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ON THE SOUTH CENTRAL PLAINS, 1870-1890

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By

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REVEALING ACCOUNTS: GENERAL STORES
ON THE SOUTH CENTRAL PLAINS, 1870-1890

A dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Introduction

On Christmas Eve 1875, in a small outpost located in the heart of the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, Mrs. Annie Bowers began working as a cook for James Jackson McAlester. A week later, on 31 December, she purchased from her new employer's general store eighteen yards of fabric, thread, braid, lining and a bottle of tonic for \$8.90. This costly purchase would take Annie roughly three weeks to make up in salary, since she earned only \$3.00 a week working for McAlester. Her first lump payment came after 7½ weeks of service; she received \$22.50 from her employer, which was subsequently applied to the debts she had run up at his store.¹ This tantalizing glimpse into Mrs. Bowers' prosaic affairs derives not from her personal correspondence or journals—the usual sources mined by historians for such insights—but rather from one detailed entry carefully recorded in McAlester's 1875-1878 sales ledger. As the above example indicates, even a single entry from McAlester's ledgers can yield telling historical information. What types of employment did women find in “frontier” Oklahoma? How much did they earn? What did they spend their money on? How typical was Annie's experience? And further, did her work outside of the home reflect or diverge from the experiences of her contemporaries as well as idealized notions of women's social and economic roles? Indeed, from one single entry a number of historical questions arise.

Sales ledgers and daybooks from general stores in Texas and pre-statehood Oklahoma provide fascinating insights into the lived experiences of those residing in

¹1875-1878 Sales Ledger, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collections, Western History Collections (WHC), University of Oklahoma, 124.

these burgeoning regions during the 1870s and 1880s.² “Burgeoning” seems like a particularly appropriate term to describe these regions in the late nineteenth century. For while it is true that by the 1870s east Texas had enjoyed decades of demographic growth and prosperity because of the westward expansion of King Cotton, both west Texas and Indian Territory, were relatively less settled and economically developed than their eastern counterparts. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, shifts in population significantly altered these regions—demographically, socially, and economically. These shifts were due, in no small part, to the great land runs that opened Indian Territory to a flood of predominantly white settlers and to incursions by both farmers and cattle ranchers into central Texas as they competed for increasingly scarce agricultural lands.

This dissertation is based primarily on general store ledgers which are used to examine the larger cultural issues of the last decades of the nineteenth century. As a record of consumption, such ledgers shed light on the material possessions, dispositions, assumptions, values, and experiences—in essence, the culture—of the thousands of persons recorded on pages now yellowing with age. Cultural historian Ann Martin Smart provides the following useful definition of both consumption and consumption studies: “Consumption implies a process or means by which consumer goods and services move through the general economy. Thus, the study of consumption ranges widely to include the institutions that produce, market, and retail those goods and services.”³ In focusing

²Given that the time period of this study is the 1870s and 1880s, the proper designation of the region examined is not Oklahoma, but Indian Territory. In 1890, Indian Territory and the Unassigned Lands (sometimes referred to as the Oklahoma District) were divided into two separate and distinct districts, Indian and Oklahoma Territories. Ultimately, Oklahoma achieved statehood in 1907.

³Ann Smart Martin, “Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 28 (No.2-3, 1993),143.

on transactions carried out at general stores by both individuals and representative groups, consumption “matters” necessarily constitute a significant portion of the present study. Store records provide critical information on commercial relationships beyond purchases however, including inscribed distinctions of race, gender, and class made by store owners as they recorded sales/account information in their ledgers. Indeed, such records demonstrate that race, gender, class and ethnic distinctions were determined and reinforced during commercial transactions carried out at general stores.

This study is both a social and cultural history of a particular time and place, specifically Texas and Indian Territory during the 1870s and 1880s. Both methodologically and epistemologically, my approach draws heavily on the “New Social History” as well as the “New Western History.” Of particular importance to this study, for example, is the everyday life of ordinary people living in the West, including women, immigrants and minorities. Further, its discussion of the relationship between goods and people, such as African Americans and spelling books or Germans and Christmas ornaments, reflects a sensitivity to material culture studies—a field defined somewhat broadly by archaeologist James Deetz as “that sector of our physical environment that we modify through culturally determined behavior.”⁴ Studies in material culture stress the way human-made things (i.e. spelling books) fit together or interact with people (i.e. African Americans), shifting in focus from objects to people to social group to culture or the other way around.⁵

⁴James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1977, revised 1996), 35.

⁵Martin, “Makers, Buyers, and Users,” 144.

Account ledgers are valuable and yet, with few exceptions, largely unexplored resources for historical analysis. Important exceptions include studies by Kenneth Wesson, Elizabeth Perkins, Alexander Moore, Christine Daniels, Aileen Agnew, Michael Kennedy, and James McWilliams.⁶ While largely focused on earlier periods in American history, these ledger-based studies provide useful models for examining both the role of merchants in the economic life of early America as well as the complex ties of rural communities to both regional economies and distant markets. Perkins's study, for example, asserts that in frontier Kentucky consumption of manufactured goods from eastern centers and metropolitan styles by local inhabitants transformed the Kentucky backwoods into a consumer frontier: an economic border region situated between subsistence and capitalist modes of production, containing aspects of each. Historical archeologists and anthropologists have also produced important works utilizing account records from general stores, including works by William Hampton Adams and Steven

⁶Kenneth R. Wesson, "The Southern Country Store Revisited: A Test Case," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 42 (Fall/Winter 1980), 157 -166; Elizabeth A. Perkins, "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," *Journal of American History* 78 (September 1991), 486-510; Alexander Moore, "Daniel Axtell's Account Book and the Economy of Early South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 95 (October 1994), 280-301; Christine Daniels, "'Getting His [or Her] Livelihood': Free Workers in Slave Anglo-America, 1675-1810," *Agricultural History* 71 (Spring 1997), 125-161; Aileen B. Agnew, "The Retail Trade of Elizabeth Sanders and the 'Other' Consumers of Colonial Albany," *Hudson Valley Regional Review* 14 (1997), 35-55; Michael V. Kennedy, "'Cash for His Turnups': Agricultural Production for Local Markets in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1725-1783," *Agricultural History* 74 (2000), 587 -608; James E. McWilliams, "Work, Family, and Economic Improvement in Late-Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts Bay: The Case of Joshua Buffum," *New England Quarterly* 74 (2001), 355-384. Also see, Dale L. Flesher and Michael G. Schumacher, "A Natchez Doctor's Ledgers as a Source of History: 1804-1809," *Journal of Mississippi History* 58 (1996), 177-192; Deborah J. C. Meyer and Laurel E. Wilson, "Bringing Civilization to the Frontier: The Role of Men's Coats in 1865 Virginia City, Montana Territory," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 16 (1998), 19-26.

Smith, Margaret Purser, and James Wettstaed.⁷ In the latter study, Wettstaed finds that in the mining community of Webster, Missouri residents had access to a wide range of goods and spending habits varied considerably, although almost everyone spent some money on “indulgences.” Further, he notes that goods from around the world were sold at the company store: “The people of this remote Ozarks mining town were probably as well connected with the world as anyone else in the early nineteenth century.”⁸ Thus, consumer goods provided a cultural link between the manufacturing centers of the East and the rural hinterlands of the West.

Ledger records provide a fresh perspective on both new and old historical questions. For instance, such data can be used to challenge or affirm pre-conceived notions of who shopped and what they bought. How significant were female consumers to store owners? Did the shopping habits of African Americans differ from those of whites? Store accounts supply direct evidence of consumer behavior, particularly with regard to day-to-day needs. As historical sources, probate inventories, which are often employed by historians of consumer behavior, fail to provide similar insights into daily life.⁹ Tracing how general stores integrated consumers, including those in marginalized

⁷William Hampton Adams and Steven D. Smith, “Historical Perspectives on Black Tenant Farmer Material Culture: The Henry C. Long General Store Ledger at Waverly Plantation, Mississippi,” in Theresa A. Singleton, ed., *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life* (Orlando: Academic Press, Inc., 1985), 309-334. Margaret Purser, “Consumption as Communication in Nineteenth-Century Paradise Valley, Nevada,” *Historical Archaeology* 26 (1992), 106-16. James R. Wettstaed, “A Look at Early Nineteenth Century Life in an Ozarks Mining Town: The View from the Company Store,” *Plains Anthropologist* 45 (2000), 85-97.

⁸Wettstaed, “A Look at Early Nineteenth Century Life,” 96.

⁹For a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of probate records, see Perkins, “Household Consumption in Early Kentucky,” 488-489. Paul Glennie, “Consumption

groups, into market society is central to this study. Again, ledger evidence from stores in Texas and Indian Territory allow for new perspectives on long-standing historical debates regarding the late-nineteenth-century consumption practices of a variety of groups. From a western perspective, this study also addresses historical inquiries on regionalism and the influence of eastern values on western settlements.

It should be noted that the word “ledger” was often employed as an all-inclusive term. In some cases, the ledger was only a cash charge book or record of settlement with the store owner, while a journal carried the itemized and chronological accounts. Daybooks typically contained individual purchases and the day-to-day transactions between store owners and their clients. This information was later transferred to an account ledger, which tallied each customer’s purchases. The terminology used to distinguish record books and the methods of account-keeping tended to be highly personalized, subject to the preferences and proclivities of the individual storekeeper. Although richly filled with consumer information on account holders, ledger books in themselves provide no cohesive narrative on late-nineteenth-century society; as a consequence, the responsibility falls to the researcher to derive meaning from such historical evidence. As Lynn Hunt asserts in her introduction to the edited collection, *The New Cultural History*, the deciphering of meaning, rather than the inference of causal laws of explanation, has become the central task of cultural history.¹⁰ Of course, the interpretative task of decoding meaning from sources, comprised mostly of names,

within Historical Studies,” in Daniel Miller, ed., *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (London: Routledge, 1995), 169-171.

¹⁰Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: History, Culture, and Text,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 12.

products and prices, is necessarily shaped by the cultural dispositions and speculations not just of the past, but of the present.

Most of the people whose names are listed in these account ledgers are not familiar, and further, most of the items they purchased are neither surprising nor extraordinary; items like tobacco, flour, coffee, salt, potatoes, and domestic fabrics appear most frequently on customers' accounts. But it is the everyday, seemingly mundane purchases of the stores' clientele which prove so revealing to this study. It is doubtful that James Jackson McAlester gave any thought to the historical significance of Annie Bowers' account entry as he dutifully recorded the data into his ledgers; he was merely doing business. Retailing in largely agricultural areas often entailed extending credit to would-be consumers; as a result, merchants kept meticulous records of their customers' accounts. To a great extent, the solvency of their businesses depended on careful record keeping. For farmers, book credit often tided them over until they were able to make good on their crops.¹¹ Despite their dependency on merchants for credit, many rural customers complained vehemently that merchants practiced shady bookkeeping, as such ledger books took on a mysterious aura with customers. The popular perception of merchants, argues Edward Ayers, in his *The Promise of the New South*, was that they squeezed every drop of profit that could be had from every minor purchase: "Everyone knew that the men behind the counter appeared friendly and warm while the credit bill grew, but revealed another face when settling time arrived."¹² Thus,

¹¹Thomas D. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows: The Southern Country Store* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944), 271-291. Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81-103.

¹²Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 93.

general store ledgers not only enhance our knowledge of consumption patterns in the past, but also underscore important aspects of local economies and the complex relationship between merchants and their clientele.

Several historians, who have specifically focused on using material culture to examine the past, have proven especially influential to this study. In his essay, “Meaning in Artifact: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America,” Kenneth Ames uses Victorian hall stands, hall chairs and card receivers—items that furnished Victorian halls or front entrances—to explore the cultural sensibilities of Victorians themselves. He asserts that by studying the items that surrounded Victorians we can learn not only about prominent parts of Victorian everyday life, but also come closer to understanding the mentality of Victorians.¹³ What did they find important and why? In another article, entitled “Trade Catalogues and the Study of Culture,” Ames employs a similar methodology to examine trade catalogues and the ways in which they can be used to study the late Victorian period. Proving particularly influential is Ames’ assertion that both rural and urban Victorians maintained a fervent interest in acquiring goods that demonstrated both their gentility and respectability, items that were more readily available because of the proliferation of ready-made, mass-produced goods advertised through catalogues.¹⁴ While Ames identifies this process as a late-nineteenth-century phenomenon, due in large part to the materialism of Victorian culture, British and American scholars of the colonial

¹³Kenneth L. Ames, “Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (Summer 1978), 19-46.

¹⁴Kenneth L. Ames, “Trade Catalogues and the Study of Culture,” in *Accumulation and Display: Mass Marketing Household Goods in America, 1880-1920*, eds. Deborah Anne Federhen, et al. (Winterthur, Delaware: The Henry du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1986), 8-14.

period describe a similar process taking place in a much earlier time. Scholars such as T. H. Breen and Cary Carson argue that “a consumer revolution” occurred in the colonies in the eighteenth century when increased demand, improved transportation, and the beginnings of mass production produced a tidal wave of consumption on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁵ According to Richard Bushman, genteel aspirations in America appeared long before the reign of Queen Victoria. He argues that gentility actually spread from Europe to “the great houses of the American gentry” in the eighteenth century.¹⁶

Applying a similar methodology and focusing on the same period as Ames, cultural historian Thomas Schlereth arrives at similar conclusions regarding Victorian culture in his article, “Country Stores, County Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues: Consumption in Rural America.” Schlereth maintains that a distinguishing feature of the last decades of the nineteenth century was the increase in rural spending, involving particularly those who aspired to some degree of urbane gentility in a rural environment.¹⁷ David Jaffee’s work on rural consumption patterns in the North,

¹⁵For studies of the “consumer revolution” on both sides of the Atlantic, see Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); T. H. Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolution of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 119 (1988), 73-104; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

¹⁶Bushman asserts that by this period, “the practice of emulation, replicated at every level with every cultural good, created innumerable networks of influence along which gentility flowed from European style centers to remote American outposts.” Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 403.

¹⁷Thomas J. Schlereth, “Country Stores, County Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues: Consumption in Rural America,” in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of*

however, demonstrates that increases in rural spending patterns were not simply a product of the late nineteenth century, but that such changes were also witnessed in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The author points to the role of peddlers in producing and bringing consumer goods, such as chairs, clocks, and books, to rural inhabitants. Not surprisingly, stationary merchants opposed the activities of peddlers who undercut country stores' ability to monopolize local markets. Ultimately, the number of peddlers dropped substantially after the Civil War, in part because large urban-based manufacturers replaced more modest rural manufacturing operations, thereby fulfilling the demand for consumer goods in the countryside—a market which was initially developed by peddlers.¹⁸

Schlereth relates the waning significance of the country store to the influx of mail order catalogues, a process that took place in the late 1880s and early 1890s.¹⁹ It is not a coincidence that this study concludes at roughly the same point. The prevalence and importance of catalogues from retailers like Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck significantly altered rural shopping habits, ultimately undermining the role of the general store in rural life. At the nexus of these studies is the intersection of material culture, consumption patterns, rural living, and, more broadly, culture and economics—all issues at the heart of this study. Further, economic and social issues are not treated as separate

Goods in America, 1880-1920, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Winterthur, Delaware: The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1989), 339-375.

¹⁸David Jaffee, "Peddlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 (September 1991), 511-535. Also see, David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary Quarterly* 47 (July 1990), 327-346.

¹⁹Schlereth, "Country Stores, Country Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues," 347.

thematic strains from cultural issues, rather such themes are perceived as integral facets of culture.²⁰ Thus, this study employs store ledgers as a means to understanding the culture of late-nineteenth-century America, integrating both a local and national perspective.²¹

Of course, any study of account ledgers must include some aspects of the stores themselves. It was general stores, after all, which provided the opportunity for local residents to enter the market as consumers, producers, and, in many cases, debtors. Because store owners offered credit to their largely cash-poor clientele, farmers necessarily relied on merchants for their economic well-being. Relevant issues concerning stores include who owned them, who frequented them, what they sold, where they were located, when they operated, and why they should be studied at all. The last point—why should general stores be studied at all—requires explanation at the outset.

²⁰In discussing the influence of Annales historians like Roger Chartier and Jacques Revel, Lynn Hunt notes the interplay of economic and social factors with cultural concerns: “Economic and social relations are not prior to or determining of cultural ones; they are themselves fields of cultural practice and cultural production—which cannot be explained deductively by reference to an extracultural dimension of experience.” Hunt, “Introduction: History, Culture, and Text,” 7.

²¹Also influential to this dissertation, although perhaps less obviously so, is Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s *A Midwife’s Tale*. While it is certainly true that countless histories have been written from personal diaries, Ballard’s diary lacks the description, analysis and emotion of many of its counterparts. Ulrich overcomes the thin detail of Ballard’s diary by weaving a comprehensive analysis of women’s lives and work in the late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth centuries around the data provided in the diary. A typical entry from Ballard’s diary, for example, reads as follows: “Clear morn. I pulld flax the fornon. Rain afternoon. I am very much fatagud. Lay on the bed & rested. The two Hannahs washing. Dolly weaving. I was called to Mrs Claton in travil at 11 O Clok Evening.” Much like a ledger entry, Ballard’s diary entries provide little in the way of detail or narrative, requiring Ulrich to patch together the people and relationships mentioned in the diary and place the events in the larger context of the period. Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 38.

General stores were likely not the most exciting establishments in western towns, although they no doubt had their moments. While other, more salacious, institutions like saloons and brothels have garnered more than their fair share of attention from western historians, general stores have largely fallen under the radar of scholarly analysis.²² And yet, general stores drew in people from all classes, races and both genders—everyone needed something from the local store. In small communities, store owners often found themselves without any competition, allowing them to be the sole purveyors of not just staple goods, but also specialty items. As local gathering sites, stores provide valuable access into the social dynamics of the communities in which they operated. Few other local institutions can make such a claim.

In terms of cultural identity and regional boundaries, Texas and Indian Territory extended over a number of “contested” regions within the United States, specifically the West, the South, and the Great Plains. Disagreement among scholars as to the parameters of the West further complicates the issue of regional identity. Does the West start at the 100th Meridian, the beginning of the Great Plains? The 98th? The Rocky Mountains? Or somewhere in between?²³ Many historians of Texas have tended to stress the state’s

²²See Elliott West’s *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979). Thomas J. Noel, *The City and the Saloon: Denver 1858-1916* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982). For some recent articles on the culture of saloon life, see Elaine Frantz Parsons, “Risky Business, The Uncertain Boundaries of Manhood in the Midwestern Saloon,” *Journal of Social History* 34 (2000), 283-307 and Jon T. Coleman, “The Men in McArthur’s Bar: The Cultural Significance of the Margins,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (2000), 47-68. For studies of brothels and prostitution, see Elliott West, “Scarlet West: The Oldest Profession in the Trans-Mississippi West,” *Montana* 31 (1981), 16-27, Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

²³Walter Nugent, “Where is the American West: Report on a Survey,” *Montana* 42 (Spring 1992), 2-23. Also see, David M. Emmons, “Constructed Province: History and

connection with the West, particularly the great cattle drives and the rugged individualism associated with cowboy culture. The state's cultural links to the South and cotton production, on the other hand, have often been downplayed. As Texas historian, Robert Calvert observes, "Cattle gave the state cowboys and western glamour; cotton made it southern, hence Confederate, defeated, poor, and prosaic."²⁴ The present study affirms the connection of Texas and Indian Territory with both the West and the South, recognizing the cultural influences of both regions. From a socio-economic perspective, Texas and territorial Oklahoma had much in common. Predominantly rural in character, each experienced tremendous growth during the late nineteenth century. There was much diversity in the economies of the two regions, but the cattle and cotton industries figured prominently in the social and economic development of both Texas and the future state of Oklahoma.

While an inordinate amount of Texas history has focused on the earlier periods of the nineteenth century and the heroic tales of Texas independence, the Republic, and the Civil War, there are some important exceptions. Although a disparate group thematically, studies by Terry Jordan, Alwyn Barr, James Smallwood, Barry Crouch, Neil Foley, and Elizabeth York Enstam all provide detailed analyses of the post-Civil War period and concentrate on the history of those generally outside of "great men"

the Making of the Last American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25 (1994), 437-459; Martin Ridge, "The American West: From Frontier to Region," *New Mexico Historical Quarterly* 64 (April 1989), 125 -141; Clyde A. Milner II, et al, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner, eds., *Many Wests: Place, Culture and Regional Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

²⁴Robert A. Calvert, "Agrarian Texas," in Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert, eds., *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991), 197.

history, specifically immigrants, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and women.²⁵

While drawing heavily on these scholarly works, this study synthesizes the consuming experiences of a rather diverse group—merchants, women, African, Mexican, Native Americans, and German immigrants—all of whom frequented general stores in Texas and Indian Territory during the 1870s and 1880s. Thus, store ledgers provide important clues on the experiences of those often left out of traditional history—insights which have gone largely unnoticed until now.

Given the importance of general stores to local economies and rural community life, there has been surprisingly little written about them, especially in the last half century. One of the earliest historical contributions on the subject of general stores was Lewis Atherton's *The Pioneer Merchant in Mid-America*. Published in 1939, Atherton examined storekeepers in the upper Mississippi area from the period between 1820 and the Civil War.²⁶ Five years later, in 1944, Thomas D. Clark picked up the story of rural stores essentially where Atherton's study left off, albeit Clark concentrated exclusively on southern stores. Focused on the period from the post-Civil War to the 1920s, Clark's *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store* remains the standard history of

²⁵Terry G. Jordan, "A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas, 1836-1986," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 89 (April 1986), 385-422; Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas 1528-1995*, Second Edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996; First Edition, 1973); James M. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans During Reconstruction* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1981); Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 1992); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas 1843-1920* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998).

²⁶Lewis E. Atherton, *The Pioneer Merchant in Mid-America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1939).

country stores.²⁷ Eloquently written and meticulously researched, Clark scoured hundreds of account ledgers and daybooks for historical insights on the communities of the New South. The 1920s, according to Clark, coincided with the decline in importance of the country store to the southern economy. While the store remained central to his analysis, his study was also a social and economic history of both the southern farmer and southern life. In 1949, Atherton followed up his earlier publication with *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860*, which, like Clark, examined the role of the storekeeper in the southern economy, highlighting especially the store owner's role as petty capitalist agent to the large non-slaveholding population.²⁸ The fact that these three important books were published in 1939, 1944, and 1949 respectively, suggests that a fresh contribution to the historiography of general stores is long overdue—if for no other reason than to add those generally left out of these accounts to the larger history of the southern plains during this period, specifically women, African and Native Americans.

Beginning in the 1980s, a growing field of historical inquiry has focused on consumer culture, its origins in American history, and its social ramifications. An outgrowth of such studies has been a revived interest in material culture studies. From

²⁷ Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*.

²⁸ Lewis E. Atherton, *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949). Examples of sources that focus exclusively on Texas merchants and general stores include: Charles G. Anderson, *Deep Creek Merchant: The Story of William Henry "Pete" Snyder* (Snyder, Texas: Snyder Publishing Company, 1984); Rose G. Biderman, *They Came to Stay: The Story of the Jews of Dallas, 1870-1997* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2002); Henry B. Crawford, "George W. Singer and Dry Goods Retailing on the West Texas-South Plains Frontier: 1880-1890," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 69 (1993), 18-33; Patrick Dearan, *Halff of Texas: A Merchant Rancher of the Old West* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2000); Donald R. Walker, *A Frontier Texas Mercantile: The History of Gibbs Brothers and Company, Huntsville, 1841-1940* (Huntsville: Texas Review Press, 1997).

the outset, two divergent schools of thought emerged—one describing the movement towards a consumer society and the “consumer revolution” that took place during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the other focusing on consumer society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those studying the earlier period attempt to identify what people had and what was available to them, as well as the larger economic, social, and cultural developments which influenced consumption behavior.²⁹ Historians analyzing the latter period tend to focus on the changing meaning of things as well as factors that influenced the experience of consumption, including the role of department stores and advertising in shaping consuming desires. Influential works on the later period include Richard Wightman Fox and T. Jackson Lears’ *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, Daniel Horowitz’s *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society, 1875-1940*, Simon Bronner’s *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, and William Leach’s *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*.³⁰ Since most studies of the late nineteenth century examine consumerism from

²⁹See earlier discussion of “consumer revolution,” page 9.

³⁰Richard Wightman Fox and T. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society, 1875-1940* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions* (1989); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1993); For useful historiographical essays and bibliographies on consumption, see Martin, “Makers, Buyers, and Users,” 141-157, Glennie, “Consumption Within Historical Studies,” 164-203, Ellen Furlough, “Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective: A Selected Bibliography,” in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, eds., Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 389-409, Lawrence B. Glickman, “Bibliographic Essay,” in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 399-414. Other important works on consumer society in the late nineteenth century and

an urban perspective, there is ample need for further exploration of rural consumption and the role of country stores in the late nineteenth century.³¹

While neither rigidly defined as a study in material culture, nor exclusively focused on general stores, cultural historian Ted Ownby's *American Dreams in Mississippi* incorporates evidence from account ledgers to examine consumption patterns in Mississippi from the antebellum period to the present. In this recent study, Ownby uses a number of sources from ledgers to letters, journals and diaries to discuss not only what people bought in the various periods he examines, but why consumers made the choices they did. In other words, he provides the cultural context behind their purchasing. His early chapters, which examine the last decades of the nineteenth century, provided useful comparisons with consuming practices in Texas and Oklahoma, particularly his discussion of women and African Americans.³² As former slaveholding regions, Texas, Indian Territory, and Mississippi found themselves in the 1870s having to adjust to a very different world—life after slavery. Consequently, all of these regions shared in the turbulence of race relations that defined the period of Reconstruction.

While the contributions of Atherton and Clark fall short in addressing contemporary historical questions, these antiquated studies present a theme of particular

early twentieth centuries include Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), Elaine Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoppers in the Victorian Department Store* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), T. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

³¹An important exception is Schlereth's aforementioned article in *Consuming Visions*, "Country Stores, Country Fairs, and Mail-Order Catalogues."

³²Ted Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty, & Culture, 1830-1998* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

importance to this study and, for that matter, any discussion of general stores in rural settings in the nineteenth century: the centrality of the merchant to both the local economy and the community as a whole. Store owners not only sold to their clients goods ranging from patent medicine to spelling books, they also served their communities in their roles as the local banker, postman, and central connection to the outside world. Further, beyond functioning as a source for consumer goods, the country store often served as a marketing agent for crops and proved to be a critical source of credit for area residents. The general store operated as a conduit within the larger market economy, linking local farmers with the more transient clientele, as well as distant eastern and overseas markets. Market society breached the frontiers of Indian Territory and the remote farming communities of central Texas, connecting local and regional economies to the national economy. In many ways, store owners fashioned themselves as not only the suppliers of tangible goods from the eastern centers, but also as part of and purveyors of more cosmopolitan culture. Moreover, they conflated their own identities and worth with their connection to the outside world and the seemingly more urbane attitudes that went along with it. Their role as creditors fortified their privileged position in rural society.

While most of the general stores under analysis were located in small, predominantly agricultural communities, there are some notable exceptions. Ledgers from stores located in the towns of Jacksonville, Athens and Nacogdoches provided important examples for this study, as did records from Charles Wolf's store in the city of Austin. In the 1870s, Austin was admittedly a small, but burgeoning city with 4,428

residents in 1870 and 11,013 in 1880.³³ In the early 1870s, the mining town of McAlester was little more than a rural outpost, with a general store and not much else. Although it would become the capital of the Creek Nation, Okmulgee was also a rather modest community in the 1870s. The same can be said for most of the other communities discussed in this work: Hedwig's Hill, Industry, Fischer's Store, Matagorda, Webberville, Refugio, Comanche, Melrose, Cade, and Old Boggy Depot. In all of these communities, there was a strong connection—economically and culturally—with the rural hinterland. Precious few of the ledger collections encompass decades of a store's history, examples from this study that do include McAlester's store in the Choctaw Nation and the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, Texas. These communities, like many in Texas and Oklahoma, experienced significant demographic growth by the late 1880s. With growth, competition, and specialization, the general store increasingly lost its position of prominence in local communities. As noted, the proliferation of catalogues from eastern retailers also undermined the general store's virtual monopoly of the local economy.

While the focus on ledgers from general stores located in small communities scattered throughout Texas and Oklahoma suggests a micro-approach to the study of history, the topics addressed in this work extend far beyond the local into broader national issues. Of particular interest is the interplay of the larger national problems and attitudes of the late nineteenth century with those at the local level. Through the commercial relations between store owners, store customers, and an examination of the commodities themselves, this study explores a host of cultural questions, especially

³³*Tenth Census of the United States 1880*, Population (Washington, D.C., 1883), 455.

issues regarding gender, race, and ethnicity in the postbellum period. In fact, one of the motivating factors behind this work is the desire to integrate the West, specifically Texas and early Oklahoma, into the larger national narrative. Survey texts for the late nineteenth century contain chapters on Reconstruction, industrialism, immigration, urbanization, the more general notion of Gilded-Age acquisitiveness, and possibly some discussion of Victorianism or, more likely, the ascendancy of middle-class values. And then, in its own separate chapter, there is the West, a region somehow divorced from the major historical processes and cultural attitudes prevalent in the rest of the nation. But no boundary separated the West from the developments that textbooks ascribe to either the East or the South. Further, the migrants who ultimately settled the sparsely populated regions of Oklahoma and central Texas brought with them their eastern, southern, and European perspectives and, by extension, all the challenges associated with those perspectives. Ledger entries are an effective source for tracing the impact of national concerns—like Reconstruction, immigration, and alcoholism—in the smaller centers of the country.

