contain the disease failed. As late as the 1870s the primary defense against the fever remained repeated artillery discharges in the affected areas. Some physicians believed the concussion created by these discharges killed the yellow fever toxin, while others believed the ozone created by the burnt powder cleaned the atmosphere. All agreed that the only means to contain the spread of yellow jack involved a rigid system of quarantine.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Annual Address of Governor P.O. Hebert, House Journal, Second Legislature, Second Session, January 1855; Report of the Homeopathic Yellow Fever Commission, 1879; Mary E. Taylor to Stella Spence, August 14, 1855 and Sereno Taylor to Eugene Hunter, May 26, 1855 in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, June 28, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection (Newberry Library); "Report of the Joint Committee of Public Health," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1853; Clinton American Patriot, August 25, September 15, and November 17, 1855; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, September 1 and September 29,

Since most physicians agreed that the epidemics spread to the interior after first being introduced into New Orleans, quarantine attempted to prevent the arrival of plague carrying ships at New Orleans. Once the fever was identified in New Orleans, the country parishes sought to repel travelers from the Crescent City. A typical quarantine station consisted of armed residents, frequently supported by crude breastworks, determined to prevent anyone having been in or passed through an infected region from entering their locality. Quarantine usually remained in place for months until the threat of fever had passed. On the roads and trails crossing the Florida parishes the guards could easily turn back any traveller attempting to enter their region. But the railroad also disrupted this arrangement. It provided New Orleans with an unbreakable link to the piney woods. In January, 1854 Governor P.O. Hebert addressed this new menace. "The sanitary condition of New Orleans is no longer a question of local interest. When the meshes of railroads which must eventually connect every part of the state with its great emporium shall have been completed, the most distant villages on our frontiers shall be suburbs of New Orleans." Thus Hebert concluded, the epidemics which

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1855; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 6, 20, and 22, 1853, November 10, 1853, September 6, 1855; John Ellis to Tom Ellis, August 20, 1855, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 10, 1854.

always begin in great cities will easily spread statewide.<sup>197</sup>

Based on the threat posed to their very manner of existence, and in some opinions to their very lives, much of the opposition to the railroad seemed justified. The menace of yellow fever transported from New Orleans to the countryside broadened the appeal of railroad antagonists. Yet despite the ferocity of some opponents, the railroad could not be halted. By the summer of 1854, regular rail service traversed the Florida parishes. The power of New Orleans commercial interests, northern capital, and the silence of the planters guaranteed the construction of iron rails across the Florida parishes. In the spring of 1856 the New Orleans Daily Picayune reported, "we hope we have now seen the last of the railroad controversy. With all deference to the parties engaged in this warfare with each other, we may be permitted to express the opinion that nothing is to be gained for themselves, or the public interest in prosecuting it further." Three months later the

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<sup>197</sup> F.F. Hansell (ed.) Commercial and Statistical Almanac: Containing a History of the Epidemic (New Orleans: James A. Gresham, 1879) pp. 45-53; E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, September 4, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection (Newberry Library); New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 31, 1858 and September 16, 1897; J.B. Kemp to E.P. Skene, September 15, 16, and 17, 1897 and W.B. King to E.P. Skene, September 15, 1897, in Illinois Central Railroad Collection Overflow Reports, E.P. Skene Outletters, 1897 (Newberry Library); "Report of the Joint Committee on Public Health," Louisiana Legislative Documents, 1853; Clinton American Patriot, August 25, 1855.

same paper proclaimed the death knell for the opposition asserting, "the grand enterprise has passed through its perils and the way to success is clear and open. Croakers and ill wishers have been foiled in their evil auguries and there is with the Company and friends a confident spirit and unity of purpose." Yet the issues raised in the controversy surrounding the New Orleans-Jackson line served to stiffen opposition to the proposed branch railroads. Confronted by strong resistance and lacking the necessary capital, all of the branch railroad companies either failed or postponed their plans indefinitely.<sup>198</sup>

The New Orleans-Jackson Railroad transformed the territory along its route. In just a few years the railroad converted the thinly settled territory along the Tangipahoa River into the most densely populated and thriving region in the piney woods. Several new towns including Pontchatoula, Tickfaw, Amite City, and Osyka emerged at ten mile intervals in conjunction with the stations established by the railroad. Previously established villages such as Manchac and Tangipahoa also thrived as a result of the railroad.

In each of these villages sawmills, cotton warehouses, stockyards, and in many cases brickyards, arose to facilitate construction and traffic along the railroad. Hotels,

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<sup>198</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 25 and July 9, 1856; Greensburg Imperial, April 30, 1859; Clinton Feliciana Democrat, July 21, 1855; Clinton American Patriot, February 21, 1855.

restaurants, general stores, and saloons also emerged to facilitate travellers and the rapidly increasing local population. Real estate prices quickly escalated as speculators from New Orleans and other areas purchased all available property in the vicinity of the railroad. The region's rapid development frustrated many of the older Florida parish families. The contempt which many of the established families felt for the hordes of speculators and opportunists who arrived in the wake of the railroad is evident in a letter of Thomas Ellis to his brother John. Writing from the newly created Amite City, Ellis underscored this feeling while expressing dismay at the level of speculation occurring along the railroad. "One must get located here to have an equal chance with those fresh water sharks and would be large land holders who are trying to induce good natured people to give whole fortunes for a few feet of piney wood land for the sake of the railroad, as if the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad were the only communication in the state with New Orleans." The Ellises, natives of East Feliciana Parish, moved to Amite City only upon the completion of the railroad.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Map of the Line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad From Canton, Mississippi to New Orleans, 1861, in Illinois Central Railroad Collection (Newberry Library); New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 19, 1854, August 1, 1854, and September 16, 1855; Thomas Ellis to John Ellis, January 26, 1858, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

The masses of immigrants and city dwellers who established residences in the piney woods in conjunction with the railroad changed the face of the territory along the Tangipahoa River and environs. Moreover, the rapidly increasing wealth and population of this region gradually shifted significant political power away from the delta parishes to the piney woods. Recognizing the significance of this transformation, many delta parish families, such as the perennially political Ellises, relocated along the route of the railroad. But most importantly for the future development of the region, the railroad controversy contributed to the changing relationship between the Florida parish planters and plain folk. This relationship, based on the dominance of the planters, had brought stability to a seeming perpetual state of chaos in the Florida parishes. In short, from the perspective of peace and security, planter dominance had been good for the region.

The relationship between the planters and plain folk had always been one of patron and follower. Though this situation allowed the planters to dominate the region, both groups benefitted in terms of the services each provided the other and most importantly, in terms of the security and stability which resulted. The railroad controversy jeopardized this relationship. While conditions associated with the railroad appeared likely to challenge the absolute dominance of the planters, it also created an opportunity for



piney-woods dwellers had surrendered their political power, failed to take the lead in protecting their interests. This absence of leadership following the 1852 constitution and the sellout of 1855, threatened to unravel a time tested arrangement in the Florida parishes. Yellow fever epidemics aggravated the anxiety prevailing in the period. The absence of a strong religious community denied the residents a fundamental means of ventilating their frustration. As a result, by the close of the decade, on the eve of the crisis of the Union, the plain folk's fealty to the planters was in doubt.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> C.D. Strickland to John Calhoun, August 27, 1852, and J.Y. Kilpatrick to A. Wang, March 10, 1857, both found in New Orleans-Jackson and Great Northern Railroad Collection (Mississippi State Archives) provide examples of opportunities created for the plain folk by the railroad; though Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and a few Episcopalian churches were evident in the Florida parishes, the region was characterized by the absence of a strong religious community. Records and newspaper accounts of these churches indicate that ministers and directors frequently complained of the failure of their communities to support their church. Visitors to the region, particularly northerners, often expressed outrage at the lack of regard for religion and the Sabbath in the Florida parishes. Though some churches, such as the Hephzibah Church near Clinton and the East Fork Baptist Church in Amite County, Mississippi attempted to police their members and mediate disputes, few churches in the region were this aggressive. Family collections indicate a widespread lack of religious commitment across the Florida parishes. See: John Durnin to Dear Sister, January 11, 1868, in James and John Durnin Papers (LLMVC); Eugene Hunter to Stella, March 20, 1862 (Ibid.); Abigail Amacker Diary, July 13, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Diary (Ibid.); S.F. Snell Letter, April 26, 1863 (Ibid.); Mary Carter to Anna McGehee, November 12, 1851(?), in John C. Burruss Papers (Ibid.); F.M. Kent to Uncle Moody, February 19, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (Ibid.); Records of Hephzibah Church, May-September, 1863 (Ibid.); Records of East Fork Baptist Church, Amite County, Mississippi, July,

Much of the ruling elite's concern centered on the results of local political contests. Increasing sectional strife and the decline of two party politics in the deep South insured the supremacy of the Democrats in statewide and national campaigns. But on the local level the dominance of the planters seemed challenged. The 1856 legislative delegation from the piney woods contained no incumbents. More importantly, the social status and wealth of those elected demonstrated that though the power of the planters remained unbroken, it had been weakened. Some of the newly elected legislators, such as W.E. Walker of Livingston, benefitted from the incumbents' failure to seek re-election.

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Sabbath in the Florida parishes. Though some churches, such as the Hephzibah Church near Clinton and the East Fork Baptist Church in Amite County, Mississippi attempted to police their members and mediate disputes, few churches in the region were this aggressive. Family collections indicate a widespread lack of religious commitment across the Florida parishes. See: John Durnin to Dear Sister, January 11, 1868, in James and John Durnin Papers (LLMVC); Eugene Hunter to Stella, March 20, 1862 (Ibid.); Abigail Amacker Diary, July 13, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Diary (Ibid.); S.F. Snell Letter, April 26, 1863 (Ibid.); Mary Carter to Anna McGehee, November 12, 1851(?), in John C. Burruss Papers (Ibid.); F.M. Kent to Uncle Moody, February 19, 1857, in Amos Kent Papers (Ibid.); Records of Hephzibah Church, May-September, 1863 (Ibid.); Records of East Fork Baptist Church, Amite County, Mississippi, July, 1866, (Mississippi State Archives, Jackson); Greensburg Imperial, August 6, 1859; Greensburg Journal, July 20, 1866; Clinton American Patriot, June 16, 1855; Davis (ed.) Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, p. 66; Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826) p. 327.

Others, such as J.B. Strickland of St. Helena, defeated powerful incumbents in extremely close races.<sup>201</sup>

Creating perhaps the most concern among the ruling hierarchy in the Florida parishes, the election of Steven Albitron in Washington Parish heralded the arrival of a new breed of politician in the piney woods. A highly educated man though of modest means, Albitron served as a school teacher in Franklinton. Unlike most of his predecessors, he owned no slaves, farmed no cotton, and possessed an estate valued at less than six hundred dollars.<sup>202</sup> Though Albitron played a minor role in the state legislature, his election symbolized the dawning political power of the masses in the piney woods and the deterioration of the absolute power of the planters.

Circumstances in the mid and late 1850s combined to create a new political atmosphere in the Florida parishes, in which the traditional power of the planters was qualified by the perception of failed leadership and an absence of concern

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<sup>201</sup> Walker filled the seat vacated by Thomas Green Davidson who was elected to Congress. In St. Helena, Strickland's narrow victory over F.H. Hatch was marred by allegations of fraud on both sides. The extremely close vote necessitated legislative scrutiny. Hatch's defeat so angered many of the power brokers in the legislature that they permitted Hatch to attend the legislative sessions and receive compensation until the conflict was resolved, see House Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, January 23 and February 20, 1856.

<sup>202</sup> House Journal, Third Legislature, First Session, January 21, 1856; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, "Heads of Households;" Albitron is also frequently spelled Albriton.

for the plight of the plain folk. But on the threshold of their greatest opportunity the increasing influence of the piney-woods dwellers was circumvented. The apparent chance for social and political change slipped away as a result of national issues which overwhelmed the local transformation occurring in eastern Louisiana. As the sectional crisis dramatically intensified at the close of the decade it essentially negated the opportunity for choice among the plain folk. Just as the Creole-American conflict in state politics had necessitated unity and reduced the choice available to common voters, the reduction in the number of political parties sympathetic to conditions in the South also reduced the choices available. The replacement of the Know Nothings by a powerful Republican organization in the North essentially negated the options open to southern voters. As a result, the growing sectional crisis allowed the planters to maintain their political dominance in the Florida parishes at the moment of its greatest challenge.

Planter propagandists relentlessly depicted themselves as the defenders of southern society in the face of increasingly hostile attacks. The appeal to southern honor and the bond of slaveholding amidst the growing northern threat served to dissuade the plain folk from continuing their challenge to planter dominance. In his farewell address to the legislature, January 17, 1860, Governor Robert Wickliffe demonstrated the power of this appeal:

The times that are upon us are rapidly precipitating a crisis which must be met manfully. In any event I know that the people of Louisiana will not be found wanting in a practical vindication of their assailed rights, and a proper defense of their honor. The character of Louisiana has not yet been stained with the servility or dishonor, and I know her people in the present, like her people in the past, would gladly accept any alternative which carries with it honor and insures self respect, than take a position which might secure temporary profit at the sacrifice of every principle of manhood, every element of independence, every attribute of the lofty sovereignty upon which we have so justly prided ourselves... the slaveholding states have not wronged nor attempted to wrong their northern brethren in any manner; and in all controversies they have been the first to yield; they have compromised and compromised for the sake of peace, when they had rights and interests at stake and the North had none - but ever yielding, and each compromise has been followed by fresh demands and renewed aggression, until fanaticism grown bold by our yielding as well as by its wondrous growth of power in the North threatens to prevail.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> "Farewell Address of Governor Robert C. Wickliffe," House Journal, Fifth Legislature, First Session, January 17, 1860.

Following the election of Abraham Lincoln, Governor Thomas O. Moore's call for a special session of the legislature in December, 1860 resulted in the passage of a convention bill authorizing the Governor to call an election for delegates to a secession convention.<sup>204</sup> If any doubted the power of the appeal to honor and the defense of southern rights, the secession convention must have convinced them. At the convention, the tradition of denying important positions to the favorite sons of the piney woods continued. Despite strenuous efforts, the piney-woods representatives failed in their efforts to secure election of one of their own to a position of leadership. Yet despite the constancy of this rebuff, when the vote to sever Louisiana's ties to the old union came, the piney-woods representatives stood beside their traditional leaders.<sup>205</sup>

On January 26, 1861, the Louisiana Secession Convention voted 113 to 17 to take the state out of the union. Every

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<sup>204</sup> For a discussion of the 1860 election and its implications in the Florida parishes see chapter four.

<sup>205</sup> Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana, 1861 (microfilm reprint, New Haven: Research Publications, 1970) pp. 7-18; Records of the Louisiana State Government, 1850-1888, in the War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Doc. F-75 (National Archives) pp. 1-3; the secession convention election in Louisiana returned 84 committed secessionists and 46 cooperationists. In the Florida parishes East Baton Rouge elected straight cooperationist delegates, East Feliciana, St. Helena, and St. Tammany elected split delegations, and Livingston, Washington, and West Feliciana elected straight secession delegations, see Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 17, 1861.

representative from the Florida parishes voted in support of this measure. The fear of the yankee menace to their peculiarly southern way of life and the assumed affronts to their honor occasioned by the rhetoric of the abolitionists and Republicans, proved more important than challenging the power of the planters. Yet the seeds for the chaos of the late nineteenth century had been planted. If the sectional controversy had not derailed the increasing assertiveness of the plain folk, the implications of the breakdown of planter dominance in the postwar period may have been reduced. But the crisis Louisianians willingly embarked upon would for some, be enduring. The Florida parishes, and particularly the piney woods of that region, had commenced upon a journey of unmitigated catastrophe which would convulse the territory for the next fifty years. As the celebrations in support of the independence of Louisiana echoed across the state, perhaps a note of sadness should have sounded in the Florida parishes. A sorrowful portent for the blood of the scores of her residents that would stain the soil for decades, and a sadness for lost opportunity as the storm waxed close.

#### Chapter Four

"Liberty's What We're Marching For Boys But We Ain't  
Gettin Nearer To It:" War

On a cool spring morning in April 1862, the Fourth Louisiana Infantry Regiment C.S.A. received orders to abandon its encampment near Corinth, Mississippi and move forward in support of the Confederate advance against Union positions in the vicinity of Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. The rapid advance was occasioned by the Confederate high command's awareness that the evenly matched opponents would not remain that way for long. The approach of a second Union army would give the combined Federal forces the strength to overwhelm by sheer force of numbers the hastily assembled Confederate Army. As the Fourth approached the front, a Tennessee regiment mistakenly fired on them from the rear creating temporary disorder in the ranks. Once reformed, the Louisianians, ranging in age from 15 to 48, received orders to assault a virtually impregnable Union position later named the "Hornets Nest." Under orders from General Braxton Bragg, the Louisianians gallantly launched three frontal attacks against the position sustaining horrific losses. When the



day ended, few among the regiment realized that for them this was only the beginning. Of the more than 1,000 men who initially enlisted in the regiment, forty survived the war unscathed.<sup>206</sup>

The Fourth Louisiana Regiment of Volunteers, Confederate States Army represented one of the first Confederate units recruited in the Florida parishes. Organized in the fall of 1860, this regiment embodied the jubilation which characterized the secession winter in the Florida parishes. With the northern states steadily increasing their influence in Congress following the break of the balance of power in the Senate, many southerners regarded the presidency as the final bond of the old union. The election of a sectional candidate in 1860 who did not appear on the ballot in the South, provoked the withdrawal of the states of the Deep

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<sup>206</sup> Eugene Hunter to Stella, March 15 and 19, 1862, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); E. John Ellis Diary, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*) pp. 15-16; Thomas C. Robertson to Dear Mother, April 9, 1862, reprinted in "Battle of Shiloh, Letter of a Soldier to his Mother" (*ibid.*); John S. Kendall Biography, typed manuscript entitled "Recollections of a Confederate Officer," (herein after referred to as John S. Kendall Biography) pp. 5-40; John S. Kendall (ed.) "Muster Rolls of the Fourth Louisiana Regiment of Volunteers, Confederate States Army," reprinted from Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXX, No. 2 (herein after referred to as Kendall (ed.) "Muster Rolls of the Fourth Louisiana,") p. 4. The Fourth Louisiana lost a staggering 209 of the 575 men engaged at Shiloh. Though severe, this tragedy would pale in comparison with the loses it sustained in other engagements, particularly during the Georgia campaign where at the single Battle of Jonesboro the unit lost 62% of its remaining troops forcing its consolidation with other Louisiana regiments, Arthur Bergeron, Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) pp. 80-81.

South. The nucleus for the Fourth Louisiana emerged in the same month that Abraham Lincoln secured election as president.<sup>207</sup>

Yet many Louisianians lamented the collapse of compromise and the triumph of fanaticism. Large numbers of voters in the Florida parishes demonstrated their Unionist sympathies by supporting the Constitutional Union Party and the national Democrats. Headed by John Bell, the Constitutional Unionists carried East Baton Rouge and St. Tammany parishes outright. In East Feliciana, the combined vote of Bell and the national Democrat Stephen Douglas exceeded that of southern Democratic candidate John C. Breckinridge. Breckinridge surpassed the combined total of the other candidates in Washington, West Feliciana, Livingston, and St. Helena. But excepting Washington, the vote in each of these parishes proved close, particularly so in St. Helena where Breckinridge outpolled the combined total of the other candidates by only twenty one votes (see table 12).<sup>208</sup>

In the months following the election a rapid transformation of opinion occurred in the Florida parishes. Previous to the crisis occasioned by the perception of Republican domination of the Federal government, many

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<sup>207</sup> Greensburg Imperial, February 2, 1861; Kendall (ed.) "Muster Rolls of the Fourth Louisiana."

<sup>208</sup> Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, November 18, 1860.

Table 121860 ELECTION RESULTS

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>BRECKINRIDGE</u>	<u>BELL</u>	<u>DOUGLAS</u>
EAST BATON ROUGE	490	569	136
EAST FELICIANA	377	277	131
LIVINGSTON	425	249	117
ST. HELENA	331	292	18
ST. TAMMANY	164	243	132
WEST FELICIANA	272	188	33
WASHINGTON	387	112	5

residents of the Florida parishes had been vocal in their support of the union. Thomas G. Morgan of Baton Rouge aggressively urged his friends to help "secure the defeat of the Great Southern States Thought alias dissolution of the union branch of the Democracy, for these fellows who are eternally preaching northern despotism - southern oppression and peaceable withdrawal from the union, I have a most sovereign detestation." As early as 1856 F.M. Kent prophesied that disunion equated catastrophe for all. Writing to his sister Kent warned "if Fremont is elected it will lead to disunion and bloodshed for I do not think this union can be dissolved peaceably." Similarly W.H. Pearson of Livingston Parish equated the secession impulse with divine retribution. Writing to his friend John Gurley, Pearson lamented, "can it be that an offended God has given us over to anarchy and confusion that we may feel the consequences of our own folly." St. Helena Unionist E. John Ellis excused himself from church services on account of his minister's propensity to preach "disunion sermons." Ellis and his brother Tom helped organize the Amite City Bell and Everett Union Club to promote the candidacy of the Constitutional Union party nominees. This club boasted fifty-nine members including some of the region's most prominent men.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Henry Marston to Editor of the (Boston ?) National Aegis, August 12, 1856 and Thomas G. Morgan to Marston, October 23, 1859, both in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC); F.M. Kent to Dear Sister, August 11, 1856, in Amos Kent Papers (ibid.); W.H. Pearson to John Gurley, December 3, 1860, in

But the Republican victory in the presidential election stunned most of the Florida parish Unionists. Many felt betrayed by their northern brethren who they believed opted for the fanaticism of the radicals rather than the middle ground offered by the parties of compromise. The Republican success seemed to symbolize their minority status in the union and presaged the vulnerability of their peculiar way of life. John Ellis angrily condemned the decision of the majority of Northerners who voted in support of "a sectional candidate elected upon a platform of avowed hostility to the rights and equality in the union of the southern states." Abandoning his past unionist sympathies, Ellis declared the actions of the Yankees had created "just cause for alarm." Many equated the triumph of the Linconites with an endorsement of the bloody antics of John Brown and his followers creating extreme fear and resentment among the former unionists. Shortly after the election the Greensburg Imperial fanned the flames of panic with an article entitled, "A John Brown Raid Anticipated." The article indicated that a schooner had recently departed Boston loaded with "Redpaths" and other John Brown followers and was presently lurking somewhere off the southern coast awaiting the opportunity to strike. The transformation was complete and

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John W. Gurley Papers (ibid.); John Ellis to Mary, September 2, 1860, Ellis to Mother, November 12, 1860, Ellis to Mother, November 31, 1860, and Constitution of the Bell and Everett Union Club, all in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.).

immediate. Just days after the election Charles Johnson noted that all party differences had been cast aside and that preparations were being made for a common defense. According to Johnson, " the night after the election all partisanship was thrown away and nothing spoken of but the union. The spirit of disunion ran much higher here than I had supposed."<sup>210</sup>

The secession of the deep South and the firing on Fort Sumter hastened the collapse of unionist sentiment. Newspapers across the region proclaimed the failure of compromise and heralded the arrival of the southern nation. The New Orleans Daily Picayune printed a letter asserting "East Baton Rouge gave the largest majority they had ever given for any cause against separate state action, but now the cooperationists and unionists have disappeared and all are united in opposition to northern aggression." Announcing Mississippi's secession from the Union the Woodville Wilkinsonian Gazette noted, "the news was received here with great rejoicing, every house on the public square was brilliantly lighted up as the Wilkinsonian Rifles paraded in dress uniform firing volleys, everybody seemed to participate in the rejoicing." The Greensburg Imperial appealed to its reader's sense of honor to promote secession proclaiming, "if

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<sup>210</sup> E. John Ellis Diary 1863-1865, see first section concerning recollections of Confederate service, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Greensburg Imperial, February 2, 1861; Charles Johnson to "My dear Lou," November 19, 1860, in Charles Johnson Papers (LLMVC).

our rights are worth maintaining, and our freedom worth keeping, let us gird on our armors and be prepared to meet those who have drawn the offensive blade and victory will be ours."<sup>211</sup>

The newspapers reflected the sentiment of the local population. Writing to a friend in Pike County, Mississippi, John Houston asserted the necessity of secession despite his love for the Union. "I hung on to the old union as long as I could. But when Lincoln's advisers proclaimed their future policy with the South to be "no compromise" we drew our swords and placed them upon the altar of our country and pledged our lives and property and sacred honor never to lay down our arms until we were free from the Vandals of the North." Perhaps the most conclusive statement concerning the collapse of unionist sentiment in the Florida parishes came from the formerly staunch unionist Thomas G. Morgan. In June, 1861 Morgan wrote his friend Henry Marston, "whatever may have been my opinion and feeling a few months ago - I now feel that we are struggling for existence - and I for one want nothing more to do with a people who will not only tamely submit to the violent outrages on the Constitution and laws perpetuated by Mr. Lincoln, but who are ready to wage a

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<sup>211</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 25, 1861; Woodville Wilkinsonian Gazette, January 12, 1861; Greensburg Imperial, February 2, 1861.

war of extermination to aid him in his nefarious projects."<sup>212</sup>

Fear, resentment, sense of honor, and increasing southern nationalism combined to produce spirited celebrations in support of secession. The New Orleans Daily Picayune reported "from every quarter of the state the same enthusiastic cry to arms resounds, and no one can remember the time when such a whirlwind of united patriotic feeling has swept over Louisiana." In one sense, the practically complete collapse of unionism could be traced to the absence of a strong unionist tradition in the Florida parishes. The legacy of their Tory forefathers and other fugitives from the American system hindered the emergence of a commitment to the American union among many of the original inhabitants. This tradition remained an issue for many older families into the mid-nineteenth century. A full year before the outbreak of war the Greensburg Imperial noted the absence of patriotic sentiment in the region. The editor marvelled at the complete lack of interest among the people for Fourth of July celebrations. Much of the enthusiasm for secession also likely related to the excitement of the process and the southern penchant for a good fight. But most important was the perception created by southern statesmen and the press that northern politicians, speaking for the majority in their

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<sup>212</sup> John Houston to William Allen, September 29, 1861, in William M. Allen Papers (LLMVC); Thomas G. Morgan to Henry Marston, June 14, 1861, in Henry Marston Papers (ibid.).



region, had insulted the South and now posed a direct threat to their very way of life. The perceived insult to their sense of honor and threat to their independence motivated Louisianians in a way nothing else could.<sup>213</sup>

During the initial months of the crisis, Louisianians flocked to the Confederate army. In the fall of 1861 the Bayou Sara Ledger, announced that the West Feliciana Parish Court had been suspended as a result of the large numbers who had volunteered for Confederate service. Three hundred of four hundred and eighty total voters had volunteered for the army making it impossible to fill jury pools, summon plaintiffs, and dozens of witnesses could not be present. In the same month the Greensburg Imperial noted that four companies had already been formed and outfitted from St. Helena alone. Many schools and colleges suspended for lack of male pupils. The faculty minutes of Centenary College on October 7, 1861 read, "students have all gone to war. College suspended and God help the right." On May 7, 1861, the Daily Picayune provided a list of the rates of enlistment for numerous parishes. The article noted that six full companies numbering more than 600 men had been outfitted in East Baton Rouge. In West Baton Rouge, whose population contained only 350 white men compared to nearly 8,000 slaves, 150 men had already volunteered. Similarly in East Feliciana

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<sup>213</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 7, 1861; Greensburg Imperial, June 23, 1860.

160 out of 400 voters had entered the ranks of the Confederate army.<sup>214</sup>

Volunteers for Confederate service continued to enlist at a high rate through the spring of 1862. By the fall of that year the potential for a slave revolt and increasing likelihood of a Union invasion in the absence of most of the region's white males dampened, though did not destroy the enthusiasm for volunteering. Throughout the war, recruiting in the Florida parishes slightly exceeded that of the state as a whole. The highest rate of volunteering occurred in the upper Mississippi delta region. Parishes with small white populations and huge numbers of slaves such as Tensas, Concordia, and Pointe Coupee produced the greatest proportion of volunteers. Volunteers from the upstate piney-woods parishes equaled the rates in the Florida parishes. The lowest number of volunteers came from the lower Mississippi delta parishes and parts of Acadiana. As late as March, 1862, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, Vermillion, and

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<sup>214</sup> Bayou Sara Ledger, reprinted from New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 3, 1861; Greensburg Imperial, October 12, 1861; Faculty Minutes of Centenary College, reprinted from Arthur M. Shaw, Centenary College Goes to War in 1861 (Shreveport: Centenary College, 1940) p. 3; Daily Picayune, May 7, 1861; Howell Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War (New Orleans: American Printing Company, 1900) pp. 9-10 indicate that the enthusiasm for the war prevailing in the Florida parishes made it very easy to recruit an entire regiment of cavalry in a very short time; Frank to Dear Anne, April 13, 1863, found in Anonymous Civil War Letters (LLMVC), in this letter a Federal soldier expresses dismay that seemingly all eligible white males in Louisiana are in the Confederate army.

Calcasieu parishes had produced no companies of Confederate volunteers.<sup>215</sup>

Though some recruits complained of the harsh conditions of army life and many families bemoaned the absence of their men, the majority of Louisianians enthusiastically supported the war effort in its initial phase. The conflict of interests created by the necessity of service to country and concern for family is evident in a letter of John A. Harris.

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<sup>215</sup> For evidence concerning fears of a possible slave revolt see: Eugene Hunter to Stella, January 1, 1862, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah Wilkinson, August 1, 1862 and November 9, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (*ibid.*); Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, November 19, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (*ibid.*); St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, January 7, 1862, pp. 29-30 demonstrates tightening slave controls. For evidence of the absence of men in the area occasioned by the war see: Dearest Pat to J.G. Kilbourne, February 23, 1862, in J.G. Kilbourne Papers, (*ibid.*); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah Wilkinson, August 1, 1862 and October 19, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (*ibid.*); Serrano Taylor to Eugene Hunter, January (?), 1864, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (*ibid.*); John S. Kendall Biography, typescript entitled "Recollections of a Confederate Officer," pp. 46-57 notes only women and children remained in the area all others in the army (*ibid.*); Records of the East Fork Baptist Church, scattered minutes 1861-1865 demonstrate large numbers of members away in the army (Mississippi State Archives); Covington Weekly Wanderer, April 19, 1862, notes that the conscript law was received well in the Florida parishes; Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, March 2, 1862, provides a complete list of all volunteer companies from every Louisiana parish. The number of volunteer companies formed in the Florida parishes by the spring of 1862 totalled: East Baton Rouge - 7, East Feliciana - 4, Livingston - 3, St. Helena - 4, West Feliciana - 3, Washington - 2, and St. Tammany - 0. The Advocate sharply criticized residents in the parishes which had raised no companies and parishes with large populations, such as Lafourche and Terrebonne, which produced proportionately few volunteer companies, see also Louisiana Legislative Documents, First session, Sixth Legislature, "Report of the Adjutant General," 1862.

While training at Camp Moore in St. Helena Parish, Harris wrote his wife explaining his decision to enlist in the Confederate army. "How I miss you and the children, it is you I have come to defend, and as long as I have strength I am willing to shoulder my musket and stand for my country, the land of the South, the fairest and happiest of all the Earth, all I ask is that you remember me in your devotions to God and pray for peace."<sup>216</sup>

Some soldiers stoically reflected on the possibility of their own death while many family members on the home front sought to place the insecurity of the times in a positive light. Informed that his regiment would soon depart for the scene of fighting in Kentucky, John G. Smith advised his sister to shed no tears for him if he died because his death would be "for one of the best causes we have ever experienced." Likewise Alice Jennings predicted the growth of southern womanhood as a result of the suffering occasioned by the war. Writing her father from Eureka Plantation in St. Helena Parish in the fall of 1862, Jennings asserted, "Hurrah for southern independence. The day has come when southern ladies are freed from that luxury which has ever been their bane...fear not for us then, the Yankees will never conquer our southern spirit. My fervent prayer is that God would give us strength to meet the coming difficulties." On the

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<sup>216</sup> John Harris to Geroam, Becky, Children and Darkys, December 7, 1861, in John A. Harris Letters (LLMVC).

day he volunteered for Confederate service young Willie Dixon vowed, "I am willing to shed the last drop of my blood on the altar of my country, if that could be the means of saving us from northern treachery." Dixon perhaps best summarized the attitude of most residents of the Florida parishes in the initial phase of the war with a series of poems he produced in the fall and winter of 1861 while a student at Centenary College:

We are a band of brothers - and native to the soil  
fighting for the property - we gained by honest  
toil

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The unjust war is now at hand - and we fight for  
our blessed land - On every hill and every glen -  
We'll fight till we are free - We'll fight till  
every limpid brook - runs crimson to the sea.<sup>217</sup>

In spite of the celebrations in favor of the South's defiant response to the perceived northern domination of the Federal government, the preoccupation with death and the premonitions of suffering exposed another, darker side of the secession hysteria. Like the ancient Spartans who feared their helots and maintained their society as an armed camp to

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<sup>217</sup> John G. Smith to Dear Sister, March 12, 1862, in D.L. McGehee Papers (LLMVC); Alice Jennings to Father, October 21, 1862, in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (ibid.); Diary of Willie Dixon, entries March 1, 1862, November 30 and December 31, 1861, in William Y. Dixon Papers (ibid.).

discourage would be invaders, the Confederates now faced war with an immensely powerful foe handicapped by a potentially dangerous enemy within. Though slave rebellions never materialized, the very possibility remained a constant source of anxiety for soldiers in the field as well as for their families at home. But the fear of invasion constituted a realistic concern. As the South embarked upon the bold stroke for independence few residents of the Florida parishes could have dreamed of the horror that awaited them. The brutality of war struck quickly and with vengeance, providing the inhabitants with an unforgettable lesson in the effectiveness of cruelty and violence. Though far less publicized than events in more crucial theatres of the war, military operations in the Florida parishes would leave the region devastated and the residents with an enduring legacy of bitterness.<sup>218</sup>

Compared to the military significance of Richmond, Charleston, Wilmington, or New Orleans, the Florida parishes pale. But like many areas in the interior South, eastern Louisiana constituted a region which Union strategists considered essential to their plan of breaking both the

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<sup>218</sup> Nannie C. to Cornelia Stewart, April, 1864, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); Eugene Hunter to Stella, January 1, 1862, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah Wilkinson, August 1 and November 9, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (ibid.); Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, November 19, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (ibid.) provide examples of the lingering fear of a possible slave revolt.

South's ability and will to fight, and which the Confederacy's policy of cordon defense left vulnerable. The tendency of many Civil War historians to overlook or give only casual mention to these smaller regional theatres of the war has created a gap in our efforts to obtain a precise understanding of the circumstances determining the nature and outcome of the war.<sup>219</sup> Without an accurate discernment of the steady erosion of Confederate power and the suffering occurring in large areas of the southern interior away from the highly publicized battlegrounds, one may infer that following Union reversals in climactic struggles in Virginia the South was actually winning the war. Nothing could be further from the truth. Moreover, without an awareness of the unmitigated catastrophe the war represented in seemingly insignificant areas of the South, it is impossible to explain the tumultuous conditions which convulsed these regions in the late nineteenth century. The great struggle between North and South disrupted the process of societal transformation occurring in many regions of the piney-woods South, destroyed the sources of stability, demonstrated the

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<sup>219</sup> Recent studies by Stephen Ash, Wayne Durrill, Michael Fellman and others have done much to correct this imbalance, but a great deal of research in this area remains to be done. See: Stephen Ash, Middle Tennessee Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Wayne Durrill, War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Michael Fellman, Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

effectiveness of brutality, and let slip the dogs of chaos by creating a socio-political vacuum where order once prevailed. This legacy of the war emerged as a primary determinant affecting the development of the Florida parishes for generations.

Eastern Louisiana contained many diverse resources which collectively heightened its strategic significance. Most obviously, the region's proximity to New Orleans meant that any movement against the Crescent City would necessitate close observation of the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Throughout the war both armies would regard the region as a potential staging and collecting point for any effort designed to recapture the great river port. In addition, a Confederate presence on the north shore of lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain would gain for them control of the narrow passes connecting those lakes as well as command of the Rigolets connecting Lake Pontchartrain with the Gulf of Mexico. Control of this territory would facilitate Confederate commerce between the many rivers and streams culminating in the lakes and expedite trade between the interior of Louisiana and the Mississippi Gulf coast. At the same time these avenues of travel and commerce would be denied to the Federals.

Eastern Louisiana's western border on the Mississippi River also contributed to its military significance. A principal component of the Union grand strategy involved



securing control of the great river in order to cut the Confederacy in two. Failure to gain command of the fertile bluffs along the Mississippi which characterized the Florida parishes would negate this essential aspect of the union plan. Baton Rouge, Louisiana's capital since 1849, and the Confederate bastion at Port Hudson guaranteed particular Union interest. As a result constant fighting permeated the area throughout the war.

But the delta and the lakeshore region were not the only strategically significant territory in the Florida parishes. The vast herds of livestock and the hundreds of farms located in the piney woods constituted an important source of food production, an importance that increased as the war dragged on. As the blockade increasingly denied necessities to the residents, considerable industry emerged primarily along the railroad. Several machine shops, initially developed to maintain the railroad, also produced heavy industrial products for the Confederate army. At least two shoe factories arose which produced brogans for the local population and the army. Several tanneries and at least one gun factory also were established in the region.<sup>220</sup> In

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<sup>220</sup> Clinton-Port Hudson Railroad Company Records, numerous entries minute book 1852-1879 (LLMVC); Daily Picayune, February 11, 1862, describes the Cate Shoe Factory at Hammond and the Confederate Leather Manufactory at Magnolia, Mississippi; Ronald Evans, "Evans, Gates, and Packwood Families of Southeastern Louisiana," typed transcript describes Southern Car Works at Independence (LLMVC); John S. Kendall Biography, p. 62 describes gun factory at Osyka (ibid.); J.G. Lea to Lemanda, October 9,

addition to food and manufactured goods the overwhelming support for the Confederacy demonstrated by the local residents made the piney woods an important source of reliable manpower. Most importantly, the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad underscored the importance of men and material by enabling both to be transported efficiently.

Finally, the presence of the largest training base in the Deep South dramatically increased the military significance of the piney-woods of the Florida parishes. Initially the masses of volunteers travelled to Camp Walker near New Orleans to be mustered into Confederate service. In an effort to create a permanent training base in a more healthful region free of the problems associated with the immediate vicinity of New Orleans, the Adjutant General's office selected a sight near Tangipahoa Station in St. Helena Parish. The new location contained abundant available land for training, plenty of fresh water, and easy access to the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad. In May, 1861 the first Confederate troops arrived at the newly established base, appropriately named Camp Moore in honor of Louisiana's secession governor. During the course of the war thousands of troops from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas would

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1862, describes shoe factory at Liberty, in Lemanda Lea Collection (ibid.); Map of the Line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, 1861, identifies all industrial enterprises along the line of the railroad, in Illinois Central Railroad Collection (Newberry Library).

pass through Camp Moore on their way to distant theatres of the war.<sup>221</sup>

Camp Moore's purpose involved more than simply training volunteers for Confederate service. Following the enactment of the Conscription Act by the Confederate Congress in April, 1862, Camp Moore served as a center for collecting and instructing conscripts from the Florida parishes and all of the lower Mississippi delta parishes. The constant presence of troops made the camp a valuable supply depot for operations in eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. Camp Moore also frequently served as the headquarters for the Confederate Department of Southwestern Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana functioning as the nerve center for offensive and defensive operations in that department. In the spring of 1862 President Jefferson Davis authorized the retention of Camp Moore as the primary base for protecting the railroad from Manchac to Jackson, Mississippi and urged

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<sup>221</sup> Powell Casey, The Story of Camp Moore (New Orleans: Bourque Printing, 1985) pp. 5-22 (herein after referred to as Casey, Story of Camp Moore); in October, 1861, Lt. Col. Edward Fry, Asst. Adjutant General at Camp Moore reported a total of approximately 5,000 soldiers in training at the base, see The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 128 Vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882) herein after referred to as Official Records, Series I, Vol. 6, p. 594; a corollary base also apparently temporarily operated in the same area, Camp Pulaski, located at Amite City ten miles below Camp Moore allegedly served as a training base for the "Polish Regiment" of Louisiana volunteers in the summer and fall of 1861, see ibid., p. 17, also several letters exist dated from Camp Pulaski which could have come from the Amite City encampment or a similarly named camp near New Orleans, see Z. Yacks to T.C.W. Ellis, July 1, 1861, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

the organization of a force of 5,000 rangers to assist in confining Union forces to New Orleans.<sup>222</sup>

Containing Union forces and protecting the residents and resources of the Florida parishes would prove to be an overwhelming challenge for Confederate troops. Part of the difficulty involved defending a region surrounded by water and penetrated by numerous navigable streams without a navy. The effort to secure the region against an enemy possessing irresistible naval power and seemingly limitless assets, eventually strained Confederate resources to the breaking point. But in their hour of despair the residents would prove resourceful, learning to rely on themselves rather than government. This lesson, internalized by many, would contribute directly to popular attitudes in the late nineteenth century.

The celebration of independence and the excitement over the war prevailed unabated in the Florida parishes until the spring of 1862 when the consequences of their bold endeavor first became apparent. In April, 1862, a two pronged catastrophe befell the western Confederacy. The feared invasion from the north necessitated the removal of all

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<sup>222</sup> Casey, Story of Camp Moore, pp. 21-24; Official Records Series I, Vol. 6, pp. 652-653 and 888; immediately following the fall of New Orleans a threatened Union invasion of the Florida parishes stimulated plans to abandon Camp Moore as untenable. The failure of this invasion to materialize and the significance of the camp as a base of operations in the Florida parishes insured its continued usefulness until late in 1864, see Ibid., vol. 53, pp. 805-808.

available manpower from the lower Mississippi in an effort to check the Union advance. The ensuing Battle of Shiloh resulted in heavy losses and particularly severe casualties for units recruited in the Florida parishes which for the first time brought the bloody cost home. Mary E. Taylor's words of mourning for her dead son Captain Bunyan Taylor illustrate the suffering and sadness which enveloped the region:

Our cottage home is in mourning now - its inmates all  
away, no wife or child or kinsmans voice - to heaven to  
sing and pray

Our cottage home's in mourning now - our children number  
7, six live in these Confederate States - but "Bun" we  
hope's in heaven

Our cottage home's in mourning now - he led, fought,  
fell on Shilohs plain - in freedoms blest and righteous  
cause he gave his life - this to sustain

Our cottage home's in mourning now - our birds add sad  
tones to their songs - our flowers weep our trees sigh  
grief and nature mourns - a nations wrongs

Our cottage home's in mourning now - our circle broken!  
is formed no more - on Earth we're sereened for all time  
in heaven to meet - and god adore <sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The Fourth and Sixteenth Louisiana infantry regiments and the First Louisiana Cavalry, among other units recruited largely in the Florida parishes, suffered heavy casualties at Shiloh and the ensuing skirmishing around Corinth, Mississippi. Captain Bunyan Taylor, Co. F "St.

Despite the heavy casualties the Federal army remained unbroken and continued to menace the lower Mississippi valley from the north giving the residents no relief from the burdensome fear of invasion by a hostile army.

But unlike the northern threat, the menace from the south came unexpectedly. In late April, 1862 a powerful Federal fleet passed the forts on the lower Mississippi and forced the capitulation of New Orleans. The fall of New Orleans deprived Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi of their principal market and effectively sealed the region off from contact with the outside world. Suddenly the residents of the Florida parishes faced the threat of imminent invasion on two fronts and, for the first time, starvation. As the remnants of Mansfield Lovell's tiny force streamed north from New Orleans to Camp Moore they brought despair and apprehension with them. A Confederate official observing the scene at Camp Moore described it as "very much disorganized," but added "there was no greater confusion than was natural and to be expected under the circumstances." Watching the

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Helena Rifles," died as a result of wounds received leading his company in a charge against Union positions at Shiloh. Poem found in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers, October 9, 1862 (LLMVC). For other examples of the high rates of casualties sustained by Florida parish units and mourning for the regions dead after Shiloh see: Eugene Hunter to Stella, June 1, 1862, Mary Taylor to Riah, September 8, 1862 and Mary E. Taylor Diary, May 6 and July 8, 1862, (*ibid.*); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, April 21, 1862 and July 9, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (*ibid.*); Muster role of the Fourth Louisiana Infantry Regiment, in James G. Kilbourne Papers, April 26, 1862 (*ibid.*); J.S. Kendall Biography, pp. 5-40 (*ibid.*).

trains unload their melancholy cargoes near her home in Tangipahoa, Louisiana, Abigail Amacker described the depression prevailing in the area: "the Federals have taken New Orleans, the hour seems very dark for us, God grant we may have peace shortly. A great many soldiers have come and are coming into this neighborhood, we fear starvation just now more than the Lincolmites." A few days later she added, "the suffering, the deaths in camp are awful, I pray God we may have peace speedily, on any terms. To be subjugated to be slaves would not be worse than this. Starvation stares us in the face and defeat too."<sup>224</sup>

As outlined by Major General George B. McClellan, overall commander of Union Forces, the plan for the subjugation of eastern Louisiana and the lower Mississippi valley began with the capture of New Orleans. After seizing New Orleans, Federal forces were instructed to secure the avenues of approach to the city and particularly, gain control of Pass Manchac and the surrounding lakeshore area in lower Livingston Parish. The plan also called for the capture of Baton Rouge as soon as possible following the fall of New Orleans. To fulfill this mission Washington dispatched a land force 18,000 strong augmented by a powerful

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<sup>224</sup> Testimony of C.M. Conrad, Confederate Congressman relative to the fall and evacuation of New Orleans, in Official Records, Series I, Vol. 6, p. 624; Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, April 26 and May 9, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (LLMVC); Dear Sister to Edward, May 4, 1862, in John C. Burruss Papers (ibid.).

naval flotilla, certain to outgun and outnumber anything the southerners could gather in opposition.<sup>225</sup>

Whether the Yankees realized that eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi were virtually devoid of Confederate troops remains unclear. What is certain is that in response to Richmond's call for troops to support operations in Virginia and Tennessee the Florida parishes and environs had been literally denuded of regular Confederate forces. Governor Thomas Moore protested that no state had done more in terms of providing troops and armaments to support the Confederate war effort yet no state had been so sorely neglected by the general government. General Mansfield Lovell, commander of the defenses about New Orleans, repeated the objections to the war department's neglect of Louisiana. Lovell noted that 20,000 well trained Louisiana soldiers had been removed to other theaters only weeks before their own state was invaded. Moreover, he warned that to abandon Louisiana entirely "would have a very bad moral effect upon the state," promoting disaffection and encouraging residents to open a cotton trade with the enemy. Rebuffed in his pleas to the war department, Lovell proposed a solution which Governor Moore heartily endorsed. The plan called for the creation of at least five regiments of partisan rangers to be armed and commissioned by the Confederate government. The purpose of this irregular force would be to "contain the



enemy in New Orleans and protect the state from his ravages."<sup>226</sup>

Partisan warfare evoked mixed emotions among civilians and military men alike. Many citizens regarded partisans as little more than undisciplined outlaws who often provoked brutal retaliation for their actions yet offered little realistic protection to the civilian population. Military men generally condemned partisans as guerrillas whose uncontrolled activities accomplished little more than keeping qualified soldiers out of the regular army. As early as the summer of 1861 General George McClellan condemned the rebel partisan operations in western Virginia as "a system of hostilities prohibited by the laws of war among belligerent nations." But partisan activities could tie down large numbers of enemy troops. Their hit and run tactics necessitated the committment of significant bodies of troops to garrison duty and escort operations. The memory of the exploits of the South Carolinian Francis Marion the "Swamp Fox of the Revolution," whether contemptible or heroic remained fresh to many. And most agreed that in the absence of all else partisan operations provided a means to strike back at an invader. In June 1861, the Confederate War Department accepted the formation of partisan forces, authorized their inclusion as a branch of the service, and

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<sup>226</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 6, pp. 652-653 and 885-890; ibid., Series I, Vol. 53, p. 805.

allowed partisan officers to be commissioned. But lingering doubts remained, particularly among certain officers who insisted that regular troops were far more effective than partisans. As a result of these doubts the war department required that each partisan force receive approval directly from the secretary of war.<sup>227</sup>

Efforts to convince doubters of the effectiveness of partisan rangers continued throughout the war. But Lovell presented a strong case in favor of partisan operations in eastern Louisiana. He pointed out that most of the fewer than three thousand troops which joined him at Camp Moore following the fall of New Orleans consisted of unarmed citizen militia who could not be considered reliable. As a result, without a motivated partisan force in the area the path would be open for the Federals to proceed up the railroad unmolested and threaten P.G.T. Beauregard's army about Corinth from the rear. Moreover, Lovell argued that quite probably the Union navy would gain control of most if not all of the Mississippi River, which would necessitate the immediate transfer of all forces from eastern Louisiana to the west side of the river. Both Lovell and Governor Moore

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<sup>227</sup> Official Records Series IV, Vol. 1, p. 395; Jackson, Mississippi Mississippian, February 27, 1863; Virgil Jones, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders (New York: Henry Holt, 1956) pp. VII-VII; John D. Winters, The Civil War in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963) p. 153 (herein after referred to as Winters, Civil War in Louisiana); Russell Weigley, The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970).

recognized the absolute necessity of securing western Louisiana where the bulk of the state's population and materiel was concentrated. Finally, Lovell bluntly requested permission to organize "guerrilla parties with authority to act as this is the only available force in the swamps of Louisiana." Lovell's appeal was strengthened by Governor Moore's demand that Louisiana be divided into two departments separated by the river. Moore's insistence that the commands be separated with an emphasis on the defense of the western part of the state, in order to maintain the supplies of beef coming from Texas, reinforced the need for Lovell's partisans east of the river.<sup>228</sup>

Though much skepticism concerning irregular forces remained, the Confederate war department recognized the logic of Lovell's argument. In early May 1862, General Robert E. Lee, responding for the war department, gave tacit approval to Lovell's plan. Lee's directive concluded, "you will organize and prepare the troops that you may collect, to act most efficiently against the enemy, should he expose himself in any manner." Three weeks later Lee removed any doubt concerning Richmond's support for Lovell's proposal. "I approve of your purpose to confine the enemy to its (New Orleans) limits as closely as possible and to protect the state from his ravages. The means with which you propose to

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<sup>228</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 6, p. 885 and 889-890; ibid., Series I, Vol. 53, p. 805.

accomplish this seem to be the best that you can now employ, and I must urge you to put them in operation without delay, soliciting bold and judicious partisans who can raise proper corps."<sup>229</sup>

To provide a structure for the organization of Confederate forces in the region General Earl Van Dorn, commanding the troops in Mississippi and eastern Louisiana, ordered that a new department be created under the command of General Daniel Ruggles. The orders creating the new Department of Southwestern Mississippi and East Louisiana also contained directions for the formation of partisan units to operate in the area. The instructions stipulated that "no organization less than a regiment, or at least a battalion of five companies" would be accepted as a partisan ranger unit. The partisans were to be trained in the same manner as regulars and held to the strictest discipline in the performance of their operations. According to Van Dorn, "an undisciplined rabble is not dangerous to the enemy, is extremely injurious to the neighborhood where it may be stationed, and is a disgrace to any country." In return for their discipline and satisfactory performance the partisans would be exempted from regular Confederate military service. Though their purpose remained primarily local defense they could be pressed into service in other theaters. By July 1862, nine companies of partisan rangers had been organized

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<sup>229</sup>Official Records, Series I, Vol. 6, pp. 652-653.

statewide, with at least one, the Ninth Louisiana Partisan Rangers commanded by J.H. Wingfield, designated to serve in the Florida parishes. During the course of the war at least four partisan units would operate in eastern Louisiana playing a central role in Confederate strategic planning.<sup>230</sup>

After securing New Orleans the Federals wasted little time in expanding their control of the surrounding region. Forts Pike and McComb guarding the entrance to Lake Pontchartrain via the Rigolets fell into Union hands after their Confederate garrisons withdrew following the fall of New Orleans. A portion of the Federal fleet rapidly steamed north to capture Baton Rouge and intimidate the surrounding area. When the fleet dropped anchor off Baton Rouge, a melancholy crowd gathered to observe the might of the invader. While the ships awaited the surrender of the city a group of horsemen fired on a longboat approaching the shore. In response and without warning the fleet intensively shelled the town. Astonished by the severity of the Federal response, women and children ran shrieking through the streets seeking safety from the bombardment beyond the bluffs of the river. Horrified by the results, young Sara Morgan mockingly retorted, "hurrah for the illustrious Farragut, the Woman Killer!!!" After landing a party which raised an

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 768 and 1061-1062; ibid., Series I, Vol. 6, pp. 889-890; ibid., Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, p. 141; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, pp. 149 and 165.