Whether in small rural communities or growing metropolises, historians rarely agree on what terms adequately characterize the cultural dispositions of the majority of persons living in a particular region or period. In fact, many disagree with the idea that a majority ever share a cultural disposition. Upon closer examination, exceptions inevitably arise in the scholarship dispelling sweeping generalizations and prompting historians to revise their earlier interpretations. As such, terms—once generally accepted by the academic community—become problematized as historians debate the efficacy of their use in relation to new directions in the scholarship. The term *Victorianism* poses

such a problem. Once an accepted, if vaguely defined term, inspiring literally hundreds of studies, Victorianism has increasingly fallen out of favor with scholars of the nineteenth century. The exception is perhaps in histories of the American West where the term has proven remarkably resilient in describing the “civilized” elements in burgeoning communities. The term is generally used to describe the values, dispositions, possessions and social actions shared by the middle classes in Great Britain and America during the last half of the nineteenth century. Daniel Walker Howe summarizes Victorians as people “trying, very self-consciously, to humanize the emergent industrial-capitalist order by infusing it with a measure of social responsibility, strict personal morality, and respect for cultural standards.... They wanted to make the age-old concept of gentility an achieved, rather than ascribed status.”³⁴ Closely aligned with aspirations of gentility, Victorian ideals encouraged people to work hard, postpone gratification, repress themselves sexually, and generally improve their lives. Whether such qualities appeared among the middling classes in the mid to late nineteenth century is open to debate; indeed, Richard Bushman’s work on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century refutes such periodization. The present study examines issues of class in rural communities in the latter part of the nineteenth century, particularly regarding store owners, and assesses whether the term “Victorian” can aptly be used to describe the social dynamics of the communities under analysis.

In terms of historiography, the best known and thorough examination of the Victorian mind set in both Europe and the United States is Peter Gay’s five volume collection, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, which includes volumes

³⁴Daniel Walker Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” in *Victorian America*, ed. Daniel Walker Howe (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 12.

entitled *Education of the Senses*, *The Tender Passion*, *The Cultivation of Hatred*, *The Naked Heart*, and *Pleasure Wars*.³⁵ While there are numerous important studies of the subject of Victorianism in America, the following works are especially worth noting. Daniel Walker Howe's edited collection, *Victorian America*, and especially his essay, "Victorian Culture in America," provides his description of both the intricacies and parameters of Victorian thought in America. According to Howe, not only was there a culture of Victorianism in America in nineteenth century, it was *the* hegemonic culture of the middle classes during the period.³⁶ Thomas Schlereth's *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life 1876-1915* similarly concludes that the culture of Victorianism permeated all aspects of middle-class life in America, particularly in the last decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century.³⁷ Besides

³⁵Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, Vol.1, *Education of the Senses* (1984), Vol.2, *The Tender Passion* (1986), Vol.3, *The Cultivation of Hatred* (1993), Vol.4, *The Naked Heart* (1995), Vol.5, *Pleasure Wars* (1998) (New York:W. W. Norton, 1984-1998; originally published by Oxford University Press). In this comprehensive collection, Gay focuses on the life and social awareness of the Victorian middle classes in the nineteenth century. In many ways, Gay's work is a response to entrenched clichés about Victorians regarding their rigidity, anxieties, and sexual dysfunctions. His rich analysis not only challenges Victorian stereotypes, but provides fascinating psychoanalytical insights into the *mentalités* of the bourgeois classes of the nineteenth century, in effect, shaping our understanding of what made the bourgeois of this period, bourgeois. In tracing Victorian attitudes and experiences, he explores such themes as love, sexuality, tenderness, passion, hate, intellectual movements, social mores, and the relationship of Victorians to the high culture of literature, art, music and architecture in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

³⁶Howe, "Victorian Culture in America," 3-28.

³⁷Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991). Schlereth explains the rationale behind his approach by citing the work of Kenneth Ames and the concern of both authors to "investigate the objects that were prominent parts of Victorian everyday life," xiv-xv. Other important works on Victorian culture in America include Katherine Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery* (Rochester, N.Y.: Strong Museum, Distributed by the University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), Kenneth L. Ames, *Death in*

his subject matter, the relevancy of Schlereth's book to this study lies in the fact that he both approaches his topic from a cultural perspective and supports his analysis by delving into an array of material culture evidence. Finally, Robert Haywood's *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* presents a compelling argument that contests the stereotype of cattle towns as rip-snorting, shoot-'em up hell holes, filled with drunken cowboys and loose women. He argues instead that Kansas cattle towns reflected the Victorian concern with respectability, order, duty and moral probity—not unlike the prevailing situation in the rest of America.³⁸ Haywood is by no means alone in arguing for the presence of Victorian culture in the West; indeed, western historians such as Richard White and Elliott West have also used the term "Victorianism" to describe the class dynamics of burgeoning western communities.³⁹

In recent years, the assault on the concept of Victorianism has largely been waged by intellectual historians and literary critics. Those who challenge the term argue that "Victorian" implies a political and cultural homogeneity which never existed on either side of the Atlantic. According to John Lucas, "There is a strong case for arguing that,

the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

³⁸C. Robert Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991). For an interesting discussion of Victorian gentility among those outside of white middle class culture in the West, see Adrian Praetzellis and Mary Praetzellis, "Mangling Symbols of Gentility in the Wild West: Case Studies in Interpretive Archaeology," *American Anthropologist* 103 (September 2001), 645-654.

³⁹Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991; 1993 Reprint), 307-319; Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 241.

except in the most rigorously controlled of contexts, ‘Victorian’ and ‘Victorianism’ are terms we could do without. They are all too frequently employed in ways that are chronologically indefensible, historically dubious, intellectually confusing, and ideologically unacceptable.”⁴⁰ Critics disdain the catch-all nature of the term, arguing that many, perhaps most, people lay on the periphery of Victorian culture, notably rural tenants, African, Hispanic, Asian and Native Americans, as well as the urban working class. In reviewing a monograph on the subject of Victorianism, historian David Shi questions the adequacy of the term, suggesting “‘Victorianism’ claims a specious unity for nineteenth-century American thought and culture” that did not exist.⁴¹

Given the contentiousness of the term, its resilience in histories of the West is interesting. How useful is the term in describing class systems in western communities? Did those living outside of eastern cosmopolitan society—in rural settlements and frontier outposts in Texas and Indian Territory, for example—have even more reason to value the symbols of Victorian culture? Did the desires to create order, instill discipline, promote morality, and display some evidence of urbane gentility manifest themselves in exaggerated forms in rural locations? This study addresses such questions and contends that class dynamics in such communities proved to be rather nuanced matters, often

⁴⁰John Lucas, “Republican versus Victorian: Radical Writing in the Later Years of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Rethinking Victorian Culture*, eds. Juliet John and Alice Jenkins (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 29. Also see, *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, eds. John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) and *Varieties of Victorianism: The Uses of a Past* ed. Gary Day (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

⁴¹See David E. Shi’s review of Stanley Coben’s *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) in *American Historical Review* 97 (October 1992), 1301-2.

challenging rather than conforming to the classic descriptions of Victorian culture provided by Howe and some of his contemporaries.

Even more contentious among scholars than the notion of a hegemonic Victorian culture is the adherence and pervasiveness of ‘the cult of domesticity’ among the middle class during this period. Just about the time that there appeared to be a virtual consensus in the academic community on the prevalence of the domestic ideal in the nineteenth century, cracks in the theoretical model began to surface. To be fair to earlier historical interpretations of the cult of domesticity, there is plenty of evidence of separate sphere ideology in the pages of the prescriptive literature of the period, specifically *Godey’s Book*, *Ladies Magazine* and the *Ladies Repository*. In the mid-1960s, Barbara Welter published her influential essay, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” which presented a negative view of female domesticity and separate spheres and proved to be remarkably influential to historical interpretations of domesticity for the next two decades. Welter argued that, because they were perceived as having more piety, purity, domesticity and submissiveness than men, women assumed roles of moral guardians and primary caregivers in nineteenth-century America—roles that confined women to the private sphere, effectively making them “hostages in the home.” Within this domestic sphere, they were to create safe havens for their families from the immoral influences of the outside world.⁴² Later scholars debated whether the early nineteenth-century doctrine of “woman’s sphere” represented a loss or a gain for women, politically and socially. In the 1970s, for example, Nancy F. Cott’s *The Bonds of Womanhood* presented a more positive perspective on the liabilities and benefits of the women’s sphere. In their role as moral

⁴²Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151-175.

guardians, women were able to influence those around them, thus aggrandizing the importance of their seemingly limited sphere and creating circumstances conducive to the growth of feminist political movements by the mid-nineteenth century.⁴³

Increasingly, historians have argued that separate sphere ideology represented an ideal, effectually realized by few. The ideal, for example, did not reflect the lived experiences of most minority or working-class women in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, separate sphere ideology has been contested terrain among the middle class.⁴⁴ Ledger records from stores in early Texas and Oklahoma indicate that women in these regions maintained diverse roles in their respective communities, particularly with regard to work. Many of the women who frequented general stores did not experience the domestic ideal that confined women's roles to the home. As a consequence, this examination of general store ledgers mounts yet another challenge to separate sphere ideology, suggesting that the social construction of true womanhood or female domesticity found only a marginal base in the realities of rural life in Texas and early Oklahoma.

⁴³Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1778-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). For more on domestic ideology, also see Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Mid-Continent American Studies Journal* 10 (Spring 1969), 5-15, Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁴⁴Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Sphere, Female Worlds, Woman's Places: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988), 28. Kerber's article traces the development and challenges to separate sphere arguments. For interpretations beyond domesticity and separate spheres regarding women's lives and roles in the nineteenth century, see Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: Norton, 1984), Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

The term “Reconstruction” also requires some explanatory comments at the outset. While contemporary historians generally agree on the events and time period associated with the term Reconstruction, in recent years, the scope of Reconstruction has expanded from strictly a southern phenomenon to one which encompasses both the North and the West. In his recent article, “Reconstructing Race,” Elliott West implores his readers to consider Reconstruction as part of a larger social process that includes developments before the Civil War and applies not only to race relations in the South, but also in the West: “During what might be called the Greater Reconstruction, 1846-1877, territorial acquisitions as well as southern slavery forced a new racial dialogue between West and South, unsettled race relations and presumptions, and finally led to a new social order encompassing western as well as southern people of color.”⁴⁵ This work adopts West’s expanded vision of Reconstruction, applying it not just to events taking place in the former slave state of Texas, but to the equally important issues of race that surfaced in Indian Territory during this same period.

In the following pages, this dissertation will employ general store ledgers to consider the cultural impact of the contentious issues listed above—Victorianism, domesticity, and Reconstruction—as well as a multitude of others. It examines how Gilded Age acquisitiveness, progress-mentality, racism, pluralism, alcoholism, regionalism, and consumerism affected those living in Texas and pre-statehood Oklahoma during the postbellum period, especially with regard to gender, race and ethnicity. While these issues represent just a small portion of the prevailing value systems, dispositions and problems circulating in America during the period, they

⁴⁵Elliott West, “Reconstructing Race,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 34 (Spring 2003), 7.

certainly demonstrate that persons living in late nineteenth century had plenty of matters to contend with. Much like in the East, there was little uniformity in the reactions to these broad issues by those residing in the regions under analysis; rather, responses tended to be nuanced, multi-faceted, and relative to the perspective involved.

Chapter one assesses the role of merchants in late nineteenth-century rural society. Focusing exclusively on store owners, this chapter considers their social status, their roles in their respective communities, and their cultural influences. Chapter two relates culture to regional identity, focusing on both the socio-economics of Texas and Indian Territory and the critical role store owners played in the economic lives of those residing in their respective communities. The next three chapters shift the focus to store customers, examining, in particular, women, African, Mexican, and Native Americans, and German immigrants. These consumer-centered chapters explore the gender, race, and ethnicity dynamics revealed in ledger records. Chapter three, for example, traces women's roles as consumers of general store goods, drawing comparisons with women's experiences in other regions of the country. Chapter four examines how the racial divisions endemic to the Reconstruction era shaped commercial relations in Texas and Indian Territory. Chapter five focuses primarily on the German immigrants of Hill Country and their roles as both retailers and consumers. Finally, chapter six examines the connection between particular consumer items sold at general stores and the rural identity of the region.

In effect, store ledgers connect residents of rural Texas and Indian Territory with the experiences of those living in other parts of the United States. The desire for genteel culture and refinement, for example, crossed the Mississippi along with the waves of

settlers who traveled from the East to the West in the nineteenth century, as did their class assumptions. The same can be said for the problems of race associated with Reconstruction, and other defining aspects of the national experience. Indeed, westerners often wrestled with many of the same questions as their eastern counterparts. Thus, ledger records from Texas and Oklahoma provide a window into late nineteenth-century American society, revealing that a multitude of social and cultural issues transcended regional boundaries.

Chapter One - Who's Minding the Store?

September 20, 1876 must have been a pretty big day for sixteen-year-old Lon Dixon. His stepfather W. A. Brown purchased two suits for Lon, or Alonzo Dixon, as he was formally known, recording the purchases under the account he held at his dry goods store, McKinney and Brown, located in Jacksonville, Texas. One suit was clearly nicer than the other: the first cost \$11.50 and the second only \$5.25.⁴⁶ Still, such purchases were of no small consequence to the new store owner, particularly in rural Texas and particularly in the 1870s when the country was still climbing out of the depression sparked by the Panic of 1873. W. A. Brown was likely suiting his stepson in clothing appropriate for an apprentice store clerk, a position that Lon would hold in his stepfather's firm until he assumed a partnership in 1886, at which point the company's name changed from McKinney and Brown to Brown, Dixon and Company.⁴⁷

The experiences of this general store owner in east Texas exemplify both the intriguing class dynamics evidenced in small, rural communities and the diversity present within such dynamics. Because of the variation in their backgrounds, value systems, career aspirations, and achievements, it is virtually impossible to pinpoint one merchant as prototypical of all the store owners in Texas or, for that matter, any region of the country. Some store owners adhered to Howe's classic description of a Victorian gentleman—one steeped in discipline, strict personal ethics, social responsibility, and

⁴⁶Customer Ledger 1876-1877, Brown and Dixon Company Records, East Texas Research Center (ETRC), Nacogdoches, Texas.

⁴⁷*Cherokee County Banner*, 11 February 1916, p.185 in *The Saga of Cherokee County, Texas*, compiled by Helen Crawford, 1987, ETRC.

moral rectitude, struggling to create order in a newly industrializing world.⁴⁸ Others veered sharply from this Victorian model. Some merchants used retailing as a springboard into bigger and better financial opportunities, exhibiting all the cutthroat business tactics associated the Gilded Age, while others seemed satisfied with modest retail ventures. Some store owners developed their careers through extensive training and apprenticeship, others happened into retailing by chance. In short, retailers in Texas and early Oklahoma during the 1870s and 1880s were a varied group. All, however, responded to and were influenced by local conditions and circumstances as well as by the value systems and attitudes that prevailed throughout the United States in the late nineteenth century.

By all accounts, store owner W. A. Brown was the industrious sort, professional and sober in his approach to both business and life. In describing Brown's business achievements, Dr. W. H. Campbell, a longtime family friend, stated in 1916 on the occasion of the Browns' 50th wedding anniversary, "It is easy to account for his success, for he has always been honest, energetic, truthful and accommodating, the four traits that make success."⁴⁹ Like his stepson, Brown had himself apprenticed at the retail firm of Clapp & Brown before it was purchased by William McKinney in 1874, who then appointed Brown as a managerial partner for the store and changed the name of the firm to McKinney and Brown.⁵⁰ In 1874, Jacksonville was a modest community at best. The town was initially located at a different site, but moved in 1872 to position itself on the

⁴⁸Howe, "Victorian Culture in America," 12.

⁴⁹*Cherokee County Banner*, 2 February 1916.

⁵⁰Jacksonville Centennial Corporation, *Jacksonville: The Story of a Dynamic Community* (Jacksonville, Texas, 1972), 100.

rail line of the International & Great Northern Railroad which completed its track in the same year. The businesses of “Old Jacksonville” re-established themselves on the new site and, shortly thereafter, the new town of Jacksonville incorporated in May 1873.⁵¹ Under Brown’s skillful management, the firm diversified and expanded. Such fiscal success allowed the merchant to buy out his partner, so that the firm became solely under the possession of the Brown family. As he diligently and dutifully reinvested his profits back into his firm for future rewards, W. A. Brown demonstrated keen business acumen. His cautious approach to retailing enabled his business to withstand the bank failures and panics endemic to the last decades of the nineteenth century. And while Brown invested in a mercantile firm in a neighboring community and became a partner in a local furniture store, his principal pursuit remained his Jacksonville store.⁵² He poured his efforts into improving his store so that one day he could pass it on to his sons.

Besides growing his business, Brown served as a principal director for the Jacksonville Education Association, the group responsible for erecting a new public school for Jacksonville in 1891, after a storm demolished the town’s only school.⁵³ The Browns, according to Dr. Campbell, “had always been kind to the broken-hearted, charitable to the poor, and a help to the community in which they lived.”⁵⁴ Time and again, W. A. Brown demonstrated both the restraint and the “striving mentality”

⁵¹Hattie Joplin Roach, *The Hills of Cherokee: Historical Sketches of Life in Cherokee County* (Rusk, Texas: 1952), 170-171.

⁵²*Cherokee County Banner*, 11 February 1916.

⁵³Jacksonville Centennial Corporation, *Jacksonville*, 13.

⁵⁴*Cherokee County Banner*, 2 February 1916.

associated with the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ By counseling his sons to reinvest in the business, by stressing that “times were hard” and “money was scarce” and that they “would have to be very careful of the funds,” W. A. Brown promulgated the middle-class virtues of conscientiousness and fiscal restraint. In describing his father’s influence, Lem Brown stated, “But father toted fair, as for seeming boyish sacrifices we were given an ever-widening vision of successful business management.”⁵⁶ Heeding their father’s advice, Brown’s sons exercised similar pecuniary cautiousness in their future business dealings.

While he sought success in business, W. A. Brown endeavored to meet his moral, social, and civil responsibilities. The Browns proved to be both charitable and influential town citizens. Indeed, his purchases reflected his desire to project a tasteful and sophisticated public image, while concurrently exercising the fiscal reserve needed to see his business prosper. Typical ledger entries from Brown’s general store included practical items like food and fabrics. For example, he picked up bleaching, lining, cotton and lawn fabrics on August 2, 1876, in addition to eggs, salt and medicine. Specialty purchases such as dishes, place settings, goblets, cashmere fabric, table linen, and perfume enabled the Browns to be tastefully attired and well-equipped for entertaining as befit one of Jacksonville’s leading merchant families.⁵⁷

⁵⁵For more on the period’s “striving mentality,” see Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976).

⁵⁶O. C. Payne, “Lem Brown and His ‘New Way’ Store,” *Holland’s Magazine* (September 1913) in *Saga of Cherokee County*, 24.

⁵⁷Customer Ledger 1876-1877, Ledger 1874-1875, Ledger F - 1883, Ledger J - 1887, Brown and Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 39, 56, 348, 525.

Although western towns have often been depicted as devoid of social hierarchies, dating back to Frederick Jackson Turner's writings on the frontier, class distinctions existed in western communities all the same.⁵⁸ Popular images of the West include scenes of lawlessness, gunfights, saloons and brothels. In his analysis of cattle towns in early Kansas, however, C. Robert Haywood contests the depiction of a "wild and wooly" West that lay in contrast to the genteel, class-conscious East. He states, "However pleasant and entertaining it may be to create a 'mythic West' separate from the East, Kansas—even Kansas of the western cattle towns—was a part of the nation and did not exist in some Brigadoon time warp."⁵⁹ For decades, the home of store owner and rancher Mayer Halff was the center of social and cultural affairs in San Antonio, in part because Halff reportedly "possessed the unique ability to shed the trappings appropriate to a cow camp and assume the role of a highly refined gentleman."⁶⁰ Closely paralleling Richard Hofstadter's mugwump elite, general store merchants emerged as the eminent community leaders, along with physicians, lawyers, ministers, and teachers. In the absence of

⁵⁸Turner argued, for example, that in the West, "Both native settler and European immigrant saw in this free and competitive movement of the frontier the chance to break the bondage of social rank, and to rise to a higher plane of existence." Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 154.

⁵⁹Haywood, *Victorian West*, 3.

⁶⁰Dearan, *Halff of Texas: A Merchant Rancher of the Old West*, 62. Admittedly, this assessment is from a popular history. I have tried to be mindful of relying on such sources for critical analysis. As David Jaffee has observed, local histories often present idealized, distorted, or uncritical depictions of historical characters. In his study of greater New England communities, Jaffee found that local histories of early communities presented distorted or idealized views of early settlers and attempted to create a particular, in this case hyper-patriotic, depiction of the past. With this in mind, I have tried to limit my use of such sources to factual data, rather than meaningful, uncritical interpretation. David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 239-249.

national sources of power and prestige, Hofstadter contended, the pillars of the local community were men of great importance in their own right.⁶¹

The privileged position of the merchant in local communities was not limited to Texas and Indian Territory. Haywood places store owners at the top of the social hierarchy in Kansas cattle towns; merchants and stockmen represented the “civilized element” in the burgeoning frontier communities.⁶² In his classic work, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store*, Thomas Clark also described merchants as the local elite. Clark observed that storekeepers became the local “rich men,” living in the best houses, generously contributing to local churches and schools, and essentially running local politics and social affairs.⁶³ Although such prestige followed only after they reached a certain level of success, the owners of general stores in early Texas and Oklahoma achieved the elevated status of their counterparts in Kansas and the southern states. The sources of local prestige came not only from business success and community activism, but also because merchants cast themselves as purveyors of eastern cosmopolitan values and goods. In his study of Mississippi store owners, historian Ted Ownby asserts that owners saw themselves as part of and agents for cosmopolitan culture; they tied their own identity to the goods themselves and to their part in knowing what were the latest trends coming out of the East.⁶⁴ In effect, merchants fashioned their

⁶¹Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 135-6.

⁶²Haywood, *Victorian West*, 38.

⁶³Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, ix.

⁶⁴Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 9.

roles as the gatekeepers of all things modern and sophisticated for those living on the peripheries of metropolitan society.

The owners of the Clark and Hyde mercantile store in Nacogdoches, Texas must have understood themselves to be the social superiors of their largely cotton farming clientele. Both store owners were lawyers with distinguished careers before they purchased the store in 1872 from another attorney, G. F. Ingraham.⁶⁵ Nacogdoches had a storied history as a center for trade and smuggling, dating back to the early eighteenth century. Initially an Indian settlement, Spanish explorers ventured into the region in the early 1700s, establishing the Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Nacogdoches in 1716. Shortly after founding the mission, the Spanish were forced out of the region by the French, the first of many challenges for the small community. Nacogdoches weathered the troubled years and, by 1870, boasted a permanent population of over 3,000 residents.⁶⁶ Store owners William Clark, III and William F. Hyde were not only elites in the Nacogdoches sense, but were prominent persons in the ranks of Texas society as a whole. Born into a prominent Texas family, Clark's father, William Clark, Jr., was a

⁶⁵In the opening pages of the 1872 Daybook, the following note appeared: "We Wm. Clark and Wm. Hyde have on October the 24th 1872 bought of Ingraham & Co. A mercantile firm composed of G. F. Ingraham and S. L. Anthom doing business in the town of Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County the entire stock of goods, wares and merchandise of said firm have and do hereby agree to associate as equal partners under the firm name of Clark and Hyde in the conduct of a mercantile business at said place sharing profits and losses equally the stock resources and liabilities on said date appears as follows: Nacogdoches, Thursday, Oct. 24, 1872. Daybook I-October 1872-June 1873, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC. For information on their occupational status, see *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870: An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Reeves Ericson (Nacogdoches, 1977), 13. For George F. Ingraham see, *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1880: An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Ericson (Nacogdoches, 1988), 4.

⁶⁶*Nacogdoches*, Nacogdoches Altrusa Club (1960), Dale Collection, WHC, 1-4. According to the census, the town's population was 3,188. *Ninth Census of the United States 1870*, Population (Washington, D.C.).

signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and served in the Second Congress of the Republic. William Clark, III practiced law in San Augustine for a number of years before moving to Nacogdoches where he continued to practice law, pursuing promising business ventures on the side. He was a delegate from the Nacogdoches region to the state secession convention held in 1860 and was one of the “Seven, serious, sober, sensible” men who voted “No” on the proposition to secede. Once the Civil War broke out, Clark raised a company of men and joined the Confederate Army, being commissioned captain of Company G. After the war, he returned to Nacogdoches to practice law, investing with William Hyde in the mercantile business as a silent partner. Indeed, Clark had little time for running a dry goods store since he provided legal services for the Houston East & West Railroad Company and served a number of terms in the Texas Legislature.⁶⁷

George F. Ingraham, one of the partners from whom Clark and Hyde purchased the store, served under William Clark during the Civil War in Company G of the 8th Texas Infantry, demonstrating the meaningful ties of this merchant elite. Although originally a New Yorker, Ingraham resolved that since he had “cast his lot” with the South, he needed to fight on the side of the Confederacy. After returning from the Civil War, Ingraham affiliated with the Democratic Party, practiced law, and ultimately served as a judge for Nacogdoches County and the Second Judicial District.⁶⁸ Among these many professional ventures, Ingraham found time to operate a dry goods store, aptly named Ingraham & Company, later becoming the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm.

⁶⁷Nacogdoches County Genealogical Society, *Nacogdoches County Families* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985), 215.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 372.

Evidently, all three of these store owners distinguished themselves professionally in careers outside of retailing.

By the time he had acquired a share in the mercantile firm, Clark & Hyde, William Clark III had positioned himself in the highest ranks of Texas society. His account records reveal that he purchased not only staple items from the store, but also that he acquired many small indulgences and specialty items for himself and his family—consumption patterns which closely corresponded with many of his upper middle-class contemporaries in regions across the United States. On November 2, 1872, for example, Clark purchased one box of milk, oysters and chocolate from Clark & Hyde, a tasty collection of delicacies for his Saturday visit to the store.⁶⁹ On November 27, Mrs. William Clark charged to her husband's account: two yards of cashmere fabric for \$2.86, 16 yards of calico for \$1.92, 12 yards of binding for 36¢, and a large array of buttons, including brass buttons, for 48¢, sales totaling \$5.58.⁷⁰ At a cost of \$1.43 a yard, cashmere would not likely appear on the shopping list of those with a modest budget. In addition to fabric and thread, Mrs. Clark bought on January 31, 1873, a roll of wall paper from the store; perhaps she sought to adorn her walls in a manner appropriate for an upper-class household.⁷¹ Two sets of shoes were purchased from the store on March 29,

⁶⁹Daybook I, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 8.

⁷⁰Ibid., 28. According to the census, Mrs. William Clark was Amelia Clark, formerly Amelia Taylor. In 1870, the Clarks had two young children: two year old William and eight month old Mary. Apparently, William F. Hyde lived alone. *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870*, 13.

⁷¹Ibid., 103. In *Accumulation and Display: Mass Marketing Household Goods in America*, the authors provide a detailed assessment of the proliferation and cultural meaning of a multitude of consumer items purchased for Victorian households; included in this discussion was the popularity of wall paper in creating a “background for domestic harmony,” 15.

1873, the significance of this purchase is that it was picked up for Clark by a “Negro Woman,” suggesting the family had some domestic help on hand; again, a situation not so different from middle and upper-class families on either side of the Atlantic.⁷²

According to census records, Lyne T. Barret, of the retail firm Hardeman & Barret located in Melrose, Texas had a domestic servant named Edward Archibald residing in his household. Listed as a white, male domestic servant from Ireland, Archibald lived in the Barret’s home along with Mrs. Angelina Barret and her five boys: William, Ralph, James, Robert and Charles.⁷³ One of the occasional responsibilities charged to Archibald was fetching items from the store and delivering them to the family home. On September 5, 1870, large quantities of flour and sugar were charged to L. T. Barret’s account per “Ed.”⁷⁴ With Mr. Barret minding the store and the five young boys occupying Mrs. Barret’s attention, Edward was likely the only adult available to run errands for the household. Sometimes twelve year old Willie or ten year old Ralph were similarly called upon to deliver grocery items from the store to home.⁷⁵ It is not surprising that Barret secured domestic help for his family, given both his and his wife’s backgrounds—both came from wealthy slave-owning families. Angelina had grown up in the home of Tom Johnson, a relative, and, according to later accounts, the Johnsons and the Barrets owned most of Melrose and a great deal of the surrounding country. Because of his family’s wealth, Barret received an exemption from military service during the war

⁷²Ibid., 151.

⁷³*The People of Nacogdoches County*, 107.

⁷⁴Account Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [Vol.1], ETRC, 283.

⁷⁵Ibid., 382.

so that he could oversee his mother's plantation. Evidently, Barret's affluent background enabled him to be "high-minded and aristocratic in his ways and tastes."⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, such qualities were suitable to gentlemen of the period not just in the South, but nationwide. In the post-Civil War period, Barret transitioned from the slave-owning elite to the merchant elite.

Both owners of the Hardeman & Barret merchandise store listed their occupations in the 1870 census as retail merchants, suggesting that both focused their professional endeavors on retailing. They established their retail partnership in the early 1860s and maintained their business relationship through the Civil War. In the immediate post-war period, however, Barret actively engaged in developing an oil company which would capitalize on the region's rich oil reserves. In December 1865, Barret and a handful of investors established the Melrose Petroleum Oil Company and the company began drilling for oil in the area in the summer of 1866. In late-1866 and early 1867, Barret traveled to New York and Pennsylvania seeking advice and financial interest on how best to develop the region's potential. Unfortunately, low oil prices and concerns by northern investors about the stability of Reconstruction Texas left Barret without sufficient investment capital to proceed; in fact, he suffered extensive financial loss through his involvement in the project. As a result, he abandoned his oil company ventures and returned to the business of retailing.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Linda Ericson Devereaux, "A History of Oil Springs," in *The Bicentennial Commemorative History of Nacogdoches*, Nacogdoches Jaycees (1976), 150. For background on the Barret family, also see C. K. Chamberlain, "Lyne Toliaferro Barret, A Pioneer Texas Wildcatter," *East Texas Historical Journal* 6 (March 1968), 8.