American flag over the statehouse, the fleet steamed upriver warning that the city would be shelled again if the flag should in any way be molested.<sup>231</sup>

Hoping to exploit the demoralized condition of the local residents and the few Confederate troops in the area, the Federals moved rapidly to apply irresistible pressure on the Florida parishes. These operations aimed particularly at the destruction of Camp Moore, the demolition of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, and the general subjugation of the region. To further these goals General Benjamin Butler, commanding the department, ordered General Thomas Williams, in charge at Baton Rouge, to mount a series of demonstrations against Camp Moore. Butler's instructions directed Williams to "punish with the last severity every guerrilla attack and burn all

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<sup>231</sup> That at least three women and children died as a result of the bombardment intensified the growing hatred of the Yankees in the Florida parishes. Lt. Colonel J.H. Wingfield commanded the scattered cavalry units operating in the vicinity of Baton Rouge during the spring and summer of 1862 (Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 22 and 122-123), the only other nearby force was Terrell's Mississippi Cavalry guarding the bridges across the Amite River. Sara M. Dawson's description of the Confederate troops about Baton Rouge in the spring of 1862 disputes the contention that the offending parties were merely local renegades, the Federals routinely referred to all Confederate forces in the area as guerrillas, prompting some locals to use the name as well. Joseph Corkern to Jephtha McKinney, August 27, 1862, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC); Sara M. Dawson, A Confederate Girls Diary (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913) herein after referred to as Dawson, A Confederate Girls Diary, pp. 40-55; Patrick Geary (ed.), Celine: Remembering Louisiana 1850-1871 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987) herein after referred to as Geary (ed.) Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 69-71; John McGrath Scrapbook, p. 16 (LLMVC); Winters, Civil War in Louisiana p. 104.

the property of every guerrilla found murdering your soldiers."<sup>232</sup>

As a preliminary to this expedition Williams launched a series of probing raids into the interior to test Confederate strength and intimidate the population. On June 7, 1862, the Thirtieth Massachusetts Regiment departed on a mission to capture several suspected "guerrillas," a term universally applied to all Confederate forces operating in the area. The raiders failed in their effort to capture any Confederate forces but they did lay waste several plantations belonging to prominent Confederate sympathizers. The destruction was rapid and complete. At each plantation all buildings and fences excepting the slave quarters were burned, livestock stolen, and ornamental trees cut down. Reporting on the success of his endeavor, the commanding officer reported, "I burnt every building on the estate of these once beautiful plantations, except such as were required to cover the negroes left behind...in fact I left nothing but the blackened chimneys as a monument to the folly and villainy of its guerrilla owner."<sup>233</sup>

Applauding this destructive raid, Butler urged Williams to intimidate the local population rapidly to insure the security of the garrison at Baton Rouge. In the last week of

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<sup>232</sup> Benjamin Butler to Thomas Williams, in Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 24-25.

<sup>233</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 19-21.

June, 1862, Williams dispatched another raiding party in the direction of Camp Moore. At Williams Bridge across the Amite River near Greensburg the raiders encountered the camp of Vernon Terrell's Mississippi Cavalry and a sharp skirmish ensued. The surprised Mississippians initially panicked and fled, but regaining their composure, they returned and fired on the Yankees from the woods. When the main body of Union cavalry came up a determined charge scattered the rebels who left several dead and wounded and over a dozen prisoners. After destroying the enemy camp the Federals proceeded back toward Baton Rouge with their loot and prisoners. But the firing had alerted local residents to the presence of the raiders, and the alarm quickly spread through the piney woods. At a point eighteen miles from Baton Rouge, Confederate cavalrymen ambushed the column at a bend in the road inflicting six casualties and recovering most of the prisoners. The results of this ambush provided an early example of the importance of citizen involvement to Confederate success in the region.<sup>234</sup>

To force the Confederates to spread thin their meager resources Union forces probed Confederate defenses at Pass Manchac and along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain in coordination with the raids from Baton Rouge. On June 17,

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<sup>234</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, p. 36; Dunbar Rowland, Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898 (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1978) p. 409 provides information on the operations of Terrell's cavalry in eastern Louisiana.



1862, a substantial Union force supported by the gunboat New London attacked and overran a hastily assembled Confederate battery on the south side of Pass Manchac forcing the destruction of the bridge and jeopardizing Confederate control of the strategic pass. Union forces then proceeded to raid the villages of Mandeville and Madisonville on the north shore panicking the civilian population and creating confusion among the few Confederate forces in the area.<sup>235</sup>

The Union plan to put pressure on multiple locations in the Florida parishes, and thereby wear down Confederate resistance and demoralize the civilian population, proved quite successful at first. Through the summer of 1862, Union forces kept constant pressure on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and repeatedly raided the interior of the Florida parishes. From July 25 to August 2, 1862, a Union raiding party backed by gunboats menaced the north shore and environs. On the evening of the twenty-fifth, the gunboat Grey Cloud drove Confederate pickets from the village of Manchac and landed a party of troops who burned the village to the ground. The thoroughness of the destruction led the Federal commander, Major Frank Peck to report, "I am aware of nothing left remaining at Pass Manchac more combustible than railroad iron and water-soaked piles." The raiders also visited all of the villages along the north shore between the Tchefuncte and Pearl rivers skirmishing with Confederate

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<sup>235</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, p. 111.

partisans and destroying provisions. During the expedition the Federals expressed surprise at the level of destitution existing among the people. Major Peck reported that "in many places flour had not been seen for months, the poorer classes subsisting almost entirely upon the meanest quality of corn meal." The raid had exposed a grim reality. Barely one year into the war suffering and privation already prevailed in large areas of the Florida parishes and southwestern Mississippi.<sup>236</sup>

The frequent raids continued relentlessly into the summer of 1862 and served to effectively keep the Confederates off balance. On July 24, 1862, a well armed expedition of 950 men dressed in civilian clothing departed Baton Rouge. At daylight the yankees approached a company of Wingfield's partisan rangers professing friendship. The Federals accordingly advanced to close quarters then suddenly fired on the astonished Confederates who fell back in disorder. When a few hours later the Federals approached as friends a second time, the rangers fired on them killing several and holding their ground until Federal artillery forced them to withdraw. Frustrated, Wingfield remonstrated that he could forge his scattered companies into an effective force capable of repelling enemy incursions "if I can be

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., Series I, Vol. 15, p. 124; Diary of Eli Capell, April 27 and November 30, 1862, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC) also describes the distress of the local population in the first year of the war.

allowed time to drill, for as you are aware we have never had one hour's time for drilling."<sup>237</sup>

The frequency of these raids greatly impacted the civilian population and deeply distressed local soldiers away in other theaters of the war. John Ellis serving in the Confederate army in northern Mississippi excitedly wrote home after hearing reports of Union cavalry raids in the vicinity of his home at Amite City. "Where are the few remaining men in the country, where the boasted guerrillas of Wingfield, where the trusty rifles and shotguns? When I hear these reports I want to go back home, but surely this report can't be true, surely Louisiana is not overrun in that way - it can not be." The increasing ease with which the Federals moved about the territory had a demoralizing effect. With the men away fighting in other theaters of the war, many residents felt neglected by the Confederate government. N.R. Jennings loudly denounced the government's failure to defend the Florida parishes. According to Jennings, "our region of the country has literally been cursed and destroyed by the incompetence, ignorance, and arrogance of the military commanders placed over us. Ruggles and Jeff Thompson have only a few guerrilla bands to protect the entire region." Governor Thomas Moore reminded the Confederate government of the contributions that Louisianians were making to the war effort. Moore initially demanded, then later pleaded for the

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<sup>237</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 122-123.

general government to make a stronger commitment to Louisiana. Citizens also directly petitioned the military authorities for protection from the invader. In July, 1862, a committee of prominent citizens from the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge sent a petition to General Daniel Ruggles commanding Confederate troops in the Florida parishes. The petition noted that the region had been stripped of men as a result of the massive outpouring of support for the Confederate Army. Moreover, Florida parish farmers, the petition alleged, had followed government instructions and reduced their cotton acreage while tripling their output of corn and in general "manifested a willingness to sacrifice all, even life itself, to advance the common cause." The statement continued, "all is at the mercy of an enemy greedy for destruction, unless they are met by an adequate force...this aid we think is due to so loyal a population if it can be afforded consistently with the general interests of the service."<sup>238</sup>

Seemingly abandoned by their protectors, vulnerable to the depredations of the enemy and facing starvation, in the summer of 1862 the residents of the Florida parishes could have easily given up the game. But the brutality of the

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<sup>238</sup> John Ellis to Ma, June 9, 1862, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); W. Greene Raoul to Father, June 28, 1862, in W. Greene Raoul Papers (*ibid.*); N.R. Jennings to Mr.'s Lusher and Davidson, (?) 1863, in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (*ibid.*); statement of Governor Moore and responses found in, Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 733-736 and 740-741; Statement of citizens committee found in, *ibid.*, pp. 777-778.

Yankees insured that they would not. Though incidents of kindly behavior on the part of the Federals occurred, overwhelmingly they extended the torch rather than the olive branch to their former brethren. Rather than building on the shattered remnants of unionism in the area and the exhausted and demoralized condition of the local populace, the iron-fisted policy of the Federals encouraged the inhabitants to resist the invader. An exasperated Christian Koch later declared that the Federals seemed completely unwilling to reconcile the people. For the Union it was an opportunity lost, and for those involved, both northern and southern, it meant escalation and prolongation of the horror.<sup>239</sup>

The ruthless behavior of the Federals touched both soldier and civilian alike. Scores of citizens were seized by Federal troops as potential Confederate supporters, or to be held as hostages, and whisked away to Federal prison camps without a word of notice to their families. Mortified by his inability to contain the marauding of the enemy, J.H. Wingfield wrote his commanding officer, "the depredations committed by the enemy are of the most shameful character on private property and on the persons of our fellow-citizens and helpless women and children." General Ruggles pleaded for more troops to curb the pillaging of the enemy which increasingly demoralized the population. The wanton

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<sup>239</sup> Christian Koch to Annette, September 1, 1864, in Christian Koch Papers (LLMVC).

destruction committed by many of their troops served to outrage some Federal officers who possessed the foresight to recognize that a people repeatedly subjected to depredations must resist. General Thomas Williams commanding at Baton Rouge complained to the Union high command about the constant pillaging committed by the Wisconsin and Michigan regiments under his command. "These regiments, officers and men appear to be wholly destitute of moral sense and I believe that they believe in the face of all remonstrances that they regard pillaging not only as a right in itself but a soldierly accomplishment."<sup>240</sup>

Though many recognized that war is war, the civilian population nevertheless expressed dismay at the brutality of the Yankees. Anxiously commenting on the increasing Yankee raids near her home, Anna Jennings asserted, "the greatest outrages are committed throughout the country and we tremble as to our fate." Kate Burruss described to her brother in the army the anxiety prevailing in the territory. "We hear of great suffering in many places from the ravages of our dreadful enemies, in this sense we have been blest. One lady near Clinton had on Saturday night all that one could wish, food, carriages, horses, elegant furniture, and on the next Monday she and her family were starving, the yankees have taken everything from her and her children." Jane McCausland

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<sup>240</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 22-23, 80, 122-123, 778, 787, 1119.

Chinn recalled the columns of smoke created by burning houses "as far as we could see," which identified the route taken by Federal soldiers. Horrified by the cruelty of the Union troops, Mary A. Stratton, a private tutor from Connecticut, embraced the cause of the South. Stratton wrote one of her former pupils, "I informed my fiancée (a Federal officer) that I would return home, but after seeing the horror Federal soldiers have wreaked upon the South I could not marry him unless he resigned." The recognition that Union forces would likely destroy everything they encountered stiffened resistance in the Florida parishes and increased the demands that the Confederate government initiate offensive operations in the area. But more so than any single event, the actions of the Union commander at New Orleans, General Benjamin F. Butler, served to mobilize support both for the Confederacy and for the residents pleas to strike back against the Yankees.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 22-23, 80, 122-123, 778, 787, and 1119; Anna Jennings to Mr. Odel, June 23, 1862, N.R. Jennings to Dear Wife, May 24, 1863 and undated letter found in 1860-1868 folder, all in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (LLMVC); Kate Burruss to Edward, May 8, 1862, and M.A. Stratton to Edward Burruss, May 29, 1864, both in John C. Burruss Papers (ibid.); Emma Lay Lane to Dear Brother Willie, December 13, 1862, in John Q. Anderson Papers (ibid.); Thomas Batchelor to Daughters, July 1, 1863, Kate Batchelor to Brother, August 30, 1863, and J.R. Galtrey to Batchelor, September 5, 1867, all in Albert Batchelor Papers (ibid.); James E. Bradley Diary, entry October 28, 1863 (ibid.); Dawson, A Confederate Girl's Diary pp. 146 and 168-185; Reminiscences of a Union Raid, October, 1862, in Josephine Pugh Papers (ibid.); W.M. Barrow to Dear Aunt Anna, September 6, 1862, in W.M. Barrow Family Papers (ibid.); Frank to Dear Anne, April 13, 1863, in Anonymous Civil War Letters (ibid.);

Promptly upon his arrival in New Orleans, Butler's actions created international outrage. Butler authorized the invasion and looting of some foreign consulates, the wholesale seizure of the property of suspected Confederate sympathizers, and the arrest and imprisonment in the dreary and unhealthy forts below New Orleans of many Confederate supporters. The seizure of the valuables belonging to these unfortunate victims and the pillaging of hundreds of homes in the city, whose contents, particularly silver ware, mysteriously disappeared, earned Butler the contemptible nickname "Spoons." But Butler demonstrated an even greater lack of understanding of human motivation and the nature of fear and resistance by ordering the execution of a man for removing a prominently displayed American flag and by issuing his notorious Woman Order.<sup>242</sup> The brutal instincts of

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Civil War Reminiscences from the diary of Jane McCausland Chinn, "The Burning of the Barns" (ibid.); Diary of Eli Capell, April 27, May 2, and November 30, 1862, in Eli Capell Papers (ibid.); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, September 2, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (ibid.); Diary of Willie Dixon, August 28, 1862 and May 24, 1863, in William Y. Dixon Papers (ibid.); Diary of Mary E. Taylor, June 19, 1862, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); John S. Kendall Biography, p. 58.

<sup>242</sup> Evidence of Butler authorizing the looting of specific foreign consulates in New Orleans found in Zwei Bericht von New Orleans, F.N. Freudenthal (Konsul, Hessen-Brunswick) aus New Orleans, these two reports, one by Dutch Consul Amedie Couterie' and the other by Freudenthal describe the looting of the Netherlands Consulate by Union troops acting under Butler's orders, in particular the theft of \$900,000.00 in Mexican silver and other items and the abuse of the Dutch and Hessen-Nassau consulate staff, located File No. 3818, Book No. 210 pp. 85-86 (Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden, Germany); Butler ordered the



Butler and his contempt for the conquered Confederates, as exemplified by his actions in New Orleans, served as the catalyst to reinvigorate Confederate resistance to the actions of the man they called "the Beast."

In the eyes of many Louisianians, Butler assumed the role of something less than human. An editorial response to news that Butler was planning a libel suit illustrates the contempt many felt for the Beast:

Libel Ben Butler, why there is not a thief in the country but is possessed of more honesty, not a liar in the land but has more truth, not a villain but has more honor, not a criminal but is less guilty, not a rake but has more virtue, not a coward but has more courage, not a traitor but has less treachery, not a beast but has less brutality, not a bully but has less bluster, not a dog that is more of a sneak, and not a mean, miserable, scrubby, sniveling, dirty, disgusting, wretch but has more claims to the respect of the public. If society

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execution of William B. Mumford for removing an American flag placed atop the United States Mint in New Orleans. Mumford, while facing the gallows refused a bargain to spare his life if he renounced the Confederacy and pledged eternal allegiance to the United States, see Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 469 and 509; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963) pp. 124-135; Butler's infamous Order No. 28, commanded that any lady who failed to show Federal soldiers proper respect "shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation." Commonly referred to as the Woman Order, it created international outrage as a result of its brutal implications and seeming insensitiveness to the plight of a conquered people.

were skimmed, and out of the dregs was raked the foulest, most offensive stinking spot, it would be found to be the bloated carcass of Ben Butler - the insulter of women, the oppressor of children, a "thing" fit for nothing but a dog post for posterity. Talk about libeling Butler. You might as well try to add sins to the devil, or stink to a skunk."

Livid with anger at Butler's actions in New Orleans Confederate troops charged their enemy shouting "Butler and New Orleans" as far away as Virginia theater of the war. W. Greene Raoul, a Confederate soldier from Livingston Parish, underscored the impact on Confederate morale of Butler's perceived outrages. "Every one is exasperated against the whole Yankee race by that order No. 28. I can't help it the hatred grows, that infamous order of Butler will do more than any other thing to deepen the hatred." Employing his amateurish poetry Confederate soldier Willie Barrow queried, "who is this general? Is he Man? Or came he from those regions prepared expressly, we are told, for Satan and his legions." The "Woman Order" created a sustained howl for protection in the Florida parishes. Deeply anxious about the implications of the order Sarah Morgan protested, "oh Gibbes! George! Jimmy! never did we need your protection as sorely as now. When Charlie joins the army we shall be defenseless indeed. Come to my bosom, O my discarded carving knife, laid

aside under the impression that these men were gentlemen. We will be close friends once more. And if you must have a sheath, perhaps I may find one for you in the heart of the first man who attempts to Butlerize me." To many the "Woman Order" symbolized the evil character of their enemy and gave new life to their belief in the righteousness of their own cause and the cruelty of the enemy.<sup>243</sup>

Butler's actions in New Orleans and the depredations committed by the troops under his command in the Florida parishes attracted the attention of Confederate authorities. Eager to stem disaffection in that region and secure their base of operations for the planned recapture of New Orleans, in late July 1862, General John C. Breckinridge arrived at Camp Moore at the head of a small army. He had orders to destroy the Union force at Baton Rouge, capture the town, and if possible move against New Orleans. Though a spy dispatched by Butler reported that Breckinridge was concentrating at Camp Moore, Butler assured his subordinates that no attack on Baton Rouge would occur. Despite the incompetence of the Union commander, success eluded Breckinridge from the outset. When he reached Camp Moore, he

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<sup>243</sup> Undated newspaper clipping from the Democratic Watchman, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, found in W.W. Garig Papers (LLMVC); W. Greene Raoul to Father, June 28, 1862, in W. Greene Raoul Papers (*ibid.*); Diary of Willie Barrow, May(?), 1862, in W.M. Barrow Papers (*ibid.*); Tom Ellis to Martina, May 20, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*); James E. Bradley Diary, entry October 19, 1862 (*ibid.*); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, May 18, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (*ibid.*) Dawson, A Confederate Girl's Diary, pp. 35-36.

found the troops there plagued with illness, chiefly measles. As a result, instead of a force of 5,000, including Ruggle's troops at Camp Moore, his army consisted of less than 3,500 men. With half his army barefoot, the long march to Baton Rouge with little water or sustenance also took a heavy toll. The Confederates arrived before Baton Rouge with a force of barely 2,600 effectives, though dozens of civilians armed primarily with shotguns joined his army as it massed for the attack on the evening of August 4. The southerners also lost the valuable element of surprise when overzealous probing by elements of Wingfield's partisans betrayed the presence of the attacking army. Finally, Breckinridge expected the ironclad ram C.S.S. Arkansas, which had courageously fought its way through the Federal fleet at Vicksburg, to provide a distracting fire against the Union warships in the river. Unopposed these warships would certainly determine the outcome. Unfortunately for the Confederates, the Arkansas, severely damaged while fighting her way down the river was destroyed by her own crew four miles above Baton Rouge.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 34, 778, and 74-83, in his report Breckinridge described the countryside from Camp Moore to the Mississippi as exhausted, see p. 1124; T.G. Lea to Lemanda, August 18, 1862, in Lemanda Lea Collection (LLMVC); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, August 4, 7, and 12, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (ibid.); John S. Kendall Biography, pp. 46-57 discusses the horrible suffering of the troops as they marched towards Baton Rouge; Kendall also notes that the sparsely populated region was completely devoid of all military age men.

Breckinridge's attack drove the yankees from their positions allowing him to destroy much of their camp equipage. But the intensive gunfire from the Union warships in the river and the absence of available drinking water forced the Confederates to withdraw outside the city. In his report Breckinridge bemoaned the striking contrast between the "presence of every comfort, even luxury" found in the encampments of the enemy and his own shoeless and poorly fed troops. Yet he noted that his troops had fought enthusiastically, many contesting the order to withdraw despite the severity of the casualties, and that the citizens of the surrounding country had exhibited the "warmest patriotism" and provided generous assistance to his army.<sup>245</sup>

Though neither side could claim outright victory Breckinridge could boast of one accomplishment, the strength of his effort had taken pressure off the badly abused surrounding countryside. In his report the General stated, "after the battle the enemy, who previously had been plundering, burning houses and other property, stealing negroes, and seizing citizens through a large region of the country, never ventured to send out another marauding force." Breckinridge placed a tight picket line about Baton Rouge with orders to harass the enemy relentlessly. Constant probing of the defenses helped convince the Federals that the city was untenable resulting in their evacuation of the area

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<sup>245</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 76-81.

a few days later. Before departing, the yankees looted the city, burned large portions of it, and released all the convicts from the state penitentiary. Several warships then steamed up the river and burned the village of Bayou Sara. After restoring order in the city and containing the fires, Breckinridge placed General Ruggles in charge of fortifying the bluffs at Port Hudson above Baton Rouge.<sup>246</sup>

With a temporary respite achieved in the western parishes the Confederates now focused their attention on securing the vital New Orleans-Jackson Railroad. Brigadier General M. Jeff Thompson of Missouri arrived in Louisiana with orders to establish a base at Pontchatoula, in lower Livingston Parish, and collect men and materials for the movement against New Orleans. Thompson surveyed the area and began gathering militia and conscripts from the surrounding

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., Series I, Vol. 15, p. 80, 797, and 129-131, General Ruggles reported that he had dispatched the Ninth Louisiana Partisan Rangers to drive the remaining Federals from Baton Rouge. According to Ruggles the Yankees fled to their gunboats and then shelled the city for two hours killing six women and children before departing. Ruggles also reported that all black convicts released from the penitentiary were given Federal uniforms and arms; Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, September 2, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (LLMVC); Frank to Dear Anne, April 13, 1863, Federal soldier describes looting in the vicinity of Baton Rouge and the destruction his comrades wreaked upon the city, in Anonymous Civil War Letters (ibid.); Diary of Willie Dixon, August 28, 1862, in William Y. Dixon Papers (ibid.); W.M. Barrow to My Dear Aunt Anna, September 6, 1862, in W.M. Barrow Family Papers; Edward Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves (Detroit: Free Press Steam and Job Printing House, 1867) herein after referred to as Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, p. 31; Dawson, A Confederate Girls Diary pp. 168-185 and 221.

region. He also dispatched details to begin reconstructing the destroyed bridges over North Pass and Pass Manchac.<sup>247</sup>

Learning of Thompson's presence and activities Federal forces determined to strike Pontchatoula. On September 15, 1862, the Federals attacked and drove the small Confederate garrison from the town. Union troops entered and looted the village destroying the bulk of the supplies collected by Thompson's men. During the fighting a train which had observed the Union approach raced back up the railroad sounding the alarm as far north as Camp Moore. In the late afternoon a counter attack by the reinforced Confederates pushed the Federals back down the railroad. Both sides considered the engagement a victory. But the advantage clearly lay with the Federals who successfully disrupted the Confederate concentration at Pontchatoula, which postponed indefinitely any movement against New Orleans.<sup>248</sup>

The operations about Baton Rouge and Pontchatoula secured for the residents of the Florida parishes a temporary respite from the fighting. This brief interlude in the fall of 1862 provided farmers with an opportunity to harvest their crops and tend to their personal affairs virtually unmolested. Moreover work continued on the Confederate stronghold at Port Hudson. Eager to have the subjugation of

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<sup>247</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp 139-140 and 797-798.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-141; Dawson, A Confederate Girl's Diary, p. 236.

eastern Louisiana as a feather in his cap yet frustrated by continuing resistance there, Ben Butler suggested destroying the levees holding back the Mississippi River. According to Butler this would destroy the enemy at Port Hudson "by drowning him out," and would "be a serious blow to the people of that country, already great sufferers from the effects of the war." Fortunately for the residents Butler's plan failed to elicit the support of his successor. But the reduced Federal pressure exposed some major problems for Confederate authorities in the area, problems resulting primarily from the effects of the blockade. Though supplies of beef and corn remained adequate to sustain the population through the winter, certain staple commodities and medicines had already reached a critical shortage. In particular, the shortage of salt had reached crisis proportions. Unlike coffee and other luxury items, salt constituted an absolute necessity, especially for the preservation of meat. By the winter of 1862 local residents had exhausted their supplies. The popular process of sifting the dirt of smokehouse floors also produced a meager return. This procedure involved digging up the floor of a smokehouse where meat had been salted for years and boiling the dirt in water. After a few hours over a heavy fire the salt-saturated water was drained off and allowed to evaporate revealing the crystalline deposits. The



residents' inability to secure salt from such sources of last resort precipitated a crisis in the territory.<sup>249</sup>

The emergency reached such proportions that in December, 1862, Confederate Collector F.H. Hatch based at Tangipahoa, petitioned Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon to allow local residents to barter with the enemy for salt. Some citizens embarked on perilous journeys to western Louisiana or to the evaporation vats near Mobile to secure the precious commodity. On one such expedition, Annabelle Pitkins left Washington Parish headed for Mobile accompanied by her nine year old son and E.J. Allen who had lost both an arm and a leg in the Battle of Shiloh. Accosted by Union cavalry near Madisonville, she pleaded that she was merely returning home with her husband who had been wounded in the fighting near Baton Rouge. When Federal officers suspiciously examined Allen's neatly healed wounds, Pitkins praised the work of Admiral Farragut's private surgeon who she claimed had removed the shattered limbs on a ship in the

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<sup>249</sup> Loving Sister F.P. Wall to Dear Sister, undated letter describing process of "dripping brine from smokehouse earth," in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC); Amite City News Digest, February 5, 1976; Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 602-603 "Report of General Benjamin Butler," also see ibid., pp. 242 and 797; Eugene Hunter to Stella, October 14, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Joseph Corkern to Jephtha McKinney, January 23, 1863, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (ibid.); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah, August 1, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (ibid.); Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, October 14, 1863, in R.J. Causey Papers (ibid.); John Ball to Joel Stokes, February 13, 1863, in Joel A. Stokes Papers (ibid.); Magnolia Grand Trunk, October 11, 1862; Ella Lonn, Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1965) p. 41.

Mississippi. To protect her precious cargo from the Yankees who would steal it, and from Confederate cavalry who would confiscate a part of it, Pitkins ingeniously fashioned a false bottom in her wagon large enough to hold one thousand pounds of salt. After taking on a large supply of salt near Mobile, she returned by a northerly route via Meridian, Mississippi and delivered her cargo to friends and neighbors. Her arduous journey required approximately six weeks. Though this supply temporarily relieved the suffering of a few individuals the salt crisis continued to escalate throughout the war.<sup>250</sup>

The acute shortage of staples which afflicted the South as early as the fall of 1862, created severe distress among the population and compounded the problems facing Confederate authorities. The inability to maintain supplies of basic necessities exemplified the rashness and seeming lack of foresight involved in the secession effort. But providing essential commodities proved to be only a part of the crisis confronting Confederate authorities on the home front. The immediate necessity of fielding armies to repel invasion on numerous fronts severely strained the existing legal system in the Florida parishes. With the vast majority of men under

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<sup>250</sup> Official Records, Series IV, Vol. 2, p. 242; Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, October 14, 1863, in R.J. Causey Papers (LLMVC); Eugene Hunter to Stella, October 13, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah, August 1, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (ibid.); Magnolia Grand Trunk, October 11, 1862; Amite City News Digest, February 5, 1976.

arms, inadequate resources remained to sustain the pre-war legal structure. As a result, Confederate commanders were forced to employ their limited means to maintain a semblance of civil discipline. In the critical weeks before the late summer fighting around Baton Rouge and Pontchatoula, Confederate authorities reluctantly dispatched a cavalry detachment to seek out increasingly aggressive criminal elements in lower Livingston Parish where civil authority had ceased to function.<sup>251</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1862 the Amite River swamplands in lower Livingston and Ascension parishes had attracted criminal elements who exploited the absence of civil authority. Repeated appeals to the military authorities at Pontchatoula finally evoked a response following the brutal robbery and murder of two Confederate soldiers near Springfield. An ardent military response was considered warranted by the presence of one Adolph Dies, "a notorious desperado who had proclaimed himself a Lincolnite and with a supposed fifteen men had threatened citizens in the parish." But in reality the purpose of the expedition was to contain lawlessness in the Amite River region and arrest several fugitives from civil justice.

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<sup>251</sup> Bayou Sara Ledger, reprinted in New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 3, 1861, demonstrates in detail the breakdown of the legal system in much of the region. The article notes that the number of men under arms had forced the suspension of the courts and the calling of jury pools; Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, p. 120.

Accordingly Lieutenant Alfred Bradley proceeded to Springfield at the head of a detachment of Caruthers' Sharpshooters, Confederate States Army. Bradley made several arrests, confiscated a few weapons, and as a bonus, killed Dies and captured a few of his associates. Though this operation may have afforded some relief to the citizens of the territory, the necessity of dispatching troops to police civilians deprived the Confederate military of limited cavalry resources at the height of the campaign season.<sup>252</sup>

The spring of 1863 brought with it renewed Federal thrusts into the Florida parishes. In preparation for operations against Port Hudson, in December, 1862, Union forces reoccupied the ruins of Baton Rouge. The propensity of local partisans to fire on passing Federal ships had resulted in the looting and virtually complete incineration of Donaldsonville and surrounding plantations below Baton Rouge. As a result, the handful of Confederate troops garrisoning the city retreated without opposing the Union warships. By the end of December General Nathaniel Banks, who had replaced the controversial Butler as commander of the Union Department of the Gulf, had 40,000 troops in Louisiana. In contrast to the massive Federal buildup, excepting the 6,000 men concentrated about Port Hudson and a few hundred assigned to protect the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, the

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<sup>252</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 120-121.

Florida parishes had been stripped of troops to support other theaters of the war.<sup>253</sup>

The Federal buildup in the Florida parishes demonstrated their determination to gain control of the Mississippi and secure New Orleans by destroying the Confederates' principal transportation artery the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad. The masses of men and material being concentrated at Baton Rouge led one Union soldier to conclude that the rebels had no chance of prevailing against the might of the northern states.<sup>254</sup> His assessment of the situation proved very nearly correct. Federal pressure would now be directed against the territory on three fronts from the north, south, and east, spreading the nearly exhausted Confederate resources to the breaking point. But despite the increasing imbalance between the opposing forces the Confederates resisted with a renewed vigor, which insured continuing and escalating havoc in the Florida parishes.

Outside of the garrison force at Port Hudson and affiliated cavalry units, the Confederate Third Military District of the Department of Southwest Mississippi and East Louisiana consisted of one battalion and several attached

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<sup>253</sup> John Durnin to Ann, September 25, 1862, notes that only one company of Confederate volunteers served as the garrison force at Baton Rouge, in James and John Durnin Papers (LLMVC); Dawson, A Confederate Girl's Diary, p. 221; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, pp. 153, 157, and 167.

<sup>254</sup> G.T. Harrower to Dear Helen, March 13, 1863, in G.T. Harrower Letters (LLMVC).

companies under the command of Colonel J.M. Simonton at Pontchatoula, several hundred trainees at Camp Moore, and two units of partisan rangers.<sup>255</sup> Concerned that the railroad would allow Confederate troops to be transferred rapidly from Mississippi to Louisiana to reinforce Port Hudson or threaten an attack on New Orleans, Union planners determined to destroy it. The beginning of the spring offensive operations would thus begin with an attack on the Confederate base at Pontchatoula.

On March 21, 1863 a two pronged attack was launched against Pontchatoula. A body of Union infantry moved up the railroad while the main force disembarked from steamers at the nearby village of Wadesborough and attacked Pontchatoula from the west. Driving Confederate skirmishers before them, the flanking force entered the village forcing the few rebel riflemen who had contained the attack from the south to retire.<sup>256</sup>

The sleepy village of Pontchatoula had no premonition of the horror that would befall it that day. What resulted constituted an orgy of pillage and destruction. Panicked women and children fled the hapless village as the Federals led by their commanding officer, Colonel Thomas Clark, looted

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<sup>255</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 1061-1062.

<sup>256</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 280-291; Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, pp. 64-86; Jackson, Mississippi The Daily Southern Crisis, March 30, 1863.

and destroyed every building they encountered.<sup>257</sup> As he observed the wanton destruction and abuse of citizens, Federal Colonel Edward Bacon noted that the legendary savagery of the Turks could not have been more thorough. Bacon reflected that the entire command "seemed transfigured by the evil spirits that possess them, and appeared more like devils of theft and pillage than like mortal men."<sup>258</sup>

The destruction of Pontchatoula continued unabated through the night. At least one civilian was murdered while attempting to negotiate the protection of his property. Lacking the strength to drive the Federals from the village, the Confederates contented themselves with taking up a defensive position before the Cate Shoe Factory, near present day Hammond. When reinforcements arrived in the afternoon, the Confederates drove the more numerous Federals from the town so quickly that they were forced to torch much of their loot along with most of the town. Confederate efforts to contain the fires permitted the Federals to retreat in good order back down the railroad. Behind them remained a deeply embittered populace whose perception of the war and moral

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<sup>257</sup> Clark's brutal and cowardly behavior at the head of his troops eventually resulted in charges being brought against him by several of his own officers for among other things; indecent exposure, rape of a colored woman, drunkenness, extortion, and the wanton stealing of money, silverware, and other household goods from individual private homes, see Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, pp. 114-118 for details of these charges.

<sup>258</sup> Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, pp. 64-67.

responsibility had received a sharp lesson from the enemy. The lessons learned from the war were only beginning. But hatred for the Yankees would remain for generations, and the lessons in brutality would determine the course of social development through the end of the century. A Federal officer who attempted to return under flag of truce some Masonic jewels looted by his troops described the mood prevailing among the citizens and soldiers at Pontchatoula: "they would hardly treat me civilly; they are terribly enraged against us."<sup>259</sup>

In the spring of 1863 Pontchatoula was not the only community to become an unfortunate victim of the war. The entire region would find itself squarely in the course of a violent storm. As the increasing might of Federal arms slowly overwhelmed the Confederates, increasing distress overcame the population. During the late spring of 1863 Union troops briefly captured and destroyed much of Clinton wreaking havoc among the once stately plantations in the area. The efforts of Confederate cavalry and the citizens who joined them proved able to delay but not prevent repeated Federal visits to Clinton and nearby Jackson. More significantly, in May, 1863 a powerful combined force of cavalry and infantry exploited the Confederates preoccupation

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<sup>259</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 284-291; Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, pp 64-84; Winters, The Civil War in Louisiana, p. 220; Jackson, Mississippi The Daily Southern Crisis, March 30, 1863.



with containing the Federals below Pontchatoula by attacking the railroad above that point. The raiding force destroyed the Cate Shoe Factory and burned the leather tannery near Tickfaw. After driving off a small body of Confederate cavalry and citizens who contested their advance at Independence, the Yankees destroyed the railroad's car manufacturing plant there along with numerous gun carriages. The depots and all structures housing supplies were burned at both Independence and Amite City and the railroad devastated as far north as Tangipahoa. Although this destruction greatly affected the Confederate war effort in the area, the greatest crisis befell the already suffering residents. While approaching and departing the area the raiders burned homes, destroyed fences, slaughtered livestock, and generally "greatly abused the citizens." Other than a few scattered pickets and a handful of partisans deployed in conjunction with elements of Terrell's Mississippi Cavalry, no significant Confederate forces remained in the area to contest the Union marauding. Coordinated pressure from numerous points at once allowed the Federals to employ their superior resources and stretch Confederate defenses beyond the breaking point. By the spring of 1863 the Federals had developed a strategy that worked, and for the luckless residents, the suffering had only begun.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Diary of Mary E. Taylor, April 29-30, May 14, May 24, June 3-9, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Official Records, Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 406-409; ibid.,

An incursion from the north became the key to disrupt the Confederate defensive perimeter stretching from the lakeshore region to the bluffs of the Mississippi. In addition to the raids from Baton Rouge and assaults on the now inconsequential base at Pontchatoula, the scattered Confederate forces in the region were thrown into confusion by the unexpected raid originating in Tennessee. On April 17, 1863 Colonel B.H. Grierson's Sixth and Seventh Illinois Cavalry and Second Iowa Cavalry departed La Grange, Tennessee with instructions to destroy the length of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad and disrupt enemy supply lines in route to New Orleans. Grierson proceeded through the state of Mississippi destroying the railroad and supply depots but generally avoiding the destruction of private property. He noted in his report that at several towns along the way groups of armed citizens had contested his advance inflicting a few casualties on his troopers. Yet rather than burning their towns or arresting those who resisted, Grierson instead disarmed the citizens, reassured them of the honorable nature of his troops and mission, and ordered that private property be respected. This had a dramatic impact on the citizens. Grierson cited numerous incidents where local residents asserted that they "had been grossly deceived as to our real character." He continued, "I mention this as a sample of the feeling which exists, and the good effect which our presence

produced among the people in the country through which we passed." Unlike the wanton destruction of private property and outrages on the citizens occurring in the Florida parishes, Grierson applied the stick to government property and offered the carrot to the citizens. This policy, in Grierson's view, did far more to encourage respect for the United States government among the citizens than burning the roofs above their heads. And unlike regions of central and eastern Mississippi where support for the secession effort dwindled into disaffection, hatred for the invader continued in eastern Louisiana to the end.<sup>261</sup>

Grierson's destruction of the railroad and rebel supply depots constituted a crisis for Confederate authorities. Frantic efforts to capture his command failed largely due to misinformation spread by scouts dispatched by Grierson in civilian clothing. Informed that a sizable Confederate force awaited them at Osyka, Mississippi, Grierson abandoned the route to New Orleans and headed for Baton Rouge. Travelling rapidly toward Greensburg, Grierson determined to cross the Tickfaw River at Walls Bridge before it could be destroyed. Completely unaware of the raider's approach, Major James DeBaun and a contingent of 115 of his Ninth Louisiana

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<sup>261</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 24, pt. I, pp. 522-529; the contrast in Union activities in eastern Louisiana and parts of southwestern Mississippi constitutes an important element in the focal point of this study. Regions where Federal policy had been mild during the war experienced much less violence and instability in the post war period, as is exemplified in detail in chapter six.

Partisan Rangers were resting at the bridge before continuing to a rendezvous with other forces pursuing Grierson. Outnumbered more than ten to one, DeBaun deployed his little force and contested the Union advance. The initial Federal assault on the bridge received a bloody repulse. The Yankees withdrew leaving several casualties including Lieutenant Colonel William D. Blackburn who led the charge. After regrouping the Federals opened with artillery fire and flanked DeBaun's position on both sides forcing the Confederates to retire. Following this encounter the raiders proceeded on to the safety of Baton Rouge virtually unmolested. Grierson's raid successfully disrupted rebel communications, destroyed large stockpiles of supplies, and devastated considerable sections of the railroad. Bemoaning the success of the raid, Abigail Amacker commented, "it seems we have come to a crisis in our revolution and we certainly cannot remain in the present state much longer." But most importantly Grierson exposed Confederate weakness in the Florida parishes, which guaranteed increasing Federal visits to the area.<sup>262</sup>

As the maneuvers which culminated in the siege of Port Hudson began in the spring of 1863, Union planners determined

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<sup>262</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 24, pt. I, pp. 523-533, 539-540, and 547-549; Diary of Eli Capell, May 3, 1863, in Eli J. Capell Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, May 22, 1863, in O.P. Amacker Papers (ibid.); Andrew Booth, Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands (Spartanburg: Reprint Company Publishers, 1984) p. 572.

to employ their planned victory as a catalyst to subjugate all of eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. Success there would enable the Federals to remove their troops in the region to other theaters. Accordingly, Union forces intensified their efforts to interdict the trade in foodstuffs and material between the lakeshore region and the Gulf coast of Mississippi. Disruption of this trade would increase the suffering of the already destitute population and hopefully produce growing disillusionment with the war effort. Central to this plan was control of the entrances to the numerous waterways connecting the rebel held interior with lakes Maurepaus and Pontchartrain. Small schooners increasingly relied on these rivers to conceal their operations from Union vessels which patrolled the lakes. By the spring of 1863 the establishment of a fortified post at Pass Manchac effectively cut off trade from Lake Maurepaus. But continuing Confederate control of the rivers entering this lake allowed the rebels to conceal light-draught blockade runners and caches of supplies along the numerous bayous connecting the streams. Rebel command of these waterways necessitated a constant Federal garrison in the dreary swampland at Manchac. Consequently as part of the Union plan to squeeze the Confederates on as many fronts as

possible, the Federal navy increasingly probed these rivers.<sup>263</sup>

To implement this plan the Federals relied on a small flotilla of light-draught schooners and a few armed barges and gunboats. The most powerful ship in the lake squadron was the ironclad gunboat Barataria. One hundred and twenty-five feet long, fronted by an iron-clad prow, and armed with bronze twelve-pounders, the formidable Barataria commanded the shipping lanes about the lakes. Finding the name of the vessel difficult to pronounce, members of the Sixth Michigan Regiment on garrison duty at Manchac affectionately nicknamed it the "Bull Terrier." On April 7, 1863, the Barataria departed Manchac and proceeded across Lake Maurepaus to explore the rivers entering the lake. But tragedy struck the expedition almost immediately. Near the mouth of the Amite River the gunboat stuck fast on a large snag. Throughout the morning the Federals tried unsuccessfully to lighten and free the boat. Unfortunately for the Yankees several local residents informed a nearby patrol from the First Mississippi

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<sup>263</sup> For evidence of the destitute condition of the population in the northshore region and continuing Confederate shipping activity and blockade running there see; Edward Stewart to John Gurley, May 1, 1862, in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); Tom Ellis to Martina, September 11, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); M.J. Scott to Dear Sister-in-Law, June 3, 1864, M.J. Scott Letter (ibid.) Christian Koch to Annette, April 6 and 8, 1863, Annette to Christian, April 21 and 29, 1863, and May 13, 1863, all in Christian D. Koch Papers (ibid.); Covington Weekly Wanderer, April 19, 1862; Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 284-286; Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, p. 60.

Cavalry of the gunboat's predicament. The Mississippians attacked the Barataria forcing the Federal sailors to abandon their efforts to free the boat and seek refuge inside. Unable to drive off the Confederates who found ample protection from the gunboat's cannon in the lush cypress swamp, the Federals panicked. Observing in the early evening that most of the rebels had departed, presumably to secure reinforcements, the Federals determined to abandon the craft and paddle to safety aboard the Barataria's cutter. Before departing the sailors set the gunboat afire ending the career of the Barataria.<sup>264</sup>

The loss of the Barataria temporarily inhibited aggressive Federal operations on the rivers of the lower Florida parishes. But growing Federal naval strength in the lakes, augmented by the Union garrisons at Manchac and Forts Pike and McComb on the Rigolets, increasingly disrupted Confederate trade there. The Federals made no secret of their intention to disrupt all Confederate intercourse and starve the rebels into submission as outlined in General Orders Number 33. By the summer of 1863 the situation for many residents had become unbearable. Denied access to their primary market at New Orleans, subjected to destructive Union raids, and flooded with hundreds of refugees ordered out of

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<sup>264</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, p. 291; Civil War Naval Chronology, 1861-1865 (Washington: Naval History Division, 1966) pt. VI, pp. 202-203; Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, pp. 57-58 and 87-93.