⁷⁷Chamberlain, "Lyne Toliaferro Barret," 5-18.

Like his partner, Blackstone Hardeman, Jr. maintained a large family which included, in 1870, his wife and ten children, although ultimately he and his wife, Rebecca, would have a total of sixteen children.⁷⁸ Blackstone Hardeman, Jr. boasted a fine pedigree in terms of Texas social circles: his father was a prominent physician who grew up and received his medical training in Tennessee before moving to Texas in 1838. Dr. Blackstone Hardeman Sr. bought land just west of Chireno, Texas—apparently the local precinct now known as Chireno initially bore the name Hardemans in honor of the distinguished founding family.⁷⁹

Although Blackstone appears less frequently in the store's ledgers, L. T. Barret made purchases from the firm almost daily, recording them under his personal account. Not surprisingly, these quotidian purchases were typically food and household basics. There are some interesting exceptions, however. The storekeeper ensured that his sons were both well-clad and well-equipped for pursuing their studies. In October, 1870, Barret procured two pairs of shoes for his boys, one for Robert and the other for Charley.⁸⁰ Ralph Barret was the lucky recipient of an arithmetic book in May 1870, a speller and a penholder in November, and a new pair of brogans on December 17, 1870.⁸¹ It appears that L. T. Barret used his mercantile business to provide not only for his family's present needs, but in supplying his sons with educational resources, he demonstrated a commitment to 'improving' them and their career opportunities.

⁷⁸*The People of Nacogdoches in 1870*, 105. *Nacogdoches County Families*, 340.

⁷⁹*Nacogdoches County Families*, 340.

⁸⁰Account Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret, ETRC, 282.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 21, 382, 384.

Education increased in importance for Texans across the socio-economic spectrum in the early 1870s. Thanks to initiatives put forth by the Republican Reconstruction governments of the early 1870s, a new public school system was put in place for the state that offered education to both black and white students, though the schools were segregated by race.⁸² According to Howe, upper middle-class Americans during the period manifested an extreme form of “future-orientation” in their ambition, their interest in education and their willingness to reinvest profits, all demonstrating their preoccupation with planning ahead and using their time wisely.⁸³ Barret’s purchases on June 25, 1870 of a top, a harmonica, and a set of marbles indicate, however, that it was not always study time for the boys in the Barret household—they were able to indulge, at least a little, in the pleasures of play.⁸⁴

Whether for themselves or for their families, store owners on the Texas frontier ostensibly attained the commodities befitting their status as the local elite. The rural middle class shared with their urban counterparts the desire for the latest in available goods. While interest in “scarce commodities” by rural inhabitants was not merely a product of the late-nineteenth century, the increased proliferation of ready-made, mass-produced commodities expanded that interest exponentially.⁸⁵ Kenneth Ames has argued that the fervent interest in possessing certain items by those in both rural and urban locations, particularly items demonstrating their gentility and respectability, intimates

⁸²Barr, *Black Texans*, 64. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 68-95.

⁸³Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” 19.

⁸⁴Account Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret, ETRC, 22.

⁸⁵Schlereth, “Country Stores, County Fairs and Mail Order Catalogues,” 347.

that many in the period defined themselves by what they owned.⁸⁶ Items purchased by Alfred B. Lewis from his dry goods store in Manor, Texas, for example, indicate that the merchant had reached a relatively high degree of success. In 1883, Lewis purchased a suit of clothes from the store on May 10 for \$12.00, he acquired another suit for \$12.42 in September of the same year, and followed up these purchases the next year by buying a coat and vest for \$13.79. Factoring in the \$3.40 hat he bought in July 1884, the pants he purchased for \$6.32, the suspenders, coat, shirts and hose he purchased in the same period, and Lewis emerges as one particularly well-dressed retailer. On December 31, 1884, Lewis charged to his account an especially costly purchase: a buggy for \$145.00 and an accompanying harness for \$16.50.⁸⁷ At such a high cost, Lewis' buggy was well beyond the reach of most of his farming clientele.

Store merchants' purchases of luxury items affirmed their elite status, especially when compared to the more modest purchases made by their largely rural clientele. In this regard, consumer goods helped to establish and enhance social differentiation, particularly in regions perceived as being on the "frontiers" of civility. In her study of the Kentucky frontier, Elizabeth Perkins found that certain items—such as punch bowls—carried social meanings and communicated relationships, establishing for their owners "a social marker of her elite status."⁸⁸ It is worth noting that by the time of these purchases

⁸⁶Ames, "Trade Catalogues and the Study of Culture," 8-14.

⁸⁷Ledger #1, Lewis Store, AR 1999 - 017, Austin History Center (AHC), Austin, Texas, 500. The store owner's name appears as A. B. Lewis in the ledgers, although in the census he is listed as Alfred D. Lewis. The discrepancy is due to either this researcher's inability to decipher his handwriting or a mistake occurring with the census taker—either is plausible.

⁸⁸Perkins, "The Consumer Frontier," 509.

Alfred Lewis was in his early sixties and, having enjoyed some measure of success, was preparing his son to take over his business. At the time of the 1880 census, Ashby W. Lewis was clerking at his father's store; he and his brother-in law, Henry C. Fristoe took over the business in the 1890s, operating an affiliate in Taylor, Texas as well.⁸⁹

Elite status manifested itself not only through the consumption practices of the merchants on the Texas frontier, but also through their community activism. A bulwark of middle-class culture was the emphasis placed on both education and the Christian religion. The school and the church were institutions that promoted such ideals as duty, discipline, virtue and morality. Community success was measured not simply by prospering businesses, although they were critical, but also through flourishing schools and churches. It is in this philanthropic capacity that W. A. Brown served as a director for the Jacksonville Education Association, raising funds to rebuild the school in Jacksonville, Texas. In their commitment to their community's moral development, the Browns established a reputation as being "kind to the broken-hearted, charitable to the poor, and a help to the community in which they lived."⁹⁰ In reviewing the accomplishments of the burgeoning community of Jacksonville, *The Texas Intelligencer*, a local newspaper, credited the establishment of schools and churches as well as thriving industries as key factors in the town's success. The editorial cited a population increase of 25 percent in 1875 as proof of the town's growth and future success. The *Intelligencer* observed that "A religious, moral, and social influence has grown and extended, and today we can safely say with excusable pride, that Jacksonville's future is assured and

⁸⁹See Ledger #2, Lewis Store, AHC, 125-131, 137. *1880 United States Census: Population Schedules*, Travis County, Precinct No.2, 10.

⁹⁰Cited earlier, see footnote #9.

firm; that commercially, socially, and morally, she has no superior, of equal (and in many instances, of greater) size, among all the towns in this grand State.”⁹¹

Described as “the first citizen of Muskogee in benevolence,” Mrs. Elizabeth Fulton Hester, wife of store owner G. B. Hester, moved to Indian territory in 1856 to perform work as a teacher and a missionary among the Chickasaws. She married retailer Captain George Benjamin Hester two years after moving into the Chickasaw Nation. In 1861, as the war between the states drew nearer, the Hesters decided to put their missionary work on hold and relocated to Old Boggy Depot, a small community in the Choctaw Nation. In their new location, Mr. Hester resumed his mercantile business and Mrs. Hester became a teacher in a National School provided by the Indian Legislature. Thus, Mrs. Hester was able to render both spiritual and educational direction even to those in the presumably “civilized” tribes. In her later years, Mrs. Hester moved to Muskogee and continued providing her philanthropic services—she held Sunday afternoon services at the city jail and played a key role in the founding of the Muskogee Day Nursery. Besides their retailing and missionary work, the Hesters were also the proud parents of Daisy Hester who married Robert L. Owen, Indian Agent and first U. S. Senator from the state of Oklahoma.⁹²

Other merchant families similarly displayed a firm commitment to developing the moral or religious character of their communities. So important were church services to the Gauntt brothers of Athens, Texas that they made their contributions to the local

⁹¹*The Texas Intelligencer*, 9 January 1875, cited in *Cherokee County Banner*, 1 June 1917.

⁹²E. McCurdy Bostic, “Elizabeth Fulton Hester,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6 (December 1928), 449-452.

preacher through the coffers of their general store. Ownership of the Gauntt Bros. mercantile firm was initially split between two brothers, William M. [Bill] Gauntt and Robert Lee [General] Gauntt, although a third brother J. R. [Bob] Gauntt would buy into the business in the 1890s.⁹³ According to their account ledgers, both brothers paid the preacher for his services, recording the transactions in their daybooks. For example, listed under General Gauntt's account for May 3, 1888 is the ledger entry "paid Preacher \$1.00." In fall of 1888, Bill Gauntt's account includes the entries: on September 7, "cash to Preacher 50¢" and on October 1, "paid Preacher \$1.00."⁹⁴ Bob Gauntt was an active member of the Baptist church in Athens and served as both a member of city council for eight years and a member of the school board for an impressive twenty years.⁹⁵ Merchants living in rural outposts, hundreds of miles from the nearest urban center, perceived churches and schools as civilizing agencies, critical to the development of both community cohesion and morality.

Progress, laissez faire and Social Darwinism, all served as central tenets of the late nineteenth-century mind set. If historians have largely failed to recognize the role of class dynamics and gentility in the American West, the opposite can be said of the stress on principles like progress, competitiveness, boosterism, and the presence of "survival of the fittest" mentality in western communities. Competition seemingly ruled the West—

⁹³Henderson County Historical Commission, *Family Histories of Henderson County Texas 1846-1981* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1981), 205. J. J. Faulk, *History of Henderson County Texas* (Athens, Texas: Athens Review Printing Company, 1929), 269-272. Robert Lee [General] Gauntt was born during the Civil War in 1862, his name is no doubt an homage to the famous southern general. At the time of his birth, Gauntt's father, John W. Gauntt, was serving a four-year stint in the Confederate army.

⁹⁴Gauntt Bros. Ledger 1887-1888, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 258, 285, 305.

⁹⁵Faulk, *History of Henderson County Texas*, 272.

unapologetic, no-holds-barred competition—much like the cutthroat competition and ruthlessness associated with the robber-barons of the East. As Robert Haywood observes, phrases like “‘survival of the fittest,’ ‘struggle for survival’ and ‘march to perfection’ seeped into the public mind and everyday conversation by a kind of untraceable osmosis. Western editors glibly used the terms with the same ease as they would any other popular cliché.”⁹⁶ The masthead of the *Oklahoma Star*, a newspaper established in the Choctaw Nation in the 1870s, read “Progress and a Higher Civilization.” According to historian Angie Debo, the *Oklahoma Star* was essentially a “Boomer” sheet that not only promoted white settlement in Indian Territory, but also frequently criticized the tribal administration and frankly asserted that “the white race was destined to own every foot of land on the American continent.”⁹⁷ As an advocate of progress, the *Star* endorsed all those who sought to elevate and refine the incipient territory. Retail merchant, cattleman, and mine owner James Jackson McAlester exemplified such a man. According to an editorial, “Jim McAlester, the Osage Mining Company and everyone else in this country, who are trying to do anything tending to unveil and utilize its hidden wealth, will always find the *Star* defending them.”⁹⁸ Apparently, the heroes of the West were those who battled the untamed, unforgiving, god-forsaken land, seized the lands of the Indians through various means and emerged triumphant; such triumphs culminated in the accumulation of personal wealth.

⁹⁶Haywood, *Victorian West*, 6.

⁹⁷Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* Civilization of the American Indian Series [Vol.6] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 226.

⁹⁸*Oklahoma Star*, 23 November 1875.

However, the idea that competition had run amuck in the West and that fortune seekers would sell their souls, and anything else they could get their hands on, for a share in the western promise of prosperity seems inconsistent with the rational order and moral uprightness of the middle-class elite. Indeed, this contradiction marks one of the many tensions of the period as conflicting values contended with one another, each seeking to define the country's central belief system. In late nineteenth-century America, perceptions of wealth, competition, and acceptable rules for conducting business were in a state of flux; after all, this is the period which saw the birth of the robber-baron. As entrepreneurs like Rockefeller and Carnegie mastered the art of quelling competition and consolidating capital, those on the sidelines critiqued the new economic and social order, especially those whose status was most threatened by the changing economic system. Out of necessity, a compromise was reached between the varying strains of American thought, a delicate balance between middle-class righteousness and ruthless Gilded-Age competition. However, some took the need to succeed far beyond the confines of civility, challenging the rules of polite society when needed and exploiting those around them when necessary. Perhaps, the rules of righteousness and a strict ethical code proved too constraining for some. Such entrepreneurs capitalized on the new economic opportunities developing in the West and spearheaded the drive to accumulate wealth.⁹⁹

⁹⁹For classic works on corporate growth and industrialism during the Gilded Age, see Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, New Ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1927); Vernon L. Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism In America, 1860-1920, Volume III: Main Currents in American Thought* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*. For more recent works, see Glen Porter, *The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1910* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1973); Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1977); Robert F. Himmelberg, ed., *The Rise of Big Business and the Beginnings of Antitrust and Railroad*

Dry goods merchant James Jackson McAlester provides a fitting example. From a modest Arkansas upbringing, McAlester emerged as prominent leader in business and political circles in both pre- and post-statehood Oklahoma. He operated a prosperous mercantile business, owned a large cattle ranch, invested in and administered a successful mining company, served as a U. S. Marshall for the United States Court, and was elected to both the Corporation Commission and the office of Lieutenant-Governor.¹⁰⁰ Truly a western success story, McAlester established himself in the ranks of the Oklahoma elite. However, such success, or at least his means of achieving that success, has drawn criticism from contemporary critics, who use terms like “interloper” and “exploiter” to describe the controversial store owner.¹⁰¹ While there is no doubt that McAlester ultimately embraced the aura of middle-class gentility, neither his background nor his means of achieving wealth in the Choctaw Nation conformed to rigid notions of Victorian civility, particularly regarding issues of race and class.

In a 1957 article celebrating the career of J. J. McAlester, titled “An Oklahoma Indian Trader as a Frontiersman of Commerce,” Oliver Knight contended that McAlester “was a stable businessman who was part of the frontier process, advancing the spread of

Regulation, 1870-1900 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Charles W. Calhoun, ed., *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996); David M. Tucker, *Mugwumps: Public Moralists of the Gilded Age* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁰Much of the section is derived from an earlier work by this author, see Linda C. English, “Inside the Store, Inside the Past: A Cultural Analysis of McAlester’s General Store,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 81 (Spring 2003), 34-53.

¹⁰¹For a good example, see Gerald L. Sparks, “James Jesse McAlester, The Choctaw Nation’s Omnipresent Entrepreneur, 1871-1894” (MA thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1997).

civilization by establishing a connecting link between frontier and metropolitan areas.”¹⁰² For Knight, McAlester was a “civilizer,” a community builder and, as the title suggests, a frontiersman of commerce. McAlester moved to the Choctaw Nation after obtaining a map from a geologist’s survey which indicated that rich coal beds were located in the area. Seizing the opportunity to gain access to the region’s untapped wealth, McAlester accepted a position with the trading firm Reynolds & Hannaford, with the stipulation that he would open a trading post in the area known as “the Crossroads,” a location conveniently near the coal outcrops. In 1870, he purchased Reynolds’ share of the business and the firm’s name changed to McAlester & Hannaford.¹⁰³ Eventually, McAlester bought out his remaining partner and became the sole owner of the dry goods store, expanding and diversifying his business interests until his death in the early 1920s.

In a more recent and more critical assessment of the merchant’s early dealings, Gerald Sparks asserts that McAlester exploited Choctaw law and a geologist’s book into a position of wealth and power. In the end, the Choctaw Nation’s power diminished because of white interlopers like J. J. McAlester.¹⁰⁴ Sparks grounds his criticisms not merely in McAlester’s acquisition of a geologist’s map, but rather in the fact that he continually forged relationships that allowed him to exploit the Choctaw Nation’s wealth.

¹⁰²Oliver Knight, “An Oklahoma Indian Trader As A Frontiersman of Commerce,” *Journal of Southern History* 23 (May 1957), 219.

¹⁰³While there are a number of histories that detail McAlester’s early career, a particularly insightful source is an article written by Paul Nesbitt based on an earlier interview he conducted with McAlester. See Paul Nesbitt, “J. J. McAlester,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 11 (June 1933), 758-764. More recent accounts include Michael J. Hightower, “Cattle, Coal and Indian Land: A Tradition of Mining in Southeastern Oklahoma,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 62 (Spring 1984), 4-25 and Sparks, “James Jesse McAlester.”

¹⁰⁴Sparks, “James Jesse McAlester,” 26-27.

For example, on McAlester's marriage to Rebecca Burney, a Chickasaw woman, on August 22, 1872, Sparks writes, "While it is unfair to suggest that he married only to gain access to the coal reserves, the fact remains that only through this union could he have access to them."¹⁰⁵ The Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes had a dual citizenship agreement; therefore, through his marriage to Miss Burney, McAlester gained citizenship to both tribes and, thus, access to tribal lands.¹⁰⁶ The store owner also developed relationships with important tribal members which paid off for him in times of crisis. For example, he established business ties with the Pusleys, a prominent Choctaw family, through their mutual interest in Osage Coal and Mining Company. His close relationship with Judge James Thompson proved advantageous for McAlester in the various legal battles the store owner had with the Choctaw leadership. Legal battles developed, in part, because there were some in the Nation who resented McAlester's ability to sidestep tribal law continually, while concurrently amassing huge profits from his land and coal interests.¹⁰⁷

To be sure, the McAlesters represented the social and economic elite not just in the community of McAlester, but in the Choctaw Nation as a whole. There is ample

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁶Despite gaining citizenship in the tribe, there was never any doubt among the Choctaws that McAlester was white, or conversely, that Mrs. Rebecca McAlester was Indian. According to the Choctaw Census of 1885, Rebecca McAlester's racial heritage was listed as Indian, specifically Chickasaw. That McAlester profited from this racially-mixed marriage, there can be no doubt. He gained access to the Choctaw coal fields the only way one legitimately could—through marriage. *1885 Choctaw Census*, Tubucksy [Tobucksy] County (Arch #121), 906-907, Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS), Oklahoma City, OK. Of note, McAlester is listed in the census as having 2000 head of cattle and 15,000 bales of cotton in 1885, confirming that he had by the mid-1880s already acquired significant wealth.

¹⁰⁷Sparks, "James Jesse McAlester," 23. English, "Inside the Store, Inside the Past," 37-38.

evidence that points to McAlester's financial success. For example, his account records indicate that he was moving large amounts of cash out of the Choctaw Nation and into his personal bank accounts—he cleared \$215,343 through his checking account with the Commercial Bank of St. Louis in 1887-1888.¹⁰⁸ From store, cattle, and coal revenues, McAlester invested in a number of real estate and business ventures, including a gristmill and a sawmill. He later served as president of the Bank of McAlester, established in 1905.¹⁰⁹ His elite status is also evidenced by his material surroundings, his prominent social network, and his widespread reputation. The McAlesters resided in a lavish home, complete with a cupola and porch all around, situated on a ten-acre lot surrounded by an ornamental fence.¹¹⁰ Purchases like peaches, currants, oysters, 2 ½ yards of table linen, ribbon, chambray, preserve dishes, and a \$13.50 China tea set suggest that the McAlesters could afford to surround themselves with the niceties of their day.¹¹¹ According to one observer who spent time in the household, Mrs. Rebecca McAlester always wore diamonds, even when doing housework.¹¹² Further indicating McAlester's prestige is the impressive list of supporters who promoted his appointment to the position of U.S. Marshall in 1893, including the principal chiefs of the Choctaw and Cherokee

¹⁰⁸Ledger 1887-1888, #161, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 62.

¹⁰⁹*McAlester Messenger*, 8 September 1905.

¹¹⁰Knight, "An Oklahoma Indian Trader," 215. For a picture of McAlester's home, see English, "Inside the Store, Inside the Past," 47.

¹¹¹1877-1880 Sales Ledger, #154, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 150, 190, 244, 268.

¹¹²According to Mrs. Cook, who spent much time in the McAlester house as a child. Interview cited in Knight, "An Oklahoma Indian Trader," 215.

Nations, the president of the Choctaw Senate, the state treasurer of Arkansas, and prominent businessmen in Texas, Missouri, and Indian Territory.¹¹³

The fact that McAlester was white and Rebecca McAlester was Native American points to the unique social dynamics of Indian Territory. Strong relationships with tribal leaders were essential to those seeking social and economic success and ties to Indian agents and the federal government also helped. Like most periods in American history, the issue of race in the late nineteenth century was tumultuous, tension-ridden and fraught with contradictions. Generally, racial minorities found themselves at the bottom rungs of society. Robert Haywood wryly observes that classes in the West “were not rigid and arbitrary—providing, as prairie wisdom had it, ‘you were free, white, and twenty-one,’ a description that was intended to cover everyone except, of course, those in racial categories not yet assimilated into the American culture.”¹¹⁴ However, this generalization cannot easily be applied to Indian Territory. The McAlesters, a mixed-race couple, maintained a position of wealth and prestige both in the Choctaw Nation, and later, in the new state of Oklahoma. Indian Territory and early Oklahoma were exceptional places in this regard, general assumptions of race and class needed to be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of this region during this period.

Frederick Benjamin Severs, who operated a dry goods store in Okmulgee, the capital of the Creek Nation, met with challenges similar to those faced by McAlester in the Choctaw Nation. Like McAlester, Severs parlayed his success in retailing into other

¹¹³*Endorsements and Recommendations of James J. McAlester, Candidate for U.S. Marshall of the Indian Territory Courts* (Atoka, Indian Territory, 1893), in Susan McAlester Barnes Collection, B-1, Part II, F-5, WHC.

¹¹⁴Haywood, *Victorian West*, 16.

profitable business ventures, similarly converting his tribal citizenship into a large personal fortune. By the time of his death in 1912, the store owner was considered to be one of the leading financiers in the region and one of the few millionaires in the early state. Severs acquired his wealth from retailing, land speculation, banking, and, most especially, cattle ranching. According to Oklahoma historians, David Baird and Danney Goble, F. B. Severs capitalized on cheap barbed wire prices, enclosing enough land to raise and sell fifteen- to twenty-thousand cattle every year. In fact, Severs and fellow Creek rancher, George Perryman, “were two of just sixty-one Creek citizens who between them controlled 1,072,215 acres in 1896—almost one-third of their nation’s entire land surface.”¹¹⁵

Born in Washington County, Arkansas, Severs moved to Indian Territory at the age of eighteen, initially clerking in a store at Fort Gibson and later teaching school in the Creek Nation at Concharty Town and Asbury Mission. With the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted on the Confederate side, serving as first lieutenant in the First Creek Regiment—Captain Samuel Checote’s Company of full blood Creeks.¹¹⁶ Apparently in honor of his service under Checote during the war, Severs was formerly adopted as a Creek citizen, a privilege afforded to no other white men afterwards.¹¹⁷ Later, Severs served as private secretary to Checote in his capacity as principal chief of the tribe. His tribal citizenship preceded his marriage to Miss Annie Anderson, the daughter of Chief

¹¹⁵W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 282.

¹¹⁶Miss Ella Robinson, “History of the Patterson Mercantile Company,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 36 (Spring 1958), 55n.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.* Mary Jane Ward, *George Washington Grayson and the Creek Nation, 1843-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 102.

George Anderson of Concharty Town. Born into a prominent Creek family, Annie's purchases months before her marriage to F. B. Severs, indicate that she already maintained a comfortable standard of living before marrying the future millionaire. On July 7, 1869, Miss Anderson purchased from Severs' store: one hoop skirt for \$2.00, a pair of shoes for \$3.00, two yards of ribbon for 50¢, pepper, starch and hair oil for 50¢ respectively, and six yards of bleached domestic for \$1.50. By October 1869, Miss Anderson appears in the store ledgers as Annie Severs, reflecting her change in marital status.¹¹⁸

In exploiting his tribal connections and amassing great personal wealth, J. J. McAlester attracted criticism from within the Choctaw Nation as well as from present-day scholars. Likewise, Frederick B. Severs' relationship with the Creeks and his subsequent rise to prominence in the Nation has garnered equally mixed reviews. Some tribal members resented the practice of fencing in large pastures for cattle which hindered freedom and travel in the Creek lands. Critics viewed successful cattleman like Severs, and a handful of other ranchers, as exploiting the resources of the nation at the public expense. Similar criticisms surfaced against Severs, and other speculators within the tribe, for their acquisition of huge lots in the newly planned town of Eufaula.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Severs seems to have played some role in virtually all the money-making opportunities available to tribal members. Early historical assessments of Severs, on the other hand, celebrate his "civilizing" influence on the Creeks, depicting him as a worthwhile cattleman who led in the "higher purposes" of frontier life and enabled the Indians to

¹¹⁸1869-1871 Daybook, F. B. Severs Collection, OHS, 5, 67.

¹¹⁹Ward, *George Washington Grayson*, 184, 196.

improve their own territory.¹²⁰ In early historical interpretations, economic success was construed as a positive good—the implication being that Severs’ success contributed to Creek improvement and economic development—even if it came at the expense of others in the tribe.

There can be no doubt that Severs assumed a leadership role in the Creek Nation, due in large part to his considerable wealth. Besides his retailing business, he owned a large, modern cattle ranch, built and owned a cotton gin at Muskogee, led in organizing the Muskogee Roller Milling Company there as well as the First National Bank. He was also builder and owner of a number of large business buildings, including the \$500,000 Severs Hotel.¹²¹ Like McAlester, Severs seems to have met all the criteria to be considered a Gilded Age success story. He was influential socially, politically and economically in the burgeoning towns of the Creek Nation, specifically Okmulgee and Muskogee. As a mixed-race couple it is difficult to know if Frederick and Annie Severs would be welcomed in genteel circles in other parts of America; however, they certainly represented the very best of the social elite in their region of the West.

Offering her own unique challenge to the social mores of the period, Anna Martin’s rise to prominence as a store owner and banker in Mason County, Texas during the 1880s has all of the qualities of a Horatio Alger novel. The story of the life of Mrs. Anna Martin is one of unusual interest because “the reader can be impressed with the splendid spirit of this woman, of gentle birth, who came to the Texas frontier, and with true pioneer spirit entered upon that life of service and struggle that was to be crowned

¹²⁰“Historical Notes,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 17 (June 1939), 232.

¹²¹Robinson, “History of the Patterson Mercantile Company,” 55n.

with success far above the average, but abundantly deserved.”¹²² In this riches to rags to riches tale, Martin surmounted the obstacles placed before her, overcame abject poverty, and ultimately labored her way to a large fortune for herself and her two boys. The fact that Martin was a woman makes her triumph even more impressive. Indeed, such experiences challenged cultural ideals regarding women’s proper roles, specifically the “cult of domesticity” which limited a women’s sphere of influence to the home. Of course, this was an ideal and exceptions surfaced in America long before Anna Martin, not the least of which were the onset of Victorian feminism and the suffrage movement.¹²³

In a letter to an interested New York banker, Martin relayed the circumstances that led to her assuming ownership of a dry goods store in Hedwig’s Hill, Texas. Charles Martin, Anna’s husband, was in the retailing business; however, after contracting inflammatory rheumatism, his health failed and the business suffered as a result. For fifteen years, Anna nursed her sick husband and cared for her two boys, Charles and Max. She kept the family afloat—barely—by servicing the El Paso-San Antonio mail line, boarding transients, selling a few grocery items to travelers, making butter for the post, sewing and so on, “enough to keep us out of debt.”¹²⁴ In November 1879, Charles Martin died and Anna borrowed \$150 from a friend to reopen the store. The death of her

¹²²*The New Encyclopedia of Texas, Vol. III*, eds. Ellis A. Davis and Edwin H. Grobe (Dallas: Texas Development Bureau, 1929), 2035.

¹²³Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” 27.

¹²⁴Letter from Anna Martin to M. Chapman dated 1904, Homer Martin Papers, Microfilm M381, Southwest Collection (SWC), Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX. Stella Gipson Polk, *Mason and Mason County: A History*, revised edition (Burnet, Texas: Eakin Press, 1980), 48-52.

husband motivated Anna to act: “I had made up my mind that I either be somebody in life or break down.” Sinking all her efforts into expanding the business, her store began to flourish. Apparently, she bought cattle, wool and produce which she sold on commission. Her store also operated as the postal station and she served as the postmaster.¹²⁵ By 1881, Anna had accumulated “a nice supply of merchandise on hand all paid for.” She reinvested her profits from the store into ranching land and cattle and then “drifted into the bank business.” She relied on her sons to assist her in her various business ventures, as she explained, “My oldest son taking care of the ranches of which are today about 50,000 acres, all stocked with good cattle and horses. The younger is a cashier of the bank of which I have the honor to be president.”¹²⁶

Existing ledgers from the Hedwig’s Hill store deal only with the period from the mid- to late-1880s—the period after Anna and her sons had acquire many of their vast holdings. Unfortunately, there are neither ledger records from the period of the Martins’ early struggles, nor during the years of transition in the early 1880s. By the mid-1880s, Anna’s purchases resembled those of her fellow merchants in Texas and Oklahoma who had reached a similar level of status and wealth. In early January 1886, she charged to her store account almost \$10.00 worth of goods, including candy, kid gloves, flannel and

¹²⁵According to Wayne Austerman, although the El Paso mail probably never paid the contractors who established permanent mailing stations, the affiliation still reaped economic benefits for local service providers. For merchants, mail service attracted customers from the surrounding environs who might have otherwise stayed away or frequented a competitor’s store. Wayne R. Austerman, *Sharp Rifles and Spanish Mules: The San-Antonio-El Paso Mail, 1851-1881* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1985). Other store merchants who served as postmasters were G. B. Hester, J. J. McAlester, and F. B. Severs.

¹²⁶Letter from Anna Martin to M. Chapman dated 1904, Homer Martin Papers, Microfilm M381, SWC.

39 yards of dress goods.¹²⁷ Later that month, Anna debited her account the rather large sum of \$44.90 “for a trip to La Grange.”¹²⁸ She bought two cans of apricots and two of salmon on March 20, 1886, delicacies of sorts, reflecting the proliferation of canned food items in rural locations.¹²⁹ Overall, her purchases indicate a comfortable lifestyle. No longer did she have to piece together “just enough” to provide for her family. By the 1880s, the boys were grown men successful in their own right. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Anna’s change in status is the entry from her 1884-1891 Account Book which includes the credit of \$1754.05 for “profit on March.”¹³⁰ Demonstrating her commitment to the Hedwig’s Hill community, the store owner provided the funding for the construction of a new school, supervising the project herself. Indeed, this store owner had arrived.¹³¹

Whether it was Anna Martin’s store in Hedwig’s Hill or one of her retailing contemporaries, the key to a successful mercantile business was knowing one’s clientele and responding to their needs accordingly. It was in a store owner’s best interest to develop good rapport with his (or her) customers, so as to keep abreast of changes in their economic fortunes. Store owners’ well-beings were intrinsically linked to the well-being of their customers, even if they saw themselves to be the social superiors of those customers. As Thomas Clark observed, “Good crops were as important for merchants as

¹²⁷Daybook I, 1885-1887, Hedwig’s Hill Store Records, SWC, 202.

¹²⁸Ibid., 215

¹²⁹Ibid., 273.

¹³⁰Account Book I, 1884-1891, Hedwig’s Hill Store Records, SWC, 1.

¹³¹Margaret Bierschwale, *A History of Mason County, Texas Through 1964*, ed. Julius E. Devos (Mason, Texas: Mason County Historical Commission, 1998), 106.

they were for farmers, and the long stoveside farming sessions were always valuable sources of information about the condition of soil, crops planned, and the next year's credit prospects."¹³² There was certainly more to the symbiotic relationship than mere economics; communal ties and friendships also linked the parties together. Store owners and their clients worshiped together, their children attended the same school and, in times of crisis, they came to each other's assistance, out of both concern and necessity. Still, economics formed the underlying connection between merchants and their customers.

Besides fostering relationships with their clientele, merchants also had a vested interest in expanding their communities and promoting their towns (or outposts) with the intent of increasing their customer base. Few histories of western communities have escaped the issue of town promotion or "boosterism." Town merchants and other community leaders played a central role in promoting the town's future. In his *The Americans: The National Experience*, Daniel Boorstin privileges the role of boosterism in community building and, by extension, nation-building. For Boorstin, boosterism fostered social cohesion, uniting the interests of ambitious community leaders to the collective interests of the burgeoning towns they promoted.¹³³ Only by attracting new residents and exciting commercial opportunities could the future of the town be assured. Of course, the commitment and skill levels of the businessmen involved was an important factor in any successful booster campaign. Historian Carl Abbot argues that a well orchestrated booster campaign was essential to a city in achieving and maintaining a competitive edge, whereas an apathetic and unfocused campaign signaled to all that a

¹³²Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 50.

¹³³Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965).

community was in trouble.¹³⁴ Everyone wanted their town to be the next St. Louis, San Francisco or Denver. Unfortunately, few towns ever achieved such success.

Store owners demonstrated their commitment to expanding their towns, or future towns, by speculating in the real estate market. They counted on an increased demand for town lots which would drive up the value of their land investments. As noted, F. B. Severs speculated in land in the town of Eufaula, as well as in Muskogee, and apparently his town lots “engrossed substantial areas.” In Muskogee, Severs built and owned a number of large businesses besides his dry goods store (he relocated in 1884 because of “the school advantages for his children”) including the Severs Hotel, clearly suggesting that the merchant had a substantial stake in town’s future prosperity.¹³⁵

Anticipating growth in the town which would bear his name, James J. McAlester claimed or purchased the land that surrounded his tiny outpost as early as February 1873. McAlester’s bill of sale showed the right of occupancy for the entire town of McAlester. However, this acquisition was not without its share of controversy. Initially, McAlester was challenged from within the Choctaw membership: Judge James Cheadle contested McAlester’s ownership of the land around the trading post, countering with his own claim to the property. Next, a dispute over the property developed between McAlester and the Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf Railroad. After learning of the railroad’s intent to come through town, McAlester encouraged his fellow speculators to raise the price of their land collectively. In what was becoming the norm in western towns, the railroad

¹³⁴Carl Abbot, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981).

¹³⁵Ward, *George Washington Grayson*, 196. Robinson, “History of the Patterson Mercantile Company,” 55n.

demanded money, some \$10,000, to run the line through the town. When McAlester refused to meet the railroad's demand, it located its line a mile and a half south of McAlester, prompting the town of South McAlester to spring up. Undeterred, McAlester immediately began purchasing sites in the path of the new rail line—in the end, the store owner spent more than \$10,000 acquiring and defending his land acquisitions.¹³⁶ As McAlester himself recalled: "It cost me more than ten thousand dollars to get a hold of South McAlester; and when the cases went through the courts they learned that their titles were not good. I bought up the judgments and in that way became a large property holder in their townsite."¹³⁷

In 1878, William Henry "Pete" Snyder established a store along Deep Creek—the first permanent building in the future community of "Hidetown," which later become the city of Snyder, Texas (in honor of its first merchant). In 1881, Snyder moved away from Deep Creek to Colorado City, beginning a second store in his new location. Closely paralleling McAlester's experience, Snyder became involved in a contentious battle over the land surrounding his early store, land which was planned for the future town site. Upon hearing that Hidetown might be designated the county seat, Snyder quickly began staking off a townsite, some 640 acres of prime Texas range land. Another early settler, T. N. (Tommy) Nunn had been using the same land for cattle and claimed ownership of the same 640 acres. Apparently, Nunn wanted to divide the land equally, but, as the local story goes, Snyder told him, "You know the land is mine and I will have it all or nothing!" A court battle ensued. Because Snyder had moved away from Deep Creek, the

¹³⁶Sparks, "James Jesse McAlester," 15-17.

¹³⁷Nesbitt, "J. J. McAlester," 764.

Texas Supreme Court ruled that Snyder no longer had legal claim to the land, awarding the land to Snyder's rival Tommy Nunn.¹³⁸ So unlike McAlester, Snyder was unable to reap the benefits of being the first to settle the Deep Creek area. Evidently, being the first one in, did not always pay dividends.

Speculating on a town's potential conformed closely to the competitive, progress-oriented mentality of the Gilded Age. The memorable Beriah Sellars character from Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner's *The Gilded Age* engaged in town speculation. The belief in and desire for progress permeated all aspects of American culture; indeed, economic progress fostered growth and change in virtually all spheres of life and labor. As H. Wayne Morgan has observed, such progress was often accomplished with what later generations would call dubious means, for sure, but accomplished nonetheless.¹³⁹ While fitting and colorful in its own right, Twain and Warner's *Gilded Age* description fails to capture the full essence of the last decades of the nineteenth century. Competing value systems, particularly those focused on gentility, moral probity, and class dynamics, also surfaced in communities across America.

According to a number of scholars, the culture of Victorianism and its precepts best explains the dominant class structure of the period. In his history of the West, for example, Richard White attributes efforts towards community building and moral reform in small communities to Victorian culture: "Community for these Victorian merchants meant women and families, and women and families demanded standards of

¹³⁸Anderson, *Deep Creek Merchant*, 99-102.

¹³⁹H. Wayne Morgan, "An Age in Need of Reassessment: A View Beforehand," in *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal*, ed. H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 13.

respectability to thrive.”¹⁴⁰ According to White, middle-class values and Victorianism were synonymous concepts. To be sure, merchants resolved to improve their communities by supporting the development of churches and schools in their inchoate settlements. However, the term Victorianism fails to capture the nuances of the elite merchant class in rural Texas and Indian Territory. As a class, they were a multifaceted group. In the community of Jacksonville, for example, W. A. Brown might easily be placed in the petite bourgeoisie. He accrued modest wealth and exercised cautious business ambition, choosing instead to focus his efforts on growing his retail business for future generations. Further, he stressed the stalwart values of thrift, discipline and hard work to his sons—caution, rather than the reckless wheeling and dealing of the period. Both William Clark III and Lyne T. Barret came from privileged backgrounds; indeed, the latter came from a prominent slave-holding family, which allowed Barret to move smoothly from the slave-holding elite to the merchant elite. James Jackson McAlester, on the other hand, was very much a self-made man. McAlester exhibited the intense drive often associated with Gilded Age success stories. His ambition and business acumen allowed him to diversify his interests beyond retailing and amass tremendous wealth. Although Anna Martin happened into retailing only because of her husband’s sickness and early death, she also successfully ventured into other industries and reaped the financial rewards of such risk taking.

¹⁴⁰White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*,” 307. See his discussion of western society, 307-316. The notion of white middle-class gentility in the West is problematized by Praetzellis and Praetzellis in their article, “Mangling Symbols of Gentility in the Wild West: Case Studies in Interpretative Archaeology.” The authors argue that symbols of gentility had power outside of the white middle class in western regions, citing examples such as a high-ranking Mexican-Californio, a Chinese-American merchant, African-American porters, and an expensive brothel to support their case. Praetzellis and Praetzellis, “Mangling Symbols of Gentility in the Wild West,” 645-654.

Despite such diversity, there was also common ground among merchants. Merchants represented an elite class in their respective communities, although the level of their wealth varied immensely. In part, their elevated status derived from their critical role as creditors to a large percentage of their clientele. Further, through their trade connection with urban centers, store owners saw themselves as agents of cosmopolitan culture, linking their own status with their ability to purvey the latest trends of the East to their rustic environments. According to his ledgers, J. J. McAlester, purchased almost all of his goods in the 1870s from wholesalers in St. Louis and, to a lesser degree, Kansas City. By the 1890s, however, his trade connections included wholesale houses in Dallas, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, as well as a slew of smaller cities.¹⁴¹ The ledgers of both William Clark's store in Nacogdoches and Anna Martin's store in Hedwig's Hill include debits for buying trips which were subsequently applied to the store owners' accounts.¹⁴² Thus, merchants served as significant cultural links between their local communities and the outside world, which only helped to heighten their already elevated social status.

Store owners drew upon all the prevailing cultural influences of the late nineteenth century, including the middle-class emphasis on community responsibility and moral probity as well as the Gilded Age preoccupation with progress and money-making schemes. It was hardly an either/or issue, since most merchants exhibited some degree of both value systems. As the local elite, store owners provided their respective

¹⁴¹1874-1875 Sales Ledger, #152, 1886-1887 Sales Ledger, #160, 1894-1996 Sales Ledger, #173, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC.

¹⁴²Daybook I, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 56; Daybook I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 215.

communities with social and moral leadership, served in political capacities, and promoted their towns' potential. At the same time, they engaged in all sorts of Gilded Age wheeling and dealing. In effect, they were very much products of their time, as well as products of their place in both the large sense (the United States) and the small sense (the regional particularities of Texas and Indian Territory).

Chapter Two - Cultural Regions & Economics

Included amidst the extant business records for Hermann Fischer's store in Comal County is a "cotton book" for the years 1885-1886. In this particular ledger, Fischer registered the allotted weights and prices assigned to his customers' cotton crops. In an entry from October 29, 1885, for example, the store owner listed the weight of John Frebely's cotton crop at 550 pounds. Assessed at eight cents a pound, the subsequent total was applied as a credit to Frebely's account.¹⁴³ The ledger is hardly an unusual find, given the period, the popularity of the crop, and the critical role of store merchants as both creditors and marketers for farmers in the South. To be sure, similar records of such transactions can be found in ledgers across the cotton South. In fact, one only needs to look as far as Thomas Clark's *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows* for a detailed bibliography of ledger collections from a number of southern states that include "cotton books" among their ledger holdings.¹⁴⁴

There is something striking about Fischer's cotton book, however. These ledger entries capture this region in a period of significant economic transition. Located in central Texas, Comal County is a long way from east Texas, the region historically associated with cotton growing, slavery, and southern society in general. In the 1870s and 1880s, King Cotton marched to both the western and northern counties of the state. To the frustration of many stock raisers, farmers increasingly encroached upon territory previously dedicated to cattle ranching. It was not always a smooth transition. Fischer's ledgers not only highlight the westward expansion of cotton production, but also

¹⁴³1885-1886 Cotton Book, Hermann Fischer Store Records, 1879-1904, Barker Texas History Center, Center for American History (CAH), Austin, Texas, see date.

¹⁴⁴Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 293-298.

demonstrate the ties of store owners to the local economy and, by extension, the economic fortunes of their clientele. Through their role as creditors, merchants maintained an elevated position of prestige in their respective communities. Indeed, this was the case for a number of industries, not just cotton farming. General stores not only provided the forum for entrance into the market, but also mediated market relations between merchants and consumers, creditors and debtors, and local industries and the national economy. Ledgers provide evidence of the interdependence of retailers, consumers, and their purchases. In addition, they link people to one another and to the socio-economics of a particular region.

Although cotton production, and specifically sharecropping, increasingly emerged as the principal economic activity of those residing in Texas during the last decades of the nineteenth century, this fact has largely gone unnoticed by historians of the period. In reality, many Texans prefer to stress their ranching heritage, rather than their sharecropping history, and thus, their connection to the West, rather than the South in the late-nineteenth century. That emphasis distorts the economic and cultural development of the state. Texas historian Robert Calvert argues that cattle ranching linked Texas to images of cowboys and western glamour, while cotton tied Texas to the defeated Confederacy and southern poverty.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the disconnection of Texas with its southern roots prompted Walter Buenger to write, “Texans escaped from the defeated, isolated, impoverished, brutally bigoted South by remaking memory, but that escape bore a price. The divorce of memory and reality, the erasing of the record of long and close

¹⁴⁵Calvert, “Agrarian Texas,” in *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations*, 197.

association between Texas and the South, means as William Humphrey pointed out, that knowledge about Texas's past often sinks to the level of comic books."¹⁴⁶

So whether Texans prefer to recognize it or not, sharecropping, cotton, as well as strong cultural and regional ties to the South reflected the reality for the majority of Texans in the late nineteenth century. By 1890, the state of Texas produced 20 percent of the nation's cotton, leading all other states in cotton production.¹⁴⁷ While it is true that ranching and the much-heralded cattle drives constituted an important part of the Texas past, in the period under analysis, cotton increasingly reigned as king in the state. It is worth noting that many agricultural reformers during the period warned against such specialization, instead arguing for diversification—and, in particular, for subsistence farming that would be less susceptible to economic or environmental catastrophes. Still, cotton farmers in Texas pressed on. They did so because, despite slumping prices, cotton almost always returned more per acre than other suitable alternatives. Because Texas farmers lacked capital, they needed to engage in crop-lien systems and sharecropping with local merchants and landowners. Cotton promised the best return on investment for both borrowers and lenders, so store owners encouraged the expansion of cotton farming with their accessible credit policies. Unfortunately, few farmers realized either economic independence or substantial wealth through cotton production.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Walter L. Buenger, "Texas and the South," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 103 (January 2000), 324.

¹⁴⁷Foley, *The White Scourge* 28.

¹⁴⁸Robert A. Calvert, "Nineteenth-Century Farmers, Cotton, and Prosperity," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 73 (April 1970), 510-11; John S. Spratt, *The Road to Spindletop: Economic Change in Texas, 1871-1901* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), 61-83; Rupert N. Richardson, et al., *Texas: The Lone Star State*, Eighth Edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 2001), 277. For a

In his book, *The White Scourge*, Neil Foley examines the evolution of cotton culture and its impact on race relations in Texas from the postbellum period to the New Deal. He argues that a distinguishing feature of sharecropping in central Texas, specifically the highly-fertile Blackland Prairie region, was its high percentage of white tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Indeed, the predominance of white cotton farmers sharply contrasts with the economic demographics of other regions in both the cotton South and counties of east Texas, where blacks comprised the majority of the workforce before Civil War and moved into sharecropping roles after emancipation.¹⁴⁹ Because of its unique racial dynamics, central Texas emerged as a distinct economic and cultural region; however, the same cannot be said of its eastern counterpart. The culture of east Texas was more closely aligned with that of other southern cotton-producing states. As Foley affirms, east Texas “fits comfortably within the cultural and historiographical boundaries of the South, with its slavery, cotton, and postemancipation society.”¹⁵⁰

discussion of labor relations, plantation owners, and African Americans, see Robert A. Calvert, ed., “The Freedmen and Agricultural Prosperity,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76 (1973), 461-471. For more general discussions of farm life in late nineteenth-century America, see Gilbert C. Fite, *The Farmers’ Frontier, 1865-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974); Mary Ellen Jones, *Daily Life on the Nineteenth Century American Frontier* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998). In *Cotton Fields No More*, Gilbert Fite discusses the poverty, economic swings, and general backwardness of southern agriculture in the nineteenth century and the modernizing effects of mechanization and diversification in the late 1930s. Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984). For a comprehensive look at Texas cotton culture in the twentieth century, see Thad Sitton and Dan K. Utley, *From Can See to Can’t: Texas Cotton Farmers on the Southern Prairies* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997)

¹⁴⁹Foley, *The White Scourge* 11, 30. According to Foley, the area that he defines as “central Texas” encompasses the diamond-shaped region of Dallas in the north to Corpus Christi in the south, bounded by San Antonio in the west and Houston in the east, 15.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 1-2.

Ledger records from general stores in these regions not only affirm the regional and racial distinctions observed in Foley's study and also demonstrate the centrality of the merchant/client relationship in these largely agricultural regions, a relationship that affected both white and black farmers. Located in the heart of east Texas, the Hardeman & Barret general merchandise store in Melrose featured a large African-American clientele, reflective of the racial demographics of the region. Store owner L. T. Barret distinguished race in his ledgers, generally by identifying his customers as either freedmen or freedwomen beside their names in his account books. Moreover, census records for the Melrose precinct confirm a high number of black farmers in the region in comparison to the demographics of central Texas.¹⁵¹

The account of Charles Byrd, Jr. provides a useful example of how ledger records reflect economic activity in the region. Specifically, this entry reveals the way in which store customers settled their debts at the local store with their cotton crops. Identified in Hardeman & Barret's ledgers as a freedman, Charles Byrd, Jr. received a \$100 credit on his account for his cotton crop in 1870, which conveniently (and exactly) settled his \$100 debt with the store owners. His debt derived from an amalgam of store purchases

¹⁵¹For the demographics of central Texas, Foley cites a census agricultural report from 1880 which noted the composition of the work force in the Blackland Prairie region as predominantly white, except in a handful of counties which maintained roughly the equal proportion of blacks to whites in 1880. However, Foley asserts that after 1880 whites began to outnumber blacks in these counties as well. Foley, *The White Scourge*, 225-226. See, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Report on Cotton Production in the United States; Also Embracing Agricultural and Physico-Geographical Descriptions of the Several Cotton States and of California*, part 1, *Mississippi Valley and the Southwestern States*, Vol. 5, *Cotton Production of the State of Texas* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), 819. For Melrose records, see *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870, An Edited Census*, ETRC.

including fabrics, food items, shoes, clothing and tobacco.¹⁵² Census records indicate that Charles Bird [sp] was a fifty-six year old, black farmer at the time of the 1870 census. Born in Georgia, he lived with his wife Amy and their seven children, who ranged in age from two to twenty-two. As noted, Bird's occupation was recorded by the census-taker as "farmer."¹⁵³ In fact, virtually all of the store's African-American customers were listed in the census as farmers, examples include Jesses Powers, Dick and Darthula Taylor, Starling Kyle, and Berry Rusk.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, no distinction is made between sharecroppers and tenant farmers or, for that matter, landowning farmers. This poses a problem for assessing the data because there were obviously significant differences between the three, both economically and socially. Landowners not only owned land, but usually employed others to farm their land for them. Tenant farmers owned farming equipment and work animals and rented land from landowners, keeping the majority of their harvest as profits (usually three-quarters of their cotton and two-thirds of their corn). Of course, the lowest ranking of the three in terms of social and economic standing were sharecroppers. They were essentially farm laborers who lacked tools, work animals, and, most importantly, land of their own.¹⁵⁵ Landowners hired them to produce cotton on their land and then paid them one-half of the proceeds of their harvest, minus any debts the sharecroppers owed the owner for supplies. With their half of the cotton proceeds, sharecroppers proceeded to pay their debts at their local store. In

¹⁵²Account Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret, B-38 [vol.1], ETRC, 98.

¹⁵³*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870: An Edited Census*, ETRC, 106.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 106, 118, 121, 139. Account Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [vol.1], ETRC, 27, 80, 168, 170.

¹⁵⁵Foley, *The White Scourge* 10.

the end, most sharecroppers were left with little or no profit, often carrying a balance with the store owner into the next planting season.

The nonspecific usage of the term “farmer” in the census is particularly compelling. On the one hand, it suggests that both store owners and former slaves in the region saw themselves as farmers, not field hands. After all, they worked a plot of land without supervision and, through their agreements with landowners, they established a “share” in the proceeds of their labor, a situation very different from slavery. On the other hand, the use of the generic term “farmer” to describe virtually all agricultural occupations in the region in 1870—sharecroppers, tenants, and landowners—may simply have been the least complicated means of collecting and categorizing data, no doubt an important consideration for an overburdened census-taker. Of course, the term also conveniently simplifies and masks basic power inequities. In this former slave-holding region, as in other parts of the South, landownership was a luxury that few freedmen could afford. In 1870, Reconstruction was in full-swing in the South and the terror campaigns of the KKK were a powerful social force. Resentment on the part of white southerners towards both Radical Republican policies and their former slaves resulted in deliberate efforts to restrict African-American ownership of land. Sharecropping, it may be supposed, was the reality for most African-American customers of the Hardeman & Barret store.

At the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, located in adjacent Cherokee county, store owner W. A. Brown similarly extended credit to his largely cotton-farming clientele, many of whom were African American. Account holders, such as Perry Bolden, Sandy Chandler and March Kessentiner, all frequent and long-term customers of

the store, received credits from the store owner for their cotton crops. For example, on December 12, 1881, Bolden received a \$44.80 credit on his account “By net proceeds 1b/c [bale of cotton].” Sandy Chandler received a \$66.00 credit on his store account on November 12, 1881 “By cash on cotton.” And finally, March Kessentiner received a \$50.70 credit from the store owner “By net proceeds 1 b/c” on November 21, 1881.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Bolden, Chandler, and Kessentiner not only acquired necessities for their households from McKinney & Brown, but also purchased work-related items, such as bagging and ties for their bales of cotton.

Ledger entries from this same period also reveal an interesting accounting practice employed by W. A. Brown to these particular customers’ accounts. He applied a ten percent interest charge to purchases made by both Bolden and Chandler in the spring of 1881; unusual in part because the store owner did not apply the practice across the board to other account holders, just in certain instances. For example, on April 30, 1881, Brown applied a ten percent charge of 40¢ to Bolden’s purchases which totaled \$4.00; his purchases included fabrics, hose, oil, snuff, buttons, and candy. Ten percent was also added to Sandy Chandler’s account on May 23, 1881 after he purchased such items as gloves, ribbon, ties, handkerchiefs, and a parasol. Chandler’s bill totaled \$5.75 and the added ten percent charge was 57¢.¹⁵⁷ In both cases, these were large orders somewhat atypical of the number and kinds of items purchased by other African-American customers. Tellingly, during the same spring, white doctor and frequent store customer, J. T. Simpson, charged to his account a large purchase order which included a lace scarf,

¹⁵⁶Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 178, 289, 303.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 147, 228.

buttons, hose, a variety of fabrics, and two boys suits—no additional interest charge was applied to the account by the store owner.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, large purchases made at other times by Bolden and Chandler did not merit the additional interest charge. The seemingly random application of the interest penalty is particularly odd. Of course, no rationale is given by the store owner for the unusual charge; however, since it only applied to black store customers, the ledger evidence suggests that there was a racial consideration to the practice.

Another interesting ledger entry that highlights McKinney & Brown's credit policies is witnessed on the account for Dick Coleman, listed in the ledgers as a "Mulatto." In this instance, the merchants indicated in their ledgers a credit limit of \$150, assumedly per annum. What prompted the limit by the store owners is unknown. According to Thomas Clark, credit limits were a fairly common occurrence in the New South, especially because of the preponderance of the crop-lien system.¹⁵⁹ Within this

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 48.

¹⁵⁹Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 277. There are a number of important studies that examine cotton farmers, the crop-lien system, and merchants' role in the economy of the New South, examples include: Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Michael Schwartz, *Radical Protest and Social Structure: The Southern Farmers' Alliance and Cotton Tenancy, 1880-1890* (New York: Academic Press, 1976); Jonathan M. Weiner, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Charles S. Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998); Scott Marler, "Merchants in the Transition to a New South: Central Louisiana, 1840-1880," *Louisiana History* 62 (Spring 2001), 165-192; Louis M. Kyriakouides, "Lower-Order Urbanization and Territorial Monopoly in the Southern Furnishing Trade: Alabama, 1871-1890," *Social Science History* 26 (Spring 2002), 179 - 198.

system, merchants secured the credit they offered to cash-poor farmers by placing a lien on the future crop. If their crop returned as much profit as anticipated, then the farmer successfully paid off his debt with the merchant. However, if the crop brought in less than what was expected—and this happened with increased frequency in the late nineteenth century—then the farmer risked falling into a downward spiral of debt with the merchant. In the case of the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, the consequences of prolonged debt with the firm was that creditors were subjected to extra interest charges, as in the examples listed above, or, in more extreme cases, customers had to sign notes or give mortgages on property to cover unpaid balances.¹⁶⁰

Bookkeeping practices and debt policies varied considerably and depended on the proclivities of the merchant involved. Despite such variation, there was widespread consensus among store clients that they were being taken advantage of by merchants. As Edward Ayers notes, “Everyone knew merchants’ ledgers often hid shady bookkeeping, always to the merchant’s benefit.”¹⁶¹ While there is little evidence in ledgers from stores in Texas and Indian Territory, in the way of signatures or initials, of public access to account records, merchants no doubt “opened their books” when pressed by their clients. After all, despite their exploitive reputation, merchants depended on their customers, just as their customers depended on them. In many cases, a general crop failure not only threatened a store owner’s livelihood, but could place his business in utter ruin. Even if they had total access to merchant’s books, not all store customers could make sense of what they were seeing. Some merchants used shorthand and symbols in their ledgers,

¹⁶⁰Brown & Dixon Company Records Fond, ETRC, 1.

¹⁶¹Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 93.

which only they and their clerks understood. As well, not all store clients could read. High illiteracy rates distinguished African Americans in the postbellum period, although many former slaves sought to rectify this problem by attending the newly established freedmen schools. Illiteracy rates were also higher for poor whites in the South compared to the national average. For example, in 1880 when the national average for white illiteracy was about nine percent, a quarter to a third of whites in southern states could not read.¹⁶²

The process for debt collection also varied depending on the store and the circumstances surrounding the individual account. No doubt, some methods for collecting outstanding accounts met with greater success than others. General appeals for customers to meet their debt obligations with their local merchant were likely the least effective. In 1872, an ad appeared in a Jacksonville newspaper that read as follows: “Our merchants will start on to lay in their spring stocks in a few weeks. They would like for every Tom, Dick and Harry, and every other man and woman to come forward and settle up.”¹⁶³ Store owners also sent out their clerks to collect outstanding debts. While working as a store clerk for the Dickson & Green mercantile firm in Comanche County, Texas, J. D. Sherrill recorded entries in his diary that relayed his collection experiences. On January 1, 1884, he wrote: “Worked all morning making out accounts. Collected all evening, had very good luck.” In an entry dated January 22, 1884, he noted, “We rolled

¹⁶²Ibid., 418. Illiteracy rates remained high for southern blacks, ranging in 1880 from 70 percent in Kentucky to 82 percent in Mississippi.

¹⁶³*Cherokee County Banner*, 3 March 1916 (Special edition featuring excerpts from *The Cherokee Advertiser*, 5 March 1872).

out this morning and went to Gaines and got him to mortgage his crop.”¹⁶⁴ Besides working in the store, one of Sherrill’s key responsibilities was evidently collecting overdue accounts. Since a number of entries mention such transactions, many overdue accounts were settled through the exchange of mortgages, on both crops and property, that could then be transferred from farmers to the store owners to pay off debts.¹⁶⁵ Under the crop-lien system, landowners had the first right to a tenant’s crop, which left little for other creditors, like merchants or bankers, to cover their own losses. As a result, the chattel mortgage system arose, which provided additional security for merchants and bankers. If a tenant could not meet his credit obligations with a merchant or a banker with the proceeds from his crop, the lenders had a right to seize his property, as shown in Sherrill’s diary.¹⁶⁶ Sherrill also collected cash when available and applied it to the overdue balances. For example, he recorded the following entry in his diary in 1882: “Went down to T. M. Coudrons [sic] today and collected \$40.00 from him for Dickson & Green.”¹⁶⁷ While Sherrill’s diary provides insights into the more extreme cases of the crop-lien system, most debtors settled with store owners when they could—which usually meant when their crops came in. In cotton regions, most merchants were also ginners and cotton buyers. When their customers brought in their freshly harvested cotton crops to be marketed, store owners were able to collect on their overdue store accounts.