New Orleans after being enrolled as registered enemies of the United States, the region groaned under the burden of war.<sup>265</sup>

The transformation of the region had been dramatic. On the eve of the conflict Edward Stewart, overseer on a lower Livingston Parish plantation, wrote his employer of the seemingly limitless harvest of foodstuffs collected on the plantation. Two years later facing starvation, Stewart complained that the sixteen refugees he harbored had overtaxed his supply of provisions. With little hope of improving conditions Stewart notified his employer, John Gurley, that he must now refuse assistance to everyone including close family friends. Concerning the arrival of yet another boatload of refugees on the northshore, Annette Koch wrote her husband, "I don't know what will become of all these people that have come to this poor part of the country, there was nothing to eat for them that was already here, and

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<sup>265</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, p. 804, provides details concerning General Orders No. 33 which directed Federal forces to cut off all private and commercial intercourse of the rebels; Civil War Reminiscences, from the diary of Jane McCausland Chinn, "The Burning of the Barns," describes the enactment of Federal policy to destroy all food supplies (LLMVC); statement issued by the provost marshall's office in New Orleans and signed by John Gurley and his wife, October 4, 1862, declaring both to be registered enemies of the United States, in John Gurley Papers (ibid.); James E. Bradley Diary, entries October 13 and 24, 1862 indicate heavy concentrations of refugees from New Orleans in the Amite City and Arcola Station area (ibid.); John Betterworth, Confederate Mississippi (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943) p. 203.



these that come bring nothing with them, they will be sure to starve. Oh the misery of this war when will it cease."<sup>266</sup>

Similar circumstances confronted the entire population in the lakeshore region. The Covington Weekly Wanderer noted that less than one week's supply of corn remained in the area and that in a two day period the cost per bushel had increased from \$1.75 to \$2.25. Sara Sandell grieved for the residents about Pontchatoula who had exhausted their personal supplies of meat. In April 1863, Sandell informed her daughter that no meat could be purchased for any price. The deepening crisis forced many residents to make desperate decisions. Annette Koch faced the dilemma of feeding her children or her servants. When she naturally chose to sustain her children, Koch suffered a near breakdown from the stress associated with her decision to release her servants who would "surely starve." Sadly noting the necessity of relinquishing the responsibility of raising his two children, M.J. Scott lamented, "it is enough to say that the war has ruined me, broken me up. Provisions are scarce and dear and clothing is almost entirely out of the question." Scott implored his sister-in-law to take the children away and "act not only the part of a friend to them, but the more holy one - that of the mother." By the summer of 1863 the success of the Federal blockade and interdiction of Confederate trade on

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<sup>266</sup> Edward Stewart to John Gurley, May 1, 1862, in John W. Gurley Papers (LLMVC); Annette Koch to Christian, May 13, 1863, in Christian Koch Papers (ibid.).

the lakes insured that the local residents would face the constant threat of starvation.<sup>267</sup>

Efforts to relieve the suffering of the people proved woefully inadequate. The Louisiana Legislature's appropriation of \$150,000 for relief of the citizens in January 1862 proved far less than necessary to sustain destitute families; besides little of this money reached the Florida parishes. The police juries of wealthier parishes, such as East and West Feliciana, made large appropriations at the outset of the war for the relief of families of volunteers. But as the war dragged on, mounting casualties, orphaned families, and increasingly devastating Union raids overwhelmed these funds. Several Mississippi counties borrowed money from the citizens to secure absolute necessities, such as salt, for the families of soldiers but their limited assets allowed them to do little else. In the spring of 1862 the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury passed a special war tax intended to raise \$20,000 for the support of soldier's families. This fund provided ten dollars per month to each soldier's wife and five dollars for each child under fourteen. In the event of death of the soldier, payments

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<sup>267</sup> Covington Weekly Wanderer, April 19, 1862; Christian Koch to Annette, April 6, 1863, Annette to Christian, April 29, 1863, May 13, 1863, July 1, 1863, April 24, 1864, and September 18 and 20, 1864, all in Christian Koch Papers (LLMVC); M.J. Scott to Dear Sister in Law, June 3, 1864, M.J. Scott Letter (ibid.); unsigned letter from Humboldt County, California to Asa Hursey, October 20, 1865, in Asa Hursey Family Papers (ibid.); Dawson, A Confederate Girl's Diary, pp. 370-372.

would continue for one year. The jurors believed this fund would provide for soldier's families for the duration of the conflict. Their gross miscalculation of the extent of the deprivation in St. Tammany exemplifies the financial catastrophe occasioned by the war. The \$20,000 appropriation received approval in March 1862. By August of the same year over sixty percent of the appropriation had been expended. With the funds exhausted by January 1863, the jury suspended cash payments and resorted to direct purchases of corn to supply food for destitute families of Confederate soldiers. To support these purchases the police jury increased the rate of property taxes. Yet by the spring of 1863, unable to maintain adequate supplies of food, the jurors were forced to rely on the decreasing charity of wealthy residents to provide for the families of soldiers.<sup>268</sup>

Some municipalities attempted to fund relief efforts on their own. The Amite City Board of Aldermen departed from their task of completing a list of rules and regulations for

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<sup>268</sup> House Journal, Sixth Legislature, First Session, January 13, 1862; New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 11, 1861; West Feliciana Parish Military Board Minute Book, period 1862-1863 (LLMVC); Magnolia, Mississippi Grand Trunk, October 11, 1862; Covington Weekly Wanderer, April 19, 1862; St. Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, March 15 and August 6, 1862, January-March session and July session 1863 (LLMVC); F.A. Cousins (President St. Tammany Parish Police Jury) to Asa Hursey, May 7, 1863, in Asa Hursey Papers (*ibid.*); List of families of Confederate soldiers eligible for relief in St. Tammany Parish, lists needy families of Confederate soldiers and the amount of relief apportioned to them, in Miscellaneous Records, St. Tammany Parish Courthouse, Covington.

the new town to entertain pleas for relief. Through the winter of 1861-1862 Amite City apportioned a part of their meager finances to aid destitute families of volunteers. But like the parish governing bodies, by the spring of 1863, lacking funds to meet even the city debt, Amite City was also forced to suspend relief payments.<sup>269</sup>

The desperate circumstances prevailing in the lakeshore region and Gulf Coast of Mississippi severely strained many residents' commitment to the war effort. Increasingly they were forced to barter with the enemy to survive despite Confederate efforts to prevent such practices. By the fall of 1863 the practice of trading cotton or sugar to the enemy for food had become common in the lakeshore region. Lieutenant C.M. Allen, on a reconnaissance mission with elements of the Second Arkansas Cavalry in October 1863, reported that a general system of contraband trade with the enemy continued in the lakeshore region. Allen stated that this illegal trade had an obvious demoralizing effect on the people. He concluded his report by earnestly suggesting that a strong force be temporarily deployed there to regain the confidence of the people. Many residents no longer trusted the ability of the Confederate authorities to protect and provide for them. Annette Koch complained to her husband

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<sup>269</sup> Amite City Board of Aldermen Minute Books, see winter 1861-1862 in Book No. 1, located in Amite City Hall; Amite City Daily Wanderer, October 20, 1864, provides evidence of the suffering of destitute families and their reliance on the charity of fellow citizens.

that her youngest son had fled during a recent Union raid. Rumors had indicated that the Yankees made "conscripts of all such lads as he and all negro men they could catch, you would have allowed him to take to the woods too." But the boy's departure deprived Koch of her last farm hand forcing her to rely on bartered food obtained from the Federal garrison at Fort Pike. Mrs. R.J. Causey regretfully informed her soldier husband that desperate circumstances had forced her to barter with the enemy to provide for their children. Although she professed continuing patriotism to the cause of the South she wrote fearfully of the efforts of Confederate cavalry to interdict this trade.<sup>270</sup>

Recognizing the severity of the situation F.H. Hatch, Confederate Collector for the region, suggested that a policy fair to both the people and the government be implemented. He informed Richmond that when available corn and sweet potatoes sold for ten to fifteen dollars a bushel. According to Hatch, "these exorbitant prices of course stimulate that questionable class of traders that always flock to the confines of warring nations, who, I think, should be regulated accordingly as they may be useful in supplying the

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<sup>270</sup> C.M. Allen to Colonel John Logan, in Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pt. 1, p. 313; statements of General George Hodge, in ibid., Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, pp. 1084 and 1088; Annette Koch to Christian, April 29 and May 11, 1863, in Christian Koch Papers (LLMVC); Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, October 14, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (ibid.); P.L. Bonny to Mr.'s Cousins, Jones, and J.A. Leblanc, April 23, 1864, in P.L. Bonny Papers (ibid.).

extreme wants of our Army and people." Hatch continued that since the enemy had made clear his intention to starve the people, "while I would not sanction or encourage trade with the enemy, I would endeavor to regulate these matters in a time of war rather by a policy which would work to the benefit of our cause and to the injury of the enemy than by a rigid application of the law." To dramatize the critical circumstances confronting the citizens of the region Hatch noted that even as a ranking Confederate official he too faced starvation. And he reminded his superiors that the only way to halt the contraband traffic with the enemy would be to deploy the precious few troops in the territory as pickets across the entire region. Hatch's proposal to allow limited trade with the enemy to relieve the extreme suffering of the people obviously met with tacit approval. By the fall of 1863 Mrs. R.J. Causey noted that the people had been granted permission to trade two bales of cotton with the enemy. But in the end this policy constituted an official acknowledgement of the Confederate government's inability to sustain its citizens, which hastened the demoralization increasingly evident in the region.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Official Records Series IV, Vol. 2, pp. 459-460; ibid. Series IV, Vol. 3, pp. 677-680; Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, October 14, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (LLMVC); for further evidence of government sanctioned trading with the enemy see copy of letter signed James A. Seddon and endorsed by Judge George W. Martin, December 19, 1862, and J.B. Eustis to P.L. Bonny, November 28, 1863, in P.L. Bonny Papers (ibid.).

Adding to the despairing conditions prevailing in the lakeshore region were increasing numbers of deserters, both Union and Confederate, who camped in the woods along the lakes or secreted themselves in the Pearl River swamps. Many of these war weary men had families in the area and simply returned home to be near them. The letters many Confederate soldiers received describing the desperate circumstances prevailing at home induced some of them to abandon the army. R.J. Causey received constant letters from his wife describing their perilous circumstances and pleading with him to return home and relieve their suffering. In November 1863 Mrs. Causey reinforced the plea to her husband by noting that a conspiracy to launch a "negro uprising" had been uncovered in their neighborhood. She continued, "I am afraid we will have some troublesome times down here the men are patrolling all of the time but the men are so few in the country that they can not do much good." Overcoming his contempt for deserters from his regiment Steven Ellis granted the offending parties a moment of understanding. "Poor fellows some of them have large families at home entirely dependent on the world and cold charities if they are not there to see to them - some instances I know of among these men where they have a wife and 5 or 6 kids, the oldest not more than 6 or 7 years old and not another person on the place - are their cares not to be pitied." Others among the deserters constituted desperate characters who preyed upon the already

suffering population. Regardless of their motives, the bands of deserters collecting in the lakeshore region added to the unhappy state of affairs.<sup>272</sup>

The demoralization evident in the lakeshore region did not translate into the development of significant Unionism. Some historians, influenced by propaganda in the Federally censored New Orleans press, have suggested that large sections of eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi experienced a revival of Unionist sympathies at the height of the war. That war weariness and a certain degree of disaffection emerged in this region is indisputable. But little evidence exists to indicate that significant Unionism emerged. Infrequent reports submitted by Federal raiders declaring that local residents had professed loyalty to the Union must be qualified by the circumstances under which these statements were made. Only an exceptionally committed or foolish person would fail to say what seemed appropriate to preserve their homestead and possibly their life. But this is not to say that the region contained no Union sympathizers. A small group of Unionists remained evident from the beginning to the end of the conflict. The evidence

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<sup>272</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pt. 1, pp. 313-314; ibid. Series I, Vol. 32, pt.3, p. 755 Daniel Logan reported that it was dangerous to travel in parts of Marion County, Mississippi and Washington Parish due to the presence of deserters; Your Loving Wife to R.J. Causey, October 14 and November 19, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (LLMVC); Steven Ellis to Ma, March 5, 1865, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.).



merely suggests that the decreasing quality of life associated with the war resulted in no significant upsurge of Unionism. Indeed some of the most acclaimed "Unionists" in the territory also appear to have been motivated by suspect principles.<sup>273</sup>

The Christian Koch family constitutes one of the most frequently cited "Unionist" families in the lakeshore region. Residents of Hancock County, Mississippi near Pearlinton and of Danish descent, the Koch's had not resided in the territory long before the outbreak of hostilities. Though Koch is often cited for his unionist beliefs the evidence suggests that his true motivation remained primarily profit

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<sup>273</sup> The New Orleans newspapers operating under the direction of Federal occupation forces consistently equated the suffering in the Florida parishes and environs with an upsurge in Unionism. Many reports in the New Orleans press seemed designed to discourage Confederate sympathies in the Crescent City by suggesting that Confederate support was collapsing in the countryside. The New Orleans Era, edited directly by Federal officers, served as a particularly aggressive propaganda tool. Limited evidence suggests that some Unionists remained in the Florida parishes for the duration of the war; see Unsigned letter (possibly from one Evans) to Dear friend brother Ellis, January 30, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); testimony of Johnson E. Yerks and William Wilder, both professed to be Union men during the war during Congressional Reconstruction hearings, Yerks estimated there were ten Unionists in the region, United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, House Committee on Elections, No. 1, Forty-first Congress, Second Session, Testimony Taken by the U.S. Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana, May-June 1869, HE 1 No. 1, 41-A-1 and HE 1 No. 1, 41-A-2; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 10, 1863 and October 9 and 11, 1864; Ted Tunnell, Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism and Race in Louisiana 1862-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984) pp. 8-25; for evidence of Federal reports indicating latent allegiance to the Union among the people see Official Records Series I, Vol. 15, p. 406.

and sadly, cowardice. Throughout the course of the war Koch, a steamship captain by trade and an extremely practical man, made a comfortable profit transporting goods and prisoners for the United States government. Federal guidelines required that Koch take the oath of allegiance in order to do business with the authorities at New Orleans. Yet as late as the spring of 1863, with a son fighting in the Confederate army, Koch expressed concern that as a result of his trading with the enemy his neighbors would not believe that "I am a good southerner." Koch's cowardice is readily apparent in his letters. He frequently wrote his wife describing rumors of the treatment accorded those who traded with the enemy. Yet just as often in his wife's letters pleading with him to visit the family and relieve their suffering she noted that nothing of the kind had occurred. Koch himself admitted that almost no Union men resided in the territory, and he frequently expressed concern for his business and personal safety in the post-war period. Annette and Elers Koch's letters indicate their fear and resentment for both armies. Both comforted themselves with the argument that they would be safe since they had done nothing to anger either side. The Kochs, like many families in the region, simply wished for peace on whatever terms would bring it swiftly.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Numerous letters in Christian Koch Papers, see boxes one and two, period 1863-1865 (LLMVC); two recurring themes in these letters reveal important information to consider when evaluating the Koch family. The Kochs appeared to be more committed to Denmark than either the Confederacy

The Federal ability to employ warships to raid the lakeshore area greatly aggravated the desperate conditions there. By the summer of 1863 Union warships increasingly raided the towns and countryside along the northshore of Lake Pontchartrain destroying precious food stores, stealing livestock, and devastating farming operations. P.L. Bonny, commanding the Confederate lakeshore post at Mandeville, noted that an occasional blockade runner continued to slip through the Federal net but the provisions they brought met only a fraction of the need. Bonny complained to his superiors that the absence of heavy ordnance allowed the Federal navy to hold the entire region hostage. The frequent intensive raids which continued into the spring of 1864 so decisively decimated the region that Union commanders complained of their inability to find anything else to destroy. Reporting on a Federal expedition he directed in the lakeshore region, Major Martin Pulver asserted, "prospects for doing serious damage to the enemies of our

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or the Union. Numerous letters demonstrate a nationalistic concern for the Danes in their war with Germany which did not seem to extend to either side in the American war. Excepting letters written in the last few months of the war when it was apparent the Federals would win, few indicate a preference for either side. Not only did the family recognize the value of siding with the victor, but Confederate efforts to arrest Elers for desertion and Christian for trading with the enemy naturally influenced their position. This lack of commitment to either cause created an obsessive concern for their personal safety among the family members not found in similar family collections. This concern contributed to Elers' decision to desert from the Confederate army and to Christian's abandonment of his family for the duration of the war.

country in that direction looked extremely doubtful, as the inhabitants, what few there were, were very poor." Similarly Union General Cuvier Grover commented that the livestock his troops had stolen during a raid near Madisonville appeared extremely unhealthy and in his words "were hardly worth driving." Through the end of 1863 Federal raiders enjoyed the privilege of devastating the region virtually unmolested. Excepting a handful of partisan rangers almost no Confederate forces remained in the area.<sup>275</sup>

Though conditions prevailing in the lakeshore region remained particularly critical, as the second year of the war came to an end, increasingly desperate circumstances dominated the entire territory. The massive buildup of forces along the Mississippi occasioned by the fighting at Port Hudson exposed the upper Florida parishes to constant maneuvering on the part of both armies. On May 21, 1863 the two pronged Union drive against the garrison at Port Hudson resulted in a sharp skirmish at Merritt's Plantation near Plains Store. The arrival of massive Federal reinforcements forced the Confederates to retire within the defenses of Port

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<sup>275</sup> Copy of Special Orders Number 27 Colonel Edward Dillon to P.L. Bonny, Lieutenant P.L. Bonny to Lieutenant J.C. Robert, May 5, 1864, J.B. Eustis to P.L. Bonny, November 28, 1863, all in P.L. Bonny Papers (LLMVC); Official Records Series I, Vol. 34, pp. 104-106 and 869; ibid. Series I, Vol. 15, pp. 786-787; ibid. Series I, Vol. 41, pp. 756-758.

Hudson completing the encirclement of the garrison. The longest siege in American history had begun.<sup>276</sup>

Outside the siege lines fighting raged along Thompson's Creek as both sides attempted to consolidate their lines. Recognizing the precarious position of his small command in the midst of the besieging army Colonel John Logan, commanding the Eleventh Arkansas Mounted Infantry and partisan units cooperating with him, withdrew to concentrate at Clinton. In a special report to General Joseph E. Johnston, Logan pleaded for additional forces to relieve Port Hudson and to secure a valuable region from the degradations of the enemy which would certainly follow. According to Logan, "the country along the Mississippi and east of it for fifty miles is a very wealthy one; there is a large amount of stock in it, and the people are doing everything they can for our cause, raising large crops of corn and potatoes for the army."<sup>277</sup>

Logan's fear that Federal forces would aggressively seek to destroy the war-making potential of the upper Florida parishes proved true. Union raiding parties destroyed crops

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<sup>276</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pp. 120-122, 137, and 144; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, pp. 244-245; for descriptions of the destruction of Bayou Sara see, Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, September 2, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (LLMVC), and W.M. Barrow to My Dear Aunt Anna, September 6, 1862, in W.M. Barrow Papers (ibid.).

<sup>277</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pp. 128-129 and 179-181; Stewart Sifakis, Compendium of the Confederate Armies: Florida and Arkansas (New York: Facts on File, 1992) pp. 90-91.

and scattered cattle along the Amite River and plundered the territory about the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad. The main Federal effort was directed at Clinton. Determined to secure the rear of the besieging Federal army, a strong Federal force commanded by Colonel Grierson departed Port Hudson on June 3, 1863 with the intention of destroying the Confederate base at Clinton. A series of well executed ambushes slowed the Federal column allowing Logan to concentrate along Pretty Creek, on the outskirts of the town, where he bloodily repulsed the Yankees. Clinton, for the moment was spared.<sup>278</sup>

But the Confederate advantage proved temporary. Four days later a heavily reinforced Federal column departed Port Hudson for Clinton. In the face of this powerful force Logan wisely retreated north leaving only a handful of partisans to harass the Union advance. The Federals entered Clinton, burned all government property including the railroad depot and a cotton factory and relieved many citizens of their private property. Despite the commanding presence of the Federals, General Halbert Paine, commander of the expedition, observed that many citizens "exhibited in their demeanor as well as their language great confidence that their army would fall upon us before the capture of Port Hudson." Indeed

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<sup>278</sup> Official Reports Series I, Vol. 26, pp. 134-136 and 181; Diary of Mary E. Taylor, June 3, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC).

Logan continued to generate some optimism by the sheer audacity of his actions in the face of vastly superior forces. In a one month period beginning in the first week of June, 1863, a portion of Logan's force under the command of Colonel Frank Powers attacked two fortified Union picket posts taking over one hundred prisoners including numerous officers. The aggressive Powers supported by partisans under the command of Captain John McKowen successfully raided the Union supply depot at Springfield Landing seven miles below Port Hudson, destroying over a million dollars of government stores and creating panic among the Federal garrison there. And as a highlight to the month's activities, partisans under Powers command captured the notorious Union General, Neal Dow.<sup>279</sup>

Among Federal generals operating in the Florida parishes Dow, whose "stealing capacities surpassed those of Ben Butler," had secured first place in infamy in the opinion of local residents. Dow allegedly not only encouraged his troops to rob the households of citizens but took pleasure in

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<sup>279</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pp. 72, 111, 126-127, and 181-182; Diary of Mary E. Taylor, June 7 and 9, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Geary, Celine: Remembering Louisiana, p. 119; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, pp. 277-278; Captain John McKowen commanded a unit of partisan rangers recruited in eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi which replaced the Ninth Louisiana Partisan Rangers under Lieutenant Colonel Wingfield and Major DeBaun when the latter became trapped within the siege lines at Port Hudson. McKowen's unit operated in conjunction with Logan's cavalry. Copy of authorization for McKowen's unit issued by the Confederate Secretary of War, December 29, 1863, in John McKowen Papers (LLMVC).

personally looting homesteads of their valuables. In an effort to bolster local morale and encourage a sense of moral responsibility in the Yankees, Powers determined to capture Dow. Dartmouth-educated Captain McKowen and five of his partisans eagerly accepted the responsibility. Powers placed great faith in the partisan leader. Following a severe wound early in the war which exempted him from further service, McKowen returned to his home in East Feliciana and recruited an independent company of cavalry. His exploits provided constant encouragement for local residents but none surpassed his capture of Dow.<sup>280</sup>

In the days preceding the raid a young woman slipped through the Federal lines, informed the Confederates of the location of Dow's headquarters at the Cage house, and agreed to act as a guide. On the evening of June 3, 1863, McKowen's raiders slipped deep into the midst of the vast Federal army besieging Port Hudson. The partisans swiftly and silently captured the sentries and several fine horses about the house but found Dow absent. Undeterred, McKowen, advised by one of the sentries that Dow had ridden to a neighboring plantation, proceeded deeper into the Federal lines while his men stood

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<sup>280</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, February 27, 1898; certificate signed by Thomas R. Cosby examining surgeon at Camp Moore, October 2, 1862, declaring John McKowen unfit for duty due to a wound received, and notice of authorization from the Confederate War Department for McKowen's cavalry unit, December 29, 1863, both in John C. McKowen Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Willie Dixon, April 4, 1864, in William Y. Dixon Papers (ibid.).



guard over the prisoners at the Cage House. The partisan waited in ambush for more than an hour amidst the Federal camps. When Dow finally appeared McKowen surprised and disarmed him holding a pistol to his head as they returned to the Cage house. To avoid attracting attention the partisans walked slowly with their prisoners through the Union lines. Upon striking the Bayou Sara road the raiders employed the horses "liberated" from Dow's staff and dashed to their camp near Centreville, Mississippi.<sup>281</sup>

Powers and McKowen's exploits did encourage the local population. Celine Fremaux, a youthful resident of Jackson regarded them as "very little short of demi-Gods." But the surrender of Port Hudson in July 1863, cast a shadow of gloom over the region. Fremaux vividly described the general weeping occasioned by the fall of the Confederate bastion and the appearance of the starved tearful defenders trudging slowly by in defeat. G.T. Harrower, a Federal soldier stationed at Baton Rouge, commented on the depression evident among the local population. "There are very few secessionists to be found here now. They all begin to wish for peace. They are at our mercy. They can never recruit

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<sup>281</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, February 27, 1898; Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, p. 182; undesignated newspaper clipping, found in John C. McKowen Papers, see folder 5 (LLMVC); John McGrath Scrapbook, pp. 16 and 20 (ibid.); Reminiscences of Neal Dow: Recollections of Eighty Years (Portland: Evening Press Publishing, 1898) pp. 699-703.

that army - nor can their British and French friends furnish them with arms - the end is near."<sup>282</sup>

Port Hudson did constitute a major setback for the Confederates, but the war was far from over. On August 3, 1863 Logan fell upon a Union force, including a regiment of the Corps D Afrique, impressing blacks to serve in the Federal army near Jackson. The outnumbered Confederates thoroughly routed the Yankees capturing all their artillery and supply wagons. As the survivors straggled back to the safety of Port Hudson, powerful Union columns departed from that garrison and Natchez forcing Logan to retire. In his report concerning the operations about Jackson, General George Andrews, commanding the garrison at Port Hudson, expressed outrage that Logan's force had received considerable assistance from local residents. Andrews noted that among the over one hundred Union soldiers taken prisoner in the battle, "several were captured through the aid of so called citizens." This brief campaign exemplifies the pattern the conflict took in the Florida parishes for the remainder of the war. The character of the war in this final phase would serve as a blueprint for the violence which prevailed in the region in the late nineteenth century.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Geary, Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 119-120; Diary of Mary E. Taylor, July 9, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); G.T. Harrower to Dear Helen, August 2, 1863, in G.T. Harrower Letters (ibid.).

<sup>283</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 26, pp. 238-240.

By the late summer of 1863 it was apparent that Confederate forces lacked the strength to repel Union thrusts into the interior of the Florida parishes. The Federal garrison at Baton Rouge remained seven to ten thousand strong providing them with ample resources to overcome the regular Confederate forces in the area. Moreover, the Federals established a powerful base at Morganza across the river in Pointe Coupee Parish and maintained strong garrisons at Natchez and New Orleans. Each of these bases could provide support for any incursion into eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. Confederate forces would continue to confront the Federals, but for the remainder of the war the proximity of the Union bases would permit speedy reinforcement of any raiding party in trouble. Recognizing their strength and perhaps frustrated by their inability to subjugate the region effectively, the Federals initiated an intensified campaign of terror against the local population.<sup>284</sup> In response, exasperated citizens increasingly took an active part in operations against the invaders.

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<sup>284</sup> The Federals also had a profit motive to crush resistance in eastern Louisiana. Virtually surrounded by Union bases and only weakly defended by the rebels, the territory seemed perfect for farming operations to supply the huge demand for cotton and sugar. By the summer of 1863 many plantations in lower Livingston Parish and along the Mississippi in Ascension and East Baton Rouge parishes were operated by the Federals. Confederate raids on these operations stimulated an aggressive Federal response. See Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, p. 878; ibid., Series I, Vol. 26, p. 313.

As in the lakeshore region by the fall of 1863 many residents of the upper Florida parishes faced starvation. Mary Taylor, whose prewar tables contained such sumptuous feasts that she resented dining elsewhere, complained to her sister, "breadstuff has risen to an enormous price, we will never be able to buy it while the war lasts." With affluent families suffering the situation facing less fortunate families proved critical. Taylor continued, "flour is selling for \$150 per bushel...God only knows what is to become of one half of the poor soldiers wives and children." Federal soldier Robert Tyson found it fascinating that they could starve the rebels while abundantly providing for themselves. Tyson compared the sparse fare of the citizens with his evening meal consisting of, "beans baked in a soup, beefsteak, gravy, potatoes in all forms, fried ham, codfish balls, tomatoes, cranberries, bread, biscuit, condensed milk, pies and pudding, tea and coffee." In contrast Celine Fremaux expressed delight at having found a few wild turnips to mix with the weevil-laden corn meal a neighbor kindly gave her family. A slice of boiled turnip, a rancid piece of corn bread, and a cup of tea made from "an infusion of tender blackberry leaves" constituted a feast for the local residents. The food shortage reached such acute proportions that upon cessation of hostilities the first actions of the

Freedmans Bureau involved securing food to relieve the starving people in the territory.<sup>285</sup>

Local residents attempted to combat the desperate shortages of food and other supplies by employing ersatz materials. Sara Morgan noted that everything from sweet potatoes to burnt sugar and parched corn constituted a supplement for coffee. But she found that no substitute approached the satisfaction derived from the "real unadulterated berry." Lemanda Lea created a stir by employing cochineal as a dye for clothing. Unable to obtain any traditional dyes, Lea, to the delight of her neighbors, discovered that the crushed remains of the little beetle provided an adequate substitute. Many other items such as medicines, farm implements, and paper became critically short as the war continued. The nature and format of the Amite

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<sup>285</sup> Eugene Hunter to Stella, January 1862 and April 15, 1863, Mary Taylor to Sister Riah, September 8, 1862, Diary of Mary E. Taylor, June 22, 1863, all in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Mary Wilkinson to Micajah, August 1, 1862, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (*ibid.*); John Ball to Joel Stokes, February 13, 1863, in Joel A. Stokes Papers (*ibid.*); Sara Sandell to Lemanda Lea, April 19, 1863, in Lemanda Lea Papers (*ibid.*); Tom Ellis to Martina, September 11, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*); Diary of Eli Capell, April 7 and November 30, 1862, in Eli Capell Papers (*ibid.*); Amite City Daily Wanderer, October 25, 1864; Robert A. Tyson Diary, May 2 and June 5, 1864 (*ibid.*); Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, see reports submitted to agency headquarters at New Orleans from: James DeGrey agent at Clinton April 8, 1867, A. Finch agent at Bayou Sara December 10, 1867, and W.H. Haugen agent at Madisonville January 10, 1868; Geary (ed.), Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 135-136; Howard White, The Freedmans Bureau in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970) p. 70.

City Daily Wanderer underscored the paper problem. When the Wanderer first appeared in mid-1864, it had one full sized page with details on front and back. By the fall of that year it was made up of one medium sized sheet of brown wrapping paper printed only on the front. Throughout the fall of 1864 the editor made desperate appeals to the public for glue, tallow, and any type of unprinted paper. On November 29, 1864 the Wanderer announced that it would continue to appear but in a different form as "the owner travels about seeking paper." His efforts appear to have been at best, modestly successful, since in early 1865 the Daily Wanderer became the Tri-Weekly Wanderer and appeared on one sheet of paper no larger than a mans hand.<sup>286</sup>

The war disrupted almost all activities in the region. Constant Union raids severely disrupted the functioning of local schools. Many suspended operations altogether while others met only sporadically when circumstances allowed. Churches too suffered from the effects of the constant raids. Union forces looted and burned some churches. Many others suspended operations out of concern for the safety of their congregations, particularly when the Federals began the

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<sup>286</sup> Dawson, A Confederate Girls Diary, p. 377; Sarah Sandell to Lemanda Lea, November 16, 1862, in Lemanda Lea Collection (LLMVC); Amite City Daily Wanderer, October 25 and 28, and November 11, 27, and 29, 1864; Amite City Tri-Weekly Wanderer, April 29, 1865; other local papers experienced similar problems, see Bayou Sara Ledger, September 14, 1861. Among the other substitutes employed as coffee were roasted Irish potatoes, parched corn, and peanuts, see Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, p. 115.

wholesale "pressing" of boys into their army and arbitrary arrest of citizens. Though civil government continued to function throughout the war and elections usually occurred as scheduled, its effectiveness was sharply curtailed. Every Federal raid forced local officials to flee or go into hiding for their own personal safety. Moreover, the increasing cost of the war forced both the national and local governments to increase taxes repeatedly compounding the suffering of the population. The vast majority of the citizens of the Florida parishes stoically accepted these hardships as burdensome necessities. But few, if any, among them accepted the atrocities committed by the invader.<sup>287</sup>

In the last eighteen months of the war the outrages committed by Federal forces on the increasingly defenseless civilian population assumed a disturbing character. In a

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<sup>287</sup> Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, June 2, 1862, in O.P. Amacker Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Eli Capell, December 5, 1862, May 28, June 14, October 3 and 18, 1864, in Eli Capell Papers (ibid.); N.R. Jennings to Dear Wife, May 24, 1863, in Hennen-Jennings Family Papers (ibid.); Geary (ed.), Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 117, 126-127, and 136; Records of the East Fork Baptist Church, entries 1861-1865, (Mississippi State Archives); Records of Hephzibah Church, October 2, 1864 (ibid.); St Tammany Parish Police Jury Minutes, January 6 and March 15, 1862, March 18, 1863, January and July Session 1864, and March Session 1865 (ibid.); Covington The Wanderer, October 15, 1864; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 11, 1864; Records of the Louisiana State Government, 1850-1888, in the War Department Collection of Confederate Records in the National Archives, Doc. F-75, see role 9 detailing Confederate local elections; Amite City Board of Aldermen Minute Book, see period 1861-1865 in Book No. 1, located in Amite City Hall; Mrs. R.J. Causey to Causey, October 14, 1863, in R.J. Causey Correspondence (LLMVC); receipts for Confederate taxes 1863-1864, in Maston S. Newsom Papers (ibid.).

letter to a friend serving in Lee's army in Virginia, J.M. Doyle described the intensification of Federal actions against the citizens. "The yankees did much more damage this time. Captain Fagan taken off prisoner and much beaten up. Hodges mansion destroyed, all eligible men taken prisoner. McVea's fine dwelling and costly carpets and furniture laid in ashes. Citizens around William's Bridge broken up. Rumor says they are coming again." Abigail Amacker expressed dismay at the changed appearance of an elderly aunt who had been robbed of everything by Federal soldiers. She confided in her diary, "I believe that grief is killing her." Elers Koch complained that the Yankees stole all of the family's eating utensils leaving them without a single knife. Celine Fremaux described a Union raid on Jackson in early 1864 in which a large body of soldiers drove them from their school house. According to Fremaux, the Yankees burned their books and slates and used their desks as troughs to feed their horses. A separate raiding party entered the only drug store and destroyed all of its contents leaving the community without any medicine on the eve of yellow fever season. Fremaux commented that the raids occurred with increasing frequency and "just such sort of narrow, mean, unmanly, sort of acts were perpetuated by every raiding gang."<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> J.M. Doyle to Eugene Hunter, October 16, 1864, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Abigail Means Kent Amacker, November 19, 1863, in O.P. Amacker Papers (ibid.); Elers to Christian Koch, September 15, 1864, in Christian Koch Papers (ibid.); Geary (ed.), Celine:



Robert Tyson expressed outrage at what he termed the "excessive looting" of his fellow Federal soldiers. During a raid coordinated with troops based at Morganza, Tyson watched with aversion as Union soldiers looted every house encountered of all their contents and "disgracefully used" the unfortunate families. Tyson graphically described the wanton devastation inflicted on the population asserting "the thieving cavalry are a disgrace to the army, the relations and boasts of one of them last evening were disgusting." As the raiders returned to Morganza bringing with them "at least ten wagons loaded with plunder," a small force of Confederate cavalry attacked their pickets. Tyson noted dryly that these courageous plunderers refused an order to counterattack and instead threw down their weapons and fled resulting in the death of several of them. The intensity of Federal depredations in his village prompted Methodist minister James E. Bradley, who regularly prayed for the soldiers in both armies, to declare "I had rather be united with death than linked in any way with such devils." J. Burruss McGehee, Eve Brower, and Carrie McGehee all vividly described the looting and burning of Bowling Green Plantation south of Woodville. Union troops under the command of Colonel J.B. Cook entered and looted the house smashing everything they did not steal

before brutally beating the elderly couple and burning the home and all outbuildings.<sup>289</sup>

Yet even more savage attacks occurred. At least two Jackson women were raped by Federal soldiers in early 1864. In one instance Union troops battered their way into the home of an elderly lady and her granddaughter. The Yankees bound and tied the old woman and gang raped her attractive granddaughter. The next day the girl was found bleeding and left for dead in a swamp outside of town. On the same day Union soldiers murdered two residents of Jackson. Dr. J. Barkdull the chief physician at the Louisiana state insane asylum was murdered by laughing Federal soldiers even as he attempted to produce papers demonstrating that he had taken the Federal oath to secure provisions for his patients. In a callous display of their contempt for the local residents Union troops staged an congratulatory ceremony for the doctor's murderers in the cemetery during his funeral. Joseph Fluker, sixteen year old son of an elderly lady who had lost her husband and six other sons to the war, was clubbed to death in the center of Jackson by Union soldiers who threw the dying young man face down into a gully filled

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<sup>289</sup> Robert A. Tyson Diary, see entries September 13 - November 24, 1864 (LLMVC); James E. Bradley Diary, entries October 28 and November 2, 1863 (ibid.); J. Burruss McGehee to James S. McGehee, February 5, 1904, Eve Brower to James S. McGehee, February 22, 1904, and Carrie McGehee to James S. McGehee, undated, all in James Stewart McGehee Papers (ibid.); Official Records Series I, Vol. 39, pt.1, pp. 829-832.

with water. Celine Fremaux described the grieving of a mother whose Confederate soldier son was taken prisoner by a column of Federal soldiers. According to Fremaux, the Federal commander turned the unfortunate young man over to a group of black troops who hacked him to pieces and scattered his body parts about the countryside. Ms. Fremaux also remembered Federal soldiers stripping a severely wounded Confederate soldier of his clothing and taunting her one-armed school marm who attempted to assist the dying man. Moreover, she recounted rumors which attributed to the Federals the mysterious appearance of several barrels of poisoned flour in her town. Josephine Pugh credited the pleas of her slaves with saving her life during the looting of her home by a party of Federal soldiers who had murdered her neighbor only moments before. Frightful accounts of the mistreatment and murder of captured Confederate soldiers circulated among the citizens. Bemoaning his miserable and starved existence as a Federal prisoner, Willie Barrow summarized the feeling of many in the Florida parishes with his plea, "Lord deliver me from such hardships."<sup>290</sup>

The sum of the increasing Federal outrages against soldiers and civilians alike was the emergence of an

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<sup>290</sup> Geary (ed.) Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 111-121, 142, 144-148, and 155; Reminiscences of a Union Raid, in Josephine Pugh Papers (LLMVC); Eugene Hunter to Stella, June 16, 1865, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); John Ellis to Martina, September 16, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); Diary of Willie Barrow, April 10, 1862, in W.M. Barrow Papers (ibid.).

unqualified hatred for the Yankees. The strength of their loyalty to friends and relatives away in the Confederate army, combined with the mutually shared suffering which forced neighbors to rely on one another to an unprecedented degree, created a bond of determination and togetherness. This bond helped to overcome the defeatism the Federals expected to result from their war on the civilian population. J.N. Waddel summarized the position taken by many families: "I lost all my property, my home and my furniture, had been driven from all I held dear and was in exile, a wanderer among strangers frequently, but I felt I could endure all this with patience, and in the hope that my country some day or other would be free."<sup>291</sup>

As the war entered its final months hatred helped to sustain the cause of the South in eastern Louisiana. Outraged by the ruined condition of his home town Clinton and reports of Yankee boasts of the thoroughness of their work, Robert Patrick, on leave from the Confederate army in northern Georgia, vented his contempt over the grave of a Union soldier. "You were not satisfied to remain at home and let us alone; you must come to the South to murder our

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<sup>291</sup> J.N. Waddel to Eli Capell, January 9, 1866, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC); John Ellis to Ma, March 11, 1862, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); John Connell to Dear Pet (Cornelia Stewart), May 1, 1865, and Lizzie Hamilton to Albert Batchelor, May 21, 1865, both in Albert Batchelor Papers (ibid.); Geary (ed.), Celine: Remembering Louisiana, pp. 137-144; Amite City Tri-Weekly Wanderer, April 29, 1865; Amite City Sunday Wanderer, February 12, 1865;

citizens, burn our houses, desolate our homes, and lay waste our country; to make war upon women and children, turning them out to die of cold and want, without the slightest compunctions of conscience. You for one have met your just reward, which is a grant of land from the Confederates of three feet by six." Writing from below Woodville, Mississippi a grieving mother declared, "you can never imagine my hatred for the Yankees. I despise everything that is connected with them in any way. From henceforth and forever I will school mine to despise more than I now do if it is possible the Yankees, but my hatred for them is so intense I don't think I can increase it." Commenting on its attack on a Federal raiding party in the spring of 1865, Steve Ellis declared that anger alone propelled his unit to victory. Hatred proved to be a powerful motivating force. Instead of embracing the cause of the Union many local residents, having little left to lose, took desperate steps to strike back against the Yankees.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> F. Jay Taylor (ed.) Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick, 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959) pp. 132, 201, and 223; Nannie C. to Dear Friend Cornelia Stewart, April 1864, and John Connell to Dear Pet, May 1, 1865, both in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); W. Greene Raoul to Pa, June 28, 1862 and May 24, 1863, in W. Greene Raoul Papers (ibid.); Steve Ellis to Dear Brother, April 9, 1865, and John Ellis to Dear Sister, March 18, 1862, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); Serrano Taylor's travel journal 1862-1863, see entry October 2, 1862, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); Geary (ed.), Celine: Remembering Louisiana, p. 118.

In the spring of 1864 Colonel John S. Scott replaced Logan as commander of Confederate forces operating in eastern Louisiana. Scott, at the head of the First Louisiana Cavalry, had established a reputation as a cunning and courageous, albeit controversial commander during operations in Virginia and Tennessee. But more importantly Scott, like most of the survivors of his cavalry unit, was a native of the Florida parishes. General Leonidas Polk specifically requested Scott's transfer to eastern Louisiana in the hope that he would be able to recruit replacements for his command and "break up the operations of the enemy" in that region. The arrival of the First Louisiana Cavalry created great rejoicing among the men of the command and inspired a new confidence among the long suffering residents.<sup>293</sup>

Scott moved quickly to consolidate his new command. Aggressive recruiting and conscripting efforts backed by a stern warning to shirkers and to those who harbored deserters resulted in the formation of a new battalion for service in eastern Louisiana. The Federals provided further incentive to join the Confederate army by impressing eligible men into their army or arbitrarily arresting them. Dozens of refugees from New Orleans and others eager to fight the Yankees rallied to the call of the charismatic leader. Yet the deprivation resulting from years of war was apparent.

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<sup>293</sup> Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, pp. 104-107 and 117; Steven Ellis to Dear Brother, April 9, 1865, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

Serrano Taylor described the appearance of Scott's force to his son-in-law, "we have refugees from New Orleans in Colonel Scott's command -barefoot- a coarse shirt and pants, unwashed for months - for they have no change." Jane McCausland Chinn related that the Confederate force on which the hopes of the residents depended consisted of "old grey bearded men, soldiers in their prime with fiery angry looks, and flustered young lads."<sup>294</sup>

Despite appearances, Scott expressed great confidence in their ability to contain the invader. In order to keep the Yankees off balance he determined to take the offensive. Partisans operating under his command attacked Federal raiding parties near Madisonville creating panic among the Union garrison there and encouraging them to remain near the protection provided by their gunboats in the lakes. During the late spring and early summer of 1864, in a series of hit and run raids cavalry units commanded by Colonel Powers disrupted Federal communications and supply trains between Baton Rouge and Port Hudson. During one such raid Captain Thomas Ellis, commanding a company of Power's Cavalry

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<sup>294</sup> Amite City Daily Wanderer, December 8, 1864; Serrano Taylor to Eugene Hunter, June 1864, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Alex Stuart to Dear Uncle, December 27, 1863, in William R. Bell Papers (ibid.); Civil War Reminiscences from the diary of Jane McCausland Chinn, "The Burning of the Barns," p. 2 (ibid.). Descriptions of Federal efforts to "press" young men into their army found in Annette Koch to Christian, April 29, 1863, in Christian D. Koch Papers (ibid.) Geary, Celine: Remembering Louisiana, p. 136.

reported destroying large quantities of Federal stores, killing at least twenty-eight Union soldiers and capturing thirty-one while sustaining only eight casualties. Elements of Scott's cavalry repeatedly established mobile batteries along the Mississippi and shelled Federal steamers and transports. A Federal raid designed to destroy Scott's base of operations failed when Scott ambushed the Federal column at the Comite River and repulsed them. According to W.W. Garig, a Livingston Parish soldier fighting with Scott, the rout proved so complete that the Yankees "ran all over the field in every direction" to the amusement of the pursuing Confederates.<sup>295</sup>

Emboldened by the early success of his new command, Scott determined on an offensive maneuver designed to reduce the Federal defenses about Baton Rouge. If successful the Confederates could disrupt Federal farming operations on plantations seized across the river from Donaldsonville. In the early morning hours of August 5, 1864 the rebel cavalrymen secretly crossed the Amite River and surrounded the Union stockade at Doyal's Plantation below Baton Rouge in

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<sup>295</sup> Amite City Daily Wanderer, December 8, 1864; Serrano Taylor to Eugene Hunter, June 1864, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC); Robert A. Tyson Diary, see entries February 1 and 11, 1864 (ibid.); Tom Ellis to Martina, May 20, 1864, in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); Diary of W.W. Garig, see entry April 7, 1864, in W.W. Garig Papers (ibid.); Diary of Willie Dixon, April 7, 1864, in William Y. Dixon Papers (ibid.); Official Records, Series I, Vol. 34, pt. 1, pp. 136-138, 877-879 and 906; ibid. Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, pp. 833, 919, and 932; Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, p. 107-108.



Ascension Parish. Scott demanded the surrender of the garrison granting the Federals a few minutes to determine their course of action. During the interval a portion of the garrison broke out denying Scott a decisive victory. After destroying part of the stockade and taking over one hundred prisoners the Confederates retreated before Union reinforcements arrived.<sup>296</sup>

Scott's offensive maneuvers in the Florida parishes created consternation among Union commanders in the lower Mississippi region. Outraged Federal officials at Baton Rouge placed a \$10,000 bounty on Scott's head.<sup>297</sup> But in a substantive military sense his efforts did little more than provide temporary relief and a bit of hope for the local population. The critical contribution resulting from Scott's command of the department concerns his policy toward citizens under arms.

Little evidence exists to indicate that Scott actively encouraged guerrilla warfare. But that he tolerated this method of combat is indisputable. Unlike Confederate commanders in other theaters of the war, Scott issued no

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<sup>296</sup> Official Records, Series I, Vol. 41, pt. I, pp. 213-218; ibid. pt. 2, p. 833; copy of orders issued by Colonel Scott to Colonel Powers from Camp Polk, May 26, 1864, in John McKowen Papers (LLMVC); Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, pp. 108-109.

<sup>297</sup> Loving Sister F.P. Wall to Dear Sister, undated letter (1864?) describing reward of \$1,000 for the capture dead or alive of Naul and \$10,000 for Scott, found in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC); Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, p. 833.

directives governing, or statements condemning guerrilla warfare. By adopting a policy of total war against a brutal enemy, Scott sanctioned a grisly development of enormous consequence for the future development of the Florida parishes.

Proposals to launch a guerrilla war in eastern Louisiana had been entertained as early as the spring of 1862. But guerrilla warfare constituted something far different from partisan operations. Unlike partisan units, whose usefulness resulted from their adherence to the commands of the regular army, guerrillas operated independently. Autonomous bodies of armed men almost always created problems for both friend and foe. Frequently the civilian population suffered as much from unrestrained fighters as did the enemy. A March 1862 proposal recommended, "let 200 determined men in each county take to the woods with their horses and rifles, swear never to bend their necks to the yoke, but war upon our tyrants and all who give them aid and comfort, night and day, as long as the foot of the Yankee presses upon southern soil." In 1862 this ominous suggestion received little support. By late 1864 the situation proved very different.<sup>298</sup>

Recognizing the odds which faced him, Scott sanctioned the participation of citizens in the war effort by encouraging the formation of citizen's militia. Previous efforts to create and employ militias in eastern Louisiana

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<sup>298</sup>New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 13, 1862.

had proved of little consequence. Scott's plan called for the creation of home-guard units consisting of men over forty-five to act as localized reserves in support of regulars when their communities were threatened. These units performed duty as garrison forces and pickets and occasionally supported the army in repelling attacks. But unlike the militia which recognized the authority of the regular army, by the fall of 1864 increasing numbers of citizens engaged in attacks upon the Yankees independent of any civil or military control. W. Greene Raoul expressed the exasperated sentiment of these men. "We had as well raise the black flag at once. They (Federals) are fighting almost upon that principle. We, I think ought to take some measure to retaliate. There is no reason to fear that they will do more, for they are doing all they possibly can now. Submission we can not have, we must fight it out to the last."<sup>299</sup>

The Amite City Daily Wanderer, one of the few newspapers still publishing by the fall of 1864, encouraged guerrilla activity. The Wanderer reminded its readers that Spain had survived the burning of its cities and destruction of its armies only to prevail over the French by employing guerrilla tactics. Responding to increasing Federal atrocities, the

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<sup>299</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. I, pt. 2, p. 19; W. Greene Raoul to Pa, May 24, 1863, in W. Greene Raoul Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Mary E. Taylor, April 28, 1863, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (ibid.); Amite City Daily Wanderer, December 8, 1864.

Wanderer urged the people to "strain every nerve to hold in check the northern horde." Beginning in the summer of 1864, guerrillas increasingly preyed upon Union forces operating in the area. Occasionally guerrillas cooperated with regular Confederate units in confronting Union raiders. But in most cases the citizens established prearranged points of ambush and waited in hiding for a Federal patrol. In almost all cases the guerrillas took no prisoners.<sup>300</sup>

These tactics produced fear and outrage among the Federals. The guerrillas proved difficult to catch, and their methods were effective. One group operating in Livingston and lower East Baton Rouge parishes sought out and killed any Federal stragglers they encountered. The same party frequently ambushed whole patrols tying up considerable numbers of Federal soldiers in pursuit. The fighting along both the east and west bank of the Mississippi became increasingly brutal. Both sides were accused of murdering prisoners and looting homesteads. Confederate guerrillas and partisans wreaked bloody vengeance on Federal soldiers encountered with looted goods. By the fall of 1864 guerrilla activity made considerable portions of the territory unsafe for Federal soldiers. In response the Federals burned entire towns, executed many Confederate soldiers as suspected

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<sup>300</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 277-278; John Burruss to Edward, February 18, 1864, in John C. Burruss Papers (LLMVC); Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, pp. 113-114.

guerrillas, and intensified their efforts to arrest every adult male of combat age. In most cases the guerrillas confined their activities to killing Yankees. But in the lakeshore and Pearl River region the war assumed a particularly ugly character. Determined to exterminate one another, guerrilla bands, occasionally operating with Confederate cavalry, and Union forces engaged in wanton acts of murder and destruction. The unfortunate residents became victims of the suspicions and requisitions of both sides. Overcome by the scenes of devastation and mangled bodies by the roadside, Annette Koch lamented, "I have found so much that is bad in the hearts of so many people. They have taken the law in their own hands and do just as they please and I think when things come to that no man is safe."<sup>301</sup>

In early October 1864 the Federals initiated a major offensive designed to drive Scott's force from the territory and exterminate the guerrillas by crushing their base of support. This operation effectively devastated the region. On October 5, 1864 the Yankees moved out of Baton Rouge in

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<sup>301</sup> John Burruss to Edward, February 18, 1864, in John C. Burruss Papers (LLMVC); Annette Koch to Christian, September 18 and 20, October 3 and 9, 1864, February 6 and 11, 1865, Elers to Christian, September 20 and October 3, 1864, all in Christian Koch Papers (*ibid.*); Priscilla Bond Diary, March 6 and May 3, 1864 and June 16, 1865, in Priscilla Bond Papers (*ibid.*); Dominique Pochelu to W.R. Bell, March 23, 1864, and Alex Stuart to Dear Uncle, December 27, 1863, in William R. Bell Papers (*ibid.*); Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, pp. 113-115; Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 294 and 880-883; *ibid.* pt. 2, p. 933; *ibid.* Series I, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 263; Winters, Civil War in Louisiana, pp. 392-396.

two columns backed by cavalry and artillery. A third column landed at Bayou Sara and proceeded toward Clinton while a large supporting force dispatched from Natchez landed at Tunica Bend in route for Woodville. At Thompson's Creek, Scott's command supported by local militia attacked and routed the column advancing from Bayou Sara. In response Federal gunboats in the Mississippi began an intensive shelling of the town of St. Francisville. The pleas of local residents, including former Governor Robert Wickliffe, persuaded Scott to break off the engagement. The other columns marched eastward virtually unmolested. As they proceeded through East Feliciana and St. Helena parishes and the southwestern counties of Mississippi, they burned all government and huge amounts of private property. The Federals destroyed all food and crops they encountered and slaughtered or dispersed all livestock. The towns of Liberty, Woodville, Greensburg, Osyka, and Camp Moore were devastated by the raiders. The Covington Wanderer reported that the Federals "committed hellish degradations, robbing and plundering indiscriminately." The Amite City Daily Wanderer gave voice to the anxiety of the people. "If the Yankees continue the destruction and heathenish pilfering that they have practiced heretofore upon the residents in the vicinity of Liberty and the adjacent country, if absolute want and starvation do not ensue, something akin will certainly follow." The New Orleans Daily Picayune reported

that the Federals had destroyed over 40,000 pounds of bacon, one hundred dozen shoes, and limitless amounts of clothing and other goods noting that "the general deemed it a military necessity in taking several citizens." The Picayune continued calling the raid "the most successful expedition emanating from Baton Rouge, it cleared the area of Jayhawkers."<sup>302</sup>

The October 1864 raid did devastate the region, but it did not dissuade citizens from attacking Federal soldiers. On the contrary, the despoiling raid seemed to promote continued resistance which increasingly relied on citizen involvement. In his report concerning his unit's role in the October raid, Major N.F. Craigie, Fourth Wisconsin Cavalry, described his movement through lower St. Helena Parish. Among his accomplishments Craigie noted the capture and destruction of over two thousand pounds of salt, a precious commodity of unequalled value to the local residents. As his command continued through the region they encountered no regular Confederate units. But his column suffered the heaviest casualties of the raid. Craigie reported that as he departed the region a citizen followed his regiment killing and wounding several of his men by "firing into them from the

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<sup>302</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 2, pp 880-883; Covington Wanderer, October 15, 1864; Amite City Daily Wanderer, November 29, 1864; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 9 and 11, 1864; Carter, A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War, p. 118; James Durnin to Dear Sister, September 13, 1864, in James and John Durnin Papers (LLMVC).

bushes." He concluded his report with an ominous note for Federal authorities, "the guerrilla could not be taken." In the Florida parishes bushwhacking was becoming an art form.<sup>303</sup>

Bushwhacking involved concealing a gunman in the undergrowth along a roadside and cutting a small opening in the bushes facing the opposite direction from which the foe approached. Unobserved, the assailant then fired into the rear of his victim. The confusion created by shotgun blasts from the rear gave a bushwhacker with knowledge of the terrain an excellent opportunity to escape undetected only to strike again at another pre-arranged location. The Federal's frustrated and vain efforts to capture bushwhackers in the last months of the war demonstrated their effectiveness. Sadly, this phenomena would be a lesson well learned in the Florida parishes.