¹⁶⁴J. D. Sherrill Diary, 1884, A1980.0244c, SMU.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., also see entries for January 11, 1884; January 19, 1884

¹⁶⁶Foley, *The White Scourge*82.

¹⁶⁷J. D. Sherrill Diary, 1882, A1980.0244c, SMU.

Cotton regions were particularly susceptible to credit/debt systems, in which local merchants assumed the role of principal creditors for the region. In a cash-poor economy, the dominant method of exchange tended to be book credit and this was certainly the case in the agricultural regions of east Texas. While most store customers relied on credit, cash transactions also appeared in ledger records. Merchants both received and dispersed cash to their clients. A number of examples from the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville exemplify this point. A debit was charged to Cal Arnwine's account in February, 1881 for "cash handed you \$1.00." In October, 1883, Dick Coleman's received a debit "to cash handed you" for \$13.00. Finally, in November, 1885, Sam Lacy's account was debited \$2.00, again the rationale for the charge was for "cash handed you."¹⁶⁸ Presumably, these three individuals needed cash for purchases or payments outside of the store's credit system. In this capacity, the store owners assumed the role of the local banker for their clients, in addition to the many hats they already wore for their respective communities.

A striking feature of census data for the communities of east Texas is the strong southern heritage evidenced by farmers listed in the records. In both the Jacksonville and Melrose communities most farmers who were born outside of the state of Texas immigrated from other southern states. This was true for both blacks and whites. Of the aforementioned African-American customers who frequented the Hardeman & Barret store in Melrose, all were born in Confederate states, except for Jesse Powers who was

¹⁶⁸Ledger D, 1880-1881, 35; Ledger F, 1883, 286; Ledger H, 1885, 56, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC.

born in Texas.¹⁶⁹ The same could be said of black customers from the McKinney & Brown store—for example, Perry Bolden and March Kessentiner were born in Alabama, while Sandy Chandler was born in Mississippi.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the white farmers who settled in east Texas migrated from regions all over the South; in fact, store owners Blackstone Hardeman and L. T. Barret were both born in former slave-holding states.¹⁷¹ As the century progressed, the southern stronghold on the state increased. By 1887, southerners constituted nearly three-fifths of the population, although their numbers steadily declined after the turn of the century.¹⁷² East Texas was not just linked to the South economically and demographically, but culturally as well. The fact that east Texas was heavily influenced by the South meant that it shared the social ruptures and turmoil associated with the Reconstruction period, especially regarding race relations. In short, cotton was by no means the only connection between Texas and the South.

Situated on the southern boundary of central Texas, between San Antonio and Houston, the Neer & James mercantile firm in Colorado County maintained a racially diverse clientele principally engaged in cotton production. Ledger records indicate that both black and white customers received credits on their accounts for some share of their

¹⁶⁹*The People of Nacogdoches County: An Edited Census*, ETRC, 106, 118, 121, 139. According to Terry Jordan, the percentage of blacks born in southern states reached its apex in the period before 1865 and steadily dwindled with the virtual cessation of black immigration to Texas after 1865. Jordan, “A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas,” 402.

¹⁷⁰*1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, ETRC, 366, 330, 317

¹⁷¹*The People of Nacogdoches County: An Edited Census*, ETRC, 105, 107.

¹⁷²Jordan, “A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas,” 388. Also see, Terry G. Jordan, “The Imprint of the Upper and Lower South on Mid-Nineteenth-Century Texas,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 57 (December 1967), 667-690.

cotton crops. For example, the store owners applied a \$150.80 credit to the account of A. E. Easterling “By 2 b/c 1040 lbs @ 14½” on September 5, 1871.¹⁷³ Distinguished in the ledgers as a freedman, Stephen McKinnon received a \$64.96 credit on September 4, 1871, “By 1 b/c 448 lbs @ 14½.” Another freedman, Irwin Dawes received \$74.34 credit from the store on September 11, 1871, “By 1 b/c 504 lbs @ 14¾.”¹⁷⁴ Indeed, numerous examples of such credits appear throughout the ledger highlighting not only the region’s commitment to cotton production, but also the central role of merchants in extending credit to their farming clientele. Moreover, ledger records indicate that both blacks and whites engaged in growing cotton in Colorado County and, given the political and racial dynamics of the period, most of these customers were likely sharecroppers.

As noted, in the late nineteenth century, cotton production increasingly spread from east Texas into the counties of central Texas. The process eventually spread as far northward as the southern banks of the Red River, a development traced by Walter Buenger in his recent book, *The Path to A Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression*.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the impact of cotton expansion was felt in regions across Texas. The “cotton book” described earlier from Hermann Fischer’s store in Comal County contained farmers largely of German descent, appropriate given the large numbers of German immigrants in the Texas Hill Country. Exemplifying this point, the names that appeared in the ledgers include George Stubbs,

¹⁷³Neer & James Account Ledger 1871-1873, 1879, John & Marie Dutt Collection, SHRL & RC, 60.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 102, 117.

¹⁷⁵Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2001).

Otto Schlamens, Herm Linartz, C. Sachtleben, and Freidrich Frerichs.¹⁷⁶ According to Terry Jordan, the Hill Country experienced a spectacular expansion in cotton production, beginning in 1870s and 1880s, especially among Germans, two-thirds of whom were raising cotton in the region by 1880.¹⁷⁷

While Germans certainly dominated the Hill Country in the 1850s, this influence steadily decreased in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as the counties of the central Texas attracted more ethnically diverse populations. By the 1880s, the large region of central Texas—including the urban centers of Dallas, Houston, Austin, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio—encompassed persons from a myriad of locations. To some degree, Spanish, French, German, African, Mexican, English, Polish, Czech, and other ethnic groups all left their cultural imprint on this remarkably heterogeneous region of Texas.¹⁷⁸ As the nineteenth century drew to a close, central Texas progressively developed into a complex hodgepodge of different ethnic and racial influences, prompting one geographer to describe the region as a “shatter belt” of diversity.¹⁷⁹ In the late nineteenth century, the region was not only experiencing increased diversity, but was also coping with the effects of the westward expansion of cotton, as described in Neil Foley’s important study discussed earlier.

¹⁷⁶1885-1886 Cotton Book, Hermann Fischer Store Records, 1879-1904, CAH, November 1885.

¹⁷⁷Terry Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 132-133.

¹⁷⁸Foley, *The White Scourge* 2.

¹⁷⁹Terry D. Jordan, et. al, *Texas: A Geography*, Geographies of the United States Series (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 5. Also see, Jordan, “A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas,” 385.

Like the ledgers from Hermann Fischer's store in Comal County, ledger records from J. L. McInnis's store in Travis County provide a snapshot of the region in a period of economic transition. Moreover, such records provide insights into the ethnic and racial composition of this centrally-located county. Situated fifteen miles east of Austin, the community of Webberville was comprised of a variety of cultural influences, including Scots, northerners, southerners, and native-born Texans, as well as a composite population of both blacks and whites. African Americans listed in the store records include blacksmith Sandy Haden, and farmer Samuel Hancock.¹⁸⁰ The store not only provided goods, but extended credit to farmers for a share of their cotton crop. Jasper Romine, a white farmer from Mississippi, received a \$29.60 credit at the store "by cotton" on December 4, 1874. McInnis equipped his customers with the goods necessary to bring their product to market. For example, Michael O'Conner purchased bagging and ties from the store owner on November 7, 1874.¹⁸¹ Suggesting that cattle ranching also remained prominent in the region, the account of John Meeks included credits for "beef hides," applied by the store owner to the account in May and August of 1874.¹⁸² In fact, both cotton and livestock constituted the principal commodities shipped from the area in the 1870s and 1880s.

If the introduction of cotton was relatively new for the western and northern counties of Texas in the 1870s and 1880s, the same could not be said of the region to the

¹⁸⁰J. L. McInnis Ledger, 1874-1875, AR 1994-57, AHC, 89, 103. *1880 Federal Census*, Travis County, 25 (40A).

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 117, 373. Also see, *1880 Federal Census*, 38 (47C).

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 63. For information on the community of Webberville, see *The New Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 6, 867.

immediate north. Cotton production in Indian Territory dated back to the 1830s, the earliest period of resettlement by the Five Tribes.¹⁸³ Pushed out of southern states, many tribal members brought their knowledge of cotton production to their new lands. After arriving in their new territory, many wealthy Choctaws immediately began engaging in cotton farming, establishing plantations on the banks of the Red River equipped with the labor of black slaves. As early as 1867, cotton emerged as the main export of the Choctaw Nation, closely followed by cattle exports.¹⁸⁴ General stores located in the Nation in the 1870s and 1880s reflect the dual-nature of the agricultural economy. Several entries from G. B. Hester's ledgers for his store in Old Boggy Depot point to the importance of cotton to the local economy. Zach Gardner received credit "by five bales of cotton" on his account on January 30, 1874. A. Conner received a \$14.00 credit to his account for 350 lbs of cotton on January 6, 1874. During the same period, bagging and ties were sold by the store owner to A. D. Irwin, Joshua Irwin, and Giles Thompson. While cotton remained the principal agricultural pursuit of farmers in the region, Hester's ledger records indicate that there was some economic diversity as well—customers received credit at his store for both corn and deerskins.¹⁸⁵

In other regions of the Choctaw Nation, cattle, not cotton, figured more prominently in store ledgers. Establishing his mercantile firm in part to service the needs of those working on his cattle ranch, it is not surprising that the ledgers of Choctaw Principal Chief W. N. Jones reflected many of the key aspects of the local economy.

¹⁸³Formerly known as the "Five Civilized Tribes."

¹⁸⁴Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* 60, 114.

¹⁸⁵G. B. Hester Ledger 1874, Benjamin R. Cook Collection, C13, WHC, 10, 11, 29, 53, 189.

Indeed, his store ledgers included the sale of cows and calves among the purchases charged to customers' accounts.¹⁸⁶ Further, at F. B. Severs store in Okmulgee, the capital of the Creek Nation, a number of clients received credit from the merchant for "beef hides." Examples include the \$2.00 credit applied to Toney Burgess's account on August 26, 1869, Cono Fixoco's account on September 17, 1869 and Henry Duncan's account on November 20, 1869.¹⁸⁷ In diversifying their business activities beyond retailing, both Jones and Severs created substantial fortunes out of their cattle ranching interests in Choctaw and Creek Territories.

While ranching was increasingly being pushed westward in the 1880s, it still maintained an important presence in southern counties as well as in a number of communities in central Texas, particularly in the sloping grasslands of the Hill Country. Early settlers to central Texas, particularly those who arrived in the 1830s and 1840s, raised more cattle and corn than cotton. While the transition from cattle to cotton began in the 1870s and 1880s, this was also the period when the large cattle drives from south Texas to railway links in Kansas reinforced the image of Texas as predominantly western, rather than southern. Cattle drives were especially lucrative operations for landless cattlemen looking to make their start in the ranching business. Jimmy Skaggs notes that driving Texas cattle northward for sale proved fantastically profitable for a number of opportunistic drovers in the late 1860s and early 1870s.¹⁸⁸ In 1870, more than

¹⁸⁶W. N. Jones Store Ledger, 1871-1874, J-2 1137, Dovie Jones Collection, WHC, see December 27, 1872.

¹⁸⁷Daybook 1869-1871, F. B. Severs Collection, OKHS, 32, 46, 97.

¹⁸⁸Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Cattle-Trailing Industry: Between Supply and Demand, 1866-1890* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1973).

five million longhorns roamed the Texas grasslands, most of them mavericks that could be claimed by anyone willing to affix a brand. It was precisely because of the preponderance of free and unbranded cattle in the Hill Country that many of the German immigrants listed in Martin's ledgers obtained herds and established ranches.¹⁸⁹ Quality steers could be purchased in Texas for \$4.00 and then sold in the North for up to \$40.00; thus, there was more than enough incentive for persons willing to drive their cattle north, which was far less expensive than shipping cattle by train.¹⁹⁰ However, the days of the long cattle drives through central Texas were essentially numbered. As Foley notes, "The era of the Long Drive, with its powerful images of cowboys and roundups, was to endure for two decades following the Civil War. But during that twenty-year span the population of Texas was increasing rapidly, and new settlements pushed the cattle industry steadily westward beyond the central prairies and onto the rolling plains of west Texas."¹⁹¹

Straddling the boundaries of southern and central Texas, Refugio County's residents focused their industry on the business of raising cattle. In the postbellum period, Refugio was an inland county devoted in the main to stock raising.¹⁹² Customer records from the W. E. McCampbell & Bros. store in the town of Refugio confirm the community's commitment to cattle ranching. First of all, frequent store customers such

¹⁸⁹Bierschwale, *A History of Mason County*, 196.

¹⁹⁰Skaggs, *The Cattle-Trailing Industry*, 2. Foley, *The White Scourge*, 26.

¹⁹¹Foley, *The White Scourge* 26.

¹⁹²Hobart Huson, *Refugio: A Comprehensive History of Refugio County From Aboriginal Times to 1955, Volume II, Secession to 1955* (Woodsboro, Texas: The Rook Foundation, Inc., 1955), 264.

as A. M. Dunman and R. S. West are listed in the store ledgers as “Cowhunters.”¹⁹³ Secondly, certain entries make specific mention of transactions involving cattle. For example, the store owners credited Davy O’Donald’s account \$20.00 for “Four head cattle” on December 27, 1876.¹⁹⁴ The sales of numerous six-shooters to store customers completes the imagined picture of rugged cowboys equipped with pistols, although their high cost priced them out of the range of most ranch hands.¹⁹⁵ Finally, the accoutrements of horse-back riding, like leather stirrups, spurs, collars, and saddles, also made frequent appearances on store accounts.¹⁹⁶

As noted, the German immigrants who settled in the Hedwig’s Hill community and frequented Anna Martin’s store were heavily engaged in cattle ranching. The centrality of ranching to those living in the Hedwig’s Hill is evidenced by a number of ledger entries from Martin’s store. In order to transport their bulk goods like cow hides and beef to market, cattle raisers needed to pay freight charges to haulers. Haulers, in turn, received credit on their accounts for transporting bulk quantities of freight. Store owners also needed to pay haulers for transporting store goods from larger centers

¹⁹³Account Ledger 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 84, 85.

¹⁹⁴Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 21.

¹⁹⁵Account Ledger 1877, W.E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 31, 75, 100, 133, 140. Daybook 1877, 32. Ranging anywhere from \$20.00 to \$45.00, guns were an expensive purchase and not all store customers could afford such an investment. All of the firearm purchases made through the McCampbell & Bros. store were recorded in the ledger reserved for successful town residents. In the ledger designated for common laborers (who tended to be either black or Mexican), there are purchases of firearms supplies like powder, shot, and caps, but no expensive pistols.

¹⁹⁶Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 17, 30, 33, 90,

outside of the region; likely the haulers would fill their wagons with store goods on their return trip to the community. Such transactions made their way into Martin's ledgers. For example, Theodor Weidemann's account is credited \$18.00, "By 3600 lbs freight," on July 30, 1887.¹⁹⁷ A few weeks later, William Tatsch received a \$11.00 credit on his account for 2200 lbs of freight on August 15, 1887.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps, Weidemann and Tatsch hauled hides and beef to market or possibly they received credit for transporting goods for Anna Martin's store—unfortunately, no further information is provided on their respective accounts.

Involved in the cattle industry herself, Anna Martin brokered sales of cattle through her store, crediting her customers' accounts for specific cows or using the less precise term "by cattle." On July 8, 1886, John Bauer received a credit for \$65.00, "By cattle delivered." The following day, Adolf Keller's account is credited \$216.00, "By 27 - year old steers @ 8.00." Both Max Reichenau and M. Bast received credits for \$7.50 for one yearling each by the store owner on September 15, 1886.¹⁹⁹ Martin credited Louis Eckert's account \$86.00 on October 25, 1887, simply by noting, "By cattle." On May 8, 1888, Bill, Christian, John, and George Keyser all received separate credits on their account for steers, credits that ranged from \$20.00 to \$85.00.²⁰⁰ All of these transactions highlight not only the economic activity of the region, but also the ways in which the general store linked the socio-economics of the Hedwig's Hill community

¹⁹⁷Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 93.

¹⁹⁸Day Book II, 1887-1888, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 101.

¹⁹⁹Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 374, 375, 429.

²⁰⁰Day Book II, 1887-1888, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 149, 331.

together. Therefore, Anna Martin's store played a pivotal role not only in how cattle ranchers disposed of their income, but also how they acquired that income.

The cattle industry of the Hill Country underwent considerable change in the decades that followed its early inception in the 1840s, when German immigrants first began ranching in the region. Indeed, Germans played a leading role in introducing innovations, such as improved breeds, mainly Herefords, and in fencing the open range.²⁰¹ According to local history, Anna Martin was the first person to buy and sell barbed wire to ranchers in Mason County and in adjoining counties.²⁰² To be sure, the issue of barbed wire is a contentious one in the West. In many western regions, the introduction of barbed wire instigated feuds between farmers and ranchers, cattle ranchers and sheep ranchers, and large and small ranchers, all competing for that highly precious commodity, land.²⁰³ While barbed wire brought innovation to ranching by alleviating some of the problems of the open range, such as wandering strays, it also incited a new set of disputes between groups competing for available land. Furthermore, by limiting access to free-pastures and watering holes, central Texas's appeal to cattle drovers and "free-grass" stockmen steadily declined; thus, barbed wire played a decisive role in transforming the region from cattle to cotton. From the early to mid-1880s, Texas ranchers embarked on the immense project of fencing their land. Marking the boundaries of their lands from their neighbors caused the lands in the public domain to shrink. Once large cattle companies obtained title to lands or permanent claims to a portion of the

²⁰¹Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 147.

²⁰²Polk, *Mason and Mason County*, 48.

²⁰³On the issue of barbed wire and disputes between farmers and ranchers, see Robert Dykstra's *The Cattle Towns*, Sixth Edition (New York: Atheneum, 1979).

range, they immediately sought to fence in their land and herds to protect against poachers and the overstocking of pastures with strays.²⁰⁴

In counties just to the north of Mason County in central Texas, specifically Clay and Brown counties, barbed wire and the issue of fence cutting came to a head in the early 1880s. Once large ranchers began fencing major sections of their lands, it prompted small ranchers, who could not hope to pasture their animals on their relatively meager claims, and free-grass trail drovers, who needed access to trails and water holes, to cut the newly-installed fences. The result of such action was the Fence-Cutters' War of 1883-84 which led to a number of deaths in Clay County and near open warfare in Brown County. Laws against both fence cutting and fencing in the public domain, as well as statutes requiring stockmen to place a gate at every three miles of fence in 1884 ultimately put a stop to the fighting.²⁰⁵

Barbed wire appears in the purchases of many of Martin's ranching clientele in the 1880s, demonstrating that German ranchers in the Hill Country similarly engaged in the fencing trends of the mid-1880s. On July 2, 1886, Fritz Grote purchased from Anna Martin's store: 10 lbs of fleece twine, a pair of shoes, 198 lbs of barb wire, and 200 lbs of smooth wire, the total bill was \$21.25. In another example, Fritz Kothmann purchased from the store, on July 17, 1886, 2011 lbs of barb wire for \$95.52 and 2900 lbs of black wire for \$104.40. In September of 1886, William Geistweidt acquired 5300 lbs of wire from the store for \$185.50 and 144 lbs of barb wire for \$5.13, while H. F. Keyser

²⁰⁴Foley, *The White Scourge* 27.

²⁰⁵Ibid. Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906*, Revised edition (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000; originally published 1971), 81-83. White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own," 345.

purchased eight spools of barb wire for \$42.40 and 1600 lbs of smooth wire for \$64.00.²⁰⁶

Clearly, not only was barbed wire a popular item amongst ranchers in the Hedwig's Hill community, but it proved to be an item requiring a fairly significant investment on the part of local consumers.

The large expenditures on various types of wire appear far less frequently in Martin's ledgers for the following summer and fall. In part, declining sales in barbed wire can likely be attributed to the fact that many of Martin's customers acquired such large amounts of wire in the summer of 1886; however, the impact of the brutal winter of 1886-1887 undoubtedly played a significant role in the declining sales of barbed wire in 1887. Beginning with a blizzard in November, a fierce winter devastated the plains, temperatures dropped not only in the far stretches of the northern plains, but as far south as central Texas, bitter cold gripped the nation. On the range, cattle died in alarming numbers. Exacerbating the impact of the winter of 1886-1887, an economic depression followed the ecological disaster, as creditors called in their loans and ranchers scrambled to sell off much of their remaining stock on a falling market. Few ranchers successfully weathered the events of 1886-1887; in fact, most had to cut expenditures and sell off at least a portion of their stock.²⁰⁷

While Anna Martin's store ledgers offer important insights into cattle raising and its influence on the Hedwig's Hill community, similar records from Hermann Fischer's store in Comal County provide an interesting comparison and counterpoint to the those from Martin's store. In juxtaposing Fischer's experiences with Anna Martin's, one finds

²⁰⁶Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, 369, 380, 430, 438.

²⁰⁷White, "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*," 344-345.

that these store owners took remarkably similar paths to central Texas and yet chose opposite strategies for economic success on the Texas frontier. Like Anna Martin and many other German immigrants, Hermann Fischer traveled from Germany with the first waves of migration, arriving in northern Comal County in 1849. Unlike Martin who operated her late husband's store first before venturing into cattle ranching, Fischer initially engaged in stock raising on his 160 acres of land, but when the population of the area increased, he built a log store and developed a prosperous mercantile business. Fischer's store was located approximately twenty miles northwest of New Braunsfels in the Hill Country of northern Comal County. Fischer, like Anna Martin, provided postal services out of his store and served as postmaster in the 1870s. The community established around his store was aptly named, Fischer's Store, becoming Fischer Store in 1894, and Fischer in 1950, both name changes came at the request of postal officials.²⁰⁸

In the 1870s and 1880s, it was cotton, not cattle, however, that increasingly came to dominate the agricultural activity in Comal County; hence, the importance of the aforementioned "cotton book" from Herman Fischer's store records. According to Terry Jordan, production of cotton by Germans in the New Braunsfels area became quite widespread as early as 1859. Cotton's importance swelled during the postbellum period, prompting one observer to describe the fields around New Braunsfels in the mid-1870s as being "snow-white with cotton."²⁰⁹ Jordan cites Comal County, in particular, as a county significantly affected by the expansion of cotton, noting the fact that the number of gins

²⁰⁸Hermann Fischer Store Records, 1879-1904, CAH. "Fischer, Texas," *The New Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 2, ed. Ron Tyler, et al. (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996).

²⁰⁹Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 132-133.

increased in the county from one in the mid-1850s, when the first cotton gin was built, to twenty by 1885.²¹⁰ Apparently, by operating a gin behind his store, Fischer himself contributed to the growing number of cotton gins available to farmers in the county.²¹¹ Thus, Hermann Fischer was not only a retailer to local farmers, but he also—for a fee—made his cotton gin available to them, which, in turn, drew them to his mercantile establishment. As a retailer, postmaster and gin operator, Fischer established himself as a prominent man of affairs, especially economic affairs, for his small community.

James Jackson McAlester occupied a similar position of importance in the burgeoning community that developed around the trading post he established in the “Crossroads” region of the Choctaw Nation in the early 1870s. From the outset, McAlester had his hand in virtually all of the economic activities in the region, including retailing, cotton, ranching, and, most importantly, mining. Due in large part to the store owner’s efforts, the community of McAlester developed and thrived based on its proximity to the area’s rich coal beds; of course, it was the potential of this geological bonanza which drew McAlester to the Crossroads in the first place. Ledgers from McAlester’s store reflect the unique socio-economics of the region. In particular, ledger records attest to the importance of mining to the McAlester community, establishing, once again, the critical relationship of the store owner with the economic fortunes of his clientele.

An intricate web of contracts, networks, professional affiliations, and personal relationships linked McAlester to the interests of the Osage Coal and Mining Company, a

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Oscar Haas, *History of New Braunsfels and Comal County, Texas, 1844-1946* (Austin: Steck Co., 1968), 150, 268.

business prominently featured in the store owner's ledgers in the 1870s and 1880s. McAlester, and three business partners, Joshua Pusley, Tandy Walker, and Dr. Daniel M. Hailey relinquished their individual coal leases (acquired in McAlester's case through marriage) for royalties in the Osage Coal and Mining Company which was owned by the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway (MK&T). The collusion between the two companies was not publicly known, or at least not publicly admitted by the two parties. The railroad company claimed that the coal company was a separate operation, even though many of the mine's directors were also MK&T's directors.²¹² In the early 1870s, the mining company entered into an agreement with the Choctaw Nation, which essentially permitted the company to do whatever was required to facilitate mining operations. The MK&T laid its track into the Nation's land with the specific intention of exploiting the region's rich coal beds. The railroad company learned of the territory's mineral wealth through McAlester. In 1871, J. J. McAlester hauled a wagon load of coal to Parsons, Kansas for the railroad's officials to inspect. McAlester's strategy worked. The MK&T tracks reached the Crossroads area in 1872, and the tiny community was renamed McAlester in honor of the man who first discovered the region's economic potential.²¹³

Hand in hand, the fortunes of the MK&T, its subsidiary the Osage Coal and Mining Company, and investor J. J. McAlester grew steadily over the course of the 1870s. By 1887, the eight mines operating in the Choctaw Nation produced 685, 911

²¹²Craig H. Miner, *The Corporation and the Indian: Tribal Sovereignty and Industrial Civilization in Indian Territory, 1865-1907*, new edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 58. For an in-depth discussion of the connection and controversy surrounding the MK&T and the Osage Coal and Mining Company, Miner's chapter titled "Coal and Ties: The Confrontation," 58-76. Sparks, "James Jesse McAlester," 7- 8.

²¹³Hightower, "Cattle, Coal, and Indian Land," 7.

tons of coal at a value of \$1,286,692.²¹⁴ The critical role of coal in the MK&T's success during the period prompted Oklahoma historians Joseph Thorburn and Muriel Wright to observe that the shipping of coal over the MK&T rail lines was of more importance than all of the Texas cattle shipped over the same line.²¹⁵ Granted this was during the era of the great cattle drives, where it still proved cheaper to drive the cattle up from Texas rather than ship it by rail. Still, the observation is a testament to the importance of coal to the region's economy during the period under analysis.

As one would expect, the occupations of miner and railroad agent figured prominently in McAlester's records. Both the MK&T and the Osage Coal and Mining Company maintained accounts at the store; in addition, representatives from each company established their own individual accounts with the store owner. With no census available for the region in this period and with the transitory nature of both railroad work and mining, McAlester's inclusion of his customers' occupation is especially valuable in revealing who exactly worked in the region during the 1870s. A number of "railroad men" appear in ledgers from the mid-1870s, including William Dargetz, Larry Bowen, and David Woolf. In January 1874, McAlester also included in his records the account of J. T. Cowan, whose occupation is listed as "car trimmer." These railroad employees

²¹⁴U.S. Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, *Mineral Resources of the United States for the Calender Year 1887* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1888), 244-245.

²¹⁵Joseph B. Thorburn and Muriel H. Wright, *Oklahoma: A History of the State and its People*, Vol.1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), 469-470.

tended to stick to the basics in their consumption patterns; their purchases included washing kettles, yeast, tea, sugar, beans, soap, potatoes, tobacco, and coffee.²¹⁶

Although McAlester's general store was not an official company store, in many ways, it operated as such. Area coal miners provided the largest customer base for the store. Furthermore, as a principal investor in the Osage Coal and Mining Company, the primary employer of the majority of persons in the McAlester community, the miners listed in McAlester's ledgers were also indirectly his employees. Finally, there were few retail options available to consumers in the region, so miners had little choice but to give back to their quasi-employer a share of their wages. According to the ledgers, the proprietor credited coal miner Charles Brown's account \$38.30 "By cash collected of Coal Company from December 1874." Similarly, John Stoker's account was credited \$11.17 "by cash of Coal Company for December." Another miner, J. McMullen, received a credit for payment from the Coal Company of \$8.75 for December, \$32.30 for January (which included some beef he sold to McAlester), and a \$6.33 credit for February.²¹⁷ Indeed, there are ample examples of customer accounts paid by Osage Coal throughout the ledgers, affirming that coal mining constituted the principal economic activity in the McAlester district.

²¹⁶1874-1875 Daybook, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, January, 1874, 1875-1878 Daybook, August, 1876.

²¹⁷1874-1875 Daybook, #152, 27, 3, 48. Excerpts from this discussion also appear in English, "Inside the Store, Inside the Past," 41-43. The article also addresses the issue of whether miners paid more for items from the store than non-employees of the Osage Coal Company. After conducting a comparison of a number of items, including flour, syrup, and tobacco, the conclusion made by the author was that coal miners were not singled out as targets of exploitation by the store owner. Those in other occupations, specifically sheep herding and retailing, paid similarly high prices on the same items, 44-46.

An entry involving one of McAlester's business partners, Dr. Daniel Morris Hailey, further demonstrates the close connection of McAlester's store with the region's pre-eminent employer, the Osage Coal Company. As an investor, Hailey gained cash royalties from the coal company. Similar to the miners' employee checks, Hailey's royalties were funneled through McAlester's store. On May 10, 1875, for example, McAlester credited Hailey's account \$248.60 "by cash of Coal Co. on royalty"; on June 1, Hailey received a \$35.55 credit, and on July 1 his cash royalty was \$28.12.²¹⁸ Evidently, investing in the upstart coal company proved quite lucrative for both Hailey and McAlester.

Regarding the early miners in the region, a few generalizations can be made. As they appear in McAlester's ledgers, the majority of names listed suggest that the miners were of American, English, Scot, Welsh, and Irish descent. Indeed, the railroads and coal companies recruited new immigrants from the British Isles to work in the mines located deep in the heart of Choctaw territory.²¹⁹ One of the most striking features of coal mining in the district after the 1880s was the proliferation of immigrants from Eastern Europe. In his study of coal mining in Oklahoma, Michael Hightower observes that, "Harsh and unsafe conditions in the mines made it difficult to attract workers, so agents were often sent to the eastern states and Europe to convince men to migrate to the Indian Territory. Sometimes agents in Europe were paid for each worker that they sent to the Choctaw coal fields."²²⁰ Hightower asserts that in 1889 the mining population numbered

²¹⁸Ibid., 75.

²¹⁹Knight, "Oklahoma Indian Trader," 210.

²²⁰Hightower, "Cattle, Coal and Indian Land," 10.

some 2,000 persons and included Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Hungarians, Belgians, Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Swedes.²²¹ Not surprisingly, later census records affirm the demographic shift that took place during the last decades of the nineteenth century, as more foreign-sounding surnames appear in the returns, including Italian miner Antonio Caffro and German miners Frederick Tronier and his son, Otto.²²²

By and large, staples characterize the purchases made by the majority of McAlester's mining customers. Miner Mike Dunn's order from January 21, 1875, included flour, sugar, and soap; a few weeks later, he bought more flour, cheese, lard, and a coffeepot. During the same period, U. A. Keith, a fellow miner, purchased sugar, tea, tobacco, flour, salt, thread and denim.²²³ Knowing the needs of his clientele well, McAlester stressed the "staple-nature" of his stock in his advertising. In an ad featured in the *Oklahoma Star*, McAlester emphasized that his mercantile establishment offered clothing, boots, shoes, hardware, queensware, tinware, hats, caps, blankets, fruit, and potatoes.²²⁴ Since the needs of his predominantly-male clientele were few, the store

²²¹Ibid. This trend can be substantiated by later census data. In the 1910 census returns, the number of immigrants from England was listed at 227, from Scotland 133, and from Wales 105. In comparison, there were 1,398 Italian-born, 395 Austrian-born, 178 German-born, and 379 Russian-born immigrants. Similarly in the 1920 census, the largest immigrant groups listed were Italians at 912, followed by Mexicans at 343 and Russians at 272. There were only 149 English-born and 40 Irish born immigrants in the later census. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910, Vol.III, Population*, 476, and *Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920, State Compendium, Oklahoma*, 43.

²²²Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States 1900, Schedule No.1, Population*, Enumeration District 81: 285A and 286A (manuscript).

²²³1874-1875 Daybook, #152, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 31, 54.

²²⁴*Oklahoma Star*, 16 December 1876.

owner obviously saw no need to waste words in his advertisements; in short, expensive specialty items were luxuries that these particular consumers could not afford.

As the community of McAlester matured in the last decades of the nineteenth century, its population rapidly grew and its economy diversified. Coal remained important, but was no longer the sole focus of the local economy. Indeed, with the influx of people attracted to the region initially because of the coal mining industry, opportunities in business and agriculture also developed. As in other parts of the Choctaw Nation, cotton emerged as the principle cash crop; however, the soil was also well adapted to fruits, vegetables, and corn. Attesting to the importance of cotton, there were three cotton gins within the McAlester city limits during this period as well as the Choctaw cotton compress, the largest compress located in either territory (Oklahoma or Indian), which processed 40,000 bales of cotton in 1900 alone. Much like its neighbor to the south, ranching and hay production also persisted in the region, although mining and cotton proved to be its most important industries.²²⁵

Whether it was cotton in east Texas, ranching in central Texas, mining in Indian Territory, or some combination of all three, ledgers provide important insights into the social and economic dynamics of these unique regions. Furthermore, by extending credit, marketing their customers' livestock and crops, and providing the goods necessary for both industry and daily living, store owners themselves played an especially important role in the economics of their communities. It was during the 1870s and 1880s that Texas experienced a significant economic shift, wherein cotton farmers increasingly encroached upon the lands previously allocated to free-range cattle ranching. Ledgers

²²⁵Pittsburg County Genealogical and Historical Society, *Pittsburg County Oklahoma: People and Places* (Wolfe City, Texas: Henington Industries, Inc., 1997), 520.

from the period reflect this transition, evidencing both the western advance of cotton and the persistence of ranching in locations like Hedwig's Hill. Through their credit policies, store owners played a determining role in the move to cotton and the continued reliance on products, like cotton, cattle, and coal. As key players in the crop-lien system, so dominant in southern cotton growing regions in the late nineteenth century, merchants significantly influenced their clients' economic fate. The era of the cowboy in central Texas, still romanticized by Texas historians, increasingly gave way to the historically less-appealing reign of the sharecropper and tenant farmer. In Indian Territory, cotton, cattle, and mining competed to define the area's economic identity. Indeed, in both Texas and Indian Territory, each of these three industries—cotton, cattle, and mining—shaped not only these regions' economies and demographics, but also their cultural identities.

Chapter Three - In the Presence of Ladies

Imagine the scene... In a rural country store, a roomful of southern cotton farmers are sitting around laughing, playing checkers, and swapping stories, while the store keeper looks on. In his 1944 classic, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store*, Thomas Clark invited his readers to imagine these farmers with their heads bowed close together and voices toned down to practically an inaudible droning, while one salacious yarn after another was told and applauded. In stores where men did all the clerking, women were generally excluded from these charmed circles. In fact, Clark supposed, "They stood near the front door with embarrassed grins on their faces showing clearly mixed feelings of eager curiosity and shocked modesty. They were caught in the unhappy situation of not knowing whether to stay until someone came to serve them or to leave the store."²²⁶

Contrast Clark's imagined scene of women embarrassedly huddled at the front door of a general store with the experiences of Mrs. Anna J. Hyde of Nacogdoches, Texas. In November 1872, Mrs. Hyde purchased from the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm a large order of grocery items totaling \$32.96. The order included such basics as bulk coffee, tea, bacon, butter, two dozen eggs, and a barrel of flour for \$14.00.²²⁷ Typically, her purchases were recorded under the name Mrs. A. J. Hyde; some entries, however, particularly those for medicinal products, appeared under Mrs. Hyde's husband's name, Doctor Hyde. Doctor George S. Hyde purchased, for example, a razor and a vile of

²²⁶Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows: The Southern Country Store*, 36.

²²⁷Daybook I, October 1872 - June 1873, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 18.

morphine from the store on December 30, 1872.²²⁸ A few days later, the purchase of some cottonade fabric and thread were recorded under Doctor Hyde's name "per [his] wife."²²⁹ Further still, there were occasions when Dr. Hyde picked up some items for his wife, like flax and sugar, and the purchases were subsequently recorded under Mrs. A. J. Hyde's name "per [the] Doctor."²³⁰ In effect, there were two separate accounts for one household. Because store ledger entries were typically recorded under the male head of household's name, the entries for Doctor and Mrs. Hyde are quite perplexing.

The clue to these unusual ledger entries lies the 1880 Census for Nacogdoches County. Anna J. Hyde, the wife of 69 year old physician George S. Hyde, lists her occupation in the census as hotel keeper. Hyde was born in New York state and was 54 years old at the time of the census. In 1880, the Hydies also had two black servants residing with them, eighteen year old Jeff McKnight and twenty year old Simma Young; in all likelihood, they assisted with the hotel keeping duties and tasks around the home.²³¹ As a hotel keeper, Mrs, Hyde would need to keep her supplies well-stocked with items from the local store. Because of the demands of her business, she frequented the store regularly, establishing a solid, mutually-beneficial business relationship with the store owners. Bowing to practical considerations, the merchants deviated from the standard practice of listing purchases under the male head of household's name, instead recording

²²⁸Ibid., 58.

²²⁹Ibid., 61.

²³⁰Ibid., 25, 29.

²³¹*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1880: An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Ericson, ETRC, 4. Interestingly, there is no occupation listed for Anna Hyde in the 1870, suggesting that hotel keeping was a relatively new role for Hyde in 1880. *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870*, ed. Ericson, 13.

items under the name of the principal purchaser for the Hyde family, Mrs. Anna Hyde. It seems unlikely that Anna Hyde stood meekly at the door of the Clark and Hyde mercantile store wondering if she should enter and deliver to the retailers her large order of grocery items for the hotel. Mrs. Hyde's experiences challenges Clark's male-centered assumptions about country stores, their proprietors, and their clients. Indeed, store records problematize traditional notions of country women's roles as both consumers and clients.

To be sure, not every woman in Texas operated a hotel, not every woman engaged in an enterprise separate from her husband's, and not every woman established a business relationship with local merchants. Still, there are many examples of women in early Texas and Oklahoma who did not cower at the front door of their local general store. They came through the door and made purchases much like their male counterparts. Daybooks, account books and sales ledgers are valuable resources for revealing women's consumption patterns in rural settings where shopping options were few. Store records indicate how often women visited general stores, the types of employment they engaged in, and the ways in which they contributed to the family income. Ledgers trace women's participation in the market in two separate, though related, ways. First, they provide evidence of women's physical presence in stores and, thus, their engagement in the public sphere, countering notions that they were confined to the inner sanctums of their homes. Second, they demonstrate that women not only participated in the market, but that they themselves proved to be significant economic players in their own rights. However, such evidence suggests that not all women entered commercial relations on equal footing. As might be expected, account records confirm that economic divisions

existed between men and women as well as between women in different socio-economic classes.

While Thomas Clark was certainly one of the earliest historians to weigh in on the subject of women and general stores, a more recent study has followed his lead by similarly marginalizing women's roles in the historical development of general stores, particularly during the nineteenth century. In *American Dreams in Mississippi*, published in 1999, Ted Ownby affirms Clark's contention that stores remained largely the preserve of men in the postbellum period. According to Ownby, general stores were sites where white men talked about politics, told jokes, or shared gossip, often while playing checkers or whittling and spitting tobacco. Women acknowledged the fraternal atmosphere of stores by steering clear of where they were clearly not welcome. Apparently not content with just the interiors, men made space in and around store sites for recreational purposes. Ownby cites directly Clark's assertion that "men still offered to stand stallions for stud outside stores, and younger men and boys saw the area outside the stores as gathering places for wrestling, running races, and eventually playing baseball."²³²

Another factor that Ownby sees as contributing to women's reluctance to enter general stores was the preponderance of alcohol sold in many stores. Served principally to white male customers, merchants sold alcoholic beverages in the rear of their stores which apparently, "offered strong taste and powerful after-effects that made trips to the

²³²Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 11. In a recent article, Lu Ann Jones has also argued that women (as well as African Americans) were less inclined to shop at country stores which tended to be operated by white men, instead choosing to purchase items from itinerant peddlers. To be fair, Jones is making the case for the importance of itinerant merchants to the southern economy, as opposed to providing an in-depth evaluation of the relationship between women and general stores in the postbellum period. Lu Ann Jones, "Gender, Race, and Itinerant Commerce in the New South," *Journal of Southern History* 66 (May 2000), 297-320.

store special occasions.”²³³ A good example in Texas of such activity can be found at the J. L. McInnis’ mercantile firm in Webberville, a rural community located in Travis County, Texas. Males comprised the majority of names listed in McInnis’ 1874-1875 sales ledger, with only a handful of women’s names appearing. Further, both tobacco and whiskey appear in the purchases of many of the men who frequented the McInnis store. John Burleson, for example, purchased on August 8, 1874 sardines for 50¢, whiskey and cigars for \$1.00, and tobacco for 25¢.²³⁴ Hardly, a grocery order. Subscribing to rather rigid gender constructions, many in the middle class believed that women were far too delicate and moral for these male-dominated environments.

Given the time period, Ownby makes the assertion that it is not surprising to find in store ledgers that the large majority of accounts in this male-dominated society were in the names of men. In his study of consumerism in Mississippi, he finds scarce evidence of female accounts, particularly in the antebellum period. Even as late as the 1890s, however, he notes that women were still heavily in the minority, comprising only slightly more than ten percent of accounts. While Ownby concedes that names in ledgers do not tell the whole story of how often women frequented general stores, he states, “It may seem likely women visited stores more often than those figures indicate and made purchases under the names of their husbands, but a few ledgers that recorded precisely who visited stores make clear that the stores were male institutions.”²³⁵ For Ownby, ledger entries that identified female customers—usually nameless—as the wives or

²³³Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 11.

²³⁴McInnis Ledger 1874-1875, AR 1994-57, Austin History Center [hereafter cited as AHC], Austin, Texas, 79.

²³⁵Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 11.

daughters of the men who held store accounts only signified further that the men in charge considered women to be outsiders. However, other historians who have broached the subject of women in account books have contended that such records need to be viewed with some degree of skepticism, especially in drawing conclusions regarding women's participation in the marketplace. In examining the role of women in commercial relations in New England, Gloria Main, Marla Miller, and Wendy Gamber have all argued that women's absence from account books does not in itself suggest that women were not significant economic players. Main observes that "reasoning from the absence of written evidence is always dangerous," in part because such evidence does not tell the whole story of commercial behavior.²³⁶

While account ledgers in Texas and Indian Territory support both Clark and Ownby's findings that general store customers were predominantly male, they also reflect regional differences that suggest in some locations women visited stores more frequently than in other areas. Alongside some rather significant female accounts, ledger books from the Clark & Hyde mercantile store indicate that women entered the store with some regularity, charging purchases to the accounts of their husbands, fathers, and male

²³⁶Main asserts that informal borrowing and lending as well as oral agreements constituted the bulk of local exchanges in rural communities in colonial New England. Gloria L. Main, "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 51 (January 1994), 46. Marla Miller provides the examples of Lydia Duncan Champion and Tryphena Newton Cooke as women whose needlework business is recorded in ledgers, yet done so under their husband's names. Marla R. Miller, "Gender, Artisanry, and Craft Tradition in Early New England: The View through the Eye of a Needle," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (October 2003), 743-776. Finally, Wendy Gamber's work on the dressmaking and millinery trades in the nineteenth century suggests that, while men generally held the purse strings in the family and settled accounts with dressmakers and milliners, it was their wives who established relationships with artisans and frequented such shops. See her segment on the "Sexual Politics of Fashion," Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 119-124.

employers. For example, a sampling of account entries from the last two weeks in January, 1873, include purchases for: Mrs. A. J. Hyde, Letty Hyde per Julia, A. J. Simpson per daughter, L. E. Griffith per Martha, G. F. Ingraham per wife, L. E. Griffith per wife, and William Clark per wife.²³⁷ Even though they appear in the ledgers under generic distinctions, women clearly patronized the Clark & Hyde firm. Women also appear quite frequently in ledgers from the McKinney & Dixon general store in Jacksonville, Texas—either under their own accounts or under the male head of households. In the last weeks of September 1874, the store owners recorded purchases under the following headings: Charles Gay per lady, A. J. Chessher (per lady), Samuel Gover (per daughter), Professor Patton (per lady), Tom Neely per sister, and John T Goodson per lady.²³⁸

A further point can be made regarding the issue of whether the above examples demonstrate that these women (and not a delegate with a grocery order in hand) frequented the stores. Standard practice at both the Clark & Hyde mercantile and the McKinney & Brown store was to note “orders” in their ledgers. For instance, on November 7, 1872, the purchases for G. F. Ingraham came into the Clark & Hyde store “per order.”²³⁹ While at the McKinney & Brown store, the purchase of some nails and a molasses pitcher by Mrs. S. A. Goodson were made “per order” on December 8, 1874.²⁴⁰ Thus, ledger entries at the McKinney & Brown store that include “per lady,” “per

²³⁷Daybook I, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 88, 91, 94, 96, 102, 103.

²³⁸Customer Ledger 8/24/74-2/8/75, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20.

²³⁹Daybook I, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 11. (Also see, 14, 28, 126).

²⁴⁰Customer Ledger 8/24/74-2/8/75, Brown and Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 73.

daughter,” “per Negro,” or “per washerwoman” denote the person who *physically* made the purchases, not someone who placed an order.²⁴¹ Thus, ledger records indicate that women were physically present in this presumed male enclave.

Such examples hardly suggest the need to completely revise earlier perceptions of women’s roles in general stores; after all, even in these examples women were still in the minority of customer accounts. Even though women were statistically less significant, ledgers indicate the frequency of women in stores differed by location and, therefore, their importance to store owners as a customer base also varied. In Nacogdoches, for example, women maintained more than a marginal presence in store records. That said, there is little evidence in these scant examples that women challenged the male-dominated status quo; in fact, the listing of accounts under males’ names only served to reinforce the superordinate roles of males in late nineteenth-century society. In many ways, the importance of women in ledgers stores has less to do with their overall numbers and more to do with revisiting, or perhaps re-imagining, their role in commercial relations, however large or small.

Even in the farthest reaches of “civilized” society, middle-class culture and attitudes pervaded mid- to late nineteenth-century American belief systems, affecting store owners in western rural outposts as well as their clientele. According to Daniel Walker Howe, the home provided the most important locus for cultural transmission in Victorian society and Victorians acknowledged this fact through their notions of domesticity.²⁴² Idealized perceptions of domesticity were manifest in a myriad of

²⁴¹Ibid., 22, 26, 29, 40, 42.

²⁴²Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” 25. Contrary to Howe’s periodization however, Victorians were not the first to put forward idealized notions of domesticity,

different ways in rural or western environments. As Barbara Welter argued in her influential essay, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” women, civilizing agents in their own right, created safe havens from the outside world for their families, protecting them from unsafe and immoral influences.²⁴³ The perception of women as civilizing agents has proven to be a remarkably resilient trope in histories of the American West, partly because such sentiments were commonly expressed by western boosters and newspaper editors during the period.²⁴⁴ Historian Robert Griswold argues that when nineteenth-century Anglo woman left their homes in New England, the South, or the Midwest to live in the West they took with them some variant of domestic ideology. Indeed, Griswold contends, “Most undoubtedly believed that women’s chief responsibilities were homemaking and child rearing, that females represented the moral foundation of the family and society, and that a commitment to family took precedence over a commitment to self.”²⁴⁵

nor the now-defunct trope of separate spheres; indeed, a number of historians have argued that such rhetoric accompanied the rise of the middle class in America during the early decades of nineteenth century. See Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Karen Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1790-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁴³Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 152.

²⁴⁴White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*,” 307-309. For a discussion of the “white woman as civilizer,” see Glenda Riley, *Women and Indians on the Frontier 1825-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984);

²⁴⁵Robert L. Griswold, “Anglo Women and Domestic Ideology in the American West in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Western Women: Their Land, Their*

That women understood that their ascribed roles in the domestic sphere did not necessarily translate to an outright acceptance of their new frontier environment. Some women needed time to adjust to their new surroundings. Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Brown, the wife of store owner of W. A. Brown, expressed some concern upon seeing her new home in early Jacksonville, Texas. In 1873, when W. A. Brown purchased the home it was set back in the woods and there were no streets leading up to the new family residence, which was described by Mrs. Brown as a very small, “uninviting house.” According to local accounts, when Mrs. Brown came in a two-horse wagon to her new home, “she thought it a very lonesome place, and remarked that she didn’t believe she would get out of the wagon, but for the fact that it was ‘just home.’”²⁴⁶ Many women believed that it was only a matter of time (and effort) before sod houses with musty air, splintery furniture and dirt-covered floors could be turned into tastefully decorated family homes.

Whether arriving by train, horseback or covered wagon, women quickly commenced their homemaking responsibilities, providing their families as much comfort and refinement as their rustic circumstances would allow. Creating homes out of what was available to women in frontier Oklahoma and Texas was no small accomplishment. As historian Linda Williams Reese notes, “Women expressed their individuality and pride in the comfort and decor of these first crude dwellings. They constructed shelves and furniture out of packing boxes... curtained off areas for privacy, planted flowers in

Lives eds. Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz and Janice Monk (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 15.

²⁴⁶*Cherokee County Banner*, 11 February 1916.

pots, sewed bright window curtains, braided colorful rag rugs to cover the earthen floors or splintery wooden ones, and made decorative plaques from the dried gypsum that so tainted their water supplies.”²⁴⁷ In their furnishing, women were aspiring to make real their dream of a comfortable house on the frontier. The purchases of Mrs. Susan Smith of Jacksonville from the McKinney & Brown mercantile provide a small, but telling, example. Smith lived with her brother Thomas Love, a resident farmer, and her twenty-year old daughter Nannie. According to the 1880 Federal Census, Susan was a housekeeper, the usual occupation for married women and, evidently, sisters of farmers. Susan was in charge of shopping for the small family: on November 13, 1876, she purchased from the McKinney & Brown store: twelve yards of ticking for \$3.60, one paper of needles for 10¢, a lamp for 35¢, a set of teaspoons for 75¢, and a cup and saucer for 15¢.²⁴⁸ While a thirty five cent lamp hardly qualifies as a symbol of gentility, Susan’s purchases do reflect an interesting assortment of consumer items, some of which were intended no doubt to enhance the comforts of rural living. Indeed, fineries on the frontier came in all shapes and sizes.

In homes across America, the preferred showroom for material representations of Victorian gentility was a finely adorned parlor. Moreover, the prized possession of many Victorian parlors was a grand piano. According to Charles Anderson’s local history, *Deep Creek Merchant: The Story of William Henry “Pete” Snyder*, the parlor of store

²⁴⁷Linda Williams Reese, *Women of Oklahoma 1890-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 33-34.

²⁴⁸Customer Ledger 1874-1875, November 13, 1876, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC. *1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, transcribed by Sue Vaughn Taylor, ETRC, 181. There is no mention of Mrs. Smith’s husband in the census, possibly she was a widow.

owner Pete Snyder in Colorado City, Texas proved to be no exception. Because they were a less expansive alternative, organs found their way into more Victorians parlors than pianos; however, pianos maintained a position of prominence in the most genteel, most well-to-do homes. Since the eighteenth century, pianos were featured in the homes of elite families who desired their children to be accomplished in the art of music, particularly their young women.²⁴⁹ Pete's wife, Nellie Snyder, apparently adored her piano and would sit for hours playing it. Pete purchased the piano for his wife shortly after they were married and, in the early 1880s, had it shipped from New York City to Colorado City, in Mitchell County, Texas. The Snyders were financially able, most of the time, to keep a housekeeper to help Nellie, which afforded the store owner's wife time to play her beloved instrument; reportedly "beautiful music could be heard throughout the open prairie land."²⁵⁰ While certainly not all Texas homes could acquire such luxuries, the Snyders did their best to bring the accoutrements of Victorian gentility to the west Texas plains. The inclusion of the story of Nellie's piano in Anderson's nostalgic history only reinforces the widely-held notion in western histories of the civilizing influence of women in the American West, a problematic notion in contemporary historiography given its sexist and racist undertones.

Providing for both her home and her hotel, Mrs Anna J. Hyde's purchases tended to be fairly basic food items rather than luxuries—not a surprise given the nature of her

²⁴⁹For a discussion of pianos and their role in Victorian society, see Federhen, ed., *Accumulation & Display: Mass Marketing Household Goods in America*, 79. Haltunnen discusses Victorian parlors and their adornments from an urban perspective in Karen Haltunnen, "From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality," in *Consuming Visions*, ed. Bronner, 157-189. Also see, Grier, *Culture & Comfort: People, Parlors & Upholstery*.

²⁵⁰Anderson, *Deep Creek Merchant*, 129.

business. Perhaps the more provocative question with regard to the Hydes is why the wife of a mature physician, a woman of middle-class standing, engaged in an occupation at all? According to Wendy Gamber, persons from all social classes, although most typically women, found themselves opening their homes to boarders in nineteenth-century America—this included perhaps a respectable widow, fallen on hard times, or even middle- and working-class families.²⁵¹ Both middle- and working-class women continued to labor and contribute to their household economy throughout the nineteenth century, in both paid or unpaid labor capacities, even if that fact became increasingly hidden behind separate sphere ideology. Jeanne Boydston has argued that during the early nineteenth century the perception of women's work changed and increasingly became devalued, especially when compared to wage labor conducted outside of the household. Respectable women no longer labored. As Boydston notes, "The language of the ideology of spheres was the language of gender, but its essential dualism was less precisely the opposition of 'female' and 'male' than it was the opposition of 'home' and 'work,' an opposition founded on the gendering of the concept of labor."²⁵²

In the small community of Nacogdoches, Texas, Mrs. Hyde worked. She did so in a social environment in which such work was looked upon with some disdain, especially among her middle-class contemporaries. Her occupation closely aligned with women's traditional domestic roles, extending her house keeping responsibilities to the upkeep of an entire hotel. Gamber argues that boardinghouse keepers endured particular

²⁵¹Wendy Gamber, "Tarnished Labor: The Home, The Market, and the Boardinghouse in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (Summer 2002), 189.

²⁵²Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 159.

contempt by critics precisely because of the blurring of the lines of home and work: “For in boardinghouses the moral contagion of the market invaded relationships that ideally were to remain untainted by base economic concerns.”²⁵³ Perhaps Mrs. Hyde worked out of economic necessity, perhaps out of choice. Life course, no doubt, factored into her decision to operate a hotel. Since she did not list her occupation as hotel keeper in the 1870s census, perhaps the fortunes of the Hyde family changed for the worse during the period between 1870 and 1880, requiring that the Hydies become a dual-income family. Regardless of her reasons, Mrs. Hyde’s occupation expanded her responsibilities beyond strictly her household; thus, challenging the domestic model, however slightly, that both confined women to the home and limited their responsibilities to the family.²⁵⁴

Operating a hotel in Nacogdoches during the same time period as Mrs. Hyde, Mrs. Susan A. Durst also frequented the Clark & Hyde mercantile store. Like her contemporary, Mrs. Durst listed her occupation in the census as “hotel keeper,” although the array of persons residing in her home suggests that Durst’s hotel was little more than a boardinghouse.²⁵⁵ In addition to her four children, Robert Rainbolt, a nineteen year old store clerk, Frederick Meier, a thirty-eight year old man from Prussia with no identified occupation, and Ed Mayfield a thirty five year old domestic servant all lived in the Durst

²⁵³Gamber, “Tarnished Labor,” 180.

²⁵⁴For a detailed discussion of female entrepreneurship in the nineteenth century, see Wendy Gamber, “A Gendered Enterprise: Placing Nineteenth-Century Businesswomen in History,” *Business History Review* 72 (Summer 1998), 188-217.

²⁵⁵Gamber asserts that most women operated “boardinghouses” which were most often converted dwellings of simple “homes” with extra rooms to let. As opposed to “hotels,” which were usually run by men and tended to be more luxurious, expensive, and architecturally elaborate than boardinghouses (although Gamber concedes that there was considerable overlap). *Ibid.*, 181.

household.²⁵⁶ In some locations, there was little distinction between hotels and boardinghouses. In discussing women and boardinghouses in 1870s Dallas, historian Elizabeth York Enstam notes that some boardinghouses actually were small, more or less exclusive hotels with complete staffs of maids, porters, and cooks, while others supplied only the most basic furniture, requiring their boarders to bring such comforts as featherbeds, blankets, pillows and even linens.²⁵⁷ It appears that Mrs. Durst's "hotel" fell into the latter, more modest, category. Rather than large purchase orders like Mrs. Hyde's \$32.96 order, for example, Mrs. Durst rarely bought more than one or two items at a time. The extent of her purchases on November 27, 1872 from the Clark & Hyde store was a barrel of flour for \$14.50.²⁵⁸

The 1870 census also indicates that Susan Durst was the "widow of Louis Orlando." With four children to support and no husband to help with the expenses, Mrs. Durst surely needed the income. In this capacity, she reflected a common regional pattern of the period that showed a strong economic link between boardinghouses and widows. For many widows, especially those with children, economic survival meant using all respectable means to support themselves—running a boardinghouse was often preferred over the other occupations available to widows: washing, ironing, cleaning house, or, heaven forbid, prostitution.²⁵⁹ Keeping boarders afforded women the

²⁵⁶*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870: An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Reeves Ericson, ETRC, 69.

²⁵⁷Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life*, 42. Also see Gamber, "Tarnished Labor," 181-183.

²⁵⁸Daybook I, October 1872 - June 1873, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 27

²⁵⁹Laurie Mercier, "'We Are Women Irish': Gender, Class, Religious, and Ethnic Identity in Anaconda, Montana," in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women's*

opportunity to earn income while remaining at home, expanding upon rather than interfering with their other house keeping and child rearing responsibilities. It is worth noting that, according to the 1880 census, Mrs. Durst was no longer in the hotel keeping business. In 1880, Susan Durst resided in the household of her son-in-law, Robert Irion, a real estate agent, and her daughter, Helena, and significantly, no occupation is listed for Durst in the later census.²⁶⁰

Evidently, a number of women worked as hoteliers in the burgeoning town of McAlester. Ledger entries from J. J. McAlester's store reveal that both married and single women operated hotels or boardinghouses in the town, dating back to the earliest years of settlement. Edward and Lena Sittel, two of the region's original settlers, operated a lodging establishment that evolved from a one-room boarding house into McAlester's first hotel, a 15-room dwelling named Elk House. Lena Sittel is said to have been the first white woman to arrive by train to McAlester in 1872, along with their nine-year-old son, Fritz. According to a local historian, the Sittels' Elk House enjoyed a lucrative business in McAlester: "In the early days, the Elk House was the best place in McAlester to get a good meal and a clean bed. They had occasion to host many of the famous and infamous who passed by, including even Belle Starr and her companions."²⁶¹ In the 1870s, McAlester recorded most of the Sittels' purchases under Edward's name; however, in the late 1890s, the store owner began listing the account under Lena's name,

West ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 316.