The October raid and corollary operations in the upper Florida parishes did accomplish a primary objective. As a result of the devastation of the region, Scott who relied heavily on requisitions from local farmers to feed his troops and horses withdrew into southwestern Mississippi. Though elements of Scott's force under the command of Colonel Daniel

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<sup>303</sup> Official Records Series I, Vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 881-882; ibid. Series I, Vol. 39, pt.1, pp. 831-832 Colonel E.D. Osband in command of the column which sacked Woodville and burned several surrounding plantations also reported that he had suffered casualties as a result of bushwhackers firing on his command "while concealed in the bushes."



Gober continued to operate in the region, no force capable of offensive operations remained in the area. But the bushwhackers had also accomplished an important objective. Their efforts helped to contain the marauding of small groups of Federals who were more likely to commit atrocities in the absence of a senior officer. As a result the local press continued to urge resistance to "the bloodhounds of the Lincoln despotism." In an effort to console its readers concerning Scott's departure from the region the Daily Wanderer reminded them that eastern Louisiana did not constitute the whole of the Confederacy. According to the Wanderer, "if our enemy held every foot of our territory, with our army still in tact, still we would not be subjugated. The bone and sinew of the Confederacy is the army." The same paper maintained, "we have a firm and never ceasing conviction that this struggle is near at a close and that a happy peace and a glorious independence will soon crown our efforts."<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Diary of Eli Capell, entries March 29, May 28, June 14, June 22, July 15, September 6-8, October 18, and October 25-29, 1864, January 31, 1865, in Eli Capell Papers (LLMVC); Annette Koch to Christian, September 25 and 28, 1864, November 14, 23, and 27, 1864, Elers Koch to Christian, October 3, 1864, in Christian Koch Papers (ibid.); Liz Ellis to Steven, October 30, 1864, Steve Ellis to Ma, June 28, 1864, Tom Ellis to Pa, October 8, 1864, E.P. Ellis to Emily, November 15, 1864, all in Ellis Family Papers (ibid.); St. Helena Parish Succession Records, Succession Bin W-3, numerous entries January-July, 1863 and May-June, 1864, demonstrate reliance of Confederate units on the local population for sustenance, located St. Helena Parish Courthouse, Greensburg; Amite City Daily Wanderer, December 8, 1864; Official Records Series I, Vol. 48, pt. 1, pp. 128

Though many residents continued to insist through the final weeks of the war that the South would prevail in the end, reality proved contrary to their hopes. Increasing reports of fourteen year old boys giving up their lives in support of a seemingly mortally wounded cause, letters from loved ones in Union prisons, and the realization that their world had been shattered caused many to long for peace. Yet Federal boasts that they intended to desolate the region so that no one could ever live there again continued to incite a population obsessed with the importance of independence and honor. Through the dreary winter of 1864-1865 new Confederate units emerged in eastern Louisiana. But the surrender of the Confederate armies under Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston in April 1865, highlighted the reality of failure. Suddenly the Federals adopted a policy of appeasement toward the rebels. Yet four years of brutality did not simply disappear. Even after the cessation of hostilities between the regular armies in eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi, guerrilla operations, occasionally on a large scale, persisted. A Federal force travelling through parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana to "secure by conciliation and kindness the good will of the people for and toward the representatives of the Federal government" was bushwhacked north of Osyka in late May. The war did not end simply because Washington pronounced

it over and staged a great celebration in honor of their victory. And in the Florida parishes the violence had only begun.<sup>305</sup>

As the official war waned, the Florida parishes, like many areas of the South, were devastated. Countless members of the pre-war elite and their offspring succumbed to the ravages of war. With them went the vestiges of stable government. The survivors faced starvation, a society turned upside down, and an uncertain future as a conquered people. In many cases hate and bitterness had replaced hospitality and kindness. Most importantly, the war challenged in an unprecedented fashion the value system of the people. The presence of the Union army thrust Federal authority into their lives. Confederate efforts also intruded upon their independent lifestyle but the harsh policy of the Federals made clear the enemy. In the Florida parishes brutality engendered brutality. The Federal government sanctioned murder and cruelty, and the residents responded effectively in like manner. Bloodshed solved problems permanently. The solution was learned; the war had only begun.

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<sup>305</sup> Amite City Daily Wanderer, October 15, 1864; F.P. Wall to Jephtha McKinney, December 17, 1864, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC); Father to Albert Batchelor, September 7 and December 26, 1864, in Albert Batchelor Papers (ibid.); Civil War Reminiscences of Jane McCausland Chinn, "The Burning of the Barns," p. 1 (ibid.); Official Records Series I, Vol. 48, pt. I, pp. 262-264.



Pistols and Politics: Planter and Plain Folk Relations  
in the Piney Woods South,  
The Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1810-1899

Volume II

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in

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## Chapter 5

"Oh God! Grant Us Rest From This Weariness":

Chaos Ascendant

In the spring of 1865 the sectional conflict moved into another far more complex phase. Thousands of Union soldiers marched home to a hero's welcome in a land which the war had transformed into one of the most prosperous and productive regions on earth. Except for the loss of many of its sons the North had remained insulated from the true horror of the war. And, after the war, the North persisted as a region at the forefront of recasting a national identity. The next phase of the conflict, though similar in many ways to the former, would be a struggle not of armies but of individuals, ideas, and policies. Hope and opportunity would fall victim to the tempestuous cauldron of chaotic circumstances collectively gathered under the name Reconstruction. Instead of opportunity, many areas of the South would experience a fierce revival of traditional values, which unburdened by the restraints inherent in the antebellum social order, would contribute directly to a continuing cycle of suffering. What

could have emerged as a time of healing and fulfilled dreams instead became one of darkness and failed will. Amidst the reality of defeat the residents of eastern Louisiana struggled to revive the sources of stability and prosperity from a world which existed no more. The result of their efforts demonstrated the incompatibility between fealty to the old order and the inevitability of the new. But more importantly, the chaotic conditions associated with Reconstruction reinforced latent suspicions of government and the effectiveness of violence.

The shock of defeat wore off slowly in the Florida parishes. Many solemnly refused to accept that their homeland had been vanquished. The Amite City Tri-Weekly Wanderer manifested the desperate pretensions of many residents: "I cannot banish the thought that ere the God of battle will manifest himself in our midst, and by the interposition of his strong arm, rescue us from the abyss of ruin which seems yawning to engulf us...our nation must unite in one fervent supplication, that Jehovah may deliver us out of the hands of our enemies." But the initial dismay eventually gave way to sensations of anger and despair. The efforts of grieving families to ascertain the value of extreme sacrifice culminating in defeat contributed to the prevailing depression. Mary L. Wall who lost her three sons and only brother to the war prayed for a means of understanding their sacrifice. Similarly, J.N. Waddell wrote



that his son's death had deprived him of the only thing he truly valued in life. Unlike their northern counterparts who realized a sense of accomplishment in the death of their loved ones, southerners enjoyed no such consolation. Linus Parker concluded, "here we are like people blown up in a steamboat, hardly knowing what has happened, how it happened or where we are left."<sup>306</sup>

The grief prevailing in the Florida parishes had a clear focus, but the anger did not. Widespread hatred of the Yankees was deepened by the occupying Federals' refusal to permit the erection of monuments to dead Confederates or to allow the decoration of individual soldier's graves. Outraged by the Federals' seeming insensitiveness in denying the young ladies of Clinton the right to decorate Confederate graves, J.M. Godfrey declared that he would make a tribute to the dead "even if they hung him." Fortunately for the peace of the region the people persuaded him to demur.<sup>307</sup>

War-related anger and frustration assumed various forms. Thomas Ellis proclaimed before a congressional investigating committee that his bitterness stemmed from his conviction

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<sup>306</sup> Amite City Tri-Weekly Wanderer, April 29, 1865; Mary L. Wall to Kate Burruss, November 7, 1866, in John C. Burruss Papers (LLMVC); J. N. Waddel to Eli Capel, January 9, 1866, in Eli Capel Papers (ibid.).

<sup>307</sup> Ellie Knighton to Terrie Minse, April 26, 1867, in Josiah Knighton Papers (LLMVC); Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, August 4, 1866; Greensburg Journal, July 20, 1866; Greensburg Weekly Star and Journal, April 27, 1867; Amite City Times, August 31, 1867.

that he could have fought harder for the Confederacy. Similarly, many former Confederates expressed boundless contempt for those who sought to cooperate with the Federals. Prominent Baton Rouge attorney James O. Fuqua exemplified this attitude in a letter to his Clinton associate James G. Kilbourne. "Keep these people away from me or I may do them mischief, tell them to keep away that I am armed and dangerous, have got a knife, a big stick, and a little nigger to collect brickbats." An aged Henry Marston expressed resentment with the whole business declaring that the "suicidal acts of secession" had robbed him of his health, wealth, and happiness. Frustrated efforts to understand exactly what had happened produced numerous scapegoats. In his private letters Charles E. Kennon condemned the Democratic party as the source of southern troubles.<sup>308</sup>

As white southerners grappled with the problems associated with defeat, blacks experimented with their new found freedom. The freedmen assumed that Confederate defeat would create unprecedented opportunity for them, and in terms of their liberation from bondage it did. Blacks universally

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<sup>308</sup> Testimony of Thomas C.W. Ellis, U.S. Congressional Hearings Supplement, House Committee on Elections, No. 1, Testimony Taken by the U.S. Subcommittee of Elections in Louisiana, May-June, 1869; James O. Fuqua to James G. Kilbourne, June 8, 1865, in James G. Kilbourne Papers (LLMVC); Henry Marston to Dear Brother, February 25, 1883, in Henry Marston Papers (*ibid.*); Lizzie Hamilton to Albert Batchelor, May 21, 1865, in Albert Batchelor Papers (*ibid.*); Charles E. Kennon to Thomas Ellis, February 24, 1870, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*).

applauded the destruction of the slave system. Some whites also expressed ambivalence at the changed state of affairs. Stella Hunter declared, "I am delighted to know that my yard will now be clear of little negroes and our expenses will now be much less though I will be sad to see them say goodbye."<sup>309</sup>

But the vast majority of whites expressed outrage with the implications of emancipation. Most planters deeply resented the enormous loss in capital they experienced as a result of the collapse of the slave system. J.N. Waddell declared, "the emancipation of the negro is the greatest injustice ever done to property owners; being nothing more, nothing less than rank robbery."<sup>310</sup> Still others chafed at the notion of extending social and political rights to their former bondsmen. In the months immediately following the surrender many whites simply refused to treat the freedmen as anything other than slaves. Charging a grand jury in the spring of 1867, Judge E.P. Ellis declared that the "ignorance, prejudice, and superstitions" of the blacks required that an 1855 law concerning the insubordination of

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<sup>309</sup> Diary of Eli Capel, see entries December 25, 30, and 31, 1866, January 6 and 7, 1867, in Eli Capel Papers (LLMVC); Stella Hunter to Eugene, June 27, 1865, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>310</sup> J.N. Waddel to Eli Capel, January 9, 1866, in Eli Capel Papers (LLMVC).

slaves "should be still rigidly enforced with regard to the free colored population in our midst."<sup>311</sup>

White contempt for emancipation frequently provoked racial incidents. During the summer of 1865 Lieutenant Edward Ehrlich, commander of the Federal garrison at Amite City, and Captain H.H. Rouse, Freedmen's Bureau agent there, reported daily incidents of racial violence in the area. In one instance Ehrlich reported that the city marshall at Amite City had requested to see the pass of a freedman named Hardy. The pass, which exemplified the rigid restrictions on black mobility in the antebellum period, constituted one of the most hated aspects of the slave system for freedmen. When Hardy proudly announced that he had none and "did not consider it necessary now," the marshall hit him with his pistol and fired several shots at him as he tried to escape. The shooting attracted the attention of several patrons at a nearby coffeehouse who proceeded to empty their pistols at the fleeing Hardy striking him twice. Ehrlich noted that military authorities had attempted to arrest the offending parties but failed. Both Rouse and Ehrlich pleaded for additional troops to curb the violence. Along with his report Ehrlich included several letters from prominent white

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<sup>311</sup> Judge E.P. Ellis's charge to the sitting grand jury, found in Greensburg Weekly Star and Journal, April 27, 1867.

citizens, including Amite City Mayor John Wentz, who also requested assistance in curbing the disturbances.<sup>312</sup>

Under the prevailing highly charged circumstances the freedmen needed and aggressively sought protection. But that some whites also requested Federal aid exemplified the desperate state of affairs. Racial violence in particular aggravated the problem of rebuilding the shattered economy. The war so completely devastated the region that the most pressing problem involved procuring adequate supplies of food.

Starvation loomed close in large areas of eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. Faced with an acute shortage of meat, prominent Livingston Parish planter, John Gurley, directed his overseer to kill as much wild game as possible while he sought provisions in New Orleans. Through the fall and winter of 1865 his employees killed hundreds of squirrels and ducks selling some to their equally destitute neighbors. Freedmen's Bureau agents across the region regularly petitioned the bureau headquarters at New Orleans

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<sup>312</sup> Captain H.H. Rouse to Lt. D. Fenno, September 9, 1865, Lt. Edward Ehrlich to Lt. D. Fenno, October 10, 1865, and December 19 and 20, 1865, included in the December 20, 1865 letter are notes from J. Bach and John Wentz requesting Federal assistance to quiet racial disturbances, all in Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105, herein after referred to as "Freedmen's Bureau Reports" (National Archives). See also "Records Relating to Murders and Outrages," Lt. Edward Ehrlich to Lt. D. Fenno, July 5, 9, and 10, 1865, August 20, 1865, September 18, 1865, October 20, 1865, ibid.

for provisions. Like many local farmers John Haney virtually ceased planting cotton and concentrated exclusively on food production, though the initial results were less than encouraging. Governor J. Madison Wells desperately sought assistance from a reluctant Washington. Wells informed President Andrew Johnson that in the last phase of the military campaign the Federals confiscated a large number of the horses and mules used for agricultural purposes by the population. The governor concluded that this more than anything else contributed to the "great distress and fear of pestilence and starvation plaguing the country." Most unconfiscated cattle and hogs had been slaughtered or dispersed by the Federals which greatly exacerbated the food crisis.<sup>313</sup>

As in many areas of the defeated South, the war promoted drastic economic restructuring in eastern Louisiana. Fully seventy-six percent of Florida parish farmers suffered acute

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<sup>313</sup> Charles Daggs to John Gurley, November 8, 1865, and Edward Stewart to John Gurley, November 13, 1865, both in John Gurley Papers (LLMVC); reports submitted to Freedmen's Bureau headquarters at New Orleans from: A. Finch agent at Bayou Sara, November 10 and 20, 1867, December 1 and 10, 1867, and January 8, 1868, James Hough agent at Amite City, December 31, 1867, and W.H. Haugen agent at Madisonville, January 10, 1868, March 6 and 31, 1868, all in "Freedmen's Bureau Reports" (National Archives); John P. Haney to E.P. Ellis, April 26, 1868, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); J. Madison Wells to Andrew Johnson, May 27, 1865, in J. Madison Wells Collection (National Archives); Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," Journal of Southern History, XLI, No.2, p. 164; Joe Gray Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) p. 65, herein after referred to as Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed.

reductions in the value of their overall wealth. Merchants and professional men fared little better, nearly seventy three percent experienced analogous reductions as a result of the war. Similar patterns prevailed statewide. Much of this decline related directly to the loss of slave property. But other indicators demonstrate that the financial catastrophe was pervasive. During the period 1860-1870 seventy-six percent of Florida parish farmers experienced a reduction in corn production while eighty-three percent witnessed a decline in their cotton yields. Most farmers faced similar reductions in their livestock holdings (see table 13). Though significant decreases occurred among all types of livestock, mules and horses incurred the sharpest losses declining by seventy-nine and eighty-four percent respectively.<sup>314</sup>

But acute reductions in landholdings provide the most conclusive evidence of the economic catastrophe wrought by the war in eastern Louisiana. Between 1860-1870 fully sixty-four percent of Florida parish property owners experienced a significant decrease in landholdings. The decline in holdings sharply contrasts with the trend in the 1850's.

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<sup>314</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, Heads of Households and Selected Statistics, 1860 (Washington: Government Printing, 1864); Ninth Census of the United States, Heads of Households and Agricultural Statistics (Washington: Government Printing, 1872). Figures derived from a three percent sample of the heads of households of each parish.

Table 13

Parish	Landholdings 1860-1870		
	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same
East Baton Rouge	-	68%	32%
East Feliciana	11%	72%	12%
Livingston	33%	60%	7%
St. Helena	-	67%	33%
St. Tammany	40%	50%	10%
Washington	25%	50%	25%
West Feliciana	-	33%	67%

	Livestock 1860-1870								
	Horses & Mules			Cattle			Hogs		
	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same
East Baton Rouge	28%	71%	-	75%	25%	-	33%	66%	-
East Feliciana	12.50%	77%	10%	11%	77%	11%	-	87.50%	12.50%
Livingston	28.60%	71%	-	20%	80%	-	20%	80%	-
St. Helena	-	86%	14%	-	90%	10%	33%	67%	-
St. Tammany	40%	40%	20%	50%	50%	-	10%	50%	40%
Washington	17%	83%	-	10%	80%	10%	-	67%	33%
West Feliciana	50%	50%	-	20%	80%	-	20%	80%	-

	Crop Yields 1860-1870					
	Corn Production			Cotton Production		
	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same	Increased	Decreased	Remained Same
East Baton Rouge	60%	20%	20%	-	100%	-
East Feliciana	-	88.80%	11%	-	87.50%	12%
Livingston	-	80%	20%	-	80%	20%
St. Helena	-	75%	25%	-	100%	-
St. Tammany	-	50%	50%	-	40%	60%
Washington	33%	67%	-	-	100%	-
West Feliciana	-	86%	14%	-	60%	40%



Local merchants and professional men who had weathered the war well or found favor with the Federals appropriated much of this property. Land served as the medium to settle many debts in the face of a severe credit contraction. Some planters as well as merchants who suffered comparatively minor losses during the war also seized the opportunity to buy up devalued land or assisted needy neighbors by purchasing a part of their holdings. During the period 1860-1870 Livingston Parish planter Thomas Green Davidson dramatically increased his landholdings. Davidson's total acreage rose from 2900 to 8100 acres though much of the increase constituted uncultivated woodlands. Former Federal soldiers who remained in the area, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and others associated with the postwar administration accounted for smaller purchases of land. James DeGrey, Freedmen's Bureau agent at Clinton, secured a homestead, set up a farm, and in 1868 ran for sheriff.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, Heads of Households and Selected Statistics, 1860; Ninth Census of the United States, Heads of Households and Agricultural Statistics, 1870. Figures derived from a three percent sample of the heads of households of each parish. Fuqua to J. G. Kilbourne, June 8, 1865, December 11 and 25, 1865, and January 14, 1866 all in J.G. Kilbourne Miscellaneous File (LLMVC); transfer of the estate of Thomas A.G. Batchelor to the firm of Levy and Deiter, concluded December 7, 1866, copy found in J.G. Kilbourne Family Papers, also J.G. Kilbourne Record Book No. 23, 1860-1867, numerous entries pp. 66-74 (*ibid.*). J. Addison to Robert Corbin, July 23, 1874, in Robert A. Corbin Papers (*ibid.*); statement of purchase of debtors note of Mrs. Nancy L. Norwood by Abraham Levi, June 15, 1869, see also preparations for seizure of Norwoods property and record of indebtedness to A. Levi from December 5, 1866 to August 1874 in letter A. Levi to James Fuqua,

Most disturbing to local residents were the scores of northern speculators who purchased vast tracts of farm and timberland. H.S. McComb purchased huge tracts of timberland at twelve dollars per acre along the line of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad and eventually seized control of the railroad itself. By the mid-1880's none other than the northern millionaire and railroad entrepreneur Jay Gould served as the largest landowner in several upstate parishes. Addressing this trend in a speech before the legislature, J.C. Kathman, chief of the Bureau of Immigration, reported "some entire portions of the state are rapidly passing into the hands of northwestern farmers." Kathman acknowledged that this transition created "great excitement" among the former slaveowners who held two thirds of Louisiana's land prior to the war. Though Kathman included some letters from Florida parish entrepreneurs extending northern farmers a welcome, the majority of local whites deeply resented the purchasing power of northern capital and the political implications of northern immigration.<sup>316</sup>

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November 9, 1874 (six items), A.L.D. Conrad to A.Miltenerberger and Co., April 10, May 15, and June 3, 1871, all pertaining to lien against Cottage Plantation. Security note on 30 arpents of land in East Baton Rouge Parish for debts due John McGath to S.H Smith, July 24, 1872, H. McGuffy to A. Levi, May 25, 1873, concerns McGuffy's efforts to sell all land, livestock, and dwellings at his plantation on the Comite River to relieve debts, all in James O. Fuqua Papers (*ibid.*).

<sup>316</sup> Documents of the Legislature of the State of Louisiana, 1868 (New Orleans: A.L. Lee State Printer, 1868) herein after referred to as Legislative Docs., "Report of J.C. Kathman Chief of the Bureau of Immigration to the

Indebtedness deprived many landowners of a significant portion of their holdings. But the destruction caused by the war also left many families homeless, creating a further strain on many local communities. Martina Ellis noted that it was impossible to locate a house in Amite City which rented for less than thirty dollars a month, an extremely high figure in the aftermath of war. As a result Ellis reluctantly opened her home to many destitute relatives and acquaintances. James O. Fuqua proclaimed house-hunting in East Baton Rouge Parish a virtually hopeless task. He informed an associate seeking to locate in Baton Rouge that the few houses available rented for no less than seventy-five dollars per month and even then "one must do without a garden or porch."<sup>317</sup>

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General Assembly of Louisiana," July 1868, p. 51. New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 22, 1873; E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, June 27, 28, 29, and October 18, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection, portion of Illinois Central Railroad Collection (Newberry Library, Chicago); copy of Democratic circular found in Report of the Joint Committee of the General Assembly of Louisiana on the Conduct of the Late Elections and the Condition of Peace and Order in the State, 1869 (New Orleans: A.L. Lee State Printer, 1869) p. 7, herein after referred to as Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections; ibid., 1868, p. 25. Frank Smith to Dr. Jephtha McKinney, November 19, 1870, in Jephtha McKinney Papers (LLMVC); John Hutchins to B.F. Flanders, October 6, 1867, in B.F. Flanders Papers (ibid.); Evan Harris to Willie McKowen, November 29, 1867, in John Clay McKowen Papers (ibid.); Greensburg Journal, February 23, 1866; William Ivy Hair, Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969) pp. 48 and 112.

<sup>317</sup> Martina Ellis to Tom, December 2 and 7, 1865, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); J.O. Fuqua to J.G. Kilbourne, December 11, 1865, in James G. Kilbourne Papers (ibid.).

Federal confiscation acts also contributed to the prevailing misery. Many prominent families lost their homes and all their property. The widow and five minor daughters of N.R. Jennings watched helplessly as the Federals confiscated all their property leaving them perfectly destitute, desperate efforts to recover their property remained unresolved as late as 1867. Some families fell victim to unscrupulous merchants whose aggressive efforts to collect all debts due forced many to relinquish their homes and other property. Abraham Levi, a prominent Clinton merchant who frequently spied for the Federals during the war, pugnaciously sought to collect from his debtors in the immediate aftermath of the surrender. Levi's assertiveness led his attorney James Fuqua to proclaim, "look out for his store when the military leave." Martina Ellis also described the acute shortage of cash in the area which contributed to the moribund economy.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> S.B. Buckner to General O.O. Howard, Director Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, October 15, 1865, in Hennen-Jennings Papers (*ibid.*). In this letter Buckner pleads for reconsideration of Mrs. Jennings case because her husband died before ever assuming the position of Confederate subsistence officer for which the deceased's properties were confiscated. James Fuqua to James G. Kilbourne, June 9, 1865, in James G. Kilbourne Papers, also J.G. Kilbourne Record Book No. 23, 1860-1867, numerous entries pp. 66-74 (*ibid.*); Statement of purchase of debtors note of Mrs. Nancy L. Norwood by Abraham Levi, June 15, 1869, and record of Norwood's indebtedness in lieu of seizure of property by Levi December 1866 to August 1874, in letter A. Levi to James Fuqua, November 9, 1874, in James O. Fuqua Papers (*ibid.*); William Watson (Sheriff of Livingston Parish) Sheriff's Fee Book, 1866-1870, lists number of property seizures in 1866 (*ibid.*); Official Records Series I, Vol. 41,

The efforts of some Federal officers and former Unionists to obtain personal wealth at the expense of the ex-Confederates further aggravated attempts at economic recovery of the area. By 1865 cotton commanded a fabulous price. Many planters counted on the surviving supplies of the precious staple to provide capital to begin the process of rebuilding. But Federal authorities seized much of the cotton on the pretext that it actually belonged to the Confederate military or by extracting healthy bribes to permit shipment. Scores of Federal officers and northern speculators enriched themselves in this manner. R.C. Cummings, a New Orleans factor, complained that General Andrew Herron repeatedly demanded a percentage of his cotton before he would allow it to be shipped. Similarly, treasury agent Alfred Reid informed treasury secretary Hugh McCulloch that General Herron and others had stolen thousands of bales of cotton, thus swindling the government out of huge sums of money. Reid noted that many of these same officers now lived in luxury and that some had threatened to kill any agent who exposed their crimes. Chad McRae, special agent for the treasury department at Baton Rouge, reported that Generals Herron and Lee "have interested themselves personally very much in preventing me from investigating abandoned and seized property." McRae cited numerous cases of \$1000 bribes paid

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pt. 2, p. 229; New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 14, 1865; Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, November 6, 1869; New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 14, 1865.

by individuals to Federal officers to free their cotton for shipment and multiple cases of theft of personal belongings by officers professing to seize the property on behalf of the treasury department. He concluded "I am convinced that much corruption has prevailed here in relation to property, less than one tenth of the confiscated goods have been placed in the hands of the treasury department." D.G. Duncan, a New Orleans Unionist, promised to secure evidence against ex-Confederates if the government would grant him five percent of the cotton they seized as a result of his efforts. The rampant seizure of cotton belonging to private individuals finally produced a response from Washington. Writing to acting Governor Benjamin Flanders, William P. Mellen, general agent for the treasury department, acknowledged that many treasury agents in Louisiana had abused their positions "for self profit or for the profit of friends." Mellen demanded that such seizures be halted even if it required the use of Federal troops.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> R.C. Cummings affidavit, August 26, 1865, D.G. Duncan to Hugh McCulloch, May 15, 1865, William P. Mellen to Benjamin F. Flanders, April 3 and 27, 1866, Chad McRae to B. F. Flanders, in undated letter folder, also see unsigned and undated letter describing theft of privately owned cotton by Federal officers and J.E. Jewett in undated folder, and Alfred Reid to Hugh McCulloch, February 14, 1867, all in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 14, 1865; quotation from Chicago Tribune, in Daily Picayune, November 13, 1872; Joseph Dawson, Army Generals and Reconstruction Louisiana, 1862-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) herein after referred to as Dawson, Army Generals and Reconstruction, pp. 11, 27, and 34; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed p. 69.

The problems of promoting economic recovery and curbing racial violence were integrally intertwined. Mass unemployment characterized the region in the immediate aftermath of the war. Many among the hundreds of soldiers returning home could find no work. Farming suffered from a lack of draft animals for plowing and a blight of army worms. Almost all industrial concerns had been destroyed during the war and little capital remained available for rebuilding. Perhaps most significantly, the railroad had been completely devastated across the length of the Florida parishes.<sup>320</sup>

In June, 1865, the military returned control of the railroad to its governing board. All of the depot buildings, platforms, water stations, and storage houses, excepting the depots at Osyka, Magnolia, and Summit in southwestern Mississippi had been destroyed. Though the track remained in fair condition from New Orleans to Pontchatoula and in "usable" condition north of Brookhaven, Mississippi, the portion from Pontchatoula to Brookhaven remained completely devastated. Few serviceable locomotives remained available for use anyway. Recognizing that the railroads constituted the key to economic recovery in Louisiana, Governor Wells

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<sup>320</sup> J.R. Galtrey to Batchelor, September 5, 1867, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); J. Madison Wells to Andrew Johnson, May 27, 1865, in J. Madison Wells Papers (National Archives); Amite City Times, August 10, 1867; John Ellis to Thomas Ellis, August 10, 1867, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); "Affairs of Southern Railroads," United States House of Representatives Report, Thirty-Ninth Congress, Second Session, Report No. 34.

attacked the corruption of the military authorities. According to Wells, the armies' hand-picked directors refused to permit repair of the roads unless the stockholders released the government "from reclamations on account of the enormous sums received by its officers since the road had been in their hands."<sup>321</sup>

The dramatic changes associated with defeat, emancipation, and military rule created a profoundly perplexing state of affairs. The transition from slave to free labor seemingly necessitated a period of adjustment but the prevailing crisis demanded immediate action. Most fundamentally, recovery depended on getting people back to work. Eli Capell summarized the existing state of affairs, "there is a great confusion in the country among whites and blacks as regards hiring for next year." Capell's monthly labor record exemplified the inconsistent working conditions. Of nineteen field hands employed at his Pleasant Hill Plantation in early 1867, only four received daily wages ranging from thirteen and a half cents to seventy-five cents

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<sup>321</sup> "Affairs of Southern Railroads," United States House of Representatives Report, Thirty-Ninth Congress, Second Session, Report No. 34; see also ibid., Fortieth Congress, Second Session, Report No. 15; Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana (herein after referred to as House Journal) "Statement of Governor J. Madison Wells," Extra Session Beginning November 23, 1865, p. 14. See also J.R. Galtrey to Batchelor, September 5, 1867, for a good description of the importance local residents placed on railroads as the mechanism of regional recovery, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); Amite City Times, July 27, 1867.



a day. The others presumably worked for a share of the crop. Most worked erratically, with some laborers frequently absent for weeks at a time. Only five of those employed in March 1867 continued to work for Capell in March of the following year. Capell's records exhibit increasing frustration with his laborers. In December 1866 he confided in his diary, "I am completely disgusted with free negroes." One week later he wrote, "negroes very unsettled won't say what they are going to do I never saw such a state of things. Not one on my place except old Tone has as yet said they would stay on with me."<sup>322</sup>

The freedmen understandably proved reluctant to continue serving their former masters in what amounted to a semi-servile state. The initial contract between Joseph Embree and his laborers contained many features of the slave system. Embree's employees worked from dawn to dark with a portion of their salary deducted if the overseer judged their work inferior. Laborers were forbidden to ride his animals or curse in his presence, and leaving the plantation without permission resulted in a stiff fine. This situation constituted an effort to keep the freedmen as close to slavery as possible. But the tendency of many blacks to place work second to enjoying their new found freedom helped

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<sup>322</sup> Diary of Eli Capell, December 30 and 31, 1866, January 7, 1867, Eli Capell's Laborer's Record Book, Pleasant Hill Plantation, Book No. 8, 1867-1885, all in Capell Papers (LLMVC).

expose a crucial flaw of Reconstruction and aggravated the prevailing circumstances. Owning no land, blacks lacked the means to achieve the self-sufficiency central to the piney-woods freemen's existence. Without funds to purchase food or land on which to grow it, many soon became desperate. The Freedmen's Bureau provided temporary relief to some but its resources proved woefully inadequate to sustain a significant portion of the state's population indefinitely. As a result, many blacks resorted to stealing privately owned livestock, primarily hogs, in order to survive. Demonstrating the severity of this problem Dustin Willard declared, "the negroes is doing very bad here there is but a few that will work for a living but steal all the time, on the river it is worse than it is on the hills, there is scarcely any hogs in the country and but few cows. I do believe they will starve us all for there is no law that can reach them." Congressional investigators reported that blacks, accustomed to having everything provided by their former masters, "have taken to filching and stealing fruit, vegetables, and poultry so that the raising of these items literally had to be abandoned to the great distress of the white people." Eli Capel killed his sixteen remaining hogs rather than see them stolen like most of his others. In the winter of 1867 Freedmen's Bureau agents at Clinton, Amite City, and

Madisonville reported extremely high levels of tension between the races due to the theft of poultry and hogs.<sup>323</sup>

Like many areas of the South in the immediate post-war period, eastern Louisiana constituted a society adrift with no clear sense of direction. Central to the prevailing chaotic circumstances was an absence of effective leadership. John Ellis summarized the lack of direction in a letter to his brother Tom. "We have no leader, no one to stand forth with honesty and capacity and will to thwart the tempest. These whom we call leaders are sunk in apathy or afraid to rise." Initially it appeared that President Andrew Johnson's policy toward the defeated Confederates would disenfranchise a large percentage of the pre-war elite. Johnson's pardon program excluded higher ranking Confederate civil and military officials as well as those possessing estates valued

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<sup>323</sup> Dustin Willard to Micajah Wilkinson, March 18, 1868, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (LLMVC); Contract agreement between Joseph Embree and his laborers, dated February 1866, in Joseph Embree Papers (LLMVC); "Report of the Special Congressional Investigating Committee of Three," Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Forty-Third Congress, Second Session, House Report No. 101 (1657), pp. 4-20, herein after referred to as "Report of the Special Congressional Investigating Committee of Three, 1874". The congressional investigating teams which examined conditions in the South in this period almost always constituted partisan bodies collecting only that evidence which supported the position of their party. Diary of Eli Capell, January 4, 1867, in Capell Papers (*ibid.*); Letters to Freedmen's Bureau Headquarters at New Orleans from: James DeGrey agent at Clinton, November 10, 1867, W.H. Haugen agent at Madisonville, December 31, 1867, and James Hough agent at Amite City, December 31, 1867, in "Freedmen's Bureau Reports" (National Archives); Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," Journal of Southern History, XLI, No.2, p. 164.

at \$20,000 or more. Yet by September, 1865, Johnson had abandoned his policy of cautiously granting pardons and instead issued them wholesale, thereby nullifying much of the substance of the pardon program.<sup>324</sup>

But the war itself had played havoc with the antebellum elite of the Florida parishes. Federal raiders targeted the property of the "sesech" aristocracy and some of what survived had been confiscated. As a result many of the old ruling order, overwhelmed by personal problems, withdrew from public service. Others found it unacceptable to stand for office in the turmoil of the post-war period. B.W. Clark considered the very idea of serving blacks and shirkers repulsive. According to Clark, "electioneering is an uphill battle with me under any circumstances and it would be especially disagreeable for me to go smiling about some rascally deserter and informing him that I would be happy to obtain his vote, when in reality it would afford me great satisfaction to give him a good kicking." The East Feliciana Patriot observed that men about Jackson and Clinton directed their energies toward financial recovery rather than

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<sup>324</sup> E. John Ellis to Tom, January 29, 1870, see also John to Tom, January 9, 1870, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 60 and 63; Jonathan Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty Under Lincoln and Johnson: The Restoration of the Confederates to Their Rights and Privileges (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953) pp. 116-117 and 138-141, herein after referred to as Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty; Eric Foner, Reconstruction America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988) pp. 190-191.

politics. Still others among the antebellum elite succumbed to the ravages of the war. J.R. Galtrey noted that most of the local power brokers in Amite County, Mississippi, including "Squire Reeves and Mr. Weathersby" died during the course of the war adding "everything about here wears the air of dilapidation and decay."<sup>325</sup>

Although death, disenfranchisement, and financial ruin certainly served to remove many from the political spectrum, these issues alone do not account for the wholesale transformation of elected officials in the Florida parishes. Though ex-Confederates dominated the legislative election of November 1865, few of them had served in the prewar period. Only G.W. Munday of East Feliciana and J.H. Collins of West Feliciana had any prewar experience among those elected from the Florida parishes. Moreover, few of the candidates elected in the piney-woods parishes came from the pre-war planter elite. Though Washington and St.Tammany parishes returned farmers to the lower house, only Jacob Magee of Washington possessed the wealth necessary in 1860 to classify as a planter. The balance of legislators elected from the piney woods came from the emerging merchant and professional class. They included among their ranks lawyers, court recorders, and lumbermen. Analogous circumstances prevailed

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<sup>325</sup> J.R. Galtrey to Dear Uncle Grip, September 5, 1867, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); B.W. Clark to Eugene Hunter, July 23, 1865, in Hunter-Taylor Family Papers (*ibid.*); Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, November 20, 1869; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 54-55 and 64-65.

in regional and municipal elections in the piney woods. Only one of the six sitting members of the St. Tammany Parish police jury retained his seat in the immediate post-war period. In Greensburg Mayor Henry Williams, a member of one of the largest and most affluent families in the parish, was replaced by local merchant C.H. Hyde. Similarly in Amite City the mayor and three out of five councilmen failed to retain their seats.<sup>326</sup>

A perception of powerlessness contributed to the political transformation in the Florida parishes. The presence of Federal garrisons at Baton Rouge, Bayou Sara, Clinton, and Amite City served as a constant reminder that real power rested with an army of occupation. Periodically these garrisons dispatched cavalry contingents to Franklinton, Greensburg, Springfield, and Covington, demonstrating the Federal presence throughout the territory. Local governing bodies and the courts functioned under the close scrutiny of resident Federal officials. In early 1867

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<sup>326</sup> House Journal 1860, 1864, and 1865; Senate Journal 1856, 1860, 1864, and 1865; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, "Heads of Households;" Records of the Louisiana State Government, 1850-1888, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Doc.F-75, Roll 9 (National Archives); St Tammany parish police jury minutes, January 1865 session, March 6, 1865 lists sitting members, see also August 1865 and August 1866 sessions (LLMVC). Although F.A. Cousin, police jury president in 1865, also retained his seat on the jury he was decisively defeated in his bid to secure reelection as president and never attended a session during the following year. Amite City Times, July 27, 1867; Amite City Council Minute Book, entries June 1863-July 1866 (Amite City Hall); Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, "Heads of Households."

General Philip Sheridan, commanding the Fifth Military District, issued a proclamation which confirmed the impotence of local civil authority. According to the decree "existing civil functionaries will be continued but simply provisionally and subject to removal should their conduct not comport with the military commanders view of their duty." Similarly the local courts exercised little realistic authority. In the summer of 1865 General E.R.S. Canby pronounced that state courts could resume their duties with the exception of cases involving soldiers or civil officials affiliated with the United States government. William P. Mellen urged the military authorities to submit cases only to those state courts that appeared sympathetic to the interests of Washington. The Greensburg Journal summarized the opinion of many local residents when it declared the Federals' usurpation of local authority a violation of the fundamental tenants of republicanism. "Our political position is already sufficiently humiliating, even if our state officials use their utmost energies and talents to conceal the fact that the powers at Washington to which we owe allegiance are adverse to state sovereignty and constitutional liberty."<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Greensburg Journal, February 23, 1866; Greensburg Weekly Star and Journal, April 27, 1867; Proclamation of General Philip Sheridan reprinted in Clinton Feliciana Democrat, March 21, 1867, found in J.G. Kilbourne Record Book No. 23; Proclamation from Headquarters Department of the Gulf signed by General E.R.S. Canby, June 27, 1865, and letter William P. Mellen to B.F. Flanders, April 27, 1866, in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC).

The absolute control exercised by the United States military authorities did further the changing political climate, particularly so among the remnants of the planter elite who deeply resented the collapse of their commanding power in state government. But the revival of the societal commitment to a peculiarly piney-woods republicanism contributed in a more substantive sense to changing attitudes in the eastern parishes. From the late 1830's to the early 1850's the centrality of the republican tradition to piney-woods perspectives promoted increasing disillusionment with planter-dominated government. Planter power brokers had, however, skillfully manipulated the sectional crisis and the omnipresent fear of slave unrest to create an "us versus them" mentality. This maneuver in turn necessitated continuing plain folk acceptance of the rule of their planter protectors.

But the catastrophe that secession and the war represented for all white social classes in eastern Louisiana encouraged the plain folk to reassess their fealty to the planters. Linus Parker declared that his reflection upon the events leading to secession and its results had led him to "wonder at the hollowness of the whole affair." In a chilling reference to the piney-woods tradition of political powerlessness the Greensburg Weekly Star and Journal urged its readers to action by declaring "you will have a government made for you if you do not make it for yourself."



The St. Helena Echo reminded the people that the man who works the land has always been oppressed by "class legislation" initiated by the "lordly planters." Calls for the revival of the independent self-sufficient lifestyle which characterized the region in less complicated times proved a popular theme of the piney-woods press during the immediate post war period. The Greensburg Journal exhorted a revival of Jeffersonian principles to liberate the people from the manipulation which led to war, ruin, and subsequent exploitation by Yankees proclaiming "home manufacturing is the true road to independence." Likewise the Amite City Democrat reminded its readers of the near Utopian existence inherent in the independent and self-sufficient piney-woods lifestyle. Many newspapers equated the prevailing deprivation with the people's abandonment of self-sufficiency for the unpredictable and dependent circumstances of the market economy. The East Feliciana Patriot urged farmers to plant corn not cotton. "We never did right in so tilling our soil as to enrich others at our expense and we can never reach that level of independence as long as we allow that great mine of wealth, our soil lie dormant. The surest way of relieving ourselves of debt and becoming independent is to raise everything our soil and climate can afford for human consumption."<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Linus Parker to John Burruss, September 27, 1865, in John C. Burruss Papers (LLMVC); Greensburg Weekly Star and Journal, April 27, 1867; St. Helena Echo, September 12, 1891;

The resurgent republican ideal demanded that piney-woods farmers free themselves from all agents of exploitation. This included their Yankee conquerors as well as their planter overlords, whom many plain folk appeared increasingly willing to believe had manipulated them. Osyka resident J.W. Courtney argued that the poor had fought and suffered through the war merely to support the lifestyle of the rich. Proclaiming his refusal to submit further to planter selfishness Courtney declared, "I am determined in my mind not to serve them [planters] any longer they have allways (sic) made laws to oppress the poor." Cotton increasingly came to be seen as the tool for exploiting the less privileged. Deliverance from the shackles of King Cotton became synonymous with independence in the piney-woods press. The St. Helena Echo declared "wealth and prosperity will come only through independence and independence will come only through agricultural diversity." Other country newspapers such as the East Feliciana Patriot and Magnolia Gazette urged farmers to plant food crops in order to break the cycle of dependence and limit the wealth of rich manufacturers.<sup>329</sup>

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Greensburg Journal, July 20, 1866; Amite City Democrat, October 2, 1875; Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, April 27, 1867, November 13, 1869, and July 2, 1870.

<sup>329</sup> J.W. Courtney to My dear brothers and sisters, February 7, 1864, in Joel A. Stokes Papers (LLMVC); Greensburg St. Helena Echo, August 4, 1889, January 23, 1892, January 30, 1892 and January 31, 1896; Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, April 27, 1867, November 13, 1869, and July 2, 1870; Magnolia Gazette, April 12, 1883; Kentwood Commercial, February 26, 1898.

Calls for economic independence, coupled with the results of the immediate post-war elections and the commanding presence of the Federal military, created conditions favorable to political realignment in eastern Louisiana. But as they had in the 1850's, the planters would again delay the arrival of realistic democracy in the piney woods by identifying and promoting fear of another common enemy of southern whites. Planter preeminence was now subject to an alliance with the increasingly powerful merchant-professional class who also demanded racial unity and home rule. But the importance of the old elite surged in the face of a determined common enemy. Henry Clay Warmoth, a Republican organizer and successor to Governor Wells, correctly surmised that the old elite intentionally fostered hatred in order to maintain their power. According to Warmoth, Louisiana's problem lay "in the contumacy of the old ruling aristocracy, who believe that they were born to govern, without question, not only their slaves but the masses of the white people." By capitalizing on reinforced racial fears and lingering hatred for the Yankees the elite again presented themselves as the protectors of the common man. Carpetbaggers, northerners who supposedly carried all their belongings in a sack as they came south to exploit the defeated region, and local people who supported the efforts of the Republican party, known derisively as scalawags, provided excellent scapegoats. The old elite aggressively

promoted contempt for the Republicans and their supporters. One Democratic party circular declared, "most ill disposed negroes are not half so much deserving our aversion and non-intercourse with them as the debased whites who encourage and aid them, and who become through their votes the office holding oppressors of the people. Whatever of resentment you have should be felt toward the latter and not the colored men." Such statements, typical in the immediate post-war period, implied that the Republicans constituted the real enemy not the freedmen. And, by joining the old elite in vanquishing the power of these intruders the common people could again enjoy the fruits of their adherence to the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian tradition. Although significant evidence demonstrates that the piney-woods aversion for rule of the elite had resurfaced, racial fears and the new common enemy would again delay the ramifications of this resentment.<sup>330</sup>

Fortunately for the battered ranks of the old elite and their reluctant allies, the Republicans would simplify the task of maintaining and expanding the remnants of their power. J. Madison Wells became governor in early 1865 when the Unionist Michael Hahn was elected to fill a seat in the

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<sup>330</sup> Copy of Democratic Party circular and statement of Henry Clay Warmoth found in "Report of the Joint Committee of the General Assembly of Louisiana on the Conduct of the Late Elections and the Condition of Peace and Order in the State," Special Report to the Louisiana Legislature, 1869, pp. 7 and 22-23.

United States Senate. He then secured election as chief executive in his own right in November 1865, defeating an absentee Henry W. Allen who had fled the country following the collapse of Confederate resistance. Wells, a native of Rapides Parish, had remained a consistent Unionist throughout the war. Though he shared many of the racial views of his Democratic counterparts, Wells emerged as one of a score of political chameleons whose machinations added to the confusion that prevailed in postwar Louisiana. Convinced that the ex-Confederates would emerge as the real power brokers, he initially made appointments and supported legislation favorable to that group. But the growing strength of the Radical Republicans, led by the youthful carpetbagger Henry Clay Warmoth, induced Wells to shift his allegiance frequently. In March, 1867, Congress overcame Johnson's veto and divided the South into five military districts; General Philip Sheridan became the commander of the fifth district which encompassed Louisiana and Texas. By the spring of 1867 Wells' inconsistency had alienated virtually everyone, prompting an exasperated General Sheridan to remove him from office. In his place Sheridan appointed New Hampshire-born Benjamin F. Flanders whose seven month tenure signalled the end of Presidential Reconstruction and the advent of Military Reconstruction in Louisiana.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Greensburg Journal, February 23, 1866; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 71, 80-82, 103-104, and 140; Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, June 30, 1866; New Orleans Daily

The events contributing to the introduction of Military or Radical Reconstruction are well documented.<sup>332</sup> The primacy of racial fears prompted all but Tennessee among the southern states to reject the Fourteenth Amendment. Rather than see the South returned to the fold with its antebellum power structure intact, Congress initiated a series of acts designed to produce substantive change in the former Confederacy.

The Congressional plan required a new registration of voters, a measure intended to disenfranchise secessionist leaders. Moreover, black enfranchisement provided the best means for the freedmen to secure their rights as citizens and to promote the fortunes of the Republican Party in the South. The measure approved by Congress on March 2, 1867 denied the vote to thousands of ex-Confederate civil and military officials. Everyone who had served the Confederacy from beef inspectors to sextons of cemeteries found themselves subject to disqualification under the new act. Registrars, who owed

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Picayune, February 8 and 9, 1867; Dawson, Army Generals and Reconstruction p. 44.