²⁶⁰*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1880: An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Ericson, ETRC, 7-8.

²⁶¹Pittsburg County Historical and Genealogical, Inc., *Pittsburg County Oklahoma*, 370, 517.

despite the fact that Edward was still very much involved in the business and would live for another two decades.²⁶² The shift in account headings indicates that Lena Sittel became the principal purchaser of goods for Elk House in the 1890s; possibly Mrs. Sittel was too busy cooking and cleaning for hotel guests in the early years to take on the additional responsibility of shopping.

According to ads in the *Star-Vindicator*, McAlester's earliest newspaper, another hotel, named the McAlester Hotel, was operated by a Mrs. Sarah Fendall. In November 1877, the newspaper featured advertising that read, "McAlester Hotel—lately kept by Col. S. J. Brooks is now conducted by Mrs. Sarah Fendall."²⁶³ At the same time, McAlester listed Mrs. Fendall in his laborers' account book for 1877. On November 28, 1877, for example, McAlester included Mrs. Fendall among his "laborers," charging her 50¢ for a crumb brush and 20¢ for a half gallon of oil.²⁶⁴ There is no census covering this period in the Choctaw Nation's history, so the marital status of Mrs. Fendall is difficult to confirm, but McAlester recorded the purchase of a "fancy" bottle of cologne for \$2.00 under the account name: "Mrs. Fendall for Dr. Fendall." It appears at least that this is another example of a doctor's wife—or at the very least a doctor's female relative—operating a hotel. While hardly a pattern, both Mrs. Hyde and Mrs. Fendall demonstrate that working women in western settlements varied in marital status and class. In itself, marriage did not exempt women from the workforce. Plenty of married women worked outside of the home, contributing their share to the collective family income.

²⁶²1897-1900 Sales Ledger, #177, M2046, WHC, 265, 626.

²⁶³*Star-Vindicator*, 3 November 1877, 3.

²⁶⁴Laborer Account Book, 1877-1879, Box 36, M2046, WHC.

In *Victorian West*, Robert Haywood confirms that many of the women living in Kansas cattle-towns engaged in occupations outside of the household. In addition, he argues that many of the women who worked in their husband's businesses as clerks, bookkeepers, or boardinghouse operators often did much of the work themselves, and yet were not recognized as gainfully employed in census records. Most married women who worked, Haywood argues, did so out of economic necessity and not by preference, and they experienced few of the benefits of the cult of domesticity. Indeed, widowhood, an incapacitated husband, or a large family needing an additional breadwinner forced women to take on unusual roles.²⁶⁵ Although Haywood did not find much evidence of married women who worked out of choice in his study, there were undoubtedly those who did—in Kansas, as well as in other parts of the West. Besides helping the family's finances, work may have also been perceived by some women as an escape from the monotony of the private sphere, expanding their relationships to persons beyond their immediate household. Further still, there may have been some women, who despite the rigors of the task at hand, enjoyed the recognition and responsibility afforded by work outside of the home.

Other female hoteliers listed in McAlester's store ledgers include Mrs. Mike Holmes, Mrs. H. M. Mize, and Mrs. David Stark. The latter is distinguished in McAlester's records as a widow, again exemplifying the connection between widows and lodging establishments. As noted, boardinghouses and hotels on the frontier varied in both size and type of services; according to Sandra Myres, they provided, with some furnishing "only meals while others supplied both meals and lodging...[and] others

²⁶⁵ Haywood, *Victorian West*, 265.

offered a combination of services.”²⁶⁶ The large purchase orders associated with Mrs. Sittel’s, Mrs. Holmes’ and Mrs. Stark’s accounts suggest that these women operated fairly substantial establishments, at least relative to those in comparable frontier settings.²⁶⁷ These female entrepreneurs, either in partnership with their husbands or by themselves, provided much needed food and lodging for McAlester’s transient mining population.

Census data indicates that a large number of women in the farming regions of the West as well as other parts of the United States worked within the household under the distinction “housekeeper.” Seldom was housework recognized as an occupation and, rarer still, was such work considered a contributing factor to the household income. As Boydston has cogently argued, with the “pastoralization of housework” in the early nineteenth century, work inside the home increasingly became distinct from wage labor conducted outside of the home.²⁶⁸ Despite this changing perception, women continued to contribute to their households through both paid and unpaid labor. According to account records from the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, a number of married women, whose husbands’ kept accounts with the firm, received credit by bringing in eggs which were in turn sold by the store owners. For instance, Mrs. Joe Tilley received a \$1.25 credit “by 10 dozen eggs” on June 17, 1876. Mrs. Tilley’s husband appears in store

²⁶⁶Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800–1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 243.

²⁶⁷Evidence of these large purchase orders appears in 1897-1900 Sales Ledger, #177, M2046, WHC, 265, 626, 1877-1880 Sales Ledger, #154, M2046, WHC, 426, 514, and 1894-1897 Sales Ledger, #174, M2046, WHC, 412-413.

²⁶⁸Boydston, *Home and Work*, 142-163. Again, such divisions were largely based on gender, men’s labor outside of home was “work” and women’s labor inside of the home was not.

ledgers the following year: Joe Tilley purchased a knife for 50¢, and, two months later, two spelling books from the McKinney & Brown store.²⁶⁹ In another example, in November, 1876, Mr. Lou Derit purchased tobacco and fabric from the store owners, three months after his wife, Mrs. Lou Derit, received a 65¢ credit “by six and a half dozen eggs” on August 4, 1876.²⁷⁰ Mrs. Susan Smith contributed to her family’s income by receiving a \$1.60 credit for eight dozen eggs from the McKinney & Brown store on December 19, 1877.²⁷¹ In *Frontier Women: “Civilizing” the West? 1840-1880*, historian Julie Roy Jeffrey asserts that the sale of butter and eggs in the western environment seems to have provided a fairly steady source of income for women. She cites one observer who pointed out that women often supported their families through such funds while their husbands learned how to farm.²⁷² Responsibilities conventionally assigned to women, keeping chickens and selling their eggs linked women and their labor to the market economy; thus, women’s economic contributions expanded beyond merely the household into the larger community. Moreover, Joan Jensen’s study of rural Pennsylvanian farm women demonstrates this was a common economic strategy for families in other regions of the country and not just the south central plains.²⁷³

²⁶⁹Customer Ledger 1877 - 1878, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 124.

²⁷⁰Customer Ledger 6/1876 - 3/29/1877, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, (no page numbers).

²⁷¹Customer Ledger 10/29/77 - 8/31/78, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 55.

²⁷²Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: “Civilizing” the West? 1840-1880*, Revised Edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979, 1998), 78.

²⁷³Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

In *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920*, Elizabeth York Enstam asserts that in early Dallas, much like in other parts of Texas, the majority of women continued, unpaid, to perform domestic work within the privacy of their homes, and this work had changed little since the early years of settlement. However, with specific types of labor, such as operating boardinghouses or selling excess food products to store owners, women's work contributed to the market economy, at least in a visible sense. By tracing the myriad ways in which housework was intrinsically tied to the newly industrializing society of the early Republic however, Boydson demonstrates that unpaid labor was not divorced from market relations. She points out that many nineteenth-century households were in fact "mixed economies," economic systems that functioned on the bases of both paid and unpaid labor.²⁷⁴ The added responsibility of producing goods for the market did not absolve women from the demands of housework; such labor merely expanded upon an already burdensome workload. The "visibility" of labor seems to be the key here. Enstam states, "Shifting such work from the domestic use economy into the marketplace, the boardinghouses lifted labor usually done in private out of its invisibility within individual homes and into public view in the realm of trade and commerce." Enstam concludes that more than any other female occupation, keeping a boardinghouse indicated the fundamental economic importance of women's traditional work in the home.²⁷⁵

One story told by store ledgers is that women engaged, and had been engaging for hundreds of years, in the "informal" exchange economy in which they traded goods

²⁷⁴Boydston, *Home and Work*, 120-141.

²⁷⁵Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life*, 42.

produced in the household with their neighbors for reciprocal goods or services. Because women's involvement in the exchange economy neither garnered wages nor drew them out of their households, the contribution of such labor to family household has been largely ignored by historians. To be sure, Boyston's discussion of "invisible work" and "unpaid labor" has done much to resuscitate women's roles in the mixed household economies of the nineteenth century.²⁷⁶ Through the exchange of goods and services, women were very clearly participating in the public economy; thus, women's work done within the confines of the family home was not necessarily limited to the private sphere. Furthermore, women often occupied critical roles in their husband's business ventures, which again expanded women's responsibility beyond housework. Commenting on such invisible labor, Catherine Kelly notes that there was enormous flexibility, permeability, and overlap between women's and men's work.²⁷⁷

Living in rural hinterlands in no way guaranteed women freedom from the rigors of their traditional domestic tasks; in many cases, the demand for domestic labor increased. Account records from McAlester's store demonstrate that regional socio-economics influenced not only women's employment opportunities, specifically the types of work available to women, but also their consumption patterns. Spanning over forty

²⁷⁶Boydston, *Home and Work*, 120-141.

²⁷⁷Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 35. A good example provided in Kelly's study of New England is her discussion of Persis Hastings Russell, a woman who assumed responsibility of her husband's store while he was away on buying trips. For discussion of women participating in the female exchange economy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, also see Jensen's *Loosening the Bonds*, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 70-105, and *A Midwife's Tale*. Ulrich finds evidence in Martha Ballard's diary of the existence of a separate female economy existing beneath the level of traditional documentation.

years, J. J. McAlester's ledgers are an excellent historical source for revealing patterns in women's work in the McAlester area. Located in a coal mining region in the Choctaw Nation, McAlester's store attracted principally men as clientele, not surprisingly since they made up the majority of the settlement's early population. In fact, amid the hundreds of customer transactions listed in his 1874-1875 sales ledger, the store owner recorded fewer than ten transactions between himself and female customers. Despite the small number of female transactions, the accounts of male customers make it possible to confirm women's presence, at least in early McAlester. James Donalson, for example, whose occupation was listed as miner, paid J. J. McAlester \$3.50 for a pair of ladies' shoes on February 1, 1870. In another example, J. J. Cleary, a local butcher, paid the same price for ladies' shoes on January 9, 1875, and Mike Dunn, Enoch Cartlidge, and J. J. Wooten all made similar purchases in the early months of 1875.²⁷⁸ As a general rule, coal mining camps maintained a disproportionate ratio of men to women; Jeffrey confirms that a characteristic feature of the mining frontier was that most residents were young men, for few women or family groups came during the early boom times. Further, she asserts that "whether in Denver, San Francisco, or a remote mining center, men did not easily decide to bring their families West or to marry and settle down. They observed the characteristics of the mining frontier, which seemed to make it inappropriate for family life."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸1874-1875 Sales Ledger, #152, M2046, WHC, 54, 56, 58, 61, 102. Quite possibly, these miners initially moved to the Choctaw lands, obtained employment, and thereafter sent for their wives. Alternatively, the men might have traveled with their wives in the initial migration. In any case, despite the scarcity of women's names, purchases documented in the ledgers imply the presence of women in the McAlester region in the early stages of settlement.

²⁷⁹Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, 136

In the few entries listed under women's names, the records indicate that the store owner paid a number of women to work in his employ as cooks and seamstresses. This is not surprising since, according to western historian Sandra Myres, it was often women's domestic skills that were most sought after in regions with high sex imbalances. She notes that cooks, seamstresses, and washerwomen, were in demand, particularly in the mining camps as well as in other areas where the population included a large number of single men.²⁸⁰ As noted, ledger entries indicate that Mrs. Annie Bowers began working as a cook for McAlester on Christmas Eve 1875. A week later, on December 31, she purchased from her employer's general store 18 yards of fabric, thread, braid, lining and a bottle of tonic for \$8.90. This expansive purchase would take Annie roughly three weeks to make up in salary, since she earned only \$3.00 a week as McAlester's cook. Her first lump payment came after 7½ weeks of service when she received \$22.50, subsequently applied toward the debts she ran up at her employer's store.²⁸¹

Three dollars hardly seems like an adequate salary to live on, and yet McAlester paid a number of female employees this wage. In another example, Miss Mollie Sullivan commenced work as a cook for McAlester on March 30, 1876, at the rate of \$12.00 per month—again, consistent with Bowers' wages.²⁸² McAlester immediately debited part of Mollie's salary, a total of \$6.75, towards "cash paid for ticket from Chitopa." Apparently, Mollie needed to borrow from her employer to finance her trip to the town of McAlester; McAlester, in turn, desperately needed her labor. There was not only a shortage of

²⁸⁰Myres, *Westering Women*, 242.

²⁸¹1875-1878 Sales Ledger, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 124.

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 260.

women available to the store owner, but it appears that the position itself turned out to be transitional. McAlester hired Mrs. Hattie Hood as a cook, only two days before hiring Miss Sullivan in March 1876 (again, for \$3.00 per week).²⁸³

Mrs. Fannie McElroy was the first woman to appear in McAlester's 1874-1875 ledger. On November 25, 1874, she purchased coffee, sugar, tobacco, flannel, calico, denim and a pair of shoes from the store for a total bill of \$12.02. On January 14, 1876, McAlester cleared Fannie's account by applying a \$12.02 credit, a credit earned "by dressmaking."²⁸⁴ In another entry involving Mrs. McElroy, Annie Bowers' account is debited \$3.00 because McAlester paid Mrs. McElroy that sum on Annie's behalf—perhaps, again for dressmaking services.²⁸⁵ As is clear from McAlester's records, women provided their cooking and sewing skills not only to the male mining town residents, but also to their female counterparts, carving an economic niche for themselves in the frontier environment. What is not known from these accounts is the level of training Mrs. McElroy brought to the craft of dressmaking. In her examination of the dressmaking and millinery trades in the nineteenth century, Wendy Gamber argues that dressmaking was not simply an extension of women's traditional domestic skills, but a trade acquired only after much training in a workshop, not in the home. Gamber locates her study in urban setting—specifically Boston—where apprenticeship opportunities were available to young working-class women. However, Gamber concedes that many women knew how to sew

²⁸³Ibid., 217.

²⁸⁴1874-1875 Sales Ledger, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 24.

²⁸⁵1875-1878 Sales Ledger, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 124.

and often made their own clothing to save money.²⁸⁶ Mrs. McElroy might have been a professionally trained dressmaker who migrated to Indian Territory to practice her trade, or perhaps she was an amateur dressmaker who took advantage of the frontier setting to fashion a lucrative new career for herself.

Women employed their domestic skills in a variety of capacities throughout Texas and Oklahoma. At the Gauntt Brothers dry goods store in Athens, Texas, for example, an account entry for Annie Richardson dated August 14, 1888 reveals a credit applied to Annie's account "paid by washing." The debits accrued on her account came from mostly grocery items, such as butter, sugar, flour, and candy.²⁸⁷ Mrs. Regina Brinkman offered her specialized sewing talents to residents of Austin in the 1870s. Fortunately for Mrs. Brinkman, by the 1870s, Austin was a bustling state capital comprised of a number of mercantile firms, each seeking to expand their customer base. Mrs. Brinkman's account appears in ledgers from Charles Wolf's general merchandise store, one of the city's first businessmen. In 1874, she purchased from the store owner three pairs of scissors on April 6, a silk handkerchief on October 5, and a hat and shoes on December 15.²⁸⁸ According to the *General Directory of the City of Austin, Texas for 1877-1878*, the business of Mrs. Regina Brinkman was that of embroideries and worsted beadwork.²⁸⁹ Given her occupation, the purchase of three pair of scissors makes perfect sense. The

²⁸⁶Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 135.

²⁸⁷1887-1888 Ledger, Gauntt Bros., Baylor University, 187.

²⁸⁸1872-1875 Ledger, Wolf Ledger, AR 1991-72, AHC, 7.

²⁸⁹*General Directory of the City of Austin, Texas for 1877-78* (Houston: Mooney & Morrison), 78.

directory indicates that Mrs. Regina Brinkman resided with Alexander Brinkman, a cabinet maker and steady customer of Wolf's. This is yet another example of a household maintaining separate accounts at the local store with its inhabitants engaging in separate vocations.

Finally, account ledgers from the Clark & Hyde firm reveal that Mrs. Arkansas Sleet frequented the store with some regularity, typically buying fabric or other dressmaking goods. For example, she purchased six yards of velvet ribbon from the store owners on December 6, 1878, four yards of calico on December 18, 1872 and one and a half yards of sash ribbon, and three quarters of a yard of belt sash ribbon on May 5, 1873. According to the 1880 census, Mrs. Sleet's occupation was that of dressmaker. The widow of Philip Sleet, she lived in Nacogdoches with her two daughters, Lilia and Estelle, and Lawrence, a twelve-year old black servant.²⁹⁰ Whether it was to complement the family's income or to serve the sole source of it, Annie Richardson, Regina Brinkman and Arkansas Sleet fashioned careers in their respective communities that drew upon talents associated with the domestic sphere. The level of their training for their craft is unknown, although it is probably fair to say that extensive dressmaking training was neither required, nor common, in frontier settings. Because Austin was a larger center and, assumedly, a more competitive business environment, perhaps Mrs. Brinkman needed to demonstrate professional training to her clients. Indeed, it is certainly possible that all of the women were trained craftswomen—the record is simply unclear.

Ledgers from William E. McCampbell's general store in Refugio, Texas, affirm that employment opportunities for women on the south Texas frontier, like those in other

²⁹⁰*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1880, An Edited Census*, ETRC, 4.

parts of Texas and Oklahoma, were limited in scope and tended to be associated with traditional gender roles. For example, Elvira Peters, who later married and became Elvira Edwards, sustained herself in the Refugio community, in part, by working as a washerwoman for a prominent town resident. In April and May of 1877, McCampbell recorded the following transactions under Elvira's account. On April 20, her purchases included a pound of candy, a dozen pearl buttons, 7½ yds of Victorian lawn fabric, and three spools of thread; she also received a credit on her account for \$1.00, "by one day's labor." On April 21, she received a credit for \$.75, "by washing for Suicord," with a similar credit applied on May 12, 1877.²⁹¹ While it is unclear what other labor Elvira Peters performed, washing constituted one of the principal tasks she engaged in to support herself in the frontier community.

By 1877, Refugio was a modest settlement, at best, equipped with only a handful of businesses, including a hotel, a courthouse, a saloon, a Masonic lodge, a chapel and a couple of general stores. Captain William E. McCampbell established his store in the town in 1867 and operated it with his brother, Thomas P. McCampbell, until his death in 1880.²⁹² In 1934, Judge Rea, a town resident and contemporary of William McCampbell, described the McCampbell Bros. Store in 1868 as "a one-storey wooden building with a large wooden warehouse in the rear."²⁹³ Within the walls of this wooden building, McCampbell's clientele came together, exchanging stories, negotiating and conducting

²⁹¹1876-1877 Account Ledger, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 108.

²⁹²Huson, *Refugio*, 176, 177, 266.

²⁹³*Ibid.*, 177.

various business transactions, many of which involved women either directly or indirectly. To be sure, however, the majority of McCampbell's clientele were men.

Like McAlester's store, women maintained only a marginal presence in the account ledgers from the W. E. McCampbell and Bros. general merchandise store. Located in a region largely dedicated to stock raising, McCampbell's ledgers reflect that while women resided in Refugio County, customer accounts were generally listed under the names of the male heads of the household. For example, distinguished in McCampbell's ledgers as a "Cowhunter," R. L. Dunman's account clearly suggests the presence of a lady in his household. On July 2, 1877, McCampbell recorded the following charges under Dunman's account: one pair of boots for \$5.00, one hat for John per Lady for \$1.00, one card of buttons for \$.25 and a parasol for \$1.00.²⁹⁴ It is doubtful that this rugged cowhunter himself donned a dainty Victorian parasol to ward off the sun's glaring rays.

Still, while most accounts were listed under male headings, the exceptions that do arise in McCampbell's records are particularly revealing. A reoccurring figure in McCampbell's 1876-1877 Account Ledger is Ann Shaw: she first appears on page 16 of the ledger under the date, February 2, 1876.²⁹⁵ Beside Ann's name, in brackets, is the distinction "(col'd)," shorthand for colored, which appears throughout the ledger beside many customers' names, both male and female. Along the same lines, the distinction of "(Mex)," short for Mexican, also differentiates many names listed in the account book.

²⁹⁴1877 Account Ledger, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 307.

²⁹⁵1876-1877 Account Ledger, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL, 16.

McC Campbell kept a separate ledger for employees, often racially distinguished as black or Mexican, than he did for employers and/or prominent town members.²⁹⁶

Returning to Ann Shaw's account, comparisons can be drawn between her consumption patterns and work experiences and those of Eliza Peters and the women who appear in McAlester's ledgers. She purchased on June 12, 1876, three spools of thread, one boy's hat, six yards of edging, one hair net, three sacks of salt, two boxes of lye and 3 3/4 lbs of lard. Shaw's purchases reflect the preponderance of staple goods in the rural setting, where luxuries were relatively scarce and expensive. Further, her account reveals the frequency with which women bought fabrics and sewing needs. Her fabric purchases suggest that she either contracted her services out or that she had a very large family to clothe. Her entries in McC Campbell's ledger also indicate that she frequently worked as a washerwoman to support herself and her family. On June 19, 1876, her account is credited \$1.00: "by 1 days washing;" it's credited again on July 3, and again on July 11th.²⁹⁷ On September 9th, she is credited 50 cents "by cash for washing," and on September 25, she's credited 50 cents "by 1 days washing for Senoir."²⁹⁸ Evidently, Shaw kept herself rather busy washing garments for Refugio townspeople in 1876 and 1877, proving to be a reliable, frequent customer in the W. E. Campbell & Bros. store records.

Common to both McC Campbell's and McAlester's store ledgers is what these particular collections reveal about the class dynamics present in the small communities of

²⁹⁶ This issue is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 72.

McAlester and Refugio, especially regarding women. In both cases, the store owners used the implied status distinction of “Mrs.” or “Miss” on the accounts of some store customers, while in other cases such titles were noticeably absent. In McAlester’s records, for example, the following accounts appear without titles: Salina Red, Vicy (col’d), Aunt Violet (col’d), Sallie Humphries, Rosa Yount, Ellen Sanders, Nancy Byington.²⁹⁹ It should be noted that the majority of women in McAlester’s ledger merited the distinction, so why not these women? A common attribute of all of these accounts is that these women worked as either cooks for McAlester or the more dubious “hired girls.” This is not to say that all of McAlester’s female employees appeared in his ledgers without titles, but rather that the chances were pretty good that those without distinctions worked as common laborers for the store owner. Similarly, in McCampbell’s records both Ann Shaw (col’d) and Eliza Peters appear without titles and both worked as laborers in the community. While in a separate ledger, McCampbell included the names of the prominent townspeople (and principal employers), all of the female accounts listed in ledger included the title of respect.³⁰⁰ Evidently, class and, to some degree, race was the primary determinant of who merited such distinctions in ledgers and who did not.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the perception of women’s work had expanded to include such fields as teaching and nursing. Indeed, by the last decades of the nineteenth century, the feminization of the teaching profession had been long under

²⁹⁹1874-1875 Sales Ledger, #152, M2046, WHC, 335. 1875-1878 Sales Ledger, #153, 214, 279. 1881 Sales Ledger, #155, 22, 45, 131, 166.

³⁰⁰Compare the entries from the Account Ledger 1876-1877 which includes Ann Shaw and Elvira Peters/Edwards with those in the 1877 Account Ledger, particularly the entries for Mrs. Kate Duncan, Mrs. Susan Dugat, Mrs. Eliza Buck, 31, 70, 479. W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col. 7597, DRTL.

way. Much credit can be given to the early efforts of Catherine Beecher who, in the early to mid nineteenth century, turned teacher training and placement into a personal campaign. She initiated a program to raise funds for the recruitment and training of teachers who would bring their moralizing mission West to staff common schools.³⁰¹ In 1846, she wrote, “The plan is, to begin on a small scale, and to take women already qualified intellectually to teach, and possessed with a missionary zeal and benevolence, and, after some further training, to send them to the most ignorant portions of our land, to raise up schools, to instruct in morals and piety, and to teach the domestic arts and virtues.”³⁰² As discussed in the previous chapter, Mrs. Elizabeth Fulton Hester, wife of store owner George Benjamin Hester, responded to Beecher’s call and moved to Indian Territory in 1856 to perform work as a teacher and a missionary in the Chickasaw Nation. After the Civil War, Mrs. Hester became a teacher in a National School provided by the Chickasaw legislature.

Account ledgers from F. B. Severs mercantile firm in the Creek Nation indicate not only that female teachers frequented his store, but also that they had their payments from the Nation applied directly to their store accounts. Abbie Berryhill, for example, purchased from the Severs store on 25 November 1872 a ring for \$3.00, a pair of earrings for \$2.50, nine yards of calico \$1.50, two and a half yards of Delane fabric for 75¢, buttons for 10¢, and trimming for a \$1.00.³⁰³ Rather extravagant purchases for a female

³⁰¹Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 2nd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 130. Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*.

³⁰²Catherine Beecher, *The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children, the Causes and the Remedy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846), 12.

³⁰³1872-1873 Daybook, F. B. Severs Collection, OHS, 75.

teaching school in Okmulgee, Muskogee Nation, perhaps she had income other than her teaching wages. On December 5, 1872, Abbie received a credit “by school draft” for \$10.50; on February 13, 1873 she received another credit for \$20.02, “by school draft 2nd grade.” In addition, Miss Mollie Willison had a \$60.00 credit “by school draft” applied to her account on December 5, 1872.³⁰⁴ On the same day, a number of men received similar credits to their accounts, including William Wilson for \$45.66, C. H Davis for \$100.00, Dorsey Fife for \$48.90, Archie Doyle for \$15.00, David Yarger for \$20.00, Lou Atkins for \$100.00, and Robert Rawson for \$100.00.³⁰⁵

In *Frontier Women*, Julie Roy Jeffrey maintains that at least two sorts of single women decided to teach in the West. The first wanted jobs to earn money and pass a few years until they married. Such aspirations did not challenge the cult of domesticity, since ultimately these teachers would end up married, shifting their attention to the needs of the family home. The second group of women who found themselves in the teaching profession tended to come from the East as part of the crusade to civilize the West. Not a temporary stop on their way to marriage, teaching was their vocation. Although some married, it was an occurrence “incidental to the main purpose of sending teachers West.”³⁰⁶ Mrs. Elizabeth Fulton Hester clearly fell into the latter category. Who knows what drew Abbie Berryhill and Mollie Willison to Okmulgee, the capital of the Creek

³⁰⁴Mollie is mentioned in an earlier entry in the ledger. The entry for November 19, 1872 reads: “Miss Mollie Wilison (Teacher), Cash paid for merchandise per bill rendered \$48.40.” Significant in the entry is the distinction of Miss, clarifying Mollie’s marital status and the inclusion of her occupation as a teacher. Ibid., 52.

³⁰⁵Ibid., 85, 198.

³⁰⁶Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, 112-113.

Nation? Perhaps one or a combination of both motivations inspired them to teach among the Creek Indians. Appearing in the ledgers for G. B. Hester's store in Old Bogey Depot, Choctaw Nation, Miss Mary Chiffey, while not a teacher herself, opened her home up to Chickasaw children who attended school in the small settlement. According to Oklahoma historian Muriel Wright, the children of several Chickasaw families, who had no school near their homes, attended the day school at Old Bogey Depot and were boarded and cared for by Miss Chiffey, a young Chickasaw woman, described as "an earnest Christian and member of the Presbyterian Church."³⁰⁷

Widowhood and the subsequent need to raise a family can be added to the reasons why single women took up the profession of teaching. Such was the case of Mrs. Harriet 'Hattie' Olivia Coleman Withers who moved to McAlester as a young widow after her husband's untimely death. According to her family history, Mrs. Withers traveled to McAlester from Denton, Texas, where her husband had been the editor of the local newspaper. She arrived with her daughters, Edna and Lillie, sometime in the early 1890s, to teach and run the Presbyterian Mission School. The first entry in McAlester's ledgers places the Withers family in the McAlester area in late 1891. On 1 December 1891, Mrs. Withers purchased \$6.43 worth of beef from the store. She followed up this order three weeks later, purchasing on Christmas Eve a sack of flour for \$1.65 and 25¢ worth of oleo.³⁰⁸ Appearing throughout ledgers in the 1890s, the town of McAlester clearly had become the home of the Withers family. In fact, an account entry from May 16, 1899

³⁰⁷Muriel H. Wright, "Old Boggy Depot," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 5 (March 1927), 7. For ledger entries, see 1874 Ledger, C13, Benjamin Cook Collection, WHC, 106.

³⁰⁸Pittsburg County Historical and Genealogical, Inc., *Pittsburg County Oklahoma*, 443-44. 1891-1892 Sales Ledger, #169, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 30.

indicates that on that date Hattie's daughter, Miss Edna Withers, commenced work for J. J. McAlester, although the type of labor performed by Miss Withers is not specified.³⁰⁹ Thus, at least two generations of working women from the Withers family appeared in the ledgers pages of McAlester's store in the Choctaw Nation.