<sup>332</sup> David H. Donald, The Politics of Reconstruction, 1863-1867 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); William M. Evans, Ballots and Fence Rails: Reconstruction on the Lower Cape Fear (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967) Eric Foner, Reconstruction America's Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Kenneth Stampp, Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (New York: Knopf, 1965); Ted Tunnell, Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

their tenures to Radical Republicans, were given ample discretionary powers to exclude as many Democratic voters as possible. Sheridan directed that the order be interpreted so as to include virtually all ex-Confederates of any standing. His proclamation declared, "Registrars will give the most rigid interpretation to the law and exclude from registration every person about whose right to vote there may be doubt." Broad and intentionally vague categories for disqualification included "all who had advocated treason or submitted treasonous articles to papers," and "all who held any office, civil or military, for one year or more." Republican registrars regularly consulted local Unionists to ascertain the political affiliation of many ex-Confederates before determining their eligibility. In parishes where it proved difficult to locate Unionists to act as registrars, Union soldiers or Freedmens Bureau agents performed this service. These measures served to disenfranchise temporarily a decisive proportion of local whites.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Fortieth Congress, Second Session, Vol. 17, 1867-1868, Exec. Doc. No. 291; Instructions to Supervisors of Registration With a Transcript of the Constitutional, Naturalization, and Other Laws Pertaining to the Qualification of Electors, Prepared by the Board of Registration (New Orleans: A.L. Lee State Printer, 1868) pp. 6-7. Testimony of John H. Pipes, pp. 384-392, and Martial Amacker, pp. 392-397, delivered before a Congressional investigating commission May 1869, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," No. 1, 1869, House Committee on Elections, testimony collected by Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana, May-June 1869, herein after referred to as "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869" (National Archives); Charles E. Kennon to

White conservative efforts to prevail in peace where they had failed in war necessitated the actions of the Radical Republicans in Congress. But disfranchising scores of men imbued with a fierce republican tradition and just emerging from a brutal war had enormous implications which the Republicans either failed to foresee or underestimated. Local newspapers blasted the Republicans for "perpetuating disunion" and "trampling upon the fundamental virtues of the Constitution." As reports circulated that disqualification included all road overseers, school directors, commissioners of election, sheriffs' deputies, steamboat pilots, and others who held seemingly insignificant positions before the war but had served in the Confederate army or civil service, passions reached a fever pitch. The Amite City Times relentlessly condemned efforts to emasculate the white South and the concomitant delivery of local government into the hands of opportunistic carpetbaggers and their minions "from the land of the gorilla and the ape." The Times and other state papers also strongly urged those permitted to vote to do so. On the day appointed for the election to approve a

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John Ellis, September 22, 1870, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty pp. 333-335; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 132, 139, and 143; Dawson, Army Generals and Reconstruction p. 49; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 21 and June 28, 1867; New Orleans Tribune, July 23, 1867, called for loyal persons to help produce evidence to "erase the rebels" from the voters rolls. Sheridan chose to view the United States Attorney General's narrow interpretation of the law as merely an opinion, not a statement of policy.



constitutional convention, the New Orleans Daily Picayune estimated that one half of the white voters of the state had been denied the suffrage.<sup>334</sup>

The results of the constitutional-convention election appeared to confirm the massive disfranchisement of white voters. The convention secured approval by a vote of 75,083 to 4,006. Republicans elected ninety-six of the ninety-eight delegates with blacks making up one-half of that number. But this election does not provide an adequate indication of the level of disfranchisement. Hopelessness and disgust served to keep most whites away from the polls. Many recognized that conservatives had no chance for success while others hoped that a low turnout would nullify the election results. Still others could not yet accept the idea of voting alongside blacks. By the day of the election even the normally enthusiastic Daily Picayune admitted that it too had abandoned hope for a conservative victory.<sup>335</sup>

The April 1868 state and constitutional ratification election provides a much more definitive statement on the

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<sup>334</sup> Amite City Times, July 27, August 10, and August 31, 1867; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 21, June 28, and September 27, 1867; Charles E. Kennon to John Ellis, September 22, 1870, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>335</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 27, 1867; Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention for Framing a Constitution for the State of Louisiana, 1867-1868 (New Orleans: J.B. Roudanez and Co., 1868) herein after referred to as Constitutional Convention Proceedings, 1868; Charles Vincent, "Negro Leadership and Programs in the Constitutional Convention of 1868," Louisiana History, X, No. 4, pp. 339-351; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 146-148.

level of disfranchisement. Though far from revolutionary, by Louisiana standards the Constitution of 1868 represented a radical departure from the past. White anger increased as the document, written by and reflecting almost exclusively the views of blacks, Yankees, and scalawags, became public. Thousands who had avoided the earlier election now determined to participate. The Daily Picayune urged readers to vote against the document designed to benefit "the camp followers left behind by the Federal army and a lot of white trash of southern origin." The gubernatorial candidacy of the carpetbagger Henry Clay Warmoth, whose public comments to black audiences had gained him notoriety as a dangerous radical, also encouraged white conservative participation. Significantly, although Warmoth's opponent James G. Taliaferro represented a reputedly more radical faction of the Republicans, thousands of white Democrats supported his candidacy merely because he was a native of Louisiana.<sup>336</sup>

The Republicans reported that only 2,169 men had been rejected outright by the registrars. Published lists of voters denied registration which appeared in local newspapers indicate that the figure was considerably higher. Moreover

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<sup>336</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 15 and 17, 1868; Constitutional Convention Proceedings, 1868; Thomas G. Davidson to James Taliaferro, April 25, 1868, in James G. Taliaferro Papers (LLMVC); Testimony of Charles E. Kennon, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869;" Amite City Times, August 31, 1867; Vincent, "Negro Leadership and Programs" pp. 339-351; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed p. 151.

public awareness that General Sheridan demanded a rigid application of the law probably discouraged many from subjecting themselves to the humiliation of rejection. Returns show that approximately 36,029 whites voted in the April 1868 election. This figure constituted slightly more than forty-one percent of adult white males, a dramatic decrease in voter turnout from elections in the late 1850s. Thus, although claims that fifty percent of white males had been denied the suffrage are almost certainly exaggerated, following the implementation of the Reconstruction acts of 1867 nearly one third fewer whites voted. Both the constitution and Warmoth secured the voters approval by comfortable majorities. East Baton Rouge, Livingston, St. Helena, and Washington parishes joined sixteen primarily upstate cotton and Sabine River region parishes in rejecting the constitution.<sup>337</sup>

By disfranchising many among the pre-war elite the Republicans provided the old aristocracy with a powerful propaganda tool. Denying landholding freemen the suffrage constituted a fundamental violation of the piney-woods tradition of republicanism. The old elite emerged as victims

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<sup>337</sup> Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, "Population", p. 629; Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington: United States Bureau of Census, 1975) Vol. II, p. 1072; Donald W. Davis, "Ratification of the Constitution of 1868 - Record of Votes," Louisiana History, VI, No. 3, pp. 301-305; Amite City Times, September 28, 1867; New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 27, 1867; Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty pp. 333-335; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed, pp. 143-144.

of tyrannical outsiders who sought not only to create equality among the races but indeed to make blacks dominant in order to serve their own special ends. This transition would prove decisive in determining the outcome of Radical Reconstruction through large areas of the South. Racial solidarity and hostility to outsiders again secured the old elite from the potential for social upheaval. Latent antagonism between white social classes would remain dormant until the common enemy was subdued.

Following the election the Republicans moved swiftly to consolidate their power. The legislature granted the governor the authority to fill vacant political positions and replace officials considered ineligible. Warmoth accordingly removed many elected officials on the state, parish, and municipal level and replaced them with party loyalists. The expulsions alienated many of the business and professional men who filled the immediate postwar void of elected officials. The disaffected consequently flocked to the battered ranks of the old elite. Warmoth further antagonized Florida parish conservatives by appointing scores of Federal soldiers, Freedman's Bureau agents, and local Republicans with questionable ethical backgrounds to responsible positions. Other clearly incompetent Republicans gained office either by election or appointment. H.H. Bankston, facing several indictments for fraud and embezzlement of municipal funds, secured appointment as mayor of Amite City.

Freedman's Bureau agent James DeGrey was appointed sheriff of East Feliciana despite his limited knowledge of the people and region. In St. Tammany, Warmoth appointed a crippled illiterate black, named Populus, parish tax collector to spite an opponent within his own party. Perhaps the greatest regional farce occurred in St. Helena where an uneducated field hand, albeit Republican organizer, John Kemp, secured election as parish coroner.<sup>338</sup>

The Republican's determination to fill positions exclusively with party loyalists necessarily created problems. Many of those appointed to responsible positions found themselves incapable of performing their duties. An exchange between James H. George, elected district judge from St. Helena, and members of a Congressional sub-committee investigating conditions in Louisiana symbolized this problem.

Q - Do you think opposition to you arose mainly from politics?

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<sup>338</sup> Senate Journal, Executive Sessions June 1868 and January 1869; Amite City Council Minute Book, entries June 1863 through February 1867 (Amite City Hall); Testimony of H.H. Bankston, Thomas C.W. Ellis, James H. George, John H. Pipes, Robert Babington, R.F. Briggs, and Johnson E. Yerks, all in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869;" James DeGrey to Freedman's Bureau Headquarters at New Orleans, April 18 and 30, 1868, in Freedman's Bureau Reports (National Archives); Isaac Evans to James G. Taliaferro, February 28, 1870, in James G. Taliaferro Letters (LLMVC); John to Tom Ellis, June 13, 1872, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, July 4 and August 2, 1872; Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed p. 176.

A - It mainly arose from politics. The lawyers held a meeting and agreed not to practice under me.

Q - Why?

A - Two reasons, one that I was ineligible and another that I was elected by negroes.

Q - How were you ineligible?

A - For lack of a knowledge of the law.

Q - Then you mean you were incompetent?

A - Yes, that is what I mean.<sup>339</sup>

Under the prevailing circumstances the Republicans naturally faced acute limitations in resources. But their determination to rule absolutely, regardless of the quality of local government, proved both provocative and fateful. Most local whites viewed the changing circumstances not merely as a loss of control over their own destiny, but as an affront to the very idea of order and government. And in eastern Louisiana, as in other areas of the South, the last months of the war had demonstrated an effective means of dealing with a perceived oppressor.

But for blacks and white Republicans the advent of Radical Reconstruction represented an unprecedented opportunity. With the future in their own hands few would willingly relinquish their new found power, and many would fight to retain it. Most regarded the limitations of some of

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<sup>339</sup> Testimony of James H. George, "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869."

their number as a product of decades of misrule and brutal oppression. With such a vast chasm between the opponents the struggle was certain to be painful.

Violence characterized the Florida parishes from the very outset of Reconstruction. Freedmen's Bureau agents, Federal soldiers, and blacks all suffered frequent attacks. The day after the second attempt on his life Lieutenant Edward Ehrlich reported, "outrages are committed daily at Amite City." During the summer and fall of 1865 at least sixteen shootings and stabbings occurred in the eastern Florida parishes. Dozens of incidents of assault, battery, and intimidation also were reported. In the few cases local law enforcement sought to prosecute it failed miserably, often with comical dimensions. A jury acquitted George Story of shooting a black woman based on his assertion that he was actually shooting at another man down the street from the victim. The jury apparently not only lacked sympathy for the victim but also considered Story's intentions justifiable.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Letters received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from: James Hough, agent at Amite City, December 12 and 20, 1867, Lieutenant Edward Ehrlich, agent at Amite City, September 18, 1865 (three letters), and December 19, 20, 21, 23, and 26, 1865 (multiple letters), General A.J. Edgerton, September 6, 1866, Captain H.H. Rouse, agent at Amite City, September 9, 1865, James DeGrey, agent at Clinton, April 20, June 20, and October 7, 1867, W.H. Haugen, agent at Madisonville, October 10, 1867, A.F. Hayden to Edward Ehrlich, October 1865, all in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives). Amite City Times, August 10 and 31, 1867; Colonel George Forsyth to Judge of District Court at Covington, May 27, 1867, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

The Federals also proved incapable of dealing with the scope of the violence. Insufficient manpower and a sluggish bureaucracy insured that before enough evidence could be gathered in one case several more startling incidents had occurred. Civil authorities refused to share information from ongoing criminal investigations with Federal troops and only reluctantly responded to Federal demands. The vast majority of local whites refused to cooperate with Federal authorities in any way. When summoned to appear before the local Freedmen's Bureau agent, Amite City resident Mark Day responded simply, "to hell with the Yankee."<sup>341</sup>

Although blacks suffered greatly from acts of violence, many proved willing to defend themselves, and others resorted to violence to obtain their own ends. Many blacks who spoke in support of the Democrats became victims of black-on-black terror. Only moments after Stephen Durden, a black resident of Livingston Parish, completed a speech supporting the Democrats, a group of freedmen shot and killed him on a public highway. Such incidents increased in the wake of the September 1867 election. After touring Washington Parish, Freedmen's Bureau agent W.H. Haugen observed that many blacks refused to work, instead preferring to steal and "are a perfect terror to the country." Armed freedmen also seized several plantations in East Feliciana and St. Helena parishes

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<sup>341</sup> Report of James Hough, agent at Amite City, to Freedmen's Bureau headquarters at New Orleans, December 12, 1867, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives).



threatening to kill anyone who interfered with their operations. Under the heading "An Ugly Sight," the Amite City Democrat described the passion of a particular black woman for carrying "a tremendous navy six shooter" with her about the streets of Amite City in search of a "white man who gave her a drubbing." The article concluded, "we hope some of her colored friends will prevail upon her to leave the ugly weapon at home and use the law to protect her." White Republican officials were often accused of instigating acts of violence. Governor Wells faced accusations that he provided immunity to those who murdered his political enemies.<sup>342</sup>

The level of violence increased dramatically with the emergence of several paramilitary organizations. Prior to this development, despite the presence of numerous "rifle clubs" and other politically inclined groups, most violent incidents had been random acts between individuals. During the spring and summer of 1867, Republican organizers from New

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<sup>342</sup> Amite City Democrat, November 20, 1875; Amite City Times, August 31, 1867; "Register of Murders and Outrages Committed," description of Stephen Durden murder August 12, 1868, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports; letters received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from: W.H. Haugen, January 20 and February 29, 1868, James Hough, August 10, 31, and September 30, 1867, James DeGrey, October 10, 1867, and message received from Lieutenant Colonel G.W. Mitchell, December 20, 1867, ibid. Testimony taken by congressional sub-committee from: William H. Wilder pp. 91-94, Henry Clay Warmoth p. 510, and Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869; W.H. Sparks to James G. Taliaferro, March 6, 1869, in James G. Taliaferro Papers (LLMVC).

Orleans worked aggressively to establish Loyal League clubs among the blacks in eastern Louisiana. Increasing acts of violence against the freedmen and inequitable labor practices encouraged a newfound militancy and willingness to defend themselves. Throughout the summer of 1867, local Freedmen's Bureau agents and Federal officers reported growing political agitation among the freedmen. White residents became increasingly tense with the discovery of each new "incendiary" tract issued by the New Orleans Radical Club headed by Henry Clay Warmoth and others. Warmoth created near panic in February 1868 when he proclaimed before a black audience in New Orleans that ex-Confederates "are traitors and treason under the Constitution is punishable by death." Carpetbagger A.J. Sypher admitted that his formation of a black militia in Rapides Parish "greatly exasperated the majority of the white people in the parish." By August 1867 Freedmen's Bureau agent James Hough reported that blacks increasingly left work to attend inflammatory political meetings "where incompetent negroes create insubordinate feelings." Hough further noted that armed groups of blacks regularly established picket posts along the public roads and "travellers passing by are halted and subjected to annoyance." Suspicions of impending trouble became a reality

during the volatile circumstances surrounding the September 1867 election.<sup>343</sup>

One of the most militant black paramilitary organizations emerged in western St. Helena Parish. This Loyal League Club, led by a mulatto farmer named Thomas Turner, created consternation by publicly parading with arms and threatening local whites. James Hough described Turner as "very troublesome and the terror of all whites in his neighborhood." In the summer of 1867 Turner announced that he had received authority from the commanding officer of the local Federal garrison "to hang all the whites." He posted pickets on the roads in lower St. Helena who loudly proclaimed their intentions. On the eve of the September 27, 1867 election Turner mobilized his forces. Rather than marching on Greensburg as local residents expected, Turner instead

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<sup>343</sup> Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1868, p. 26; and Warmoth comments in ibid., "Minority Report," 1869, p. XL; letters received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from: James Hough, agent at Amite City, August 10 and 31, and September 30, 1867, A. Finch, agent at Bayou Sara, September 21, 1867, James DeGrey, agent at Clinton, August 20, 1867, all in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives); Amite City Times, August 31, 1867; Woodville The Woodville Sentinel, August 21, 1871. Testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from: James H. George, pp. 41 and 95, John H. Pipes, pp. 384-392, Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, Amos Kent, pp. 223-227, all in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869. John Ellis to Tom Ellis, August 10, 1867, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 5 and October 8, 1868; Otis A. Singletary, "The Negro Militia Movement During Radical Reconstruction," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1949) pp. vi and 6-12; James Stewart McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," unpublished manuscript found in James S. McGehee Papers (LLMVC).

headed for Amite City. In the afternoon of September 27, Turner arrived outside of Amite City at the head of an armed band which estimates placed at anywhere from 50 to 250. Major James Offley, commanding the Federal garrison, informed the militiamen that they would not be permitted to enter the town as an armed body. But to the horror of local whites, Offley permitted the blacks to conceal their weapons and march into town en masse. Turner's men voted without incident then camped on the outskirts of town for several days as a demonstration of their resolve.<sup>344</sup>

In permitting Turner's militia to enter Amite City as an organized body and camp on the outskirts of town Offley created panic among local whites. Turner had boasted that he was authorized to hang any whites who interfered with his group, and many residents considered the Federal commander's actions irrational. Few had forgotten that in the summer of 1866 black Federal soldiers had rounded up suspected white criminals in Clinton and threatened to kill the prisoners if anyone hindered their arrest. Many also remained outraged that Yankee planters had provided arms to many of their black laborers. The Amite City Times and other local newspapers angrily contrasted General Sheridan's orders to break up

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<sup>344</sup> James Hough, agent at Amite City, to Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans, September 30, 1867, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports; testimony taken by a congressional subcommittee from John H. Pipes, pp. 384-392, Amos Kent, pp. 223-227, and Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869; Amite City Times, August 31, 1867.

meetings supporting hospitals and monuments for Confederate veterans with his tolerance of secret meetings by armed blacks. The Times, however, continued to profess confidence in Major Offley's intentions but declared, "the whites can not and will not sit idle and see their families butchered by barbarians. Self defense is God's gift - a deduction from the gift of existence itself."<sup>345</sup>

Similar processions by armed groups of blacks panicked whites statewide. Following a mass demonstration by armed freedmen who defied civil authorities and threatened to burn the town of Breaux Bridge in St. Martin Parish, Alexandre DeClouet confided in his diary "much anxiety felt by all." DeClouet noted a counter demonstration by whites a few days later had attracted 1,200 supporters. A new organization called Knights of the White Camellia had been a conspicuous presence at this later meeting. Tom Ellis summarized the perspective of local whites to a congressional investigating commission declaring, "this organization on their (blacks) part called for organization on our part."<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Amite City Times, August 31, 1867; Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, July 21, 1866; James Stewart McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," in James Stewart McGehee Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>346</sup> Alexandre DeClouet Diary, Vol. 3, September 20-24, in Alexandre DeClouet Papers (LLMVC); Testimony of Thomas C.W. Ellis before a congressional sub-committee, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869, pp. 98-110; James Stewart McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," in James S. McGehee Papers (LLMVC).

Limited evidence does indicate that secret white paramilitary organizations functioned in Louisiana prior to the winter of 1867-1868. In a November 1865 address to the state legislature Governor Wells announced, "secret political associations, the members of which are bound to each other by strange oaths, and recognize each other by signs and passwords, are being revived in this city (New Orleans) with affiliations in the parishes throughout the state." Wells failed to speculate on the motives of these secret organizations nor did he provide any evidence to support his allegations. But if the evidence is sparse concerning white paramilitary organizations statewide, even less exists to indicate their presence in the Florida parishes prior to the first months of 1868. The explosive conditions surrounding the elections in the fall of 1867 and the spring of 1868 promoted the rapid growth of white secret societies across Louisiana. The Knights of the White Camellia and the Ku Klux Klan constituted the principal groups to emerge in this period.<sup>347</sup>

Historians have frequently misunderstood the relationship between these two white supremacy organizations. Despite the recurrent misconceptions, both groups functioned separately with different methods, if not purposes. In the winter of 1867-1868 the first reports of a Ku Klux Klan in

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<sup>347</sup> House Journal, Extra Session November, 1865, "Address of Governor Wells," p. 13.

Louisiana began to circulate. Organized in Tennessee in 1866, the Klan initially functioned as a social club for Confederate veterans. Yet by early 1867 Klan members recognized that their secrecy and mysticism enabled them to function effectively as regulators. By the spring of 1868 ample evidence suggests that several Klan dens existed in the Florida parishes as well as in upstate Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. The Klan combined an unqualified commitment to white supremacy with a murderous contempt for aspiring blacks and white Republicans. Terror served as the weapon of choice for Klansmen. Murder, arson, and intimidation all played an integral role in the Klan's nightly adventures. Their violent activities demanded absolute secrecy; few ever admitted membership. Klansmen in eastern Louisiana conformed to the stereotype of white-hooded and shrouded specters who travelled late at night and terrorized with impunity.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Limited evidence concerning the Ku Klux Klan's presence and activities in Louisiana has caused some historians to speculate that it either did not exist as an organized body during Reconstruction or that it functioned under the name Knights of the White Camellia. See Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed, p. 145; Tunnell, Crucible of Reconstruction, p. 6; George Rable But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984) p. 71. Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. xxxi-xxxii, 83-86, and 147-156. Dustin Williard to Micajah Wilkinson, March 8, 1868, in Micajah Wilkinson Papers (LLMVC); Diary of Willie Dixon, entries February 20 and June 16, 1868, Dixon refers directly to his induction into the Ku Klux Klan "at a late hour of the night" in Clinton, in William Y. Dixon Papers (*ibid.*); Charles Kennon to Tom Ellis, July 5, 1870, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*); Mary Alley Scrapbooks, Vol.1,

In contrast to the Klan, the Knights of the White Camellia originated in Louisiana with slightly different intentions. While the Klan combined fealty to white superiority with a determination to terrorize their enemies into submission, the Knights incorporated a similar commitment to white supremacy into a political and economic agenda. Though equally brutal in their condemnation of assertive blacks and white Republicans, the Knights seldom engaged in terror. Instead they typically incorporated menacing persuasion with economic intimidation to achieve political ends.

Members of the White Camellia openly admitted their affiliation, though the very same men denied any knowledge of the Klan. Local residents apparently felt justified in their determination to preserve the superiority of the white race but proved reticent in discussing an organization which encouraged murder. When congressional investigators in the spring of 1869 repeatedly insisted that Knights of the White Camellia constituted nothing more than a pseudonym for Ku Klux Klan, prominent Tangipahoa merchant Charles Kennon exploded, "I know that it is not the Ku Klux. I have never heard it called so." Though some residents belonged to both,

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pp. 7-9 (*ibid.*); testimony taken by congressional subcommittee from: James B. Wands pp. 97-102, Charles Benedict pp. 218-224, William H. Wilder pp. 91-94, H.H. Bankston pp. 83-87, Isham Buckhalter pp. 400-403, Thomas C.W. Ellis pp. 98-110, all in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869.



the oaths of each group symbolize the contrast in emphasis. In swearing loyalty to the White Camellia one committed himself to "defending the social and political superiority of the white race and in all places to observe a marked distinction between the white and African races." Furthermore, initiates pledged to "vote for none but white men for any position of honor, profit or trust, and to protect and defend persons of the white race against the encroachments and aggressions of an inferior race." Though containing an extreme commitment to racial superiority and an apparent willingness to defend that principle, the oath did not include an overt call to violence. A Klansmen pledged to "reject and oppose the principles of the radical party in all its forms, and forever maintain that intelligent white men shall govern this country." After swearing to protect "females, widows and their households," the Klansmen further pledged to "obey all instructions given me by my chief, and should I ever divulge or cause to be divulged any secrets, signs or passwords of the Invisible Empire, I must meet with the fearful and just penalty of the traitor, which is death, death, death, at the hands of my brethren."<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Testimony taken by congressional sub-committee from: Charles Kennon, pp. 217-223, John R. Wood, p. 308, Robert Babington, pp. 368-371, John H. Pipes, pp. 384-392, Martial Amacker, pp. 392-397, Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110; E.R. Boissat, p. 276; Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. xxxi-xxxii. Walter L. Fleming, The Reconstruction of the Seceded States (Albany: New York State Education Department, 1905) pp. 119 and 125; J.C. Lester and D.L. Wilson, Ku Klux Klan: It's Origin Growth and

Black activism and defensive preparations encouraged the formation of secret white paramilitary societies. And by fanning the flames of racial hysteria the old elite recovered much of their influence. The near universal support among whites attained by the postwar leadership enabled them to aggressively pursue their primary purpose, recovery of political control. But as in the antebellum period all whites did not share the same priorities. Though most whites feared black empowerment and demanded government led by native conservatives, the divergence in priorities exemplified by the nebulous distinctions between the Knights of the White Camellia and the Ku Klux Klan symbolized a contrast among whites that was central to the chaotic conditions of the late nineteenth century. Although the two organizations shared many of the same ideals and members, in eastern Louisiana political control proved primary to the White Camellia while Klansmen typically regarded racial dominance as preeminent. The difference in the priorities and methods of these two groups contributed to a schism between piney-woods whites in the late nineteenth century which resulted in the emergence of violently competitive factions.

The distinctiveness between the two organizations sharpens when examining their day-to-day operations. The

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Disbandment (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1905) pp. 189-198; John Ellis to Tom Ellis, March 6, and December 23, 1869, and January 11 and 29, 1870.

membership of the White Camellia represented the best elements of white society. Most of their leaders in eastern Louisiana, including Tom and John Ellis, John Pipes, and J.B. McClendon represented the emerging business and professional class which provided leadership in the immediate post-war period. Others, such as former state senator and Washington parish patriarch Hardy Richardson, exemplified the old elite's commitment to the movement. The Klan's obsessive secrecy makes identifying members difficult. But the few in eastern Louisiana whose membership is certain differed from the Knights; they were younger, less affluent, and largely detached from sources of power. Tom Ellis referred to the Klansmen simply as "drinking characters." Other possible Klansmen such as Robert Babington, a Franklinton businessman and postmaster, represented those associated with both organizations.<sup>350</sup>

In the weeks preceding the November 1868 election, the white societies initiated an offensive which exemplified their respective practices. Having failed in the spring of 1868 to achieve victory through legal means, the Democrats

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<sup>350</sup> John Ellis to Tom, March 6, 1869, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); testimony taken by congressional subcommittee from: Charles Benedict, pp. 218-224, John Wood, p. 308, Robert Babington, pp. 368-371, John H. Pipes, pp. 384-392, Martial Amacker, pp. 392-397, and Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, all in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, "Heads of Households;" Diary of Willie Dixon, entry June 16, 1868, in William Y. Dixon Papers (LLMVC); Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. 83-86 and pp. 147-148.

determined to triumph through extra-legal activities. The Daily Picayune declared in the immediate aftermath of the April election "the next time an election takes place we will be prepared, and their (Republicans) intimidation game will not be a very safe one." The most hotly disputed contest in addition to the presidential election and a few local races involved the selection of a congressman from eastern Louisiana. That race pitted an aging Louis St.Martin against the carpetbagger General J.H. Sypher in a bitter contest characterized by massive fraud and violence.

The white conservative campaign incorporated economic intimidation, psychological terror, and murder. One technique involved a systematic economic lockout of blacks who voted Republican. Acting at the behest of the Knights of the White Camellia, local Democratic executive committees issued protection papers to freedmen who voted Democratic. The papers identified the individual as a Democratic voter who was therefore entitled to retain his employment and receive valuable services provided by Democrats such as grinding corn and extending credit. Local newspapers and power brokers promoted this effort relentlessly in the weeks preceding the November election. According to congressional testimony the owners of the Magee Mill and Lumber Company in Washington Parish distributed fliers informing the freedmen that the mill would no longer grind their corn or cut their timber if they failed to vote Democratic. Isham McGee, a

black resident of Washington Parish, confirmed that many freedmen voted Democratic simply to avoid losing their jobs or essential services. The Democrats circulated a petition among whites pledging that they would not buy from or sell to blacks who failed to vote Democratic. Those who refused to sign came under immediate suspicion. In the Florida parishes as in other regions of the South, voting Republican carried a stiff price.<sup>351</sup>

Another part of the Democratic strategy involved the use of terror. This aspect of the multi-faceted campaign of intimidation fell to the Ku Klux Klan. To fulfill their part of the scheme the Klan employed tactics designed to eliminate black leadership and inspire fear in their Republican opponents. During the interim between the April and November elections, the Klan sought to "turn over" Republican activists. Johnson E. Yerks, a leading St. Helena Parish Republican, informed a congressional investigating team that several prominent blacks presented letters urging them to turn over or face death. Yerks himself received a menacing

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<sup>351</sup> Diary of Willie Dixon, entry June 13, 1868, in William Y. Dixon Papers (LLMVC); New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 15, 1868; letters received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters from James DeGrey, agent at Clinton, April 10 and May 10, 1868, and W.H. Haugen, agent at Madisonville, May 10, 1868, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives). Testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from: H.H. Bankston, pp. 83-87, James H. George, pp. 41 and 85, Johnson E. Yerks, 87-90, William H. Wilder, pp. 91-94, John Evans, pp. 95-97, and Charles Benedict, pp. 218-224, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869;" Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. 83-86.

letter signed only "KKK." Headed "Crow Hall Midnight," the letter warned that Yerks was suspected of Radical principles and should beware the hour of midnight. Other prominent Republicans received similar letters. H.H. Bankston testified that the Klan placed cards with mystic warnings on his door and those of other known Republicans. As the election neared the Klan began making nightly raids in full costume. Black Washington Parish residents Isham Buckhalter and Isham McGee received midnight visits from large groups of Klansmen. Both declared that the Klansmen "dressed in sheets from the top of their heads to their horses heels" and "wore false faces." The nightriders warned the blacks to vote Democratic or die. Buckhalter testified that the blacks knew the Klan were men and not ghosts, but added that most believed they would be killed if they voted Republican.<sup>352</sup>

Republican activists had good reason to fear the Klan. In the two weeks preceding the November election armed Klansmen in groups fifty to one hundred strong made nightly rides through the streets of Greensburg and Franklinton creating fear and consternation among friend and foe alike. Other groups of Klansmen made discreet yet menacing midnight rides near the homes of Republican organizers. Even more

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<sup>352</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from Johnson E. Yerks, pp. 94-95, Isham McGee, pp. 397-400, Isham Buckhalter, pp. 400-403, and H.H. Bankston, pp. 83-87, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869; Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. 83-86 and 147-156.

disturbing, Klansmen unexpectedly dynamited trees late in the evening near Republican homes greatly heightening the anxiety of the inhabitants. William Wilder and H.H. Bankston both declared that the "tree burstings" created extreme fear among local Republicans black and white. Wilder described panicked families huddled in their homes waiting to be attacked and afraid to venture out for sustenance much less to vote. Word circulated later that the "tree burstings" served as a signal to Klansmen that the election should proceed without violent interruption, indicating that the Klan recognized their campaign of terror had been successful. With little physical harm the Klan's nocturnal activities effectively neutralized a significant portion of the Republican electorate.<sup>353</sup>

But, seemingly exasperated by the intransigence of some black leaders who refused to "turn over," in the days immediately preceding the election the Klan systematically eliminated the black and significantly weakened the white Republican leadership. Congressional candidate J.H. Sypher emerged as the principal candidate for elimination. Sypher, widely regarded as a ruthless and opportunistic carpetbagger,

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<sup>353</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from: William H. Wilder, pp. 91-95, H.H. Bankston, pp. 83-87, Charles Benedict, pp. 218-224, Martial Amacker, pp. 392-397, David Hennessy, pp. 220-222, "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869"; "Register of Murder and Outrages Committed," entries for November, 1868, describe numerous freedmen terrorized by nightriders "styling themselves Ku Klux," in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives); Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. 83-86 and 147-156.

along with his brother engineered the appointment to local office of numerous Republicans in eastern Louisiana. His frequent speeches to largely black audiences encouraging support for the Republican party and self defense enraged many whites in the Florida parishes.

Ten days before the November election armed bodies of whites broke up Republican meetings at Greensburg and Tangipahoa where Sypher planned to speak. Rumors circulated that prominent Republicans including Sypher and John Kemp, president of the local black Republican club, would be killed that night. Learning of the rumors Sypher wisely cut short his visit to Greensburg and canceled his appearance at Tangipahoa. Kemp received a final warning which he answered with a telegram to Governor Warmoth requesting troops. Unfortunately for Kemp, his message fell into the hands of Klansmen who intercepted the youth attempting to mail it in a nearby village. Late that evening a body of Klansmen crossed the state line below Osyka, Mississippi heading south. The Klan routinely employed neighboring dens in extreme cases to hamper identification. The nightriders entered the village of Tangipahoa and inquired at the hotels for Sypher. Learning of the absence of their prize the Klansmen proceeded to Kemp's home outside the town and brutally murdered him. Six days later Jim Beekham, leader of a black militia forming in western Washington Parish, similarly met his fate. Black Republican organizers Squire



Roberts and Mumford McCoy barely escaped with their lives. The Republican mayor of Amite City placed Roberts under arrest for disturbing the peace on election day and probably saved his life. McCoy, a Greensburg blacksmith and legislative candidate received a post-election visit from a group of white men who denounced his activism. The visitors warned McCoy that if any whites should be harmed he would be held personally responsible and that as retribution the Klan would cut off his head. McCoy understandably fled the parish the same day. Many other less prominent freedmen suffered similar abuse including Bill Wheeler whose eyes were gouged out at Greensburg, and Daniel Lee and Marshall Thompson both bushwhacked near Amite.<sup>354</sup>

In addition to Sypher, the Klan also targeted other prominent white Republicans. James B. Wands, a former Union naval officer from New York, aroused the ire of Democrats by securing from Warmoth appointment as local tax collector and state representative. If the onerous burden of Reconstruction taxation did not in itself condemn Wands, his

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<sup>354</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from: James H. George, pp. 41 and 95, H.H. Bankston, pp. 83-87, Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, William H. Wilder, pp. 90-94, John Evans, pp. 95-97, James B. Wands, pp. 97-102, R.F. Briggs, pp. 236-238, Robert Babington, pp. 368-371, J.C. Bach, pp. 110-111, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869." "Register of Murders and Outrages Committed," May-December 1868, several entries November, 1868, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives); letter received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from J.D. Buckley, agent at Amite City, November 15, 1868 (*ibid.*); Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, pp. 147-156; *ibid.*, 1868, p.13-14.

aggressive support of the Republican cause did. In the days preceding the November election Wands distributed Republican ballots in Livingston, St. Helena, and Washington parishes. Warned of a plot to kill him, Wands fled Franklinton the evening before the election and camped in the woods as Klansmen searched the area. David Hennessy, a member of Warmoth's newly created Metropolitan Police and a registrar of voters in Washington Parish was not so lucky. The day before the election the third attempt to kill Hennessy proved successful. Mass torchlight counter demonstrations by Republicans and Democrats in Clinton and Jackson avoided bloodshed only because both sides recognized the horrific casualties that could result. Describing a provocative Democratic procession near Olive Branch in East Feliciana Parish which stumbled into a similar Republican procession, Willie Dixon declared, "we came very near having a bloody battle with them." A timely absence from the region was all that saved Republican Congressman J.P. Newsham of West Feliciana from a brutal murder at the hands of an outraged mob. Numerous bloody encounters between individuals contributed to an incredibly high level of tension by election day in the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge. In the wake of massive election day violence and fraud, Freedmen's Bureau agent J.W. Coleman reported from Baton Rouge, "the

Bureau appears to be the only protection the freedmen have."<sup>355</sup>

The pressure applied to black voters came from friend and foe alike. To counter Democratic threats and intimidation white Republicans warned that blacks who failed to vote, and Republican at that, would not receive their share of land and mules. Republicans routinely promised the freedmen that once in power their supporters would be appropriately compensated. Moreover, the Federal garrisons increasingly demonstrated an unwillingness to intervene on behalf of black Republicans. Prominent Republican William H. Wilder declared, "the soldiers are worse on the negroes than anybody else." Thus blacks had the option of risking their life by voting Republican or voting Democratic and forfeiting their only realistic hope for economic advancement.

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<sup>355</sup> Diary of Willie Dixon, entries August 1, 15, 22, 29, September 2, October 19, and November 3, 1868, in William Y. Dixon Papers (LLMVC); testimony taken by a congressional investigating commission from James B. Wands, pp. 97-102 and Charles Benedict, pp. 218-224, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement," 1869. Letters received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from George Dunwell, agent at Clinton, June 9 and 20, 1868, J.W. Coleman, agent at Baton Rouge, November 20, 1868, H.E. Barton, agent at Clinton, November 10, 12, and 20, 1868, and Robert M. Davies, agent at St. Francisville, October 14 and 20, 1868, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports. Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1868, pp. 23-24; ibid., 1869, pp. 17-26, 79-81, and 229-230; Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Advocate, September 16, October 5, and November 4, 1868.

Unfortunately for the freedmen this unenviable predicament would only get worse.<sup>356</sup>

The 1868 Democratic campaign of terror proved remarkably successful. By employing the lessons in brutality learned from the war the Democrats effectively neutralized much of their opposition. Political violence claimed the lives of 204 black and white Republicans statewide with at least thirteen murdered in the Florida parishes. Rowdy armed Democrats congregated about most precincts intimidating all who sought to vote Republican. Colorized ballots made a voter's preference easily identifiable thus expediting coercive efforts. Only precincts guarded by Federal troops recorded any Republican votes. White and black Republicans voted Democratic at most polling stations in St. Helena and Washington parishes or faced the consequences of failing to vote. Their votes contributed to huge Democratic majorities in both parishes. The extent of their defeat alarmed both the state and national Republican leadership. Barely forty percent of the region's Republicans cast ballots for their party's ticket. Excepting in West Feliciana where the Republicans scored a substantial victory, every parish in eastern Louisiana returned a Democratic majority. (see table

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<sup>356</sup> Testimony taken by congressional sub-committee from: William H. Wilder, pp. 91-94, Thomas C.W. Ellis, pp. 98-110, and Charles Kennon, pp. 217-223, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869"; Letter received at Freedmen's Bureau headquarters in New Orleans from A. Finch, agent at St. Francisville, February 20, 1868, in Freedmen's Bureau Reports (National Archives).

14) The margin of victory ranged from slightly more than one hundred votes in East Baton Rouge to a one hundred percent Democratic vote in Washington.<sup>357</sup>

The Republicans two-to-one majority among registered voters in the delta parishes easily offset a similar Democratic majority in the piney woods. Despite the regional preponderance of Republicans, what the Democrats had failed to accomplish through persuasion in April 1868 they achieved splendidly only seven months later. The key to success remained the unqualified application of violence. Moreover, Democratic efforts contributed to an emerging societal phenomena. The secret societies, and nightriding in general, promoted an important camaraderie among the country whites. Amongst the dearth of opportunities for fraternizing in the rural areas, Republican bashing became an important outlet for socializing and, ominously, violence was at its core. With startling alacrity violence progressed from a common element in the piney-woods of Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi to an integral aspect of the resident's very existence. Long acceptable in affairs of honor, unrestrained brutality emerged as the principal means of societal

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<sup>357</sup> Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Advocate, November 4 and 9, 1868; Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, p. xxix; testimony taken by a congressional sub-committee from: James H. George, pp. 41 and 95, William H. Wilder, pp. 91-94, Charles Benedict, pp. 218-224, and R.F. Briggs, pp. 236-238, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869"

Table 14

## 1868 Presidential Election

<u>PARISH</u>	<u>GRANT</u>	<u>SEYMOUR</u>
East Baton Rouge	1249	1353
East Feliciana	644	1411
Livingston	149	670
St. Helena	136	1094
St. Tammany	470	704
Washington	0	757
West Feliciana	1137	648

regulation and governance. Significantly, violence became an aspect of behavior not merely accepted but expected. The events of the 1860's clearly demonstrated that the old adage "violence does not solve anything" was nonsense.

Since Grant did not require Louisiana's electoral vote to secure the presidency little formal protest accompanied the presidential election. But to insure that the Republicans retained control of state government Warmoth engineered the creation of two vital agencies. Though federal law prohibited the creation of a state militia, Warmoth established the Metropolitan Police Force to counter Democratic intimidation. Composed of white and black Republicans, the Metropolitans served as the governor's private militia independent of any other authority. Warmoth secured arms, including Gatling guns, in Washington which enabled the Metropolitans to become an effective fighting force. More importantly, Warmoth's Election Act provided for the establishment of a Returning Board to be controlled by reliable Republicans whose duties included tabulating votes and excluding those from regions influenced by violence or intimidation. Though intended to prevent fraud, the Returning Board proved as adept at stealing elections as did Democratic practices. Congressional investigators examining the results of the 1872 Louisiana elections reported that the

Returning Board had committed "flagrant and transparent" fraud upon the citizens of Louisiana.<sup>358</sup>

To increase their strength on the local level in the wake of the November 1868 debacle, the Republican dominated legislature created several new parishes. Among these Tangipahoa, carved from portions of each of the four piney-woods parishes in eastern Louisiana, constituted the wealthiest. The new parish spanned the length of the Florida parishes from Lake Maurepas to the Mississippi state line along the course of the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad. An act of the legislature granted Warmoth the power to appoint all officials for the new parish. The certainty of Republican domination of Tangipahoa combined with the exclusion of the railroad from the existing parishes intensified piney-woods Democrats' hostility for the state government. The unusual procedure creating the new parish government led a suspicious Paris Ellis to assert, "I ascertained while in New Orleans that the Radicals were in ascendancy and offices being let to the highest bidder." But Republicans defended the necessity of creating the new parish. H.H. Bankston defeated for sheriff the preceding year testified during a congressional hearing, "they robbed me out of my election in St. Helena and I came to New Orleans took an active part in getting the new

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<sup>358</sup> "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three, 1874," pp. 1-34; James Longstreet to Henry Clay Warmoth, June 30, 1870, in Henry Clay Warmoth Papers (LLMVC); Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed pp. 177-182.



parish created and asked for the appointment as sheriff." Commenting on the creation of the new parishes and the suspect qualifications of some of the appointed officials, the New Orleans Republican maintained, "men must be known to be in full sympathy with the administration before receiving office else its policy can not be carried out successfully, to the victors belong the spoils."<sup>359</sup>

Republicans believed the creation of new state agencies and parishes would provide the mechanisms to contain Democratic intimidation and maintain power. But regardless of the strategy they employed in eastern Louisiana their efforts would probably have failed. As violence became less a method of last resort and instead a preferred means for settling disputes, it became increasingly apparent that local Republicans and their northern supporters lacked the resources and resolve to prevail. Moreover, despite the odds against them the Republicans contributed directly to their own demise.

In the past three decades many scholars have sought to portray the vast majority of Republicans as honest and hard working rather than as the incompetent thieves presented in

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<sup>359</sup> Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana at the Second Session of the First Legislature Begun and Held in New Orleans, January 4, 1869 (New Orleans: Ramirez-Jones Printing Co., 1869) p. 83; Paris Ellis to Tom Ellis, March 7, 1869, and John Ellis to Tom Ellis, March 6 and 13, 1869, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from H.H. Bankston, pp. 83-87, in "United States Congressional Hearings Supplement, 1869;" New Orleans Republican, March 10, 1869.

earlier studies. And indeed many Republicans, black and white, did risk their lives to improve the plight of the freedmen and establish a more democratic southern society. Some such as James B. Wads remained successful in the post-Reconstruction period without abandoning their principles based on their integrity. But Wads did not represent the majority of Republicans in Louisiana. Unfortunately, the greed of some overshadowed the sincere intentions of others. Republican corruption contributed to an unqualified hatred for carpetbagger control among the conservative whites of Louisiana, and more importantly, reinforced latent disillusionment with government.<sup>360</sup>

The dramatic increase in the rates of taxation initiated by the Republican-dominated legislature in itself proved catastrophic for many already heavily burdened by war related debts. But the hefty increase in salaries the legislature provided for themselves and other elected officials provoked even greater resentment. Likewise, the public became increasingly aware that scores of state jobs were being

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<sup>360</sup> For recent interpretations see: Richard Current, Those Terrible Carpetbaggers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Eric Foner, Reconstruction: Americas Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); James McPherson, Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992); Kenneth Stampp, Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (New York: Knopf, 1965). For older views see: Claude Bowers, The Tragic Era Reconstruction After Lincoln (New York: Halcyon, 1929); E.Merton Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947); William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877 (New York: Harper Brothers, 1907).

awarded to northerners who had little interest in Louisiana other than making a personal profit. Vermont native M.H. Twitchell secured the establishment of Red River Parish in upstate Louisiana and filled the payroll with family members and friends. Twitchell repeatedly sponsored legislation increasing both the salaries and per diem of elected officials. Congressional investigators found that by controlling the legislative, judicial, and tax collecting mechanisms of the parish the Twitchells had amassed great wealth to the detriment of many established families, and they naturally held the Republican Party responsible. Governor B.F. Flanders received and acted on scores of petitions from northern business associates soliciting jobs and lucrative state contracts. The always controversial J. Madison Wells acknowledged that Federal officers had stolen between \$50,000 and \$100,000 of New Orleans municipal funds while serving as city administrators. Wells also confirmed that General Banks had placed scores of cronies on the state and New Orleans municipal payroll including his brother who continued to receive a large salary though he had not resided in the city for months. Some Republicans recognized that selfishness and rampant corruption nullified their hopes for reform. Governor Warmoth's successor William Pitt Kellogg conceded that the Republicans had awarded themselves excessive salaries. In a January, 1876 address to the legislature, Kellogg acknowledged that the salaries of many

state and local officials greatly exceeded the amount fixed by the constitution. In urging the legislature to contain its greed, he noted that excessive government salaries served as a principal contributor to the increasing state debt. He concluded, "there is no public officer in Louisiana whose duties as such are so onerous or his responsibilities so great as to justify a larger compensation than \$10,000 a year."<sup>361</sup>

Kellogg had long recognized that excessive fees and salaries damaged the image of the Republicans and decimated the state treasury. The unregulated fees for services

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<sup>361</sup> "Annual Address of Governor William Pitt Kellogg," House Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 1876, p. 20; G. Wheat to Maston Newsom, June 17, 1874, and receipt for parish taxes, June 22, 1874, in Maston Newsom Papers (LLMVC); Port Vincent Livingstonian, April 25, 1879; New Orleans Republican, January 1, 1873. "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three, 1874," see in particular pp. 104-108; Ted Tunnell (ed.), Carpetbagger From Vermont: The Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); J. Mills Thornton, "Fiscal Policy and the Failure of Radical Reconstruction in the Lower South," in J.M. Kousser and James McPherson, Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Oscar Lestage, "The White League in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly Vol. xviii, No. 3, pp. 657-661, herein after referred to as Lestage, "The White League in Louisiana." Philip H. Sheridan to Orville E. Babcock, January 21, 1875, General Philip H. Sheridan Letter (Newberry Library); Elizabeth Tilton to B.F. Flanders, October 3, 1867, John Hutchins to Flanders, October 6, 1867, David Barritz to Flanders, October 9, 1867, all in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC); J. Madison Wells to Andrew Johnson, May 22, 1865, in J. Madison Wells Collection (National Archives). In one of his first actions as Governor Francis T. Nichols, the first Redeemer chief executive, promoted legislation "reducing their (legislators) present extravagant compensations," see Nichols to E.A. Burke, February 20, 1877, in Francis T. Nichols Papers (LLMVC).

charged by Republican appointed sheriffs, coroners, district attorneys, and other officials necessitated increasing rates of taxation. The method of taxation often seemed designed to promote default and seizure. In one instance, Maston Newsom unexpectedly received notice to pay more than \$340 in taxes within ten days or all his property would be confiscated. The public naturally resented higher taxes particularly when they received little benefit from their sacrifice. A congressional investigating committee sent to discover the source of Louisianians' fierce resistance to their government expressed dismay at the policies of the Republican state government. The committee's report exemplified its surprise: "In the parishes taxation has been carried almost to the extent of confiscation. In many of the parishes all the white Republicans and all the office holders belong to a single family. As the people saw taxation increase and prosperity diminish, as they grew poor while officials grew rich, they became naturally sore." The committee further noted that the governor and legislature exercised "extraordinary and exclusive jurisdiction over political questions," commanded a private political militia, created monopolies, abolished courts, and "commanded a degree of power scarcely exercised by any sovereign in the world." The

committee concluded that based on its observations few could wonder at conditions in Louisiana.<sup>362</sup>

In an 1874 legislative address Kellogg acknowledged an emerging trend of enormous consequence for the future development of the region. According to the governor, under the direction of the Republicans legal fees and court costs had risen to a level that "bared the way to the courts in many instances." He prophetically concluded that this tendency would cause many to avoid using the legal system to redress grievances. His fear would soon be proven painfully correct. Yet Kellogg contributed to this problem himself by continually interfering with the courts in favor of friends and allies creating the impression that the legal system was also subject to his will.<sup>363</sup>

In addition to the selfishness and seeming lack of concern for the state's welfare exhibited by many Republican officials, accusations of theft of public and private funds further damaged their image. Deputy United States Marshall Thomas H. Jenks admitted to a congressional committee that

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<sup>362</sup> "Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874, pp. 12-13; notice of taxes due signed by James B. Wands, in Maston S. Newsom Papers (LLMVC); "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three, 1874," pp. 3-34; New Orleans Times, April 14, 1873.

<sup>363</sup> "Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874, pp. 12-13. J.J. Monette to William P. Kellogg, January 22, 1876, and J. Regan to Kellogg, March 17, 1876, in Governor's Correspondence Collection (LLMVC).

his brother L.B. Jenks embezzelled \$14,000 in parish funds while serving as deputy tax collector in East Feliciana. Jenks's theft continued a trend of missing funds in East Feliciana during Reconstruction. Fraud surfaced there as early as 1869 when only \$10,000 of a special \$20,000 tax reached the parish treasury. Tangipahoa and Livingston also recorded large discrepancies between the amount of taxes collected and the amount of money deposited in the parish treasuries. Municipal funds also mysteriously disappeared under the direction of Republican administrators. The Woodville Sentinel repeatedly demanded that the Republican mayor account for missing funds during his two years in office. Comparable accusations appeared in many regional newspapers. The Amite City Democrat and the Tangipahoa Democrat gleefully published weekly accounts of alleged fraudulent practices. The Amite City Democrat fanned the flames of outrage by declaring that Republican graft had increased the state debt from four million to seventy-five million dollars during their seven years in power. Allegations involving the theft of personal funds proved even more disturbing to local residents. Prominent Tangipahoa Parish Republican organizer Johnson Yerks faced frequent accusations concerning the theft of funds entrusted to his care by an elderly school teacher.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Testimony of Thomas H. Jenks, found in "Testimony Taken by the Select Committee on Alleged Frauds in the Presidential Election of 1876," United States House of

The Republicans further damaged their own image by neglecting to fulfill their promises. During each campaigning season they advocated educational reform. Long neglected in Louisiana, improved educational opportunities proved attractive to many poorer whites as well as blacks. And initially the Republicans did make some dramatic reforms. The legislature appropriated funds establishing the first schools for blacks and increased funding for existing public schools. An infusion of Peabody educational funds improved the quality of many private as well as public schools. But the increasing flow of funds created greater temptation for theft. Prior to the war many parishes publicly disclosed school appropriations to prevent theft of the precious funds. St. Helena Parish in particular meticulously accounted for every educational dollar spent. Yet by 1873 black and white community leaders expressed outrage over the misappropriation of educational funds entrusted to Republican officials. J.W. Armstead, a black West Feliciana proponent of education, informed congressional investigators that the Republicans misuse of school funds created scores of Democratic

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Representatives, Miscellaneous Document No. 31, pt.1, Forty-Fifth Congress, Third Session (Washington: Government Printing, 1879) herein after referred to as "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876." Letter signed "Citizen" to Henry Marston, June 8, 1869, in Henry Marston Papers (LLMVC); Lestage, "The White League in Louisiana," p. 633; Woodville Sentinel, August 26, 1871; Amite City Democrat, August 21, September 18, and November 6, 1875; Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, June 7, 1873, September 19, 1874, and September 26, 1874; Mary Lotspich to Maston Newsom, March 20, 1873, in Maston Newsom Papers (LLMVC).



supporters among the freedmen. Reports submitted by many parish superintendents appeared chaotic. They provided no indication of funds appropriated, spent, or even the number of schools operating and students in attendance. Some parishes, such as St. Tammany, simply stopped submitting reports after 1866.<sup>365</sup>

Despite Republican boasts to the contrary, by 1874 the school system was in a shambles. Barely 37 percent of children in the Florida parishes attended school. Though this constituted a slight numerical improvement over the antebellum period, particularly among blacks, the figures compiled by the state Board of Education indicate that the increasing appropriations did little to broaden the appeal and quality of education. Unfortunately a significant percentage of the school appropriations never reached the schools themselves. Summary reports for the period 1870-1877 demonstrate that excepting Livingston, which consistently accounted for all school appropriations, every parish in

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<sup>365</sup> St. Helena Parish Records, 1816-1853, see treasury reports February, 1853 and October, 1857 (LLMVC); James Mobley, "The Academy Movement in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXX, No. 3, pp. 739-928. Testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from J.W. Armstead, pp. 295-299, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876," pt. 3; "Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education," Legislative Docs., First Legislature, Third Session, January 1870; ibid., First Legislature, First Session, 1874; "Report of the Superintendent of Education," ibid., Fourth Legislature, First Session, 1852, demonstrates increased level of funding to education in 1870's. Copy of speech of E. John Ellis delivered at Cummingsville, Ohio, October 5, 1880, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

eastern Louisiana witnessed the theft of substantial school funds. Massive embezzlement characterized the school systems in East Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, and St. Tammany. The treasurer of the St. Tammany school board purloined with such vigor that he effectively forced the closure of the entire parish system for lack of operating funds. Similarly in Tangipahoa superintendent Johnson E. Yerks embezzled nearly \$8,000 in school funds thereby decimating the parish system. St. Helena recorded a shortfall of over \$20,000 in funds appropriated for education and monies actually distributed to the schools. The systems in Washington and West Feliciana through the efforts of some determined individuals maintained a higher degree of integrity. But in each of these parishes the schools suffered from the misuse of funds for political purposes and outright theft. Describing the problems plaguing education in Louisiana, David F. Boyd, president of Louisiana State University complained, "radicalism, mismanagement of state affairs for years past has daily hurt us, hindered us with a state debt and driven off private patronage."<sup>366</sup>

Republican fraud and mismanagement of state funds began at the highest levels of government. State auditors Charles Clinton and George Johnson under the direction of Governor Kellogg allegedly permitted the theft of over \$320,000 in state funds. When state investigators came to examine the

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auditors' records for evidence of misappropriated funds, Johnson locked the office doors and removed the records to the Customhouse at New Orleans beyond the reach of state investigators increasing public outrage.<sup>367</sup>

But most damaging of all to the character of the Republicans were the accusations of massive corruption on the part of the legislature. According to the allegations, in the form of levee and asylum bills Republican legislators routinely pocketed huge sums of state funds. Funds appropriated for the construction and improvement of levees and other state works frequently either disappeared or fell far short of requirements. E.L. Weber, Republican senator from West Feliciana Parish, described the method of fraud to a congressional commission. On his arrival at the legislature Senator M.H. Twitchell encouraged Weber to join a combination of nineteen Republican senators. Twitchell explained that the nineteen senators comprised a one vote majority which afforded them great opportunity. According to Weber, the combination frequently secured passage of levee bills which appropriated millions of dollars for certain parties and companies holding levee bonds and contracts. The members of the combination received from \$10,000 to \$20,000 of the appropriation for each bill that passed. Weber

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<sup>367</sup> "Report of the Joint Committee of investigation of the Affairs of the Late Auditors to the General Assembly state of Louisiana," Legislative Docs., First Legislature, First Session, 1878.

described scores of levee, asylum, and statehouse bills in which the combination pocketed hundreds of thousands of state dollars. Thomas Durant exposed a similar conspiracy to defraud the state of six million dollars of federal levee appropriations. In an 1876 address to the legislature Governor Kellogg acknowledged that the state had awarded a monopoly contract to the Louisiana Levee Company, and despite the appropriation of millions of dollars, the company had made little effort to meet its obligations. By 1875 the misappropriation of funds endangered essential state services. The failure to maintain the levees resulted in frequent crevasses, particularly a disastrous one at Bonnet Carre which decimated railroad operations for months. C.B. White, director of the state Board of Health, complained to Governor Kellogg that over the past two years the legislature had failed to appropriate any funds to maintain essential quarantine stations leaving the citizens vulnerable to the depredations of yellow fever.<sup>368</sup>

The most compelling evidence of Republican corruption came from the Republicans themselves. Congressman J. Hale Sypher acknowledged that the corruption of some Republicans

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<sup>368</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional investigating commission from E.L. Weber, pp. 234-235, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876," pt. 3; "Annual Message of Governor William Pitt Kellogg," Senate Journal, first Legislature, First Session, January, 1876, pp. 8-10; Thomas Durant to Benjamin Flanders, June 7, 1867, in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC); C.B. White to Kellogg, May 1, 1875, in Governors Correspondence (LLMVC); Amite City Democrat, November 20, 1875.

had destroyed the party's chances for success in Louisiana. Similarly St. Helena Republican J.P. Wall affirmed his commitment to the party but denounced those members "who to obtain their own selfish ends succumbed to a few renegades not worthy to be recognized by any party." Many black voters abandoned the Republicans when they failed to provide the quality of leadership they sought. Black Republicans in West Feliciana Parish directed a "petition of outrage" to Governor Kellogg for appointing a corrupt official to their parish leadership. Black leader Jefferson Carter declared that his support for the Democrats resulted from the Republicans failure to fulfill their promises to establish schools for the freedmen. Explaining his support for the Democrats, Isaac Guy declared, "the Republicans promised me in 1865 two mules and forty acres of land to vote for them; well I voted for them, but I learned to find if I got my forty acres and two mules I would have to work for it myself. So I thought I would just as soon vote for the others, because I got tired of being fooled." Others resented the Republicans' refusal to nominate qualified blacks for local office. Black Republican leader Charles Roxborough summarized the disillusionment of many of his followers, " I know that the Republican party conferred citizenship and the right to vote upon the negro. But even this, it seems to me, was done from political necessity - in order to swell their vote - to keep them in ascendancy in this country." A congressional

investigating committee confirmed that Republican fraud, exploitation, and neglect had served to drive many blacks into the arms of the Democrats.<sup>369</sup>

Although rampant corruption existed in Louisiana during Reconstruction, fraud was not unprecedented in the Bayou State. In fact corruption had been a standard practice of Louisiana politics since the colonial period. Tax collectors routinely recorded discrepancies in the amount of funds collected and delivered to the state treasury. Officials also frequently awarded state contracts and positions to family members or friends. Far from it, Reconstruction produced neither the first nor last corrupt Louisiana official. The significant difference between Reconstruction

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<sup>369</sup> Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, June 7, 1873; petition protesting the appointment of L.B. Jenks to serve as parish recorder in West Feliciana, submitted to Governor Kellogg April, 1876, in Governors Correspondence (LLMVC). Testimony taken by a congressional investigating commission from: Jefferson Carter, pp. 150-151, Isaac Guy, p. 165, and Charles Robinson, p. 337, in Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Forty-Fourth Congress, Second Session, Misc. Docs. No. 34, pt. 3; Charles Roxborough to J.S. Davidson, Chairman Republican Parish Executive Committee, July 31, 1890, Charles A Roxborough Letter (LLMVC); testimony taken by a congressional investigating commission from: J.Hale Sypher, pp. 541-542, and B.F. Joubert, pp. 453-462 in "Testimony Taken by the Select Committee to Investigate the Condition of Affairs in Louisiana," United States House of Representatives Document, Forty-Second Congress, Second Session, Misc. Doc. No. 211, 1872; also see testimony of James E. Anderson, pp. 1-64, and Thomas H. Jenks, pp. 315-318, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876." Amos Ackerman to B.F. Flanders, May 22, 1872, and H.C. Hobart to Flanders, February 6, 1873, in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC); Amite City Democrat, September 4, 1875; "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three, 1874" pp. 18-30.

corruption and that of other periods lay in the public awareness of the fraud. Newspapers and Democratic politicians relentlessly paraded evidence of corruption before the public thereby creating the impression that such practices were unprecedented. The propaganda blitz persuaded many that Reconstruction served as an anomaly to Louisiana's tradition of "good" government. Although this fallacy does not absolve corrupt Republican officials from their misdeeds, particularly that of subverting an opportunity for realistic reform, it does help explain the intensity of the conservative reaction.<sup>370</sup>

Allegations of Republican fraud reinforced the Democratic appeal. Conservative leaders effectively manipulated events in support of their own goal to re-secure power. By encouraging the belief that Republican officials systematically looted the state of its wealth, the Democrats produced a near hysterical demand for their ouster. Suspicions of electoral fraud seemed confirmed in 1872 when the Republican dominated Returning Board seated Kellogg as governor over the Fusion candidate and Warmoth backed John McEnery. Thereafter conservative Louisianians ceased to regard the state government as legitimate. By 1873 most of

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<sup>370</sup> List of defaulting tax collectors in Legislative Docs., Second Legislature, First Session, 1853; Board of Trustees of Montpelier Academy vs. Dr. Thomas Webb, May 6, 1841, involves allegations of theft of school funds, in St. Helena Parish Records (LLMVC); Thomas G. Davidson to A.W. Walker, October 23, 1870, involves efforts to purchase black votes, in Ellis Family papers (ibid.).

the country parishes were in open revolt against the government. Local political contests dramatically aggravated the prevailing hostility. In the Florida parishes, where local judges exercised enormous influence, judicial races provoked the greatest controversy. For the remainder of the century the dominant regional party or faction could often be identified by those seated at the parish and district judicial benches.

In a hotly contested 1873 race in the Sixth Judicial District, comprising the piney-woods region of the Florida parishes, Democratic incumbent E.P. Ellis faced challenges from Regular Republican Ashford Addison and Independent Republican William Breed Kemp. Despite some irregularities, far less violence characterized this elections than those of 1868. The results indicated an Ellis victory by more than 1000 votes. Democrat Bolivar Edwards defeated his Republican challenger F.M. Bankston by a similar margin for district attorney. But determined not to lose their grip on power, particularly in a parish created and designed to be a Republican stronghold, the Returning Board threw out the results and declared Kemp and Bankston the winners. Though many black voters avoided the polls as a result of earlier events, little evidence of direct voter intimidation existed to sustain the Returning Board's findings. In addition the Democrats commanded a 2500 vote majority over the Republicans in the piney-woods parishes. Nevertheless other Florida



parish contests, particularly the parish judgeship and legislative seats, were determined in a similar manner. The most provocative debate centered on the seating of Kemp, whom many regarded as a consummate opportunist and scalawag. When Federal authorities at New Orleans sustained the Returning Board's findings, open rebellion flared in eastern Louisiana. The Tangipahoa Democrat, in a call for active resistance declared, "to resist by lawful means Kellogg's taxes, when Kellogg's tools and lickspittles are his judges is worse than nonsense. There is no justice for the people in these bogus courts. They are filled with usurpers, who were put in office because right or wrong, they would meekly do their masters bidding."<sup>371</sup>

The seating of the defeated Republican candidates provided the proverbial match to the tinderbox of Democratic outrage. As Democrats in Tangipahoa, Livingston, and St.

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<sup>371</sup> Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, September 27, 1872, February 1 and 7, 1873; "Annual Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874. "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three," Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Forty-Third Congress, Second Session, House Report No. 101 (1657), pt. 1, 1874, pp. 338-340. John Ellis to Tom Ellis, January 29, 1873, May 30, 1873, and June 4, 1873, Alexandra to Maggie, July 28, 1873, and copy of court order summoning witnesses to appear in the case of E.P. Ellis vs. W.B. Kemp, dated April 21, 1873, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Case of W.B. Kemp vs. E.P. Ellis, No. 4655, in Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana (New Orleans: Republican Printing, 1873) Vol. XXV, pp. 253-263. Report on the Conduct of the Late Elections, 1869, p. xxix; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 25 and May 9, 1873; Amite City Independent, November 7, 1874; Port Vincent Triune, July 22, 1873.

Tammany organized to prevent the seating of the "usurpers," mass meetings in East Feliciana, St. Helena, and Washington urged support for their oppressed neighbors. J.G. Kilbourne and G.W. Munday, prominent members of the old elite in East Feliciana and St. Helena respectively, directed the Democratic response. The widespread reaction exemplified regional white unity and the resurgent authority exercised by the planters.<sup>372</sup>

Armed bodies of men seized the courthouses in Tangipahoa, Livingston, and St. Tammany parishes in support of the Democratic officials functioning under the authority of the McEnery pretender government. Sporadic violence erupted in St. Helena and Washington as residents vented their frustration. In Livingston Parish armed citizens removed the seat of justice from Springfield to the Democratic stronghold at Port Vincent on the Amite River. Initially state officials seemed overawed by the determination of the resistance and did nothing. But as frightened Republicans rushed to the safety of New Orleans with accounts of open rebellion, Kellogg determined to act.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 25 and May 9, 1873; "Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874; John Ellis to Tom Ellis, May 20, 1873 and June 4, 1874, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>373</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 25 and 29, 1873; "Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874; John Ellis

To suppress the insurgency he secured an additional \$30,000 in armaments from the Federal government and dispatched an elite brigade of the Metropolitan Police to contain the most severe outbreaks. Three of the seven deployments of Metropolitans in 1873 served to quell disturbances in the Florida parishes. The Daily Picayune reported the mood prevailing in the Florida parishes. "The people feel deeply this new outrage. The Kellogg usurpation, infamous before, brought now into closer contact with the citizens, grows irksome beyond endurance. If these outrages are repeated, the citizens will meet force with force. The hireling bands of a pretended authority, denounced in the United States Congress as a vile usurpation, resting only on fraud and force will be resisted."<sup>374</sup>

The Metropolitans had arrived in Amite City on April 19, 1873 at a late hour in the evening. After surrounding the public buildings and disarming the surprised guards, they forced the Democratic officials to step down and installed their Republican opponents. With their mission accomplished the Metropolitans perilously held their position before departing shortly before dawn on the fourth day. This force then combined with another brigade dispatched from New Orleans to conduct the dangerous journey across Livingston

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to Tom Ellis, May 20, 1873 and June 4, 1874, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

Parish. After fighting off some bushwhackers, the Metropolitans returned the seat of government to Springfield and installed the Republican officials. A similarly successful operation forced the opening of the parish court at Covington in St. Tammany Parish a few months later. Though these expeditions successfully disrupted the functioning of the local Democratic government, their inability to deploy garrison forces insured the weakness of the Republican officials. As a result, by 1873 virtual chaos reigned in the piney woods.<sup>375</sup>

Kellogg hoped that an effective Metropolitan Police Force backed by Federal troops would allow him to regain lost ground in the country parishes. But the steadily decreasing numbers of the Federal occupation army soon rendered it virtually ineffective beyond New Orleans. Moreover, outrageous incidents such as the Colfax Massacre, in which armed whites slaughtered at least one hundred blacks, demonstrated that Kellogg exercised little realistic authority outside the Crescent City. The September 1874 defeat of the Metropolitans at the hands of the White League, a para-military force committed to white supremacy and

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<sup>375</sup> "Address of Governor William P. Kellogg," Senate Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 5, 1874; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 23, 25, 28, and 29, 1873; New Orleans Times, April 19, 24, and 28, 1873; Amite City Independent, September 5, and November 7, 1874; Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, October 31, 1874; John Ellis to Tom Ellis, May 30, and June 4, 1873, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

supporting the McEnery claim to the governorship, radically curtailed the effectiveness of the governor's private militia. Even with the unflinching support of the Grant administration and a rump Federal force quartered primarily in New Orleans, by late 1874 the Kellogg government tottered on the brink.

When word reached the piney woods of the Metropolitans' defeat in New Orleans, most of the Republican officials fled the region. President Grant's assurance that Federal troops would support their claims to office prompted some to return and resume, as much as possible, their duties. The Republican Amite City Independent warned the Democrats, "the new Rebellion will be crushed. The president has ordered troops stationed at White League strongholds all over the state." Similarly the New Orleans Republican declared that if the Democrats persisted in their efforts to "clean out" the Yankees, southerners could expect the same treatment in the North. According to the Republican, "a brutal mob in any northern city might at any time revenge this intolerance in a manner painful to all sentiments of humanity. As there are more southern people who go North than northern people who go South, this balance of insult and possible injury must go against our section." Unmoved by these threats the Amite City Democrat declared, "let us organize, unite, and arm for the task, they can call us White League, Ku Klux or what not. The mercenaries that prowl around the country forcing

themselves into offices against the express will of the people will be attended to in due time." The same paper urged the use of violence as the best means to destroy their enemies. By the close of 1874 state authority in Washington Parish had completely collapsed; the remainder of Louisiana would soon follow.<sup>376</sup>

The power of the Federal army alone sustained the government of William Pitt Kellogg. In the Florida parishes Kellogg's authority rarely extended beyond the garrison towns of Baton Rouge and Bayou Sara. By 1874 he commanded only a fraction of the electoral strength necessary to maintain his administration. As a result, the Republicans increasingly relied on the expanding fraud perpetuated by the Returning Board at New Orleans to retain control of state government. Revulsion for the increasingly impotent administration encouraged the growth of a movement to join the Florida parishes with Mississippi. Giving voice to this idea the Amite City Democrat reported, "We have lately heard from numerous persons in the Florida parishes on the subject of the annexation of this part of Louisiana to Mississippi. There is decidedly strong feeling in favor of it and that feeling is growing everyday." Although this movement soon

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<sup>376</sup> New Orleans Republican, April 5, 1873; Amite City Independent, September 5, 1874; Amite City Democrat, September 4 and December 11, 1875; Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, September 26, 1874; New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 9, 1873. Resolutions adopted at White League meeting in Bayou Barbary, Livingston Parish, September 5, 1874, in Mary Alley Scrapbooks (LLMVC).

faded, it demonstrated that many residents despised Republican government more than they loved Louisiana.<sup>377</sup>

As the prestige of state government declined in the eyes of the majority in eastern Louisiana, local government assumed an increasing importance. Daniel Wedge informed congressional investigators that the people of eastern Louisiana respected local officials but had no confidence in state authority. Conservatives intensified their efforts to secure control of the local courthouses in response to the increasing irrelevancy of state government. And increasingly their efforts proved successful. Joseph Thompson, a member of the McEnery pretender legislature announced from Covington in the fall of 1874, "we in St. Tammany have taken possession of the courthouse and public offices - have turned over the keys to the officers elect and intend to hold possession. I hope that the other Florida parishes have done the same."<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Amite City Democrat, April 1, 1876; D.A. Weber to William P. Kellogg, March 6, 1876, in William Pitt Kellogg Papers (LLMVC); E.R. Platt, Assistant Attorney General to William P. Kellogg, 1874, describes additional troops en route to Baton Rouge, in Ellis Family Papers(*ibid.*); "Report of the Special Congressional Committee of Three, 1874," pp. 1-34; S.E. Claille, Intimidation and the Number of White and Colored Voters in Louisiana in 1876 As Shown by Statistical Data Derived From Republican Official Reports (New Orleans: Picayune Printing, 1877) p. 31; New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 4, 1873.

<sup>378</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from Daniel Wedge, p. 138, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876," pt. 3; Joseph M. Thompson to Tom Ellis, September 17, 1874, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

With startling speed conservatives in each of the remaining Florida parishes bludgeoned their way back into power. Convinced that politics offered no hope for an honest trial, they instead relied on a proven means for success, violence. Since 1871 several counties in southwestern Mississippi, particularly Amite and Wilkinson, had experienced frequent racial troubles, often on a massive scale. Wilkinson County blacks, many of them Union army veterans, boasted a well-armed and disciplined militia which frequently picketed roads and marched en masse through towns. Their forthright actions created alarm among the local whites and neighboring Louisiana conservatives who typically cooperated closely. Madison Batchelor reported that a plot had been uncovered among blacks in Amite County to rise and slaughter as many whites as possible "about a certain day." By the summer of 1875, with Kellogg's authority rapidly deteriorating, East Feliciana whites determined to act. Armed mobs drove all black elected officials from the parish threatening them with death should they return. Kellogg provided encouragement, but little else, yet by summer's end the threat of Federal intervention had produced an uneasy peace.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Madison Batchelor to Albert, September 6, 1874, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); Woodville Sentinel, August 26, 1871; House Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 1876, pp. 94-99; Henry Marston to J.F. Temple and Sons, August 5, 1875, and Marston to J.W. Burbridge and Co., August 5, 1875, in Henry Marston Letter Book No. 4, p. 228.



Nevertheless, sensing victory and Republican weakness the Democrats continued to push their advantage. On October 7, 1875 an armed mob marched on the courthouse at Clinton, shot black Sheriff Henry Smith, and forced him to resign on pain of death. The mob then entered the courthouse, halted the proceedings, and also forced the Republican judge to resign. A few days later a leader of the mob, Dr. J.W. Saunders nearly succumbed to a massive dose of poison administered by his maid. A hysterical crowd promptly hanged the maid, Babe Mathews, in the courthouse square and marched on Baton Rouge to arrest her brother-in-law, former Representative John Gair, whom Mathews had implicated as the instigator of the plot. Apprehended by the mob in Baton Rouge, Gair, a leading East Feliciana Republican since the advent of Radical Reconstruction, never reached Clinton. Mobs similarly forced the resignation of Republican officials in West Feliciana and St. Helena. A mass meeting in East Baton Rouge produced a petition demanding that the Republican officials resign or face the consequences. Lieutenant Governor C.C. Antoine acting in Kellogg's absence announced, "certain evil disposed persons acting in concert with residents of Mississippi have banded together for unlawful and disorderly purposes and brought about in the parish of East Feliciana and in the district immediately adjacent thereto a condition of anarchy and mob violence." Antoine ordered the First Division State Militia to the region to

restore order, though at least one Clinton resident, Henry Marston, reported that no troops ventured into the troubled area. Commenting on the events in the Felicianas the Amite City Democrat remarked caustically, "the insolent, ignorant, negro Sheriff Smith of East Feliciana has at last resigned."<sup>380</sup>

With state officials apparently unable or unwilling to contain the violence, whites in the delta parishes continued to effectively "bulldoze" the territory. Bulldozing emerged as a term describing the attainment of goals through armed might by crushing the opposition into submission. Under the pretext of preventing the theft and resale of seed cotton by blacks, armed bands of regulators terrorized the freedmen and Republican sympathizers in the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge. Nightriders brutally abused and murdered many blacks in an effort to return them to a state of economic and political dependence. Blacks responded in kind by forming the Sage Hill Club which retaliated by murdering at least two whites. By the eve of the election of 1876 chaos prevailed

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<sup>380</sup> House Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 1876, pp. 94-99; Amite City Democrat, November 20, 1875; Henry Marston to J.F. Temple and Sons, August 5, 1875, and Marston to Jacob Wall, October 14, 1875, both in Henry Marston Letter Book No. 4, pp. 228 and 250. Although Marston noted that no troops arrived to assist the Republicans during the troubles in the fall of 1875, he did indicate that a small contingent of troops visited Clinton in the summer of 1876, see Marston to A. Foster Elliot, July 9, 1876, in Henry Marston Letter Book No. 4, p. 300 (LLMVC).

throughout the Florida parishes. The Daily Picayune declared Louisiana to be in a complete state of anarchy.<sup>381</sup>

With the Kellogg administration near collapse by the spring of 1876, many black and white Republicans abandoned the party in an effort to salvage their political careers or save their lives. Kellogg attempted to shore up the party in rural areas by replacing some wavering parish officials with loyal Republicans. Yet almost as soon as they received their commissions, mobs forced their resignation or flight. The Bayou Sara Ledger reported, "four members of the West Feliciana police jury were forced to resign, in open session, last Monday, to save trouble, in the face of blue jackets,

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<sup>381</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from: John DeLee, pp. 140-142, E.L. Weber, pp. 198-234, Henry Reid, p. 266, J.W. Armstead, pp. 295-299, J.S. Dula, pp. 351-363, T.M. Clark, pp. 383-385, George Swayze, pp. 386-388, Julius Green, pp. 506-509, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876," pt. 3. Testimony taken by a separate congressional investigating commission from: Isaac Guy, p. 165, M.F. Jamar, p. 238, Benjamin Rogers, pp. 241-243, G.W. Munday, p. 332, J.G. Kilbourne, p. 457, and George Norwood, p. 480, in Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Forty-Forth Congress, Second Session, House Misc. Doc. No. 34, pt. 3, 1877, herein after referred to as "Congressional Investigating Committee at Clinton." E.L. Weber to William P. Kellogg, April 10, 1876, Richard Walther to Kellogg, April 24, 1876, Joseph W. Armstead to Kellogg, May 1, 1876, and copy of proceeding from the Inquest on the Death of Max Aronson on the Plantation of H.S. Perkins, May 13, 1876, all in William Pitt Kellogg Papers (LLMVC). J.A. Glasper to Stephen Packard, January 1877, in Louisiana State Executive Department, Governors Correspondence (*ibid.*); Henry Marston to A. Foster Elliot, October 17 and 19, 1875, in Henry Marston Letter Book No. 4, p. 251 (*ibid.*); Amite City Democrat, November 27, 1875; New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 4, 1873. "Reminiscences of Days Before and After the Civil War," printed pamphlet by Philip H. Jones, in Annabel Smith Papers (LLMVC).

who are stationed at a stones throw from the seat of justice in our parish."<sup>382</sup>

During the course of 1876 increasingly chaotic conditions prevailed in eastern Louisiana. Murder and bushwhackings occurred with painful frequency as lawless elements exploited the lack of legal authority. Arson, attributed to disgruntled blacks, destroyed significant portions of the towns of Clinton, Jackson, and Amite City. Most importantly, by early summer large sections of eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi appeared on the verge of a race war. Following the murder of white regulator Max Aronson in West Feliciana Parish, conservatives intensified their campaign of terror against local blacks. Multiple lynchings of freedmen suspected in Aronson's murder climaxed when armed blacks massed near Pinckneyville, Mississippi. Whites from across eastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi converged on the region. Though possessing superior numbers, the blacks panicked when confronted by the white mob. Before darkness brought a halt to the slaughter, reports indicated that fifty freedmen had been killed outright and a half a dozen others lynched along the roadside as an example of the futility of their rebellion. With black

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<sup>382</sup> Amite City Democrat, April 1, 1876, and Bayou Sara Ledger reprinted in ibid., May 20, 1876; Joseph Armstead and George Swayzie to William P. Kellogg, May 1, 1876, and Agnes Jenks to Kellogg, September 23, 1876, in William Pitt Kellogg Papers (LLMVC).

resistance effectively crushed, the last hope for the Republican party in eastern Louisiana flickered out.<sup>383</sup>

In the wake of the Pinckneyville massacre scores of blacks who had previously testified about the scope of Democratic intimidation recanted their statements before a congressional commission at New Orleans. Other blacks abandoned the Republicans during the election of 1876 based on the strength of Democratic promises of schools and higher wages. Samuel Houston, a Republican party official in St. Tammany Parish, noted "the times were getting poorer and they (blacks) were getting poorer with them, the Democrats gave kind and conciliatory speeches to the blacks and generally out-generated the Republicans." Nevertheless, the Republicans managed to "steal" the election in part by rejecting the returns from East Feliciana and portions of West Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, Livingston, and Tangipahoa. But with blacks firmly cowed and Republican state authority smashed, Louisiana effectively returned to the rule of native whites. As a final demonstration of their contempt for Republican government a committee visited and shot the newly

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<sup>383</sup> Cornelia Stewart to Albert Batchelor, May 23, 1876, Batchelor to Cornelia Stewart, May 25, 1876, in Albert Batchelor Papers (LLMVC); records of the inquest relating to the death of Max Aronson in West Feliciana, May 13, 1876, in William Pitt Kellogg Papers (*ibid.*). Testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from M.F. Jamar, p. 238, in "Congressional Investigating Committee at Clinton, 1877"; Amite City Democrat, April 22, May 13 and 20, 1876; New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 24, 1876. James S. McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," unpublished manuscript in James S. McGehee Papers (LLMVC).

"elected" Governor Stephen Packard who quickly abandoned his claim.<sup>384</sup>

Jubilant celebrations heralded the collapse of Republican government in Louisiana. It mattered little that "John Sherman's theft" had secured Louisiana's electoral vote for the Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes. In their eyes from the depths of defeat and despair Louisiana whites had secured a brilliant victory over the Yankees. And for the moment native Louisiana whites felt unified and confident. But in reality the victory over Reconstruction would prove more catastrophic to many regions of the South than had defeat in war. For blacks the greatest of triumphs, liberation from bondage, concluded with the advent of decades of political exploitation and grinding poverty. And for whites a generation of bitterness and brutality had distorted their perceptions of the traditions

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<sup>384</sup> Testimony taken by a congressional committee from Samuel H. Houston, p. 263, in "Testimony Taken by the Select Committee on the Recent Elections in Louisiana," Documents of the United States House of Representatives, Forty-Fourth Congress, Second Session, House Misc. Doc. No. 34, pt.2; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 31, 1876; testimony taken by a congressional investigating committee from: Thomas McWilliams, p. 139, Henry Reid, p. 266, J.W. Armstead, p. 295, Andrew Duncan, pp. 300-314, T.M.J. Clark, pp. 381-383, T.W. Dalton, pp. 503-505, and Julius Green, pp. 506-507 in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876," pt. 3; "Report of the Board of Returning Officers to the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, Relating to the Election of 1876," Louisiana Legislative Docs., 1877. Also concerning blacks defection from the Republican party see Henry Marston to J.W. Burbridge and Co., September 29, 1876, Henry Marston letter book No. 4, p. 320, (LLMVC).

they held dear and the methods appropriate to sustain them.<sup>385</sup>

The unprecedented publicity surrounding cases of Republican fraud and impropriety demonstrated just how corrupt government **could** be, thus augmenting the plain folk's suspicions of authority. Many among the piney-woods dwellers recalled the failure of government to address their needs in the antebellum period, and an enlightened few recognized that their own desires had always been subsumed by the grand strategy of the planter elite. Each time assertiveness or discontent surfaced among the plain folk the elite circumvented their intentions with appeals for unity in the face of a common threat. The Spanish colonial government, abolitionists, Federal troops, and carpetbagger government had all served to rally the forces against a common enemy. And throughout racial unity served as the foundation for their appeals. In the post- Reconstruction period no apparent common enemy would emerge. Blacks, no longer enslaved or politically independent, would pose far less of a threat. With these threats removed, contempt for the old

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<sup>385</sup> Substantial evidence, most provided by the Republicans themselves, exists to demonstrate that John Sherman engineered the fraud which handed Louisiana's electoral vote to the Republicans in 1876. See testimony taken by a congressional investigating commission from: James E. Anderson, pp. 1-64, Thomas H. Jenks, Agnes Jenks, and J.Hale Sypher, pp. 60-325, in "Select Committee on the Presidential Election of 1876;" unsigned statement presented to B.F. Flanders concerning John Sherman's role in 1876 Louisiana electoral fraud and subsequent patronage, January 28, 1889, in Benjamin F. Flanders Papers (LLMVC).

elite quickly manifested itself in the piney woods. In the first major post-Reconstruction election voters in Tangipahoa Parish, the scene of the fiercest late nineteenth-century disorders, decisively voted down the old elite in favor independent candidates.<sup>386</sup>

In the late nineteenth century the Florida parishes served as a microcosm for examining the South as a whole. In the Felicianas and East Baton Rouge stability returned as the old elite augmented by some new faces effectively returned to power. But in the piney woods a continuing cycle of social and political instability predominated. In addition to the turmoil promoted by a rapid economic and demographic transformation several determinants peculiar to the region insured social strife. Among these were a failure of leadership and latent resentment for authority. The piney-woods republican tradition, as manifested in eastern Louisiana, virtually demanded defiance to governance. And at least thirty years of suspect government had amply reinforced latent suspicions of authority. Leadership failed primarily due to its inability to overcome the powerful factions which

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<sup>386</sup> The results from Tangipahoa during the state election of 1879 startled members of the old elite as well as the Democratic party. In particular the defeat of judicial candidates O.P. Amacker and J.M. Thompson, both members of the pre-war elite and conservative leaders during Reconstruction indicated the changing political climate. Though the Democrats ran strong in all the towns excepting the village of Tangipahoa, they generally did poorly at all rural precincts, see Amite City Independent, December 6, 1879.



rapidly emerged and also because of its failure to cope with the incredible levels of violence.

By the close of Reconstruction eastern Louisiana constituted a culture of violence. Few residents conducted their daily affairs unarmed. Sixteen years of fighting Federal troops and Republican government had demonstrated the effectiveness and finality of brutality. From the year immediately preceding the outbreak of war to the year of the close of Reconstruction the murder rate increased 900 percent. Similarly the level of assault increased by approximately 377 percent. Such incredible rates of violence did not simply end with the conclusion of Reconstruction. An even more appalling period of misery and terror would follow. With the common enemies removed the white factions turned on themselves in a chaotic carnage of factional feuding which terrorized the population and decimated the economy. In his last annual address to the legislature William P. Kellogg summarized the enduring condition of the Bayou State, "the great need of Louisiana is peace - peace and the enforcement of the laws, with the active concurrence of the people for whose protection the laws are devised." Kellogg could not have realized that his words would prove more relevant twenty years later than they had when he first spoke them.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> "Report of the Attorney General," Louisiana Legislative Docs., 1860; ibid., 1877. "Annual Address of Governor William Pitt Kellogg," House Journal, First Legislature, First Session, January 1876, p. 22.

## Chapter Six

### War Without Honor: Chaos Ensconced

In a swampy area along a roadside in northeastern Tangipahoa Parish three men waited nervously. One, a teenage boy with little experience in such matters, crouched anxiously in a clump of bushes about one hundred yards up the road from the others. If all went as planned, he would announce the approach of the unfortunate victim with a series of bird calls. The two assassins, both armed with double barreled shotguns and Winchesters, remained concealed in the thickest undergrowth near a stream bed. A can of turpentine and a pile of cigarette butts lay at their feet. As morning turned to midday, the bushwhackers settled in for another day of patient waiting. Their rival had survived another morning. Perhaps he would come tomorrow, and if not, they just might shoot somebody then anyway.<sup>388</sup>

Similar situations constituted a regular occurrence in the Florida parishes as well as in many other regions of the late nineteenth-century rural South. With the close of Reconstruction large areas of the South returned to a

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<sup>388</sup> Similar descriptions of bushwhackings found in: New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 4-5, November 9, and December 11, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4-5, 11, December 11, 1897.

semblance of the stability they knew in the antebellum period. But in other regions, unrestrained violence remained a fundamental component of everyday life. In some relatively isolated areas of the piney woods and mountain South scores of fierce feuds erupted. Many of these feuds found their origins in the struggle for economic and political primacy which characterized much of the post-Reconstruction South. The frequency and endurance of this white-on-white violence indicated the presence of a retarded system of justice and the continuity of the frontier mentality. Moreover, it demonstrated a breakdown in the social homogeneity which prevailed among native whites during Reconstruction. But more importantly, the widespread acceptance of violence unregulated by traditional interpretations of honor, indicated a perverted understanding of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian concepts of independence and honor. In the Florida parishes, violence did result from perceived threats to individual liberty. But it also functioned as a matter of economic or political policy, frequently motivated by but transcending concerns for independence and honor.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> For examples of late nineteenth century southern violence see: Michael Hyman, The Anti-Redeemers: Hill Country Political Dissenters in the Lower South From Redemption to Populism (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); O.V. Burton, In My Fathers House There Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Stephen Cresswell, Mormons, Cowboys, Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1870-1893); Robert Ingalls, Urban Vigilantes in the New

Among the piney-woods dwellers of eastern Louisiana the Jeffersonian tradition served not as a blueprint for creating good citizens but instead as the instigator of an obsessive concern with liberty and independence. Rather than promoting agrarian virtue, the republican tradition as manifested in the Florida parishes produced a suspicion of government and authority figures in general. This perverted tradition demanded a resistance to restraints on liberty even to the point of employing dishonorable means, such as shooting perceived agents of oppression in the back. Only the presence of a series of common enemies prevented the fruition of this philosophy from the antebellum period to the close of Reconstruction. With the common threats removed, this debauched Jeffersonianism waxed ascendant producing an ungovernable society overwhelmed by violence.

The feudists themselves were not the only ones who demonstrated the presence of a perverted republican ideal. Although the unwillingness of certain individuals to address the chaotic conditions can certainly be attributed to cowardice, this in itself does not account for the reaction of the majority. The tacit tolerance of lawlessness by the mass of the population signified instead the dominance of a

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South: Tampa 1882-1936 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Charles Mutzenberg, Kentucky's Famous Feuds and Tragedies (New York: R.F. Fenno Co., 1917); Altina Waller, Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

corrupted Jeffersonian tradition as a social determinant. By employing only those aspects of the Jeffersonian tradition conducive to their social and political agenda, local power brokers promoted in the people an intense but distorted republican legacy, which violently rejected government and other sources of restraint on their individual liberty. The refusal of the mass of the population to address the lawlessness reinforced the impression that individual liberty was most effectively manifested through the barrel of a gun. In an effort to explain the source of the chaotic conditions prevailing in the Florida parishes, the Daily Picayune described the residents as peculiar people "who are exceedingly jealous of what they deem their rights, and it was mainly through their misconception of what those rights really were that the troubles originated."<sup>390</sup>

Evidence of this dangerous tradition is readily apparent. One recent immigrant to the area received a chilling response to an article he published castigating the prevailing violence and distorted sense of personal rights common to the region. A derisive response from a long-term resident warned the newcomer that he had lived in the territory too briefly to understand "society here," adding contemptuously, "his stay here will be short unless before he leaves some domestic misfortune should happen to him or his,

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390New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 12, 1899.

which heaven forbid will help him understand the social qualities of this community."<sup>391</sup>

The ominous circumstances were furthered by a legacy of instability connected to the criminal and rebellious composition of the initial settlers. The plain folk's strong proclivity for rebellion against the existing order simmered as the political agenda of the ruling elite repeatedly subsumed their aspirations. Lingering suspicions of authority, combined with the increasing demands of the market economy and years of unprecedented brutality, all contributed to the emergence of a peculiar set of social mores. By the late nineteenth century, confirmation of governmental corruption and the absence of a unifying common enemy permitted the emergence of the dangerous product of this tradition, unleashing a vicious cycle of violence and anarchy.

In many areas of the post-Reconstruction South stability returned under the direction of the old elite. Despite the continuity of racial and class oppression their resumption of power signalled the return of societal equilibrium. In Louisiana, years of chaotic conditions climaxed with the dramatic collapse of the Republican government. The sudden Federal refusal to sustain the Republican government, combined with the prevailing disorder in the rural parishes, created a momentary power vacuum. In most of the delta and

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Amite City Independent, August 20, 1887.

sugar parishes the planters easily reasserted their dominance. But in some areas of the state, particularly the piney-woods region of eastern Louisiana, local residents resisted the return of the prewar status quo.

In a determined but haphazard manner many voices urged the people to concentrate on personal concerns rather than the political agenda of the elite. The expanding influence of the emerging merchant-professional class exacerbated the challenge to planter power. Calls for new leadership surfaced in all areas of the Florida parishes. In a direct attack on the legacy of planter dominance the Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate declared, "the old war horses of antebellum days have become so mixed in their political theology, so crocheted and rank by reason of a thousand political entanglements and creeds, that the only salvation for the country is in placing its politics in the hands of the young men." Recognizing the necessity of explaining their rejection of the old elite the same paper continued, "there can be no doubt that these (old elite) and these alone have caused a large proportion of our discord, strife and bitterness within the party in past years, and with all seriousness we assert that the only means of escape in the future is to trust our political fates to new men."<sup>392</sup>

Although in the delta parishes their vast patronage enabled planter interests to maintain the lion's share of

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<sup>392</sup> Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, August 15, 1888.

authority, in the piney woods, where the planter elite had always maintained a precarious grip on power, a serious challenge emerged. At the forefront of this dispute the piney-woods press gave voice to the dissenters. Among the most aggressive of the newspapers in eastern Louisiana, the Franklinton New Era condemned the efforts of Feliciana planters to dominate politics in the piney-woods parishes. The political intrigues of delta planters in the piney woods represented a particularly sore topic for many in the eastern parishes. Similarly the Amite City Florida Parishes published letters attacking the "political bosses and bloats" who had long dominated the region and now sought to entrench their power further. The same paper attacked government mismanagement and the failure of local politicians to address the will of the majority. As an alternative to maligning the prevailing conditions, the Amite City Democrat reminded its readers of the independence and security inherent in the piney-woods lifestyle, attributes which the residents had virtually abandoned to conform to the agenda of the planter elite.<sup>393</sup>

The sharpest break with the politics of the past occurred in Tangipahoa Parish. The new parish initiated the move to resist the resurrection of the prewar status quo when its voters repudiated the old elite in the initial state

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<sup>393</sup> Franklinton New Era, August 15, 1888; Amite City Florida Parishes, July 15, August 5 and 12, 1891; Amite City Democrat, October 2, 1875.



elections. And indeed Tangipahoa was aptly suited for this leadership. The rapid economic and demographic transformation of Tangipahoa, occasioned by its proximity to the New Orleans-Jackson Railroad, greatly exacerbated the post-Reconstruction instability. The possibilities created by the railroad encouraged scores of opportunists to settle in Tangipahoa. By the early 1870's Tangipahoa was second only to East Baton Rouge among the Florida parishes in the number of white residents and the parish seat, Amite City, had equaled Clinton as the second largest town in eastern Louisiana. The influx of new settlers, combined with the weakened status of the antebellum elite, permitted the rise of numerous factions which competed fiercely for political control. This situation in turn provoked resentment on the part of the traditional piney-woods dwellers and the old elite, many of whom had opposed the railroad and now fiercely resisted its associated consequences.<sup>394</sup>

As events would demonstrate, Tangipahoa experienced some of the most ferocious societal divisions in the nation during the course of the late nineteenth century. But despite the savagery of its conditions, Tangipahoa was not alone. Factional politics and economic competition destabilized the

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<sup>394</sup> Amite City Independent, December 6, 1879; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 8, 1897; Ninth Census of the United States, Population (Washington: Government Printing, 1872) pp. 154-157 and 629.

piney woods of much of Louisiana and especially the Florida parishes for the next three decades.

Bitter factional disputes emerged in Louisiana immediately following the overthrow of the Republican state government. With the Republicans removed as an effective force, the Democrats rapidly fragmented into three primary groups: the moderate patricians, the lottery dominated ring faction, and the reactionary Bourbons. The bitter divisions among these three statewide factions contributed significantly to the turbulent political conditions in the Florida parishes. Few local political contests operated beyond the intrigues of the Democratic factions. In the winter of 1892 the Daily Picayune observed that bitter hostility prevailed among the Democrats in eastern Louisiana. Weary of the infighting and disappointed by the lack of unity, congressional candidate C.J. Boatner expressed the feelings of many Democrats in an 1894 speech; "I am heartily tired of factional fights and want to see the party united as in the days of 1868 to 1879." Others placed party above personal ambition in a vain effort to reduce the infighting. B.T. Young declined the nomination for representative from St. Helena in an effort to alleviate factional antagonisms.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> C.J. Boatner to Steve Ellis, March 12, 1894, Tom Ellis to Steve, December 4, 1879, Steve to Tom, September 23, 1883, M.S. Newsom to Tom, December 14, 1883, multiple letters regarding Democratic factional fighting july 1885-August 1887, Steve to Tom, April 5, 1892, S.M. Robertson to Steve,

The dramatically weakened Republicans also suffered from infighting and factional divisions. They too endured bitter internal disputes resulting from the popular aversion for the rule of the old elite. The struggle of younger Republicans to cast off the domination of sugar-planting interests ripped asunder party organization in the Florida parishes which added to the political chaos. In a heated denunciation of the efforts of old-line Republicans to maintain their dominance the Kentwood Commercial declared, "there was a time perhaps when two or three men could manipulate the politics of the parish behind locked doors but it won't do now." The Commercial joined the Weekly Picayune in prophesying "an end to the Republican organization here" if its members did not negotiate a speedy conclusion of their internal troubles.<sup>396</sup>

Factional fighting debilitated party loyalty and correspondingly the entire regional political structure. But factionalization was not limited to politics. During the

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August 25, 1893, T.M. Akers to Steve, August 8, 1894, T.E. Warner to Steve, September 10, 1894, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC). Charles Lea To Uncle Hardy, March 20, 1879, in Hardy Richardson Papers (*ibid.*); Lemuel Conner to Dearest Mother, April 27, 1884, in Lemuel Conner Papers (*ibid.*). New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 23 and 30, 1892; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, September 26, October 3 and 10, 1891, January 23 and February 13, 1892; Amite City Independent, December 22, 1883; Kentwood Commercial, January 1 and March 13, 1897; Franklinton New Era, August 31, 1887 and August 15, 1888; Amite City Florida Parishes, October 1 and 8, 1890, August 12 and September 16, 1891.

<sup>396</sup> Kentwood Commercial, April 4 and August 1, 1896, June 5, 1897; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, September 10, 1896, Daily Picayune, December 5, 1897; Steve Ellis to Tom, April 5, 1892, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

course of the late nineteenth century bitter divisions also emerged along social, cultural, and economic lines. Temperance advocates provoked almost constant controversy by aggressively encouraging prohibition. Local tavern keepers and patrons of the illicit "blind tiger" moonshine distilleries often forcefully opposed the efforts of the "drys." Hostility surrounding the temperance movement climaxed in June 1890 when two days of rioting disrupted communities in northern Tangipahoa and St. Helena parishes, as well as portions of neighboring Pike County, Mississippi. Heated controversy also frequently plagued the efforts of railroad promoters and educational reformers. The prevailing antipathy often provoked extreme controversy over seemingly insignificant issues. Efforts to purchase a building to serve as the parish courthouse repeatedly produced hostile factions in Tangipahoa as did the controversy created by the ban on sling shots in Amite City.<sup>397</sup>

Perhaps the most significant division in white society centered on racial attitudes. In particular this controversy

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<sup>397</sup> Kentwood Commercial, July 9, 1895 and August 22, 1896; Amite City Florida Parishes, October 8, 1890 and March 11, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 10, 1889 and October 16, 1897; Amite City Democrat, November 6, 1875. E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, July 15, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection (Newberry Library); E.W. Preston to Robert R. Reid, April 27, 1897, in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC). R.L. Duvall to Robert Corbin, March 17, 1892, in Robert A. Corbin Papers (*ibid.*); broadside entitled "To the Citizens of the Parish of Tangipahoa," concerns factions surrounding the location of the courthouse building, in Louisiana Broadside Collection (*ibid.*); Amite City Council Minute Books, January 30, 1886 (Amite City Hall).

pitted racial moderates against those who demanded unqualified white supremacy. During the last phase of Reconstruction many whites advocated racial cooperation as a tool to overcome the Republican government. As early as the fall of 1874 the impassioned debate surrounding this issue had created a rift in the once-solid ranks of Florida parish Democrats. Addressing those who supported racial cooperation, Democratic organizer Charles Kennon declared, "we can never control the negro vote for the simple reason that it involves social equality which we can never accept. Let our banner be white and keep it unsullied." But other whites disagreed, preferring instead to grant blacks the suffrage which they in turn would control. The Weekly Picayune observed that blacks were learning "who would give them employment and treat them kindly." In return for political support blacks would be granted limited opportunities for advancement. Most importantly, some secured employment in white-owned businesses. For the cooperationists black employment provided a cheap and easily exploited source of labor. Black votes and labor contributed to the empowerment of one white faction at the cost of the unqualified hatred of the other.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Charles Kennon to Tom Ellis, November 11, 1870 and October 6, 1874, Tom Ellis to Steve, April 1, 1884, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC). Resolutions adopted by White League meeting at Bayou Barbary, Livingston Parish, September 5, 1874, in Mary Alley Scrapbooks (ibid.). Amite City Florida Parishes, August 26 and September 16, 1891; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, February 24, March 2, and April 9,

It should be noted that despite the factionalization of white society blacks were victimized by all white groups. The New Orleans Weekly Picayune summarized the prevailing racial climate in eastern Louisiana: "the question of white supremacy is not an issue here as it is well understood that the citizens will not tolerate anything else." Completely cowed by the massive violence characterizing the final months of Reconstruction, blacks retained only the unenviable option of suffering exploitation or intimidation. While the advantages of controlling black votes and labor proved readily apparent to all whites, one primary group determined to exclude blacks, while the other sought to use them. This strategical fissure contributed significantly to the eruption of bitter factional feuding.<sup>399</sup>

During the 1870's and 1880's economic conditions improved substantially in eastern Louisiana. Considerable new industry, primarily lumber mills, brickyards, and cotton mills, located predominantly along the course of the

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1896, and Daily Picayune, February 22 and July 4, 1897, January 10, 1898; Charles E. Lea to Uncle Hardy, March 20, 1879, in Hardy Richardson Papers. Testimony of Samuel H. Houston, in "Testimony Taken by the Select Committee on the Recent Election in Louisiana," United States House of Representatives Report, Forty-Fourth Congress, Second Session, 1877, p. 263; testimony of J.W. Armstead, pp.297-299, Robert C. Wickliffe, pp.548-549, and John Kennard, p.592, in "Testimony Taken by the Select Committee on Alleged Frauds in the Presidential Election of 1876," United States House of Representatives Report, Forty-Fifth Congress, Third Session, 1879.

<sup>399</sup> New Orleans Weekly Picayune, April 9, 1896.

railroad. Included were some large firms such as the Isabella (later Banner) Lumber Company at Kentwood, in northeastern Tangipahoa Parish, and the Gullet Cotton Gin Manufacturing Plant at Amite City. Other industrial concerns included shoe and box factories, vegetable canneries, and railroad repair facilities. In addition, scores of truck farms dotted the landscape alongside cotton fields and herds of grazing livestock. The rapid rate of development initially created a labor shortage. Moreover, it heightened the tension between planters and commercial interests who competed directly for laborers. E.D. Frost regional director for the Illinois Central Railroad, successor to the New Orleans-Jackson line, complained to H.S. McComb that fierce competition for laborers raged between planters and railroad interests in the Florida parishes. Likewise the Amite City Gazette published letters from St. Helena planters desperately seeking cotton hoers.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, November 3, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Outletters Collection (Newberry Library); Amite City Gazette, May 23, 1890; Amite City Democrat, November 20, 1875. Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, August 9, 1872; Kentwood Commercial, March 16, July 1, 9, and 16, 1895, March 14, 1896, June 12 and July 17, 1897; "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Soils," United States Department of Agriculture Report (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905) p. 252. Amite City Florida Parishes, November 26, 1890 and March 4, 1891 (notes nine sawmills operating in a five mile radius about Hammond); Newsom Brick Yard and Sawmill receipts, in John Thomas George Papers (LLMVC); Charles Gayarre to L.E. Simonds, July 4, 1875 and November 12, 1877, in Charles Gayarre Collection (*ibid.*). Liberty, Mississippi Southern Herald, August 25, 1883; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, November 1 and 7, 1894, March 29, 1895; Where to Locate New Factories in the States of

Brisk economic growth attracted additional sources of capital and labor to the region. Hundreds of northern settlers and investors emigrated south in search of cheap land and labor. Business advocate Charles Gayarre informed inquiring northern industrialists that southern labor could be worked sixty hours a week, adding that management "will not be interfered for many years to come by the impatient demands of overtaxed workmen."<sup>401</sup>

Several new communities dominated by northern immigrants, in particular Kentwood and Roseland, developed along the railroad. Other previously established towns such as Hammond also encouraged northern immigration. Newspapers there proclaimed the benefits of northern emigration and actively encouraged new settlement. One broadside distributed by industrial promoters in Kentwood proclaimed the village "free from malarial influences, poisonous snakes and other reptiles, and annoying insects of all kinds." And, addressing the greatest concern of northern immigrants declared, "at Kentwood the people are polite and kindly

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Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana On the Line of the Southern Division of the Illinois Central Railroad (Cedar Rapids: Republican Printing Co., 1892) pp. 118-148, hereinafter cited as Where to Locate New Factories.

<sup>401</sup> Charles Gayarre letter published in New Orleans Bulletin, 1885, in Charles Gayarre Collection (LLMVC);



disposed towards northern people and always treat them well."<sup>402</sup>

The population of some of these settlements quickly surpassed many previously established towns along the railroad. Moreover, the rapid rate of economic development encouraged commercial interests in older communities such as Clinton, Franklinton, and Greensburg to petition for the construction of spur railroads through their towns. The Franklinton New Era urged its readers to encourage the construction of a railroad to stimulate economic development in Washington Parish.<sup>403</sup>

But the influx of northern settlers and ideals threatened the traditional social structure of the Florida parishes as never before, leading to a dangerous polarization of society. Many of the region's traditional residents accordingly resisted the changes brought by northerners, and frequently felt animosity for the settlers themselves. Although it aggressively courted northern immigrants the Kentwood Commercial admitted that outside the towns "back in the woods," many residents resented Yankee intrusion. The

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<sup>402</sup> Undated broadside advertising Kentwood found in Amos Kent Papers (LLMVC); Roseland Herald, June 15, 1894; Kentwood Commercial, February 16, April 6 and 13, and December 14, 1895, February 15 and March 14, 1896. Greensburg Gazette, June 17, 1882; New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 9, 1897; Where to Locate New Factories pp. 118-148.

<sup>403</sup> Franklinton New Era, May 21, 1896; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, September 17, 1892, June 10, 1893, and March 15, 1895

Commercial also reluctantly noted that a mass meeting designed to promote support for northern immigration among established residents "was very poorly attended." Less inclined to play down the issue, the Amite City Independent observed that many older residents exhibited overt hostility to northerners settling in the area. The New Orleans Daily Picayune reported that in contrast to depending on yankee immigration, promoters in Amite City were employing local capital to develop the existing resources of their town.<sup>404</sup>

Northern settlers and capital challenged the existing order in the Florida parishes in two important ways. Their money fueled the economic growth occurring primarily along the railroad, which in itself threatened the traditional piney-woods lifestyle of eastern Louisiana. The intrusion of numerous industrial concerns and the purchase of huge tracts of timberland naturally jeopardized the conventional existence prevailing in the Florida parishes. Moreover, the northern work ethic and conception of property rights differed from the established relaxed attitude regarding work and landholding. The societal transition initiated by these changes produced concomitant blocs of supporters and opponents, increasing regional divisiveness. In essence, progress had reached a region where most were unprepared for it, many resented it, and some would violently resist it.

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<sup>404</sup> Kentwood Commercial, March 30, April 6 and 13, December 14, 1895; Amite City Independent, November 14, 1874; New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 27, 1897.

The problems plaguing the Florida parishes related directly to the events of the preceeding decades. The weakened status of the old elite, the multiple societal factions emerging, and the challenge posed to the traditional culture contributed to a continuing cycle of instability in the piney woods. Most significantly, the events of the war and Reconstruction had created a culture of violence in the eastern parishes.

Incredibly high rates of violent crime characterized the piney woods of the Florida parishes throughout the late nineteenth century. The breakdown of legal authority amidst the highly charged racial and political circumstances during the last years of Reconstruction virtually required that all residents be armed. With an armed camp established, few were willing to be the first to conduct their affairs unarmed. The Kentwood Commercial observed, "a good many peaceable citizens carry guns simply because dangerous men carry them." The editor declared that his research indicated that proportionately more people carried concealed weapons in the Florida parishes than any other region of the nation. Despite these allegations similar situations prevailed in other areas of the country. But most regions enjoyed the discipline provided by a popularly supported legal system which was painfully lacking in the Florida parishes.<sup>405</sup>

As early as the spring of 1879 local newspapers urged legislation to contain the proliferation of concealed weapons. Many recognized that although weapons may have proved essential in defeating the Reconstruction government, they now constituted a menace. In the spring of 1890 the Amite City Gazette reported, "Saturday night last one would have supposed Amite City had been turned into a frontier town and wild Indians had made an attack so numerous were the pistol shots." Violent crimes frequently went unnoticed for hours because of a general acclimation to gunshots. The Kentwood Commercial complained that the reports of weapons from the scene of one violent crime had "caused no alarm or excitement as the people of the town are not unaccustomed to hearing the discharge of firearms during the night." Kentwood attempted to control the random discharge of weapons in town by building a shooting gallery "for the rowdy boys." James S. McGehee reflected that Florida parish boys "had grown up in a country where youths were permitted by public opinion to carry revolvers at an age when they scarcely had sufficient discretion for pen knives. Human life there has always been held far too cheaply." Not surprisingly women also frequently carried guns for self-protection.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Amite City Independent, April 26, 1879; Amite City Gazette, May 23, 1890; Kentwood Commercial, March 30, 1895 and August 29, 1896; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, August 2, 1894, March 26, 1895 and Daily Picayune, November 21, 1896; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 9, 1888. James Stewart McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," unpublished manuscript in James Stewart McGehee Papers (LLMVC); untitled, undated

In a series of articles beginning in the winter of 1890 the Amite City Florida Parishes provided perhaps the best explanation of the regional obsession with violence. "Four years of war added to ten years of alien carpetbag rule, fourteen years of demoralization and destruction could not have been expected to leave the people of this state in a very settled condition, nor with a very high regard for the majesty of the law." The editor emphasized that by the close of Reconstruction few local residents had retained any respect for established legal authority. But, ominously, the same paper observed that the absence of effective law enforcement since the close of Reconstruction had permitted "a few lawless and irresponsible men in the community who have nothing to lose to terrorize a whole community." Local newspapers fanned the flames of chaos by dramatically publicizing events and essentially making heroes out of notorious criminals. Many newspapers also encouraged a culture of violence by the nature and emphasis of some of their articles. One such article entitled, "How to Whip a Bigger Man Than Yourself" described a series of dirty tricks to overcome a more powerful opponent.<sup>407</sup>

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newspaper article (apparently Daily Picayune, 1900?, describing armed women in Tangipahoa, in John W. Lambert Papers (ibid.)).

<sup>407</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, November 5, 1890 and February 11, 1891; undated unidentified news article (Amite City Advocate) found in Duncan Francis Young Scrapbooks, Vol. 4, pp. 12-13, (Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Howard Tilton Library, Tulane University).

With the order and stability provided by a dominant planter class removed, as well as Federal troops, the piney woods of the Florida parishes declined into anarchy. The popular desire to return to an independent unregulated existence foundered on the reality of the prevailing circumstances. The rapid economic transformation occurring primarily along the railroad impeded efforts to return to a simpler lifestyle. Many openly opposed the implications of modernization. Local newspapers vigorously attacked the perceived exploitation inherent in capitalism. The Kentwood Commercial predicted that the abuses of capitalism would produce "a revolution the magnitude of which few have ever dreamed of." Similarly the East Feliciana Patriot condemned the "merciless creditors" who exploited honest working people. The Patriot joined the St. Helena Echo and other papers in urging readers to strive for self-sufficiency and economic independence.<sup>408</sup>

The negative impact of modernization proved readily apparent. Many lumber mills provoked widespread resentment by compensating workers in script redeemable exclusively at the company store. Such restrictive practices naturally kept many laborers in poverty. Likewise the railroad incurred the wrath of many residents. Some farmers condemned the high

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<sup>408</sup> Kentwood Commercial, July 30, 1895; Clinton East Feliciana Patriot, April 27, 1867; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, August 24, 1889, September 12, 1891, and January 14, 1898; Amite City Independent, January 7, 1882.

freight charges which cut substantially into their meager profits. Others deplored the railroad's decimation of their livestock. Most importantly, many deeply resented the railroad's exploitation of its own laborers. Regional director E.D. Frost observed that the railroad had aroused the hostility of local residents primarily due to its failure to pay its workers. Frost summarized the prevailing animosity simply by noting "we have broken so many promises." The St. Helena Echo, always at the forefront in condemning unfair labor practices, declared "it is fast becoming the old, old question of capital vs. labor, freemen vs. capitalist slavery. Let the farmers stop, think, and take measures to protect themselves."<sup>409</sup>

As abundantly demonstrated in the newspapers, a fierce determination to maintain one's independence and honor remained central to the piney-woods existence in the Florida parishes. And, in a society now heavily armed and extensively schooled in the effectiveness and finality of brutality, conditions proved conducive to chaos. In an effort to rationalize the chaos that gripped the eastern Florida parishes the New Orleans Daily States explained, "the people of the Florida parishes are generally rough and of an

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<sup>409</sup> E.D. Frost to H.S. McComb, October 18, 1875 and June 27, 1875, in W.M. Francis and E.D. Frost Out Letters Collection (Newberry Library); Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 16, 1892; Amite City Democrat, December 4, 1875; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, November 27, 1895.

independent, too often fierce spirit unrestrained by the efficient enforcement of criminal justice."<sup>410</sup>

Like the social structure and economy of the region, the system of justice in the Florida parishes was completely transformed as a result of events associated with the war and Reconstruction. The remnants of the prewar legal system which survived the war collapsed before the purges initiated during Reconstruction. With real power concentrated in the hands of Federal authorities the majesty of civil justice declined. The system installed by the Republican government proved incapable of coping with the ever increasing cycle of violence. Moreover, the popular perception of corruption and fraudulent rise to power of the Republican system negated respect for the courts among the residents.

Tangipahoa and East Feliciana experienced the widest chasms between legal authority and popular approval. In Tangipahoa the Republicans appointed as sheriff a widely despised man accused of prewar criminal activity. And, a large portion of the population believed that the local judges held office fraudulently. In East Feliciana popular outrage resulted in the violent ouster of the local sheriff and judges. But the similarities between these two parishes end with redemption. The return of the planter class to power in East Feliciana allowed for the establishment of a

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<sup>410</sup> New Orleans Daily States, reprinted in Kentwood Commercial, January 1, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 12, 1899 and Weekly Picayune, August 2, 1894.



respected assertive legal system in a social framework which retained many elements of the antebellum system. The rapid economic transformation of Tangipahoa and the concomitant factionalization of society and politics hindered efforts to reestablish a respected system of justice.

Throughout the late nineteenth century the local courthouse served as the premier political prize in many regions of the rural South. In the Florida parishes judges commanded the greatest power and respect, though the district attorney and sheriff also retained considerable influence. Central to understanding the chaos which emerged at its worst in Tangipahoa Parish is the incoherent system of justice that prevailed there. Unfortunately for the residents the district judgeship fell directly under the control of one faction, the district attorney remained partisan to another, and a progression of sheriffs proved cowardly and incompetent. Although all of the piney-woods parishes experienced inordinant rates of violence, as a result of the legal chaos prevailing in Tangipahoa, it continued a regional tradition attracting scores of lawless elements.

The turbulence within the legal system rendered it largely ineffective, promoting increasing disaffection with the mechanisms of justice. Violent criminals in the charge of the sheriff frequently escaped as did inmates of the parish prisons. Henry Crittenden, who escaped from Tangipahoa Sheriff P.P. McMichael while en route to the state

penitentiary, announced that he would kill all who had testified against him, causing several families to flee the region. Most escapees, such as Cade Strickland, who fled the courthouse during an exchange of gunfire between his friends and sheriff's deputies, were not pursued after their escape. Criminal dockets were often stolen or destroyed, and in one case, the Washington Parish courthouse mysteriously burned down amidst a series of heated cases.<sup>411</sup>

The cowardly behavior of several sheriffs, in particular P.P. McMichael and F.P. Mix of Tangipahoa, encouraged the violence. Neither made any realistic effort to control the ever-widening cycle of brutality. When asked how a mass-murderer could so blatantly snub the legal system, a female member of one of the notorious feuding families responded curtly, "they were afraid to arrest him." Concerned citizens frequently filed charges in vain against local sheriffs for failure to perform their duties. Similarly, the district attorney repeatedly failed to prosecute those aligned with his faction or particularly dangerous elements. The New Orleans Daily Picayune observed that in the late nineteenth century piney woods, the old honor bound means of settling disputes, in face to face confrontations, had given way to

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<sup>411</sup> Kentwood Commercial, March 30, 1895, June 6, 1896, January 1, March 20 and 27, June 12, and July 3, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, June 10, 1891; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, August 15, 1891 and January 22, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 20 and 29, 1891, June 14, 15, and July 1, 1897, and Weekly Picayune, June 2, 1896.

"skulking, cowardly, assassins," thus neutralizing the legal system with fear. The failure of the mechanisms of justice to arrest the increasing violence led a group in Washington Parish to urge its readers to "deal out the justice of Judge Lynch with an unsparing hand."<sup>412</sup>

Sheriff McMichael's cowardice proved particularly shameful. Throughout the 1890's, the bloodiest decade in the region's history, McMichael remained completely unwilling to confront the most violent elements. Moreover he seemed to resent those who possessed the courage he lacked. For months prior to the fall of 1896, merchants in Hammond had been bullied by a notorious thug who was "trying to run the town with a small gang at his back." When Hammond city marshall Tom Rhodes courageously confronted the gang, a shootout resulted leaving one of their number dead and Rhodes seriously wounded. But to the dismay of the residents who applauded Rhodes' bravery, McMichael promptly arrested Rhodes for creating a disturbance. The remaining gang members continued to roam free "making threats." Sheriff Mix likewise incurred the wrath of East Feliciana residents. After accompanying a "dangerous negro maniac" to the asylum at Jackson the sheriff was angered to find the facility full.

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<sup>412</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 14-15, 1897, January 31 and February 10, 1898, June 12, 1898; Kentwood Commercial, June 12 and July 3, 1897; Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, No. 5 and 6, multiple entries 1893-1899, (Archives of the Clerk of Court, Tangipahoa Parish, Amite City).

Rather than returning the man to jail in Tangipahoa, Mix simply released him in Jackson.<sup>413</sup>

The shortcomings of the legal system mirrored a more substantive problem. Conditioned by brutality and a fierce tradition of independence, many residents rejected the idea of government intervention in what they considered private affairs. Feuding families frequently expressed contempt for the interest shown by non-participants and often regarded the system of justice as merely another hostile faction.<sup>414</sup> Many considered government to be inherently corrupt and partisan while others regarded murder as the most definitive means of defending independence and honor. In court, defendants repeatedly appealed to the warped Jeffersonian tradition which permitted a man to confront a perceived threat aggressively, and juries accordingly sustained their pleas. With juries unwilling to convict, the efforts of peace officers were neutralized and the entire system demoralized. Commenting on the prevailing attitude toward the legal system in the piney woods, the Weekly Picayune

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<sup>413</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 7, 1889 and October 31, 1896; Kentwood Commercial, October 24, 1896 and January 23, 1897.

<sup>414</sup> Though most of the families involved in the primary feuds resented the interest shown by outsiders, some of the feudists themselves, particularly younger unattached men, seemed to revel in the publicity surrounding the later phases of the feuds.

observed, the people seem to fear the courts "more than smallpox."<sup>415</sup>

In the winter of 1890 the Florida Parishes summarized conditions in the piney woods. The editor observed, "from a period of anarchy we have progressed to one in which the law breaker is at least brought to trial." Despite this positive step he noted that few criminals filled the local jails. He concluded with an impassioned appeal for jurors to convict the guilty noting, "we can have no prosperity until we have peace; we can enjoy no peace as long as the criminal laws of the land are violated openly and with impunity." At the conclusion of a session of the district court seven years later, the same paper lamented that despite the large number of locally and illegally distilled "blind tiger" whiskey cases heard, not a single conviction had resulted. In a similar complaint to that of years before the editor noted, "the court officers do what they can but the juries favor whiskey and won't convict." Following the April 1891 bushwhacking of Jack Hall in Livingston Parish, the Florida Parishes argued that his murder was a logical step. Hall had been tried for the murder of Bud White a few months earlier, but a jury had failed to convict him.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> New Orleans Weekly Picayune, August 2, 1894.

<sup>416</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, November 5, 1890, April 29, 1891, and April 30, 1897.

In an 1894 article entitled, "What is the Reason," the Roseland Herald observed that of the thirteen true bills returned by the sitting grand jury none had resulted in convictions. The indictments, ranging from trespass to murder, were all dismissed by a jury composed of men "who will never convict, no matter what the evidence may be." The Herald continued, "If this is true then justice has fled, and the courts are a mere farce, a travesty on justice." Instead of improving the system these appeals had little if any positive effect. The Daily Picayune noted that every celebrated case appearing before the Sixteenth Judicial Court at Amite City in June, 1897, had been dismissed. In some cases the jury deliberated only five minutes before returning a verdict of not guilty. The only exception being a party of armed feudists who, upon learning that their case would actually go to trial, marched out of court derisively mocking the proceedings. The court responded by disbanding the jury and canceling the proceedings.<sup>417</sup>

Outraged by what it called "The Reign of Blood" in the piney-woods parishes, the Daily Picayune printed an assessment of the legal system there. The report commended Sixteenth Judicial District Judge Robert R. Reid for his efforts but aggressively condemned the incompetence of Tangipahoa Sheriff P.P. McMichael. A similar report

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<sup>417</sup> Roseland Herald, June 15, 1894; New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 19, 1897;

presented by an 1897 grand jury also praised the efforts of Judge Reid but gingerly criticized District Attorney Duncan Kemp and Sheriff McMichael. Both reports reserved their strongest criticism for the mass of the population. The Picayune denounced the residents for their pervasive disrespect for the law. According to the Picayune this condition resulted from a persistent effort of some to bring justice into disrepute, thereby creating a condition in which juries refused to convict out of sympathy for the accused or fear of being killed by friends of the criminals. The Picayune concluded, "The burden is placed where it belongs upon the people." In a separate article the same paper and others noted that in the past fifty years Washington Parish had convicted only one accused murderer amidst the relentless prevailing violence.<sup>418</sup>

To counter the ineffectiveness of the judicial system the St. Helena Echo called for radical changes. The Echo urged that court officials be made appointive lest the region continue "onward and downward to financial ruin." But like most other observers, the Echo admitted that without a change in the character and accountability of the population any effort to restructure the system of justice would be doomed to failure. Judge Robert Reid provided perhaps the best summary of the prevailing conditions in a January 1897 charge

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<sup>418</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 15 and July 12, 1897, October 26, 1896; Kentwood Commercial, March 27, 1897.

to a sitting jury. "The failure to perform the duties entrusted to you is the fruitful source of mobs and riots, the people become incensed against the machinery of justice by reason of such failure; evil doers become emboldened by immunity from punishment for crime and the result is a hatred and contempt for them and anarchy and lawlessness spread their reign of terror over the community."<sup>419</sup>

In a culture dominated by an extremely sensitive concern for honor and independence, an ineffective legal system spelled disaster. Seemingly insignificant issues frequently resulted in serious "difficulties." "Difficulty" emerged as a term popularly employed among the press and people to describe an honorable violent confrontation. Difficulties differed from "cowardly murders" and bushwhackings, both of which connotated craven assassinations or murders conducted under criminal auspices. Bushwhacking almost always indicated an advance planned, feud-related homicide. In examining events in the piney woods of eastern Louisiana in the late nineteenth century, it is important to remember that the majority of residents tolerated murder as a means of settling differences. Thus most difficulties were considered justifiable.

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<sup>419</sup> Greensburg St. Helena Echo, September 30 and October 7, 1893, also reprinted in New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 2, 1897; see also Daily Picayune, January 14, 1897.



Difficulties comprised 79 of the 133 homicides identified in the Florida parishes during the period 1882-1898. Twenty murders occurred under criminal circumstances. These incidents ranged from the bungled train robberies of the much heralded Eugene Bunch to the random murder of inoffensive tramps camping along the railroad. In one particularly grisly incident, a pair of highway bandits robbed and murdered a travelling salesman horribly mutilating his corpse to inhibit identification. Nineteen bushwhackings occurred in the same period as did six racially-motivated murders. Most of the remaining nine murders were feud-related instances in which the victim received wounds in the back. Such instances differed from difficulties in that they manifested no sense of honor. Significantly, a considerable proportion of the difficulties and almost all of the bushwhackings were-feud related.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> These figures include four murders in southwestern Mississippi related to or directly influencing events in the Florida parishes. Amite City Florida Parishes, January 7 and 28, and April 29, 1891, March 23 and August 10, 1892, April 12 and 26, 1893, January 23, 1904; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 31, July 11 and 25, August 29, 1891, May 21, June 18, July 9, August 20, September 17 and 24, 1892, May 27 and June 10, 1893, September 20, 1895; Kentwood Commercial, March 30, June 11 and 25, July 9 and 16, December 28, 1895, January 11, April 24, September 12, October 24, 1896, April 10, July 10, August 7, November 13, 1897, February 5 and March 19, 1898; Liberty, Mississippi Southern Herald, April 5, 1884; Magnolia Gazette, August 25 and September 8, 1882, May 31 and July 26, 1883; Osyka Two States, November 23 and 30, 1888; Amite City Gazette, August 19, 1887; Amite City Independent, July 15, 1882 and May 26, 1883; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, August 6, 1888; New Orleans, Daily Picayune, January 26, February 2 and 5, April 20, 1883, May 9, 1887, December 17, 1888, January 22, 25, and 26, 1889, January 11

In addition to the almost daily incidents of personal violence, collective terror and nightriding continued to plague the region. In the late nineteenth century many areas of the South witnessed the rise of terroristic organizations known as whitecaps. Usually inspired by economic competition, whitecaps often engaged in violent acts against oppressive employers or industries. But in most cases blacks served as the target of whitecap violence. Whitecaps frequently drove blacks from employment and sought to force their code of morality on the resident population. Jews also suffered at the hands of whitecaps, though it had less to do with religion than perceived price gouging by Jewish merchants. One observer described the situation in early 1893, "there is a good deal of excitement here about what is

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and 20, 1891, July 12, 1894,, October 10, November 21, December 23 and 25, 1896, March 15 and 27, April 6, May 25, June 12, July 4, 20, and 29, August 24 and 26, November 9 and 22, December 11 and 13, 1897, January 31, May 31, June 8, July 13, 1898; New Orleans Weekly Picayune, November 2 and December 9, 1894, March 24 and 26, November 21, 1895, January 10, April 22 and 27, June 4, July 14, and September 7, 1896. A.C. Bankston to Uncle Simon, August 18, 1876, in William Bond Papers (LLMVC); W.D.J. Warner to Tom Ellis, September 15, 1874, in Ellis Family Papers (*ibid.*); W.W. Draughon to Judge Robert Reid, June 15, 1900, also undated news clippings from New Orleans Times Democrat and Greensburg St. Helena Echo, all in Robert R. Reid Papers (*ibid.*); Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Books, Books No. 4-6 multiple entries (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); Minutes of the Pike County, Mississippi circuit Court, Minute Books A and B multiple entries (Pike County Clerk of Courts Office, Magnolia, Mississippi). Unidentified newsclipping dated March 3, 1894, two undated untitled newsclippings (1888?), all in Duncan Francis Young Scrapbooks, Vols. 5 and 6 (Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Howard Tilton Library, Tulane University).

called whitecaps. They are running all the darkeys off from peoples mills and farms at a dreadful rate. It is rumored that all the Jews in Summit are going to Jerusalem." Whitecaps met in secret, concealed their identities from the general population, and often included mystic rituals in their initiation process. The celebrated Mississippi whitecap, Will Purvis, who escaped fate when his head slipped through the hangman's noose, maintained that whitecaps functioned as a direct outgrowth of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>421</sup>

The success of nightriding during Reconstruction had not been lost on the residents of the Florida parishes and southwestern Mississippi. Moreover, nightriding continued to provide a source of camaraderie in a region otherwise virtually devoid of entertainment. But whitecapping was a deadly serious business. Whitecappers terrorized the community and paralyzed economic development. In the Florida parishes whitecappers were seldom motivated by high ideals.

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<sup>421</sup> Sister to J.J. Stokes, February 6, 1893, in J.A. Stokes Papers (LLMVC); untitled news article dated Laurel Hill, La., January 22, 1893, in J.Burruss McGehee Papers (*ibid.*). Francis Williams Griffith, True Life Story of Will Purvis (Purvis, Mississippi: Booster Press, 1935); John H. Napier, Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: It's Land and People (Oxford: University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1985) p. 84; William Holmes, "Whitecapping: Agrarian Violence in Mississippi, 1902-1906," Journal of Southern History, XXXV, 1969, p. 165. New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 10, 1887, March 30, 1894, October 15, 1896; New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 16, 1887; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, November 15, 1895; Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, July 1, 1888. Kentwood Commercial, November 16, 1895, February 1 and April 4, 1896; Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891.

Instead they typically functioned as racial regulators, keeping the blacks down, and assaulting the interests of economic competitors.

Whitecaps frequently posted armed pickets near sawmills and brickyards to prevent blacks from working. In one instance in the summer of 1895, several whitecaps called together a group of black laborers working for a sawmill in central Tangipahoa Parish. The nightriders informed the blacks that they could no longer work at the mill. And, to demonstrate their resolve they singled out a man whom they had already warned. The unfortunate man pleaded that he had not understood them initially but would cease working immediately. The whitecaps coldly responded that the time for amends had passed and cruelly murdered him before all the gathered workers. Similar incidents occurred with painful frequency.<sup>422</sup>

Unlike in neighboring Mississippi where local authorities aggressively combated whitecapping violence with the enthusiastic support of the governor, little official sanction hampered them in the Florida parishes where the whitecaps commanded broad support. One group, the Phantom Riders, which operated extensively in Tangipahoa, St. Helena,

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<sup>422</sup> Kentwood Commercial, June 11, 1895; Magnolia Gazette, November 9, 1882; Sister to J.J. Stokes, February 6, 1893, in Joel A. Stokes Papers (LLMVC); Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 15, 1896, April 5, 1899, and Weekly Picayune August 2, 1894.

and Washington parishes, functioned as a pseudo-legal arm. The Phantom Riders whipped and terrorized accused thieves, wife-beaters and the like, always reserving their most severe treatment for blacks. They boasted among their number some prominent local figures which strengthened their immunity from criminal prosecution and furthered acceptance of extra-legal violence among the population. In an article highly critical of the Phantom Riders the Republican New Orleans Weekly Pelican observed, "no notice of them (Phantom Riders) whatsoever has appeared in our daily papers. The murderous doings were suppressed for fear, it is said that some good (?) citizens might be implicated in such questionable acts."<sup>423</sup>

Some of these groups considered their actions both morally justified and essential to securing regional stability. The constitution of the Knights of the Mystic Ring, based at Amite City, declared, "it shall be the duty of every member to protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless, from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal." These were clearly high-minded ideals for an organization focused on secret para-military operations.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> New Orleans Weekly Pelican, July 16, 1887; New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 10, 1887 and February 22, 1897.

<sup>424</sup> Handwritten constitution of the "Knights of the Mystic Ring," found in Thomas E. Warner Papers (LLMVC).

Their pretensions to address the ineffective legal system notwithstanding, the whitecaps themselves constituted an extreme threat to regional stability. This resulted not simply from their extra-legal activities but from the possibilities inherent when multiple clandestine militias terrorize a community at will. Individual efforts to impress upon the residents the necessity of controlling whitecap lawlessness typically failed miserably.

Throughout the late 1890's Kentwood served as a center for whitecap activities. Located barely five miles from the Mississippi state line it offered a safe haven for Magnolia state fugitives as well as harboring many indigenous desperados. When C.T. Curtis, the northern-born editor of the local newspaper, criticized the prevailing lawlessness, he quickly received two death threats. Curtis responded with an admission of his own cowardice and a lengthy apology to those he had offended. Yet his weekly apologies apparently failed to appease his antagonists. One month later the same paper reported that Curtis had "mysteriously disappeared."<sup>425</sup>

Wilfred Colvert, a former editor of the Chicago Vindicator and an ex-secret service agent, replaced Curtis. Initially Colvert appeared uniquely suited for the stressful role of a "fighting editor." But he too, soon earned the

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<sup>425</sup> Kentwood Commercial, August 13 and 20, October 1, 1895.

wrath of the whitecaps. In December, 1895, Colvert announced, "we have heard of one person who does not like the Commercial or its editor and we are considering the advisability of shutting up the shop." Colvert continued to direct the paper seeking, as far as possible, to distance himself from the prevailing factional violence. Despite his efforts in March, 1897, the Commercial reported that the editor had received two notes ordering him to "git" out of town on pain of death signed "Captain Whitecaps." Instead of fleeing like his predecessor, Colvert instead retreated from his position of criticizing lawless elements and allowed his paper to degenerate into the mechanism for publicizing the views of the most violent local faction.<sup>426</sup>

The greatest threat to regional stability posed by whitecapping, involved the possibility that they could fall under the control of one ill-intentioned individual or group. In a January 1891 address to a sitting grand jury Judge Walter Thompson lamented, "I predicted then that no matter how good the motives of the parties who started this organization (whitecaps) it would fall under the control of parties who would use it as a means of private vengeance and oppression. Subsequent events have confirmed my predictions." If the brutality practiced by terroristic nightriders was not in itself enough, a private clandestine militia in the hands of a rancorous competitor could wreak

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havoc on the local economy and provoke the emergence of counter para-military organizations. Such a situation would result in little less than complete societal chaos. And, in the Florida parishes perfect conditions for chaos were already in place.<sup>427</sup>

The political power vacuum prevailing in the post-Reconstruction piney woods created the opportunity for new leadership. But the men who filled the void in leadership lacked both the stature of the old elite and the unifying issues which the planters had manipulated so effectively in support of their dominance. The factionalization of politics and the rapid economic transformation occurring in certain areas rendered stability increasingly elusive. Indeed, societal equilibrium proved exceedingly difficult to secure in a region where, in the absence of a common threat, many refused to be governed. Furthermore, the fledgling political leaders faced the resentment of many of the old elite who not only offered little assistance but withdrew their active support from a legal system in crisis.

Among the more important families who sought to fill the political void in this turbulent period were the Reids, led by brothers Joseph and Robert. The Reid brothers, both practicing attorneys, migrated from Madison County, Mississippi in 1866 and settled near Amite City. By the late 1870's the Reids had established themselves as an alternative

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<sup>427</sup>Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, 1891.



to the old elite and secured a strong political base. Colonel Robert Reid, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and one of scores of Louisiana politicians who continued to rise in the ranks of the Confederate army throughout the late nineteenth century, emerged as the family's consummate politician. Their growing influence in regional politics climaxed when Robert Reid secured election to the highly influential district judgeship.<sup>428</sup>

But like many other political newcomers the Reid's success provoked extreme resentment from many members of the old elite. Congressman S.M. Robertson repeatedly expressed deep reservations about the character of the Reids to his friend Steve Ellis. Similarly Charles Lea informed Washington Parish patriarch Hardy Richardson that a bloodless revolution would be necessary to terminate the rule of the Reids. The efforts of the Reids and other emerging political families to promote education and stability consistently suffered from a lack of support among the old elite.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Judicial District Court, Succession No. 852 A (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court, Amite City); Register of Doctors, Tangipahoa Parish Conveyance Records, filed December 2, 1882 (*ibid.*); Succession of Dr. Columbus Reid, No. 443, filed April 13, 1886 (*ibid.*).

<sup>429</sup> Tom Ellis to Steve Ellis, December 4, 1879, Steve to Tom, November 15, 1887, S.M. Robertson to Steve, August 11 and 25, 1893 and July 24, 1896, T.M. Akers to Steve, August 8, 1894, Steve to Tom, September 4, 1894, T.M. Babington to Steve, September 19, 1894, S.W. Settoon to Steve, September 9, 1895, Milton Strickland to Tom, February 15, 1896, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC). Charles Lea to Hardy Richardson, March 20, 1879, in Hardy Richardson Papers

Resistance to the Reids and allied families also centered on their methods and the factionalization of the Democratic party. The Reid faction, like many of the emerging families, aggressively exploited the divisions created by the Louisiana lottery and the increasing power of the Farmers Alliance. By 1892 the Reid faction of Florida parish Democrats openly defied the regular party provoking considerable resentment. The pro-lottery and anti-Reid St. Helena Echo observed, "this faction with its audacious leaders in bitter hostility to the Democratic party is drawing lines deep." In a blatant effort to employ an old strategy to sustain the power of the regular Democrats the Echo equated the assertiveness of the Reid faction with a blow to white superiority. "It must be noted that white supremacy, the peace and happiness of the people of our state is seriously threatened."<sup>430</sup>

Part of the Reid faction's political success resulted from both its determination to contain the prevailing lawlessness and its willingness to use force. The aggressive methods of the Reids brought them into frequent conflict but also gained them powerful allies, most notably Tangipahoa Parish mill owner, postmaster, and Democratic party chairman Sam Hyde. But as with all the piney-woods political

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(ibid.); New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 4, 1897.

<sup>430</sup> Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 23 and February 13, 1892; Amite City Florida Parishes, July 22, 29, and August 19, 1891.

factions, the Reid organization's primary purpose remained local political control. And in this endeavor they proved extremely successful through most of the late nineteenth century. By the early 1890's the Reid faction frequently directed regional Democratic strategy and parish policy through secret sessions of the Tangipahoa Parish Executive Committee meeting at the courthouse in Amite City. Many of those excluded from this process deeply resented the secret sessions. The New Orleans Times Democrat condemned their iron-fisted political control as "undemocratic." As a result, many Florida parish residents viewed them as merely another political faction embroiled in the internecine warfare which overwhelmed the region. Despite this perception, the legitimacy of their often marginally legal efforts to control criminal elements led the newspapers to dub them the "Courthouse faction."<sup>431</sup>

Another politically prominent group which promoted the fortunes of one feuding faction under the cloak of legitimacy was the Kemp family. Though a Confederate veteran William B. Kemp allied himself with the Republicans in the wake of the war. He attained notoriety when he secured appointment as

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<sup>431</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14 and August 12, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 4 and 5, 1897, and Weekly Picayune, September 6, 1896; New Orleans Times Democrat, September 14, 1890 and July 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, June 11, 1895; Greensburg, St. Helena Echo, January 23 and 30, 1892. S.W. Settoon to Steve Ellis, September 9, 1895, and Milton Strickland to Tom Ellis, February 15, 1896, in Ellis Papers (LLMVC).

district judge from Governor Kellogg after being defeated at the polls by E.P. Ellis. With the close of Reconstruction, Kemp recast himself again into a race-baiting spokesman for the rights of local whites, especially Confederate veterans. In 1896 his son, Duncan, secured election as district attorney gaining the support of some and the boundless contempt of others by his ability to manipulate the legal system in support of friends. In reference to his maneuvering the Kentwood Commercial observed, "he (Kemp) is generally like a flea, very hard to catch." As district attorney Kemp consistently refused to prosecute or delayed the trials of feudists opposed to the Courthouse faction allowing them time to murder all witnesses and secure alibis.<sup>432</sup>

By the early 1880's the old elite had clearly lost the advantage in the piney-woods parishes to the emerging factions. Both the Courthouse faction and the diverse elements associated with the Kemp faction commanded broad support in each of the five parishes. Politicians and office-seekers typically identified themselves as Reid or anti-Reid men. A "Reid Democrat" came to symbolize one who

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<sup>432</sup> Andrew Booth, Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands (Spartanburg: Reprint Co., 1984) vol. III, p. 531; Kentwood Commercial, January 30, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, October 8, 1890; Amite City Tangipahoa Democrat, February 1, 1873; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, July 26, 1895; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 21, 1897. Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Books, multiple entries vols. 5 and 6 (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City).

adhered to the Florida parish faction of Democrats committed to securing local control independent of the regular party. The Courthouse faction frequently antagonized the state Democratic party by obsessively concentrating on local contests and exhibiting little interest in statewide races. Though influenced by pro and anti-lottery agitation and the growth of the Farmers Alliance, each faction operated independently of statewide trends lending support to the group which seemed best situated to promote its interests.<sup>433</sup>

As the dominant faction the Reids endured intense hostility. St. Helena attorney Milton Strickland declared to friends in Tangipahoa, "your friends and mine can never have any chance in this district in business or politics unless the rule of those Reids is overthrown and their reign closed. Everywhere they are attempting to defeat and crush out every man who will not wear the Reid collar, let us fight them to the death." But in the absence of an effective legal system the Courthouse faction embodied the only realistic hope for stability. Accordingly, many of the old elite reluctantly supported the Courthouse faction in an effort to contain the prevailing lawlessness. Livingston Parish senatorial

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<sup>433</sup> H.R. Williams to Judge Robert Reid, April 8, 1900, in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC); Tom Ellis to Steve Ellis, December 4, 1879, T.M. Akers to Steve, August 8, 1894, Steve to Tom, September 6, 1894, S.W. Settoon to Steve, September 9, 1895, Milton Strickland to Tom, February 15, 1896, F.M. Hinson to Steve, March 15, 1896, all in Ellis Papers (*ibid.*).

candidate F.M. Hinson declared himself outraged to learn that the Ellis family had placed their dwindling support behind the Courthouse faction.<sup>434</sup>

But the Courthouse faction never commanded the absolute control that would have been necessary to bring stability to the region. The local district attorney and most sheriffs typically remained outside their realm of influence or were controlled by directly competing factions. Moreover, the Courthouse faction, like the other political cliques which filled the power vacuum created by the decline of the old elite, lacked the deferential support the planters had always enjoyed. Part of this problem resulted from the character of some of the faction's most important supporters. Throughout the early 1890's Sam Hyde remained embroiled in seemingly constant tort-action lawsuits, primarily resulting from disputed timber transactions and labor controversies. He also possessed a notoriously quick temper, engaging in his first shootout at sixteen. Similarly Joe Reid endured the contempt of many piney-woods residents. Congressman S.M. Robertson informed a supporter in Amite City, "I note what you say about Joe Reid. It is astonishing to me that such a man, known as he is, to the community in which he is now located, so well, can have any political influence." Reid's

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<sup>434</sup> Milton Strickland to Tom Ellis, February 15, 1896, F.M. Hinson to Steve Ellis, March 15, 1896, in Ellis Papers (LLMVC).

reputation suffered significantly from his alleged participation in an 1891 killing in Amite City.<sup>435</sup>

The prevailing instability was dramatically complicated by the arrival of a new family. Led by brothers A.H. (Lance) and Joel, the Goss family migrated to the Louisiana-Mississippi border region under suspicious circumstances. At least some members of the family had been heavily involved in whitecap atrocities in and about Marion County, Mississippi. In sharp contrast to practices in Louisiana in the 1880's and 1890's, successive Mississippi governors, particularly John M. Stone and Anselm McLaurin, sought to crush the whitecap menace. Their efforts resulted in many arrests and the dispersal of the remaining fugitives. During this same period portions of the Goss family resettled in Osyka, Mississippi and the village of Slaughter in East Feliciana Parish.<sup>436</sup>

Soon after their arrival in the region the Goss brothers introduced practices which would eventually cost both their

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<sup>435</sup> Congressman S.M. Robertson to Steve Ellis, August 25, 1893, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC); Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, No. 5, multiple civil action entries (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City). Amite City Democrat, May 6, 1876; Kentwood Commercial, June 11, 1895; Amite City Florida Parishes, December 3, 1890, January 7 and 14, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 6, 1896, February 9 and 11, 1897.

<sup>436</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 1, 8, 9, 29, 1888, January 12, 1889, March 30, April 1 and 12, 1894, November 12, 1895, December 27, 1896; Francis Williams Griffith, True Life Story of Will Purvis, published manuscript (Mississippi State Archives, Jackson).

This is a detailed historical map of Louisiana, showing its various parishes and major cities. The map includes geographical features like the Mississippi River, Lake Pontchartrain, and the Gulf of Mexico. It also shows the state's boundaries with neighboring states and territories. The map is oriented with North at the top.

Key features and labels on the map include:

- Parishes:** WILKINSON, AMITE, PINK, MARION, ST. CLAIR, ST. JOHN, ST. ANDREW, ST. CHARLES, ST. GEORGE, ST. MARTIN, ST. MICHAEL, ST. PETER, ST. RICHARD, ST. TERESA, ST. VINCENT, ST. ANNE, ST. CATHARINE, ST. DENIS, ST. EMMANUEL, ST. JOSEPH, ST. LOUIS, ST. MARY, ST. PIERRE, ST. ROCH, ST. THOMAS, ST. YVES.
- Cities and Towns:** WOODVILLE, NATCHITOCHULES, BOSSIERE, MONROE, BATON ROUGE, LAKE CHARLES, LAKE MICHIGAN, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. JOHN, LAKE ST. ANDREW, LAKE ST. CHARLES, LAKE ST. GEORGE, LAKE ST. MARTIN, LAKE ST. MICHAEL, LAKE ST. PETER, LAKE ST. RICHARD, LAKE ST. TERESA, LAKE ST. VINCENT, LAKE ST. ANNE, LAKE ST. CATHARINE, LAKE ST. DENIS, LAKE ST. EMMANUEL, LAKE ST. JOSEPH, LAKE ST. LOUIS, LAKE ST. MARY, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. ROCH, LAKE ST. THOMAS, LAKE ST. YVES.
- Geographical Features:** MISSISSIPPI RIVER, LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN, GULF OF MEXICO, BAY ST. LOUIS, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. JOHN, LAKE ST. ANDREW, LAKE ST. CHARLES, LAKE ST. GEORGE, LAKE ST. MARTIN, LAKE ST. MICHAEL, LAKE ST. PETER, LAKE ST. RICHARD, LAKE ST. TERESA, LAKE ST. VINCENT, LAKE ST. ANNE, LAKE ST. CATHARINE, LAKE ST. DENIS, LAKE ST. EMMANUEL, LAKE ST. JOSEPH, LAKE ST. LOUIS, LAKE ST. MARY, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. ROCH, LAKE ST. THOMAS, LAKE ST. YVES.
- Boundaries:** MISSISSIPPI RIVER, GULF OF MEXICO, BAY ST. LOUIS, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. JOHN, LAKE ST. ANDREW, LAKE ST. CHARLES, LAKE ST. GEORGE, LAKE ST. MARTIN, LAKE ST. MICHAEL, LAKE ST. PETER, LAKE ST. RICHARD, LAKE ST. TERESA, LAKE ST. VINCENT, LAKE ST. ANNE, LAKE ST. CATHARINE, LAKE ST. DENIS, LAKE ST. EMMANUEL, LAKE ST. JOSEPH, LAKE ST. LOUIS, LAKE ST. MARY, LAKE ST. PIERRE, LAKE ST. ROCH, LAKE ST. THOMAS, LAKE ST. YVES.



lives. Like scores of other pharmaceutical drummers, druggists, and practitioners of "country medicine," both of the Goss's claimed the title doctor. The brothers combined a passion for politics with a determination to eliminate all economic competition in the communities where they located. To secure these goals the Goss brothers directed whitecap groups which systematically terrorized and sometimes murdered competing pharmacists and merchants. Their ambition to exercise political control over specific regions led them to employ whitecaps to terrorize the labor of competing merchants and politically opposed mill owners. The Goss's criminal activities brought them into almost constant conflict with the courts and local residents.<sup>437</sup>

The Goss family troubles began almost immediately upon their arrival in the region. Lance Goss directed a movement to dominate through terror the region about Slaughter in

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<sup>437</sup> J.J. Goss allegedly possessed a degree from the Georgia Eclectic Medical College, specializing in female and chronic diseases, Magnolia Gazette, March 22, 1883, Greensburg Gazette, June 17, 1882. Greensburg St. Helena Echo, July 25, 1891 and June 18, 1892; Amite City Florida Parishes, July 29, 1891 and June 29, 1892; undated clipping from the New Orleans Times Democrat, describing the Goss's involvement in the murder of a druggist in Osyka, Mississippi, in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC). New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 1, 8, 9, 12, 29, 1888, January 12, 1889, December 23, 1896, February 22, July 11, December 29, 1897, June 8, 15, 17, and 29, 1898; Minutes of the Pike County, Mississippi Circuit Court, minute book A, pp. 553-555, 563, 565, 569, and 576, minute book B, pp. 11-12, 16, and 18 (Pike county Courthouse, Magnolia, Mississippi). Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, multiple entries book no. 5, 1892-1896 (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, August 8, 1888.

lower East Feliciana Parish. But this effort, in a stable delta parish, met with an aggressive response from the local planter hierarchy. Led by planters from East Baton Rouge and West Feliciana parishes as well as the local sheriff, an armed group of more than one hundred men forcibly drove Goss and his gang from East Feliciana. Similarly, Joel Goss fled Osyka, Mississippi after directing the murder of competing druggist Felix Varnado. A jury failed to convict Goss even though both of the assassins stated that Goss had paid them to kill Varnado. In this case, Goss initiated a pattern his family would employ in the future: the killers were to be compensated with a business established at the Gosses' expense. Moreover, each would receive an additional one hundred dollars. But Joel Goss's boasts that all who testified against him would be put to "a long sweet sleep," and his obvious involvement in the murder of the popular Varnado, created a strong public reaction which forced the Goss brothers to flee. Prophetically they migrated to the increasingly lawless environs of Tangipahoa Parish.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, August 8, 1888; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897, also undated clipping from the Times Democrat, detailing Goss's involvement in the murder of Varnado in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC). Osyka Two States, November 23 and 30, 1888; New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 24 and 30, December 1, 8, 9, 12, 19, 20, 29, 1888, January 12, 1889, December 23, 1896, February 22, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 9 and 11-13, 1888. Minutes of the Pike County, Mississippi Circuit Court, minute book A, pp. 553-555, 563, 565, 569, 575, and 576, minute book B, pp. 11-12, 14-15, 16-18.

The Varnado murder embarrassed the residents of Pike County. In the wake of the trial a citizen's commission met at Osyka and released a statement condemning the murderers adding that none of the accused including "doctors" Joel J. Goss, Lance Goss, W.M. Tetts, and Bill Rials were "old citizens of Pike County." The commission noted the relentless threats that Lance Goss, who joined his brother in Osyka after fleeing Slaughter, "would kill anyone who testified against them" had outraged many local residents. Many regretted that the law had not reacted to the Gosses' frequent public boasts that they intended to murder Varnado. But despite the public reaction, sixteen additional deputies were hired to keep order during the trial, the courts attitude toward the Gosses' appeared to be simply, get out of Mississippi. Responding to a warning that some of the accused might flee before the resumption of the next term of court the presiding judge said, "at least the country will be rid of them." In essence the courts served only to drive the felons away possessing the knowledge that one can get away with murder.<sup>439</sup>

Upon their arrival in Tangipahoa Parish the Gosses had entered the heart of a region ripped asunder by factional politics and without effective law enforcement, perfect

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<sup>439</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 8 and 29, 1888, January 12, 1889; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 9 and 12, 1888. Minutes of the Pike County, Mississippi Circuit Court, minute book A, pp. 553-555, 563, 565, 569, 575-576, minute book B, pp. 11-12, 16.

conditions for the implementation of their method to achieve economic and political dominance. Their operations would soon bring them into conflict with the dominant Courthouse faction, which in turn would create for them a natural ally in the Kemp faction.

By 1890 the Gosses' directed a group of whitecaps which operated freely in the region. Despite their reputation, the Goss group initially attracted broad support, including that of some prominent residents, with their moralistic appeal and aggressive "negro bashing." The whitecaps whipped, murdered, and generally terrorized blacks driving scores from the region. But their nightly adventures also terrorized many whites. In one highly publicized operation the whitecaps raided the village of Tangipahoa, entered the homes of several women of supposed "ill repute" and warned them to leave town or die.<sup>440</sup>

In these endeavors the whitecaps continued to command some public support. But the relationship with many prominent residents soon soured when Lance Goss exposed his ambitious plans. Goss announced that he intended to organize companies of whitecaps throughout the region led by himself and brother Joel. His first priority was to eliminate the prominent Draughon brothers of Tangipahoa, particularly Avery

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<sup>440</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22 and December 11, 1897.

Draughon who served as one of the few effective deputy sheriffs. While serving as mayor of Tangipahoa Avery Draughon had sought to curtail whitecap depredations in his village by arresting Joel Goss, thus incurring the Gosses' wrath. Moreover, Goss proposed to drive away black labor from the mills at Kentwood, Tangipahoa, and Hyde Station. He insisted that blacks belonged in the fields and had no right to such labor. The plan called for the whitecaps to burn the mills, kilns, and other property belonging to those who resisted. But his real motive centered on an effort to secure the support of the emerging Populist movement to further his own political ambitions. Regardless, each of these plans brought him into direct conflict with members of the Courthouse faction, in particular Sam Hyde, a friend of the Draughons and a mill owner who employed black labor.<sup>441</sup>

Members of the Courthouse faction accordingly joined the whitecaps with the stated intention of seizing control and redirecting their energies. In particular they wanted to protect the Draughons and halt the flow of cheap black labor from the region. Within weeks they had secured control of

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<sup>441</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22 and December 11, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897. Hyde Station, Louisiana was a small mill town and post office located about six miles south of Tangipahoa. At the height of the bloody Tangipahoa troubles the legend originated that railroad conductors would announce "Hyde next stop Tangipahoa" and all the passengers would seek cover under their seats. The name of the community was changed to Fluker in 1916.

the whitecaps and elected Hyde captain. Outraged by the nightriders' change of direction, the Goss brothers, more determined than ever to break thier opponents, departed with their supporters and created a new whitecap organization.<sup>442</sup>

The schism in the whitecaps weakened but did not wreck the Goss group's plans. The whitecaps continued to terrorize black mill workers. But during a late night effort to drive off laborers employed by the Draughons, one of the blacks met their attack with a shotgun allegedly provided by the Courthouse faction and "brought down several of the boys," including Lance Goss. This shootout exposed many of the participants and the underlying motives of the Goss faction temporarily breaking up their operation. With their support evaporating the Goss brothers wisely fled the region. But before departing, Lance Goss made public threats against prominent members of the Courthouse faction whom he blamed for the whitecap's demise.<sup>443</sup>

The brothers relocated in Purvis, Mississippi. After allowing time for tensions to cool in the Florida parishes, Lance returned to Tangipahoa and reentered politics. Joel organized a highly publicized band of whitecaps that terrorized the region about Marion County, Mississippi.

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<sup>442</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4 and 11, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22, 1897.

<sup>443</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22 and December 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, June 11, 1895.

Among the participants of this group was the notorious Will Purvis. But the Mississippi state authorities aggressively pursued Goss, whom Purvis claimed had framed him for murder, forcing him to again flee and return to Tangipahoa parish.<sup>444</sup>

Upon his return to the Florida parishes Goss reorganized the whitecaps. This time the Goss faction concentrated on controlling businesses in Amite City and aggressively courted the local Populists with their message condemning the political elite and advocating mill work for whites only. Specific Amite City merchants received notices ordering them to leave town or face the consequences. But this time the Gosses had challenged the Courthouse faction at their strongest point, and they moved quickly to "down the Goss Faction." Moreover, Lance Goss's effort to destabilize the economy by damaging railroad property brought him into conflict with a well-financed major corporation, the Illinois Central Railroad. But the Gosses' promotion of white labor and calls for the disfranchisement of blacks, whose votes were increasingly manipulated by the Courthouse faction, continued to attract supporters in northeastern Tangipahoa. By associating themselves directly with the emerging Populist-Republican fusion party in a loudly proclaimed

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<sup>444</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 30, 1894, November 12, 1895, February 22, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897; Williams, True Life Story of Will Purvis; Kentwood Commercial, November 16, 1895.

effort to seize power from the dominant Courthouse faction, conditions were perfect for the onset of a bitter feud.<sup>445</sup>

In the absence of effective law enforcement, feuding filled the vacuum for addressing perceived injustices. In the late nineteenth century numerous family feuds erupted in diverse regions of the rural South. Most of these feuds involved personal quarrels between families that abated when the primary feudists were killed or driven from the area. But few regions endured multiple unrelated feuds occurring in the same period. Moreover, in most cases, as in the celebrated Hatfield-McCoy feud, the local system of justice endeavored to curtail the violence and at least some of the feudists suffered the consequences of their crimes.<sup>446</sup>

The brutality which engulfed the Florida parishes differed from that of other regions in that the legal system was subject to, rather than separate from, the feuding. Not only were the representatives of the legal system completely cowed by the violence, but feudists so permeated the system itself that it proved ineffective, functioning as merely

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<sup>445</sup> Kentwood Commercial, February 15, 1896; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 23, 1896, February 22 and December 11, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, January 14, February 4 and 11, 1891, June 29, 1892. Greensburg St. Helena Echo, June 18, 1892. New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897; Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, minute book 5, multiple entries (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City).

<sup>446</sup> For an insightful examination of the Hatfield-McCoy feud see: Altina Waller, Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia 1860-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988)



another partisan tool of the feudists. In addition, unlike other states where concerned governors monitored and interceded in affairs, in Louisiana, only a sustained statewide cry for intervention moved a reluctant Governor Murphy J. Foster to make even a cursory effort at controlling the violence in the Florida parishes. As a result, none of the criminal elements ever faced the implications of their actions before a determined court of law.

One of the first and most significant conflicts which emerged in post-war eastern Louisiana was the bloody Tanner-Kirby feud. Waged primarily in Livingston and St. Helena parishes, this feud had its origins in a personal quarrel emanating from the late Reconstruction period. As with many of the celebrated feuds, the name assigned it by the press constituted something of a misnomer. The conflict pitted the Kirby and Jackson families and their supporters against the large Lanier family and their allies.

The feud began amidst the chaos of Reconstruction. The absence of legal intervention in the increasingly brutal internecine warfare required that the families take measures to defend themselves. But, significantly, no evidence exists to indicate that either side ever sought legal intervention on its behalf. Instead all parties involved chose to resolve their differences personally without government intervention. The bushwhacking of Captain Pierce Lanier, Sr. in February 1883 and the retaliatory murder of one of the Kirbys near the

same spot dramatically intensified the brutality. Public interest was piqued when the news circulated that Captain Lanier's body had been soaked in coal oil and burned, possibly before he died.<sup>447</sup>

By the spring of 1883, when the feud reached its height, both factions engaged in brutal offensive operations. Following a series of individual murders injurious to both sides, the Kirbys determined to deliver a fatal strike against their enemies. Four members of the Kirby faction led by Bill Kirby bushwhacked and killed two Laniers on the Springfield-Greensburg highway; a third survived by fleeing into the town of Greensburg. In the wake of these murders the Amite City Independent reported "three Laniers, one Kirby, and two Jacksons are still alive, it is hoped this will end the feud in which six or seven men have died." On May 20, 1883 the Kirbys engineered a second bushwhacking of a group of Laniers amidst the thick undergrowth along Hog Branch in Livingston Parish. The ambush resulted in the death of two more Laniers as well as Bill Kirby. After some sporadic sniping at one another the feud finally subsided in early 1884 when the remnants of the Lanier family departed St. Helena Parish.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, May 22 and 24, 1883.

<sup>448</sup> Special edition of the Amite City Independent presenting highlights from the period July 15, 1882 to May 26, 1883; Magnolia Gazette, May 31, 1883; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 14, 1897; Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate,

The Tanner-Kirby feud captured the attention of local residents and provided a poignant lesson in the importance of individual action and the irrelevance of the legal system. In its wake scores of feuds developed across the Florida parishes. Many utilized the opportunity to settle old scores. Others felt compelled to slay their antagonists lest they themselves be killed. All recognized that little if any effort would be made to arrest them and few juries would convict anyway.

Each individual feud resulted from circumstances peculiar to the combatants. Some ensued as a result of seemingly petty personal quarrels while others had their origins in intensive economic or political competition. The Ricks-Bond feud which flared intermittently throughout the course of the early 1890's and claimed at least five lives had its origin in a broken marital engagement. By contrast the Settoon-Johnson feud in Livingston Parish resulted from the introduction of economic competition in a relatively homogeneous area. The shooting began when the Johnson faction established a general merchandise store in Springfield. The new store competed directly with the existing one owned by former state senator J.S. Settoon. The Settoon faction's determination to maintain commercial

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May 22 and 24, 1883; W.D.J. Warner to Tom Ellis, September 15, 1874, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

domination about Springfield continued to provoke sporadic violence throughout the mid-1890's.<sup>449</sup>

Other feuds, such as the McClendon-Overton conflict, emerged as a direct result of the failure of the legal system. An East Feliciana Parish jury's failure to convict B.W. McClendon of the highly suspicious murder of Bill Overton, prompted Overton's brother Tom to kill McClendon with a specially loaded shotgun. This murder in turn provoked additional reprisal killings. Similarly the long enduring Jolly-Cousin feud in St. Tammany Parish originated in a legal dispute over a piece of land which an ineffective legal system never properly adjudicated. This feud, which lasted more than thirteen years, climaxed in 1897 with a pitched battle involving pistols, shotguns, and clubs that left four dead and two wounded.<sup>450</sup>

By far the most dramatic feud, and the one that best illustrated the relationship of the eastern Louisiana piney-woods mentality and peculiar pattern of development to the continuing cycle of violence, was the so called Hyde-Goss feud. This feud resulted from the struggle for political and

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<sup>449</sup> Greensburg St. Helena Echo, July 9, 1892; New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 22, 1894 and Weekly Picayune, August 2, 1894 and June 27, 1895; A.C. Bankston to Uncle Simon, August 18, 1876, in William Bond Papers (LLMVC).

<sup>450</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 26, 1883, January 20 and 29, 1891, March 27, November 22 and 27, 1897; Amite City Democrat, November 13, 1875; Kentwood Commercial, December 4, 1897.

economic control between the Courthouse faction and a diverse collection of political aspirants and criminal elements.

The Goss faction's failure to attain commercial supremacy through intimidation forced them to rely on political appeals to challenge the Courthouse faction who now consistently disrupted their operations. Lance Goss in particular remained deeply embittered over the breakup of the whitecaps. Moreover Joel Goss's effort to reestablish the whitecaps at Amite City had brought the full weight of the Courthouse faction down on the family. Joe Reid especially resented the Goss faction's methods as well as the threat it presented to the power of the Courthouse faction. Accordingly he persuaded the sheriff to have Joel Goss, who remained a fugitive from justice in Marion County, Mississippi, arrested and returned to stand trial. But again Goss secured acquittal, reappearing in Amite City boasting of his intention to have the arresting deputy Bob McMichael, Joe Reid, and Avery Draughon killed.<sup>451</sup>

To confront their enemies in the Courthouse faction the Goss brothers allied themselves closely with the emerging Populist-Republican fusion party which challenged the rule of the Democrats statewide in the 1896 election. Recognizing that the best chance to challenge the statewide control of the Democrats lay in unity, the remnants of the Republican

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<sup>451</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22 and December 11, 1897, June 15 and 17, 1898.

party combined with the increasingly forceful Populists. The Populist emphasis on labor and agriculture and its commitment to improve the quality of life of the common man attracted a large following in Louisiana. The combined ticket commanded the support of black and white workers alike, cutting into traditional sources of Democratic support.

The Fusion party constituted a serious threat to the race baiting, do nothing rule of the Louisiana Bourbon Democrats. But in the piney woods of the Florida parishes the highly charged election represented a serious factional confrontation. Though the gubernatorial challenge the Fusion candidate John Pharr posed to the Democrat Murphy Foster stimulated some interest, the area was gripped by the intensity of the regional contests. Local attention concentrated primarily on the challenges to Judge Reid, District Attorney Kemp, and Sheriff McMichael. In addition the challenge posed by Lance Goss to the Courthouse faction's candidate for coroner, Dr. J.M. Craig, provided additional interest.

After a grueling campaign the Fusion party appeared poised for victory based on their organization of local blacks into Fusion party clubs. But in the last hours before the election Hyde and other members of the Courthouse faction persuaded the blacks to support the candidacy of Judge Reid regardless of who they voted for in the governor's race. Accordingly the majority of blacks supported Pharr for

governor but provided the decisive margin to re-elect Judge Reid and defeat Lance Goss.<sup>452</sup>

On election day, April 21, 1896, a large crowd gathered to observe the voting at the precinct in Tangipahoa. When it became apparent that blacks were voting in support of the Courthouse faction despite the threats issued, members of the Goss family became enraged. Deason Goss, twenty year old son of Lance Goss, accordingly approached Sam Hyde and gave him a sound drubbing which seemed to reduce the prevailing tension. But a few moments later Lance Goss approached Hyde demanding an explanation. When Hyde turned to walk away, Goss promptly drew his pistol and shot him in the back. While falling Hyde drew his own revolver and emptied it into Goss. The shooting provoked a general exchange between supporters of each man. In the aftermath Lance Goss lay dead, struck eight times. Sam Hyde, shot once in the back and once in the stomach, appeared mortally wounded.<sup>453</sup>

Hyde survived his wounds but the feud was now on in earnest. The Goss family, particularly the deceased man's wife and sister Ida Fenn, swore vengeance against all those who participated in his death. And to many residents the

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<sup>452</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 22 and 23, 1896; Amite City Florida Parishes, April 24, 1896.

<sup>453</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 22, 1896, February 22 and December 11, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, April 24, 1896; New Orleans Times Democrat, April 22, 1896 and July 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, April 24, 1896.

Gosses had good reason to be angry. Though only five empty chambers were found in Hyde's gun, Lance Goss had been struck eight times, indicating that others had fired on him. Moreover Goss's nephew, Willie Knapp, who had also fired on Hyde, barely survived the wrath of his uncle's killers. Goss family members repeatedly claimed that the entire incident resulted from a pre-arranged conspiracy to kill both Goss and Knapp who had been condemned by some for his participation in a killing in East Feliciana a few years earlier.<sup>454</sup>

Though it had again prevailed at the voting booths, the Courthouse faction emerged from the election of 1896 badly bruised. Several of their strongest supporters had been involved in a violent personal confrontation which left one of them severely wounded. More importantly their candidates had faced a surprisingly strong district-wide challenge. Though they carried the parishes of Tangipahoa and St. Tammany, their majorities in each had noticeably declined. The decline in support for the Courthouse faction candidates proved more drastic in St. Helena and Livingston where the Courthouse ticket prevailed by only 28 and 59 votes respectively. But the greatest shock came in Washington

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<sup>454</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, April 24, 1896; Kentwood Commercial, April 24, 1896; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 22, 1896, February 22, July 4, and December 11, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, April 22, 1896, July 11, 1897; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, July 25, 1891.



Parish where Judge Reid himself was defeated by nearly a 300 vote margin.<sup>455</sup>

The declining strength of the Courthouse faction did relate directly to the strong appeal of the Fusion ticket. Beginning in the late 1870s the strength of the Farmer's Alliance increased steadily in the Florida parishes. The combination of farmers committed to improving their standard of living and delivering themselves from capitalist exploitation embodied in the Alliance rapidly gained strength in the post-Reconstruction period. Its rhetoric espousing the virtues of the independent agrarian lifestyle played well in the piney woods. With the emergence of the Populist crusade in the early 1890's the agrarian movement became far more radicalized. Florida parish farmers collectively transported their goods overland and by lake steamer to New Orleans to force the railroad to lower its freight rates for hauling produce. Locally the Populists increasingly vented their frustration on the Courthouse faction which demonstrated little if any interest in their program. In a frustrated outburst one Tangipahoa Parish farmer wrote, "We are tired of being ridden by the political bosses of Amite City and we demand that something be done toward giving the

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<sup>455</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, April 24, 1896; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 23, 1896; S.W. Settoon to Steve Ellis, September 9, 1895, Milton Strickland to Tom Ellis, February 15, 1896, F.M. Hinson to Steve Ellis, March 15, 1896, W.H. McClendon to Steve, April 12, 1896, and S.M. Robertson to Steve, July 24, 1896, all in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC).

white Democrats of the parish an opportunity to say who shall fill the offices for the next four years." Such statements also exemplified the consistent theme of white supremacy which permeated the rhetoric of the piney-woods Populists. The racist appeal reinforced their resentment of the Courthouse faction which allied itself closely with mill owners who employed cheaper black laborers. As a result, blacks in the Florida parishes demonstrated far less interest in the local ticket than they did in the statewide Fusion effort.<sup>456</sup>

But the declining power of the Courthouse faction also related to their inability to govern effectively. Though they had been dominant for years, criminal elements and lawlessness continued to prevail in the piney woods. In an effort to encourage greater citizen support for law enforcement Judge Reid and other members of the Courthouse faction organized the "Law and Order League." The constitution of the League acknowledged, "a spirit of lawlessness prevails in certain portions of this parish which

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<sup>456</sup> Amite City Democrat, September 25 and November 20, 1875; Amite City Gazette, June 28, 1889; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, August 22, 1891 and September 23, 1893; St. Francisville Feliciania Sentinel, June 22, 1889. Amite City Florida Parishes, October 1 and December 17, 1890, July 8, August 12 and 19, 1891; New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 19 and April 25, 1896; D. Caffery to Steve Ellis, September 20, 1893, in Ellis Family Papers (LLMVC). Newspapers clipping from the Wesson, Mississippi (?) Southern Industry, May 16, 1885, in Duncan Francis Young Scrapbooks (Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, Howard Tilton Library, Tulane University); James S. McGehee, "Ramble in Autobiography," p. 85, in James Stewart McGehee Papers (LLMVC).

the regularly constituted authorities have thus far failed to suppress and the welfare and security of a large majority of the population, white and colored, are jeopardized by these parties, who under cover of darkness seek to regulate the affairs of both employees and employers in defiance of civilization." The statement concluded with a call for citizens to take action to suppress those who "singly or in bands seek to disturb the industrial and social harmony of any portion of the parish."<sup>457</sup>

Although the League constituted a noble effort to encourage citizen involvement in containing the growing lawlessness, it failed for a variety of reasons. Fear discouraged many residents from associating themselves with an organization committed to containing the most violent elements. Others maintained a steadfast rejection of the right of government to interfere in personal matters. Scores of piney-woods dwellers remained committed to the idea of individual action spurning the intervention of government. The prevailing attitude that some folks "needed a killing" and that government served as an unwanted interloper in the natural course of human affairs, served consistently to stifle efforts to restore stability in eastern Louisiana. Finally, the Courthouse faction failed to free itself from the morass of factional fighting occurring in the piney

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<sup>457</sup> Amite City Florida Parishes, February 4 and 11, 1891.

woods. Its opponents relentlessly accused them of prejudice in their direction of the courts and thus rejected their authority. Lacking the strength and public support to enforce stability, the prestige of the Courthouse faction steadily declined.

The expanding cycle of violence increasingly prompted local residents to appeal directly to state officials for relief. The near anarchy prevailing in the piney woods was exemplified in a petition sent to Governor Foster by "Indignant Citizens" of Livingston and St. Helena parishes. The petition requested the governor's intervention to halt the constant unprovoked "shooting of people on the Greensburg-Springfield road" by unknown parties. Foster's reluctance to intervene in the increasingly turbulent Florida parishes prompted some residents to adopt desperate measures, some of which threatened the political structure. The single greatest challenge to the legally constituted authorities occurred in October 1896, in Tangipahoa Parish.<sup>458</sup>

The threat arose in conjunction with the brutal murder of the Cotton family at Tickfaw. The axe murder of the entire family of five by two blacks, John Johnson and Arch Joiner, provoked unprecedented rage in the southern portion of the parish. After securing a confession, Judge Reid ordered the prisoners sent to New Orleans for their own

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<sup>458</sup> Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 13, 1896 and January 22, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 27, 29, and 30, 1896.

protection. An outraged mob halted the train on its return to Amite City and threatened the deputies who had transported the accused to New Orleans. Determined to force the return of Johnson and Joiner, a mob of more than 500 marched on Amite City threatening to kill Judge Reid and other officials. In the midst of the crisis Joe Reid, Sam Hyde, and Charles Bradley arrived at the head of about fifty supporters of the Courthouse faction. Hastily sworn in as deputies, the men barricaded themselves and prepared to be stormed while Judge Reid and Sheriff McMichael sent frantic telegrams to Governor Foster appealing for assistance. Responding rapidly under the circumstances, Foster ordered a company of state militia to Amite City and placed three more on alert. Fortunately bloodshed was avoided when the mob halted before the barricades established on the outskirts of Amite City. A conference held between a committee from the mob and parish officials defused the situation when the officials consented to return the accused to Amite City to stand trial. Within days after their arrival in Amite City, Johnson and Joiner were taken from the courthouse by a mob 250 strong and lynched at the site of the murders; this time parish officials did not intervene.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 24, 27, 29, 30, October 4 and 15, 1896, January 21 and July 4, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, October 3, 1896 and January 23, 1897; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 22, 1897.

The Courthouse faction emerged from the Cotton tragedy severely weakened. The affair dramatically exposed the limitations of their authority. Moreover, the confrontation with the mob had strengthened their enemies who loudly condemned their protection of "negro murderers." Many refused to recognize that they had acted in support of the parish officials, not the accused. For their enemies the time seemed right to settle some scores.<sup>460</sup>

Following the death of Lance Goss his family engaged in elaborate preparations to fulfill their threat to kill all those involved in his demise. In support of this effort they recruited the assistance of a large family living near Tangipahoa. The Gill family embodied the piney-woods lifestyle and mentality. They congregated in a remote area near the Tangipahoa River appropriately named "Gilltown." Their tendency, along with the closely related Ricks family, to intermarry made them a tightly knit, somewhat xenophobic clan with distant blood connections to the Gosses. Several sons of the family patriarch Frank Gill, in particular Alonzo, Alex, Gage, and Obe had served as stalwart members of the Goss whitecap band. The Gills raised much of their own food, cutting a little timber and manufacturing a little blind tiger whiskey for cash. During the early 1890's the Gill boys compiled an impressive record of arrests ranging

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<sup>460</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 29 and 30, 1896, January 21, 1897; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, January 22, 1897.

from attempted murder to forcible disruption of peaceable assemblies. Their frequent brushes with the law had steadily increased their contempt for the Courthouse faction but created for them an important friend in District Attorney Kemp, who typically secured their release without trial.<sup>461</sup>

In recruiting the Gills as assassins, Ida Goss Fenn and Joel Goss continued the pattern they had established earlier in Mississippi. The Gills would be set up in a business financed by the Gosses and paid a set amount of cash for each murder. By November 1896 the Gosses had secured a small general merchandise store in Tangipahoa which Alonzo Gill and his brothers operated. The Tangipahoa location would expedite the murder of the first intended victim Bill Davidson. On Christmas eve, 1896, while Alonzo Gill served as lookout, Obe Gill and friends Monroe and Otto Bamber cornered Davidson and shot him four times in the back. Though Davidson returned fire before he died wounding one of the assassins, they all escaped into the nearby river swamp leaving the first member of the Courthouse faction dead in the streets of Tangipahoa.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 22 and July 4, 1897, April 9 and 12, 1899; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4 and 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, March 6, 1897. Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Books, multiple entries vols. 5 and 6 (Tangipahoa parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); interview with Junie Ricks, June 21, 1988.

<sup>462</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 25 and 26, 1896, February 22, July 4, and December 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, February 27, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat,

But despite the success of their plan the Goss family had little to celebrate. Only hours before the Davidson murder Joel Goss lost his life in a difficulty in Amite City. Deputy Sheriff Bob McMichael's attempt to arrest Goss's son Walter for the attempted murder of an Amite City businessman provoked a challenge from Goss. When Goss threatened to have McMichael murdered if he arrested his son, McMichael shot him point blank in the head killing him instantly. With the sheriff's brother responsible for this questionable killing, the sheriff's department was rendered increasingly ineffective at an extremely critical moment.<sup>463</sup>

No one resented the killing of Bill Davidson more than his cousin Sam Hyde. The Davidson murder left nine fatherless children and deprived the Courthouse faction of a staunch supporter. Many residents were particularly incensed that Davidson had been shot multiple times in the back. On the evening of the murder supporters of the Courthouse faction gathered in Tangipahoa. They learned that the Gills and Bambers had purchased a large quantity of ammunition before fleeing into the river swamp. As they conferred in front of the telegraph office, several shots were fired into

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January 11 and July 11, 1897. Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, No. 5-7 multiple entries temporarily assigned docket no. 219 (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); interview with Junie Ricks; interview with Orin Davidson June 18, 1988.

<sup>463</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 23 and 24, 1896, June 17, 1898; New Orleans Times Democrat, January 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, January 23, 1897.



the gathering wounding one of their number. The assailant escaped undetected.<sup>464</sup>

Under intense pressure from friends of Davidson, some of whom initiated legal action for nonfeasance, Sheriff McMichael reluctantly agreed to attempt the arrest of the Gills and Bambers. Local residents reported that the fugitives camped in the swamp at night, then returned to their homes in the morning. In the pre-dawn hours of February 20, 1897 McMichael dispatched two deputies by train to direct the arrests though he remained safely in Amite. When the train arrived in Tangipahoa, Sam Hyde, Charles Bradley and fourteen others were waiting. After being deputized the posse proceeded to Gills town and surrounded Frank Gill's fortress-like home shortly before dawn.<sup>465</sup>

Deputy Ellzy Dees, believing he could persuade Obe Gill to surrender peacefully, approached the house and became a hostage of the parties inside. Once inside Dees realized that just such a move had been anticipated as nearly a dozen heavily armed men manned the barricaded doors and windows. A fierce shootout lasting several hours followed. During the

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<sup>464</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 25 and 26, 1896, February 22, July 4, and December 11, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 1897; interview with Orin Davidson.

<sup>465</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 21 and 22, July 4 and 5, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, February 21 and 22, 1897, Kentwood Commercial, February 27, 1897. Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, no. 5, two entries pp. 100 and 284 (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); interview with Junie Ricks.

course of the firing two members of the posse were wounded. Sam Hyde who had moved close to the house demanded the release of Deputy Dees as the condition for the posse's withdrawal. Dees was released, but Hyde found himself pinned down by the firing from the house behind a stump in the yard. After remaining for several hours unable to retreat or return fire, he called for someone in the house to serve as a shield while he departed. Felder Ricks accordingly walked between Hyde and the house to the edge of the property. Upon reaching the fence line, Ricks fell to the ground and the Gills opened fire striking Hyde once in the back as he scrambled for cover. The effort to arrest Obe Gill had failed miserably.<sup>466</sup>

Local officials made no further attempts to arrest the Bambers and Gill in connection with Davidson's murder. But Judge Reid's threat to request state militia units to secure their capture if they did not appear for the June 1897 session of the district court proved effective. At the head of twenty heavily armed men the fugitives appeared at the courthouse, learned that they would actually have to stand trial, and fled warning that they should not be pursued. The Gills maintained that they could not receive a fair trial before Judge Reid, and they understandably feared

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<sup>466</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, February 21 and 22, July 4 and 5, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, February 27, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, February 21 and 22, 1897; interview with Junie Ricks.

incarceration in the stronghold of their enemies. But their escape produced grave consequences. Six days later Gurley Mixon and Alex Martin, prosecution witnesses in the Davidson killing, were mysteriously murdered at Tangipahoa in separate incidents.<sup>467</sup>

With the Gills and Bambers now acting as the primary feudists of the Goss faction the newspapers assigned this group the name "Branch men," due to the proximity of numerous branches or streams about Gills town. With clearly little to fear from the legal system, the Branch men determined to continue the process of eliminating their enemies before the same could be done to them. They recruited the assistance of a notorious desperado, Julius Parker, to assist in the murder of Sam Hyde.

Parker possessed many qualities that could be deemed psychopathic. He had fled Westville Mississippi, "under a cloud" a few years earlier charged with among other things abuse of a young boy and cruelty to animals. His time in the Florida parishes had been equally troublesome. Parker lived in poverty after abandoning his wife and children for a teenage girl. To secure funds he sold some blind tiger whiskey and frequently offered to kill for money. Ida Fenn's promise of large sums of cash and a business opportunity

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<sup>467</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, June 8, 13, 15, 17, 21, July 4 and 5, December 11, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4, 5, and 11, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, June 19, 26, and August 7, 1897; interview with Junie Ricks.

easily persuaded Parker to join the conspiracy to murder Hyde.<sup>468</sup>

The Branch men knew that in his capacity as postmaster Hyde would file a monthly report in Amite City within the first three days of the month. The three assassins secreted themselves in the thick underbrush along Dry Branch near Arcola Station and waited four days for their victim. Though warned the evening before that the assassins awaited him, on July 3, 1897 Hyde proceeded toward Amite alone. At the spot assigned for the bushwhacking the Branch men emptied their shotguns into Hyde's back and fled, scattering turpentine to confuse the bloodhounds certain to pursue them.<sup>469</sup>

Immediately following Hyde's armed funeral Joe Reid, Charles Bradley, and other supporters of the Courthouse faction gathered to formulate a strategy for dealing with the Branch men. Outraged residents forced Sheriff McMichael to step down temporarily and appealed to the governor to declare martial law. The Tangipahoa Parish Police Jury reinforced their efforts by offering an unprecedented reward for Hyde's

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<sup>468</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 4-6, 8-12, August 3-7, 24, September 2-4, 10, and November 9, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, August 3, and December 11, 1897; interview with Junie Ricks.

<sup>469</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 4-6, 8-12, 14-16, August 3-7, 24, September 2-10, October 8, November 9, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15, and 19, August 3 and 25, 1897. Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, July 4, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, July 10, 17, and August 7, 1897; interviews with Junie Ricks, R.A. Kent, Jr., August 1, 1991, and Eugene B. Watson, December 27, 1980.

murderers. Several unrelated murders in the following weeks in Tangipahoa Parish increased the tension. Governor Foster promised state militia to secure the fugitives' arrest. But fearing retaliation if they remained overnight in the Amite City jail, Obe Gill and the Bamber brothers agreed to turn themselves in to stand trial for the Davidson murder only if they would be incarcerated in New Orleans. The trio had good reason to be fearful. As they quietly boarded the train at Tangipahoa for transport to New Orleans, their plan became public. An effort to intercept the fugitives failed when the horse carrying a rider dispatched to alert the men gathered at Hyde Station collapsed in route.<sup>470</sup>

Under intense public pressure sheriff's deputies soon made several arrests in connection with the Hyde murder. The evidence accumulated against Alex Gill, Julius Parker, and Joe Goins proved particularly convincing. But District Attorney Kemp, gleefully observing the systematic destruction of his rivals in the Courthouse faction, refused to pursue the matter. Indeed Kemp and his father along with Judge Reid's bitter political foe, Milton Strickland, served as legal counsel to the accused. Joe Reid accordingly directed the prosecution personally. In an eloquent and emotional

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<sup>470</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14-16, 20, 29, August 2, 3, 5-7, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, July 4-6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 1897. Kentwood Commercial, July 10 and 17, August 7, 1897; Sixteenth Judicial District Court Minute Book, No. 5, multiple entries; interviews with Junie Ricks, and Herbert Hart, February 2, 1991.

appeal Reid urged the jury to pass judgement based on the evidence and deliver the "country from anarchy and ruin, and prove the potency of the arm of justice." Despite his efforts a series of relatives asserting the innocence of the accused and a liberal dose of threats against the jurors secured not guilty verdicts for all.<sup>471</sup>

The decision provided a definitive illustration of the impotence of the legal system. In its wake a reign of terror engulfed the piney woods as the Branch men extracted revenge on all who had opposed them. Those who came to northern Tangipahoa now did so at the risk of their own lives. An elderly minister, one of the few members of the local religious establishment courageous enough to condemn the violence, received a near fatal beating at the hands of several Branch men. The same group attacked staunch supporters of the Courthouse faction Ben and Seaborn Hart who saved themselves by dashing into a store in Tangipahoa and returning fire, others were not so fortunate. Branch men forced the city marshall of Tangipahoa and others to kneel before them publicly and blow down the barrels of their pistols. Merchants were terrorized and sites suitable for bushwhackings established along the roads to Gills town. The

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<sup>471</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, July 11, 14, 15, and 19, August 3, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 14-16, August 3, 5-7, and 24, September 2-4, 7, and 10, October 8, November 9, and December 11, 1897. Kentwood Commercial, August 7 and 28, September 4, 11, and 18, 1897; W.W. Draughton to Robert Reid, June 15, 1900, in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC).

Branch men notified friends travelling at night to place a lantern on the left side of their horse and whistle a specific tune otherwise they would be killed. As a climax to the fall activities some of the Branch men bushwhacked young Willie Mixon, who possessed information concerning the Davidson murder, under circumstances similar to the Hyde killing.<sup>472</sup>

Joe Reid and other surviving elements of the Courthouse faction continued to press the criminal cases outstanding against the Branch men, particularly the unresolved Davidson murder. Members of the Gill and Goss families repeatedly announced their intention to kill the Reids. The brothers foiled several prepared bushwhackings by alternating their route when they travelled to court in neighboring St. Helena and Washington parishes. In early December 1897 the Gills received a tip from someone in the district attorney's office that Joe Reid would be handling cases at the Washington Parish Courthouse in Franklinton. On the evening of December 9, 1897, Alex, Alonzo, and Gage Gill along with Walter Goss waited patiently outside the courthouse for Reid to depart. As he descended the steps, Gage Gill approached from behind firing five shots, one hitting Reid in the back and killing

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<sup>472</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 4, 7, 10, and 16, October 8, November 9, 16, and 24, 1897; Greensburg St. Helena Echo, December 17, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 3, 11, 12, 1897. Kentwood Commercial, October 30, November 13 and 27, December 18, 1897; Reminiscences of Dr. J.W. Lambert, J.W. Lambert Papers (LLMVC); interview with Norma Lambert, July 26, 1988.

him. Though a vast crowd gathered to condemn the murder, only two volunteered to join a sheriff's posse departing in pursuit of the killers.<sup>473</sup>

Three days later a Baptist minister became the next victim of the Branch men. S.B. Mullen, an itinerant preacher from Simpson County, Mississippi, arrived in Amite City to attend a local religious revival. Unfortunately for Mullen the Branch men mistook him for a detective. Following their typical pattern several men approached Mullen from behind and shot him point blank in the back on the steps of the Amite City Hotel. The St. Helena Echo led the condemnation of the minister's murderers declaring, "Oh heaven pity! And if there be any power to save, hear the cries of the poor widows and orphans and save this country from the further shedding of blood."<sup>474</sup>

The successive series of murders committed by known parties provoked a statewide demand for order in the eastern

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<sup>473</sup> New Orleans Times Democrat, December 11-13, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 11-21, 29, 1897, January 3-4, 6-7, 10, 1898; Kentwood Commercial, December 18, 1897; Amite City Florida Parishes, reprinted in Daily Picayune, January 10, 1898; interview with Junie Ricks.

<sup>474</sup> Greensburg St. Helena Echo, December 17, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 13-14, 25, 1897; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 13-16, 20-21, 1897; Kentwood Commercial, December 18, 1897. Though the mistaken detective theory remained the most widely accepted interpretation of Mullen's murder, others interpreted the situation differently. Some noted that Mullen resembled Judge Reid, while others pointed out that Mullen came from the same region as Julius Parker, and the Branch men feared the information he possessed.



Florida parishes. Many locals were also outraged that members of the Branch faction boldly entered Amite City during Joe Reid's funeral and made threats around the town. Newspapers across the state called for action to reestablish law and order in the piney woods. The Crowly Signal complained that murder in Washington and Tangipahoa parishes constituted little more than a misdemeanor. The New Orleans Daily Picayune declared "law has ceased to be supreme and society in the parish of Tangipahoa has degenerated to that primitive state where each individual must look out for himself as best he can. The entire state demands that the reign of law shall be restored in Tangipahoa, no matter what the cost." Likewise the Shreveport Times observed, "nowhere in the state does a feeling of such dread and terror exist as in Tangipahoa. Only a determined and unflinching effort to discover and punish the assassins will redeem Tangipahoa from its Baptism of Blood." The Times maintained that lawlessness in the Florida parishes damaged the reputation of the entire state. Similarly the Plaquemines Journal condemned those responsible for the murders. "The soil of Tangipahoa has literally been drenched with blood of late, most of those who have lost their lives being the victims of cowardly and heartless assassins. There is no coward so vile and despicable as he who strikes a fellow being from behind under the favoring shadows of night or the protecting trees of a forest. These black hearted miscreants have made the name of

that fair section of the state a byword and a reproach."<sup>475</sup>

Increasing calls from the press and public demanded intervention by the governor. The Baton Rouge Daily Advocate insisted the governor must intervene "with firmness and decision." The New Orleans Times Democrat demanded that Governor Foster force the resignation of District Attorney Kemp, Judge Reid, and Sheriff McMichael for failure to maintain order. In an interview with the Daily Picayune, Deputy Sheriff Millard Edwards explained the prevailing situation in Tangipahoa and neighboring parishes. According to Edwards "it is well known to everyone that a terrible feud exists in the region, every other man is a friend of one side or the other and thus it would be impossible to organize a posse of 50 men to serve warrants." Edwards noted further that those not involved in the feud were terrified of the participants and therefore would not support the peace officers. John King superintendent of the Gullet Gin Company at Amite City reaffirmed Edwards' observations. "The feud is so severe that everyone goes about armed, everyone knows who killed Joe Reid. There are two parties arrayed against each other and each has many influential friends there so that it is practically impossible to suppress the lawlessness. If

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<sup>475</sup> Crowly Signal and Baton Rouge Capital Item, reprinted in Franklinton New Era, December 17, 1898; New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 11-14, 21, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 11-13, 1897; Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, Plaquemines Journal, Shreveport Times, and Amite City Florida Parishes all reprinted in Daily Picayune, January 4 and December 21, 1897.

the people rose in mass to suppress the violence it would be one faction against the other and a bloodbath."<sup>476</sup>

Under mounting statewide pressure Governor Foster ordered the convocation of a conference to discuss the violence increasingly referred to as the "Bloody Tangipahoa Troubles." The meeting convened in New Orleans on December 20, 1897, with Governor Foster and Attorney General Cunningham in attendance. Judge Reid represented the Courthouse faction and District Attorney Kemp, who increasingly served as the defender of the Goss faction, spoke for the Branch men. The newspapers noted that the representatives of each faction slept at different hotels adding "the relations between the two factions are not amicable." Sheriff McMichael and several deputies also attended. The conference lasted two days but other than condemning the incompetence and cowardice of McMichael, little of substance was achieved. The governor too seemed baffled by the incredibly chaotic circumstances and chose to remain aloof. Other than promising troops if the violence persisted he took no action.<sup>477</sup>

The governor's conference proved to be an unqualified victory for the Branch men. Governor Foster had failed to

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<sup>476</sup> Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, December 28, 1896, and reprinted in New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 21, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 23 and 25, 1897; Daily Picayune, December 15-16, 1897.

<sup>477</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 20-21, 1897; New Orleans Times Democrat, December 23 and 25, 1897.

dispatch troops and the remnants of the once powerful Courthouse faction had been humiliated and left seemingly without support. Some speculated that Foster's inaction resulted from his reluctance to intervene in the factional feuding lest it cost him the political support of one of the groups. Others saw it as consistent with the ineffectual pattern of his administration. Rather than attempt to conduct the scheduled trial of the Branch men accused in the murders of Davidson, Mixon, and Joe Reid, parish officials canceled the January term of the district court. The Daily Picayune lamented "a feeling of unrest prevails here and trouble is looked for." Exasperated the Franklinton New Era complained "in Washington and Tangipahoa the law is held in contempt because it is not enforced."<sup>478</sup>

In the wake of the governor's conference District Attorney Kemp secured the release of Obe Gill and the Bamber brothers from prison in New Orleans. Kemp's political power increased significantly in the vacuum created by the destruction of the Courthouse faction. But by this time the shift in power made little difference. When officials in Meridian, Mississippi arrested Julius Parker and forcibly returned him to stand trial in Tangipahoa for burglary and abandoning his family, the officials at Amite City

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<sup>478</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 7, 10, and 13, 1898; Sixteenth District Judicial Court Minute Books, No. 5 and 6 multiple entries (Tangipahoa Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); Franklinton New Era, December 17, 1898.

reluctantly admitted him to jail and endured the criticism of the more courageous Mississippi deputies. Nine new murders in the five months following the governor's conference confirmed the continuing absence of law enforcement in Bloody Tangipahoa. When those accused of the Davidson murder finally came to trial in June 1898, the Daily Picayune reported their acquittal with the contemptuous comment "the state having made no case against them."<sup>479</sup>

With their victory complete over the system of justice and their enemies, the Branch men returned to whitecapping. Merchants and mill owners were visited and ordered to dismiss their black laborers on pain of death. But their effort to force the dismissal of blacks from the huge Banner Lumber Company in Kentwood provoked a serious challenge. When the directors of the Banner Company refused their demands, Branch men killed one company foreman near Franklinton and bushwhacked another near Spring Creek. In response an armed posse of more than 100 Banner employees, exasperated citizens, and sheriff's deputies from three different parishes pursued the Branch men for weeks in a wild series of encounters which included several pitched battles and deaths.

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<sup>479</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 7, 16, 18, 20, and 31, February 10, 12, and 17, March 9 and 13, April 3, 4, and 23, May 31, June 4, 6-8, 12, and 18, 1898; Franklinton New Era, December 17, 1898. Kentwood Commercial, November 13, and 27, 1897, February 5, 12, and 26, March 5 and 19, 1898; Sixteenth District Judicial Court Minute Book, No. 5 and 6 multiple entries (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City).

Hard pressed by deputies under the direction of state Adjutant General Jumel and Deputy Sheriff Avery Draughon the Gills and Bambers agreed to submit to a court hearing. But as before they came backed by an armed mob, posted bond, and departed. When tensions cooled a few months later the Gills summarily executed Avery Draughon in Tangipahoa. Among those who participated in the futile effort to capture his murderers were the seventeen year old sons of two previously assassinated members of the Courthouse faction. The feud had passed to a new generation, and it would flare intermittently until the outbreak of World War I.<sup>480</sup>

The violence which consumed the Florida parishes in the late nineteenth century demonstrated that when left to their own devices the piney-woods dwellers proved incapable of effectively governing themselves. A peculiar pattern of regional development and an infatuation with a warped Jefferrsonian tradition which accepted violence as the means to an end, subverted the honorable and progressive intentions of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian perception of independence. This perverted tradition created in many residents an obsessive compulsion with independence which compelled them

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<sup>480</sup> Franklinton New Era, April 8, 1899; New Orleans Daily Picayune, April 4-8, 10, 12-14, 1899; W.W. Draughon to Robert Reid, June 15, 1900, and undated clipping from the St. Helena Echo, in Robert R. Reid Papers (LLMVC). Sixteenth District Judicial Court Minute Books, No. 5 and 6 multiple entries (Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court Archives, Amite City); interview with Norma Lambert; undated newsclipping from Daily Picayune, in Dr. J.W. Lambert Papers (LLMVC).

to reject violently governance and legally constituted authority. When the bonds of planter dominance and concomitant exploitation were finally broken, the result was anarchy and the degeneration of a central element of piney-woods society, honor. In the end those without honor prevailed, contributing to a legacy of violence which insured the Florida parishes would maintain inordinately high rates of brutality into the middle of the twentieth century. Perhaps then planter dominance of the piney woods had been good for the region, promoting stability, prosperity, and reinforcing the sense of honor essential to agreeable interpersonal relations in many areas of the South. But conditions created by the planters had repeatedly subverted the ambitions and customs of the plain folk corrupting the purity of their traditions and contributing correspondingly to decades of bloodshed. The question remains then did planter dominance provide a moment of stability in an otherwise chaotic society? Or did the agenda of the planters corrupt the natural societal evolution of the piney woods producing anarchy? To those who lost their lives in war, Reconstruction, and family feuds, the debate matters little.

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Samuel C. Hyde (July, 1990)  
Norma Lambert (August, 1990)  
Junie Ricks (July and August, 1990)  
Eugene B. Watson (March, 1981)

## Appendix

### 1.) Explanation of tables one and two:

A. Topic -"Value Land with Improvements"-data taken directly from census

B. All Livestock -Total numbers obtained by counting livestock held by each farmer (census figures were off)

- using the average price for each animal given in the 1880 agricultural census, I adjusted the average price by using the Warren-Pearson Price index for 1850 (George F. Warren and Frank A. Pearson Prices N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1933)

- I then multiplied the total number of a given animal by the adjusted price to get the total value of the animals for 1850

C. Value of Slaves -Using several sources- U.B. Phillips, Fogel-Engerman, Frederick Bancroft, and Robert Evans plus primary evidence from my research, I obtained an average price in 1850 of \$1000 per slave and multiplied this by the total # of slaves in each parish taken from the census

D. Manufacturing Capital - Taken from 1850 census compendium



## Vita

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana January 25, 1958. He spent his youth in Amite City, Louisiana. In 1980 he received a B.A. from Tulane University. After completing two summer sessions in Europe and one year of coursework at the University of Munich, Germany, he completed his M.A. at the University of New Orleans in 1987. In 1989 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for overseas study which he fulfilled at the University of Bonn, Germany. He is currently a candidate for a Ph.D. in history at Louisiana State University and an instructor of history at Southeastern Louisiana University.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

**Candidate:** Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.

**Major Field:** History


**Title of Dissertation:** "Pistols and Politics: Planter and Plain  
Folk Relations in the Piney Woods South,  
The Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1810-1899"

**Approved:**

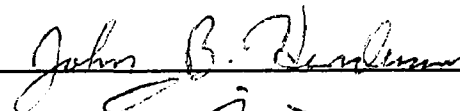
  
Major Professor and Chairman

  
Dean of the Graduate School

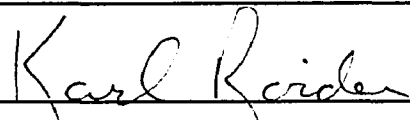
**EXAMINING COMMITTEE:**

  
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**Date of Examination:**

November 10, 1992

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