Married, single, or widowed, women in the Texas and early Oklahoma worked. Women in these regions modified their notions of domestic ideology, particularly those that confined women's roles to the home, to meet the reality of life in their small, often isolated, rural communities. The contrast between idealized domestic roles and the actual lived experiences of women was not simply a western phenomenon however, but was true for settings throughout the United States, both rural and urban. The cult of domesticity was an ideal challenged by women not necessarily by choice, although this was the case for some, but often by necessity. Ledgers reveal that women frequented general stores with their purchases appearing under their own account or, more often still, under their husband's accounts. In some locations, women were significant purchasers in their own right. At the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm in Nacogdoches, women not only patronized the store in significant numbers, but female hotel owners and dressmakers held substantial accounts with the store owners, who undoubtedly appreciated and welcomed such business. However, in areas where their overall population numbers were few, like the small mining community of McAlester, women maintained only a marginal presence in store ledgers.

In McAlester, favorable demographics allowed women to capitalize on the demand for their traditional domestic skills such as cooking, washing and sewing. This

³⁰⁹1897-1900 Sales Ledger, #177, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 806.

proved to be a mixed blessing. Indeed, work was available to women in frontier settlements, although such work tended to be limited in scope. This was the case for most, but certainly not all women in the West. After all, where does store owner, rancher, and banker Anna Martin fit into this paradigm? Martin's experiences diverged from both traditional women's work and idealized notions of domesticity. To be sure, Martin operated her deceased husband's store out of necessity, but her success in the ranching and banking industries demonstrated the store owner's determination and willingness to take commercial risks. In many ways, women in rural communities and frontier outposts proved to be pragmatic when it came to idealized notions of female roles—accepting middle class expectations when they proved particularly valuable and purposeful and ignoring them when necessary. While there are certainly remarkable exceptions, more often than not, employment opportunities outside of the home paralleled tasks done inside of the home. While the frontier social conditions did not liberate women from tradition, women reshaped their domestic roles and created a hybrid drawn from both idealized femininity and that hard mistress, reality.

Chapter Four - Recording Race

“Turbulent” hardly seems an adequate term to describe the volatility of race relations in late nineteenth-century America. From a southern perspective, this was the period of Reconstruction, terror campaigns, lynch law, Redemption, and both *de facto* and *de jure* segregation. From a western perspective, this was the period of migrations west, Indian wars, and the Dawes Act. For an area that straddled both the South and the West, this was undoubtedly a turbulent time. In Texas and Indian Territory, the challenge of the late nineteenth century was to negotiate new ground rules for governing race relations in the postbellum environment. As Elliot West cogently observed, “Never had our presumptions about race been so jangled and divergent. And never had we faced such fundamental decisions about the arrangement of our racial parts—their standing and social prerogatives, the reach and limits of their political due, whether indeed they should be here at all.”³¹⁰

In the 1870s and 1880s, America was still recovering from the Civil War and still grappling with that conflict’s social and economic ramifications, in particular the numerous calamities afflicting the roughly four million former slaves living in the South. All the while, the nation looked covetously at former, and soon-to-be-former, Indian lands in the West for possible expansion and development. The belief in and pursuit of “progress,” so endemic to the Gilded Age, seemed to necessitate the destruction of Indian tribal power and the appropriation of Indian property.³¹¹ In western outposts, racial

³¹⁰West, “Reconstructing Race,” 20.

³¹¹Ronald Takaki discusses the implications of the coming of the railroad and the 1871 Indian Appropriation Act on both Indian tribal power and property. See Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1979), 171-175.

tensions existed not only between whites and African Americans, but also between Native, Mexican and Chinese Americans.³¹² The lofty goal of Reconstruction was to meld the racial and regional divisions of the nation, not just in the South, but in all parts of America. The challenge of Reconstruction was to meet these idealistic goals at a time when racial boundaries were sharpened, strained, and deeply contentious.

Critical to the Reconstruction impetus was the national policy towards bridging the divides in America through economic and social “consolidation.” Regardless of region or skin color, all Americans were to be integrated into the American whole. As Elliot West asserts: “From Virginia plantations to Nevada mines and Nebraska homesteads, the nation pulled together under the ideals of free labor and yeoman agriculture and through the realities of corporate capitalism.”³¹³ It should be noted that the motivations behind this consolidation imperative were political and economic, by no means was the government, either sincerely or rhetorically, attempting to consolidate the races. To be sure, few in America would have supported such a policy. Attempts to integrate the hegemonic social or cultural mores of the white middle class filtered through such institutions as the Freedmen’s schools for ex-slaves and agency and boarding schools for Indians. West contends that economic integration for freedmen and Indians came through—at least ideally—forty acres and a mule, sharecropping and allotment. Pursuing this intellectual framework further, general stores could also be construed as institutions that enabled economic integration. In effect, store merchants provided a middle ground for bringing outsider groups, such as Native, Mexican, and

³¹²Since I have drawn heavily from Neil Foley in my discussion of Mexicans in Texas, I have similarly chosen to use the term Mexican rather than Hispanic, Chicano or Tejano.

³¹³West, “Reconstructing Race,” 21.

African Americans, into the national economic agenda. Through credit, minority groups could become important consumers who could help prime the burgeoning industrial economy of the North. Of course, credit was a mixed blessing. Poor African-American sharecroppers often found themselves trapped in debt cycles with their economic fortunes tied to white store owners who, all too willingly, offered them available credit and consumer goods.

Store records from nineteenth-century Texas and territorial Oklahoma provide important clues into the success of national economic consolidation efforts. Further, these records offer valuable insights into the deep racial chasms that distinguished the last decades of the nineteenth century. Much like Radical Reconstruction itself, the initiatives of the national government designed to integrate economically all Americans into a cohesive whole challenged the deep-seated racist attitudes held by many Americans and, as a result, garnered little success. In a profoundly divided nation, the institutions that brought the races together also served to divide them, reflecting and reinforcing the racial hierarchies of the day. Ledger records provide evidence of the grounds on which minority groups were integrated into market relations. While ledgers shed light on the lived experiences of all persons—white, black, Mexican and Indian—residing in the south central plains, they also illuminate how these persons ultimately lived both together and apart.

In entry after entry, there is abundant evidence in ledger records that maintaining racial distinctions was a high priority for those responsible for recording sales data. Operating and owning a general store in Jacksonville, Texas, William McKinney and W. A. Brown distinguished race in their account books in a number of different ways. In

some instances, the store owners included the words “Negro,” “col,” or “Freedman” beside the names of their African-American clientele. On October 31, 1874, for example, the merchants listed the following transaction in their ledgers: “John Tilery (Negro), To one pair boy’s shoes \$1.50.”³¹⁴ In another example, an entry from the store’s 1877-1878 sales ledger was recorded as “Nelse Snead (col), 1877: April 28, one satchel \$1.50, May 1, one plow point \$1.00.”³¹⁵ Finally, “Freedman” appears beside George Anderson’s name in the account ledger for 1882.³¹⁶ While there is no evidence that these customers had access to such records, the use of such racial qualifiers would hardly come as a surprise to African Americans living in the South during this period—most were used to being reminded of their racial status. Given the problem of illiteracy among former slaves, it is unlikely that many of the store clientele could read the ledgers even if they were given access to them.

Another clue to identifying race in the McKinney & Brown account books can be found in ledger entries for Sam Lacy recorded in 1883. On February 22, 1883, Lacy acquired a number of items from the store, including such staples as potatoes, garden seeds, coffee, snuff, a bucket, calico fabric, a box of caps, ladies shoes, a pair of pants, plow points and twenty seven yards of domestic fabric—a fairly substantial order by any standard of the day, but especially in relation to others in the ledgers. The store owner entered the following qualification beside Lacy’s name in the ledger: “Secured by Sandy

³¹⁴Customer Ledger 8/24/74 - 2/8/75, Brown & Dixon Records, ETRC, 40.

³¹⁵Ledger B, 1877-1878, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 140.

³¹⁶Ledger E, 1882, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 103.

Chandler, limits \$25.”³¹⁷ Sandy Chandler was one of a handful of African-American customers who “secured” accounts at the McKinney & Brown store for new African-American customers. Indicative of his spending habits, Chandler made the following extensive purchase on May 23, 1881 from the store: two pairs of gloves, several yards of ribbon, two ties, a cord and fan, a tuck comb, two handkerchiefs (one silk), a pair of hose, a parasol and some candy.³¹⁸ Chandler was obviously capable of large purchases. What exactly securing an account entailed is not clarified in the ledgers, however there are a number of possibilities. The first is that Sandy Chandler assumed responsibility for Lacy’s account; in other words, if Lacy skipped town, Chandler covered Lacy’s debt at the store. Perhaps, secured meant only that Chandler vouched for Lacy’s character, providing a character reference for Lacy to the store owners. A long-standing and frequent customer of the store, Chandler would have established credibility with the store owners as being reliable. Possibly, Lacy worked on Chandler’s land, and Chandler was effectually securing the right of his employee to establish credit at the store—a scenario difficult to confirm since both are listed in the census as farmers.³¹⁹ Perhaps, “secured” meant some combination of all three of these possibilities.

Implied in a system where one black farmer “secured” another’s ability to make purchases at the local store is some form of social hierarchy. After all, what distinguished Sandy Chandler, and others like him, as either capable or willing to secure

³¹⁷Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 177.

³¹⁸Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 228. According to the 1880 census, Sandy Chandler was a Mississippi-born farmer, thirty-five years of age, African American, his wife’s name was Martha, and he had five children ranging in age from eight to sixteen. *1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, 366.

³¹⁹*1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, 368.

the debts of others? Would there not have to be some vested interest on the part of those securing others to take on such a responsibility? According to the McKinney & Brown records, African-American client March Kessentiner secured at least two of the store's account holders in the early to mid-1880s.³²⁰ Mr. Kessentiner secured the account held by John Pinkard in 1883. Three years earlier, Pinkard appeared in the census as a servant residing in the home of John W. Marshall, a white farmer successful enough to have two servants living in his home.³²¹ Pinkard's account in 1883 included basics typically associated with farm labor—bolts for plows, nails, a hoe, shot, garden seed, potatoes, bacon, a pair of overalls, and brogan shoes. Demonstrating that his purchases extended beyond mere necessities, Pinkard's account was debited 50¢ on May 12 for “cash for whiskey.”³²² Kessentiner also secured the account of Mandy Bryant in 1885. Appearing in the census as Amanda Bryant, Mandy's occupation is listed as farm laborer. At the time of the census, she and her three small children resided with her father Cesar Buford, no spouse was listed as residing in the household.³²³ Like Pinkard, Mandy purchased mainly staple goods from the store—soda, sugar, coffee, spices, garden seed, flour, and domestic and cottonade fabric.³²⁴ As is clear from these customers' accounts, “conditional” status predicated the terms of their participation in commercial relations.

³²⁰Unfortunately, there is little continuity of the spelling of Mr. Kessentiner's name in either the ledgers or the census. He appears in the 1880 census as March Kisentiner. See *1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, 317.

³²¹*Ibid.*, 170.

³²²Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, 167.

³²³*1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*, 317.

³²⁴Ledger H, 1885, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 29.

For the most part, both Pinkard and Bryant exercised restraint in their buying patterns. They did so, in all likelihood, because they were poor. Indeed, one measurement of poverty is inability to establish credit on one's own.

Not only did Perry Bolden "secure" the accounts of other African Americans in the McKinney & Brown books, but he also proved to be one of the more reliable, indeed more substantial, customers recorded in the ledgers during the first decades of the store's operation.³²⁵ Bolden appeared early in the firm's records, purchasing, for example, two pairs of shoes, fabric, mattress ticking and tobacco in August of 1876.³²⁶ Bolden's substantial purchase order on August 16, 1876 stands out from a sea of rather meager entries that were more typical of the area's residents, most of whom acquired only a handful of items at a time. While Bolden obtained the usual basics, he also included with his large orders many non-necessities among his purchases, a luxury not afforded many of his fellow African Americans. Bolden included with purchases on April 30, 1881, for example, a box of candy for 25¢, bulk candy for 10¢, and a doll for 40¢.³²⁷ Assigning class distinctions to the past is problematic, especially when so little is known of these customers. Still, factoring in his willingness to secure other customer's accounts, his large purchase orders, and his ability to acquire specialty items, Bolden emerges as a

³²⁵Perry Bolden appears in the census as Perry Boland. His occupation is listed as farmer and he headed a rather large household, including his wife and eight children. At the time of the census, his eldest son, also named Perry, resided in his household—both figures appear in the McKinney & Brown records. According to ledger entries, Bolden secured the account of Denis Cristial in 1877. Ledger B, 1877-1878, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 125.

³²⁶Customer Ledger 1876-1877, August 16, 1876, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC.

³²⁷Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 147.

figure of some importance to the store owners, which is particularly compelling because Bolden was African American and this was post-Reconstruction Texas. According to historians of Texas in the post-Civil War period, violence and oppression played significant roles in reducing black political power and generally limiting any claim by blacks for social and economic equality.³²⁸ An active and determined Klan, lynchings, and terror all distinguished Reconstruction Texas. To be sure, those who most threatened the racial status quo had the most to fear.

In 1883, Bolden acquired from the store owners a spelling book for 15¢.³²⁹ His eldest son, Perry Bolden Jr., made similar purchases in 1881, obtaining spelling books on two different occasions from the McKinney & Brown store.³³⁰ Sandy Chandler also acquired educational materials from the store, purchasing an arithmetic book, two spelling books and pencils in 1878.³³¹ These purchases, as meager as they were, demonstrated a commitment to learning and suggested a desire to “improve” themselves and their families. Indeed, many former slaves deemed education as *the* avenue to a

³²⁸Barry A. Crouch, “A Spirit of Lawlessness: White Violence, Texas Blacks, 1865-1868,” *Journal of Social History* 18 (Winter, 1984), 217-32; Crouch, *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Texans*; Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform*; Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*; Randolph B. Campbell, *Grass-Roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). In their recent book on the subject, Smallwood, Crouch, and Peacock note that by the fall of 1868, Texas authorities had issued approximately 5,000 murder indictments of mostly African Americans, and yet they had only executed one man, a freedman from Houston. Significantly, most of these killings occurred in Northeastern Texas. James M. Smallwood, Barry A. Crouch, and Larry Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem: The War of Reconstruction in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 71.

³²⁹Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 487.

³³⁰Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 289.

³³¹Ledger B, 1877-1878, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 336.

better life; accordingly, they expended much of their energies on education for themselves and their children. Even these small expenditures on education distinguished these Texas blacks as extraordinary. As Eric Foner has convincingly argued, an indispensable aspect of “the meaning of freedom” for blacks was the ability to acquire an education. Indeed, Foner notes that “white contemporaries were astonished by their ‘avidity for learning.’”³³²

As in other parts of the South, educational opportunities for Texas freedmen initially were provided by the Freedmen’s Bureau, specifically through Freedmen’s schools. After 1870, however, administration of schools opened to black students were transferred from the Bureau to Texas state authorities and a state superintendent until 1872, and then officially through the newly established public school system instituted by the Republicans in the early 1870s. Costs for tuition and books fell on the shoulders of the freed slaves themselves. Despite limited incomes and high rates of poverty, freed men and women demonstrated remarkable resilience and dedication in finding the means to fund their children’s education. As a result, illiteracy rates among school-age children dropped steadily. According to Alwyn Barr, “Illiteracy among freedmen over ten years of age in Texas fell from over 95 per cent in 1865 to 89 per cent in 1870 and to 75 per cent in 1880.”³³³ The almost-zealous drive to educate their children continued among former slaves long after the Freedmen’s Bureau closed its doors in the late 1860s; indeed,

³³²Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 96.

³³³Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas*, 64-65; Crouch, *The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Texans*, 59-64. Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 90-92; Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 68-95.

ledgers from McKinney & Brown indicate that education remained an important priority among African Americans throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Ledger entries from the Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise firm, located in the community of Melrose in Nacogdoches County, Texas, also demonstrate the commitment by many agriculturally-dependent African Americans to invest in their children's education. In September 1870, for example, Jesse Powers, a fifty-three year old "mulatto" farmer, purchased a picture primer from the Hardeman & Barret store. The same year, Starling Kyle, a seventy year old black farmer with six children, charged to his account four 1st readers and three spellers. Thirty-five year old black farmer, Jake Buford charged three spellers to his account in 1870. And finally, George Garret, a thirty-six year old black farmer, included two spellers amongst his store purchases, again in 1870.³³⁴ The numerous examples of black farmers acquiring spellers and primers either for themselves, or more likely for children, affirms that education was a priority for many Texas blacks in the post-Civil War period. With the continual threat of violence and the weight of economic oppression, African Americans not only persevered in the cumbrous environment of Reconstruction Texas, but found a way to finance the education they so valued.³³⁵

³³⁴Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, 1870-1873, B-38 [1 Volume], ETRC, 27, 80, 122, 144. *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870, An Edited Census*, ed. Carolyn Reeves Ericson (Nacogdoches, 1977), ETRC, 121, 139, 105. Beside George Garret's name in the ledger is in brackets "(alias Hamil)," as it turns out, he appears in the census as George Hamil.

³³⁵While the freedom to educate their children was new for African Americans, the fact that many white farmers in Hardeman & Barret ledgers also purchased educational materials suggests that both whites and blacks in the Nacogdoches area privileged the education of their children. For examples, see Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, 21, 34, 59, 61, 67, 139, 145, 160, 163, 346.

Without doubt, readers were the most popular schoolbooks to appear on customers' accounts during the period. According to an inventory list from the McCampbell & Bros. store in Refugio, Texas, the most popular readers lining the store's shelves were McGuffey's readers. At the time of the inventory, the store had thirty-three McGuffey's in stock, exceeding by a large margin the store's two Holmes' readers, McGuffey's nearest competitor.³³⁶ Given the proliferation of the popular readers in the nineteenth century, it makes sense that they would appear so abundantly in the inventory for McCampbell's store. It has been estimated that from the time of the readers' first publication in 1837 until 1920, some one hundred and twenty-two million copies of McGuffey's texts were issued. Sixty million were reportedly sold between 1870 and 1890 alone. Unrivaled in their success, no other school texts bearing a single person's name sold near as many copies as McGuffey's readers.³³⁷ Designed to shape and mold the values of middle-class children, the readers espoused the values of hard-work, perseverance, dependability, honesty, frugality, patriotism, generosity, and Christian piety.³³⁸ While not as common in customers' accounts as McGuffey's readers,

³³⁶List of Goods, 1879-1882, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col.7597, DRTL, 7.

³³⁷Charles Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 85. Elizabeth Kolmer, "The McGuffey Readers: Exponents of American Classical Liberalism," *The Journal of General Education* 27 (Winter 1976), 314.

³³⁸Carol Billman, "McGuffey's Readers and Alger's Fiction: The Gospel of Virtue According to Popular Children's Literature," *Journal of Popular Culture* 11 (Winter 1977), 614-615. In accordance with the prevailing attitudes of the day, McGuffey lauded in his stories the value of both healthy competition and individualism in achieving one's goals; indeed, such attributes were necessary components of the progress-mentality so endemic to Gilded Age belief systems. However, McGuffey warned his young readers against the excessive materialism, ruthless acquisition and big-scale capitalism of the period. Instead, he promoted the idea that "money isn't everything," and rather joy should come from hard-work, frugality, and generosity. Thus, McGuffey's message more

elementary spellers also frequently appeared amidst the purchases recorded in ledgers. Initially published in 1783 under a different title, Webster's *The Elementary Spelling Book* was by far the most popular speller of the nineteenth century.³³⁹ Like McGuffey, Webster used his spellers to impart moral lessons to his predominantly young audience. Taking advantage of their captive audience, both authors sought to mold and train their reader's character; thus, moral neutrality was by no means their goal.

While the social imperatives presented in these schoolbooks reflected those of white middle-class Americans, those who received these moral lessons were a much more heterogeneous group. In the small rural communities of Texas and Oklahoma, persons of all classes, races, and ethnicities were exposed to the messages of these texts. That was the idea: spread middle-class norms and values to school children in all parts of the nation. Whether such groups took them to heart or not is another matter entirely. Middle-class reformers believed that those in the lower classes were especially in need of moral guidance. Ledger records from the Hardeman & Barret store indicate African Americans in the region included readers, most likely McGuffey's, among their household purchases in the early 1870s. As noted, Starling Kyle purchased four First

closely aligned with Hofstadter's traditional Mugwumps and their aversion to the cut-throat capitalism associated with the period's robber barons. In this sense, McGuffey's readers mirrored the conservatism and anti-industrialism of persons living in rural settings who developed a distaste for cities, large-factories, and corporate greed. Billman, "McGuffey's Readers and Alger's Fiction," 617-618; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 135-136.

³³⁹In fact, it has been estimated that from seventy-five to eighty million copies of the speller were printed. According to its publisher, thirty-five million copies were produced from 1855 to 1890. In describing the popularity of Webster's speller, historian Charles Carpenter asserted, "Printing presses were worn out printing the book and it was at this time that the term *Blue-Black Speller* became a household word all over the country." Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks*, 151.

Readers from the store on May 21, 1870.³⁴⁰ Moreover, the store owners recorded the following purchases for Dick and Darthula Taylor's account on January 9, 1871: "One slate, three slate pencils, and one First Reader (per daughter)."³⁴¹ Census records indicate the Taylors were an African-American farming couple with two young children. According to McKinney & Brown's ledger records from Jacksonville, Perry Bolden purchased one spelling book from the store on November 12, 1883.³⁴² Outside of household necessities, few items rivaled spellers or readers in their popularity with African-American customers.

Despite this explicit interest in educational materials, the spending habits of African Americans in store ledgers largely paralleled those of white farmers. For the most part, fiscal restraint rather than lavish spending characterized the purchasing patterns of the majority of African Americans in the cotton-producing regions of Texas. Studies examining the spending habits of African Americans in other parts of the postbellum South have likewise found that African Americans exercised caution in their spending.³⁴³ Poverty and fear of debt kept African Americans from spending irresponsibly; instead, they expended both their energies and their meager savings on

³⁴⁰Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [1 vol.], ETRC, 80.

³⁴¹Ibid., 393. *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870*, ed. Carolyn Reeves Ericson, ETRC, 107.

³⁴²Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 487.

³⁴³Adams and Smith, "Historical Perspectives on Black Tenant Farmer Material Culture," 330; Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 74. These studies and the conservative spending habits of both African Americans and whites in Texas and Indian Territory are discussed in detail in chapter six, "Commodities from a Local, Regional, and National Perspective."

trying to get ahead, not behind. The fact remains that it was exceedingly difficult for African Americans to get ahead in Reconstruction Texas. The state proved to be anything but the “land of milk and honey.” As one former slave who migrated from Virginia noted, “I got to Texas and try to work for white folks and try to farm. I couldn’t make anything at any work. I made \$5.00 a month for I don’t know how many year after the war.”³⁴⁴ Since money was clearly tight for many former slaves, frivolous spending was simply not an option.

If fiscal conservatism was the general rule, what should be made of African Americans who did not exercise such pecuniary restraint? The purchases made by Charles Menefee from the Hardeman & Barret store in Melrose extended well beyond necessities, even into the realm of modest luxuries. In the summer of 1870, Menefee, a twenty-eight year old black farmer with a large family, charged to his account a set of jewelry for \$1.00, a harmonica for 15¢, a set of tumblers for 75¢, two vials of shoe cologne for 50¢, a couple of ladies’ hats for \$1.50 and \$1.75, a pair of bracelets for 37¢, and a strand of beads for 35¢.³⁴⁵ Granted these were inexpensive luxuries, but given that

³⁴⁴Cited in Leon Litwack’s *Been in the Storm So Long*, 309, 411. Not to take away from this account, but five dollars a month seems a little low for the period. Litwack notes that the average wage hand in Reconstruction Texas (and Arkansas) could expect to make anywhere from \$15-\$25 a month. Smallwood puts the wage scale from \$2 to \$15 a month for male field hands and from \$2 to \$10 for female. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 43. According to the Texas Agricultural Bureau, even as late as 1887-1888 the average monthly income for a farm laborer in Nacogdoches County was only \$12.00. *Forgotten Texas Census: First Annual Report of the Agricultural Bureau of the Department of Agriculture, Insurance, Statistics, and History 1887-1888* (Reissued and published by Texas State Historical Association, 2001), 167.

³⁴⁵Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [1 vol.], ETRC, 225. Store owner L. T. Barret denoted former slaves in his ledger by the distinction “F.M.C.” or “F.W.C” for freed man or woman of color, again reinforcing that while African Americans were certainly integrated into the larger economic system, racial boundaries persisted (even in private ledgers). Perhaps Menefee could afford such

so many African Americans lived in poverty in east Texas, these are compelling purchases and worthy of further consideration.³⁴⁶ At the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, Sandy Chandler's account also reveals expenditures on luxury items, rather than just basic necessities. As noted, on one trip to the store, he bought two pairs of gloves, several yards of ribbon, two ties, a cord and fan, a tuck comb, two handkerchiefs (one silk), a pair of hose, a parasol and some candy.³⁴⁷ The purchases totaled \$5.75 and were subject to an additional ten percent interest charge by the store owners. In addition to these small extravagances, Chandler's ability to secure accounts suggests that he had likely attained at least measured economic success and possibly middle-class standing in the rural community of Jacksonville.³⁴⁸ In consumption terms, these examples indicate that both Menefee and Chandler diverged, however slightly, from the fiscal cautiousness of many of their African-American counterparts.

These extravagances, which suggest perhaps some gesture toward gentility and middle-class refinement by Chandler, need to be considered in the context of white middle-class attitudes toward such genteel expressions by African Americans during the period. According to Richard Bushman, there were ample examples of middle-class

purchases, or possibly he allowed himself to engage in special-occasion spending. Like most account holders, Menefee kept a running tab at the store and significantly, he paid his bill in full in February 1871.

³⁴⁶Of course, comparable purchases to Menefee's—harmonicas, tumblers, and shoe cologne—were also made by the store's white customers, including those of store owner L. T. Barret. See Hardeman & Barret Merchandise, ETRC, 22, 34.

³⁴⁷Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 228.

³⁴⁸James Smallwood has argued that Texas did maintain a small, but growing African-American middle class during the Reconstruction period. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 110.

African Americans in both northern and southern cities who adopted all the forms of respectability that middle-class whites brought into their lives in the nineteenth century. However, whites tended to act with disdain and ridicule at any attempts by blacks to display their refinement. Bushman argues that “instead of honoring the black elite for their progress toward refinement, the more general reaction was to turn the standard aristocratic critique of middle-class pretensions against blacks.”³⁴⁹ It is in the context of white ridicule that some historians have argued that dress and gestures toward refinement were in themselves politicized acts of transgression. According to Shane White and Graham White, reactions by whites to black dress, demeanor, and gestural language suggests that they recognized “a highly political subtext of struggle, a determination to renegotiate the social contract.”³⁵⁰ Because certain behaviors challenged social boundaries, donning a parasol or taking an afternoon stroll on a city promenade became politicized acts by African Americans that were assertions of both dignity and resistance. Seen in this light, perhaps the purchases by Sandy Chandler at the McKinney & Brown store go beyond mere middle-class emulation and intimate something far more significant: a desire for genteel goods that mounted a challenge to social status quo and tested the boundaries of freedom itself.

³⁴⁹Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 438.

³⁵⁰Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 128.. Also see, Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 50-51. Even for those not in the middle class, appearance was important. Kelley argues that “dressing up” was equally important to the working poor because it created the opportunity for blacks to be something other than workers and blurred status distinctions. For an archeological perspective, see Paul Mullins, “Race and the Genteel Consumer: Class and African-American Consumption,” *Historical Archaeology* 33 (1999), 22-38; Praetzellis and Praetzellis, “Mangling Symbols of Gentility in the Wild West,” 651.

Located in largely agricultural regions, the majority of McKinney & Brown's and Hardeman & Barret's customers, both white and black, engaged in farming, particularly sharecropping—hardly remarkable in a region where the principal crops were cotton and corn.³⁵¹ In post-Civil War Texas, most blacks became sharecroppers, and most found that they had limited opportunities either to save money or acquire land.³⁵² Frustrated with the opportunities afforded them in rural settings, some blacks chose to move to urban centers to seek employment. While non-agricultural employment among blacks in the last decades of the nineteenth century increased steadily, Texas maintained a lower percentage of urban workers, white and black, than any other state because of its limited urbanization and industrialization. To be sure, discrimination played a critical role in limiting employment opportunities for blacks in cities. As a result, most blacks migrated into pursuits associated with personal and domestic services such as servants, laundresses, nurses and mid-wives, restaurant and saloon keepers, hairdressers and barbers.³⁵³

³⁵¹Affirming this point in the ledgers is the fact that Perry Bolden Jr.'s account received a credit of \$44.80 from the net proceeds of one bale of cotton in December, 1881. Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 289. Hardeman & Barret's ledgers featured a separate "cotton account" entry, listing customer's credits received from cotton. Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, ETRC, 357.

³⁵²Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans*, 46. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*; Lawrence D. Rice, *The Negro in Texas, 1874-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). Alwyn Barr, "African Americans in Texas: From Stereotypes to Diverse Roles," in *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations*, eds. Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 57-67.

³⁵³Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans*, 92. For an informative discussion of the experiences of urban blacks in post-Civil War San Antonio, see Kenneth Mason, *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867-1937* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

According to ledgers for the Wolf General Merchandise Store in Austin, African Americans also found work as general laborers in a variety of capacities for city businesses. Lem Chambers, who worked as a general laborer for one of the city's wholesale grocers, Brueggerhoff & Heidenheimer, provides an example. Chambers is listed in the *General Directory of the City of Austin, Texas for 1877-1878* as "Lemuel Chambers (co'd), lab [laborer] Brueggerhoff & Heidenheimer."³⁵⁴ Located just down Congress Avenue from Chambers' employer, the Wolf Merchandise Firm attracted numerous customers from the immediate vicinity, including laborer Lem Chambers. Not all city residents found themselves in the city's directory—there are few African Americans or women listed in the directory, for example—in part this is because its focus was on listing businesses and skilled laborers; as a consequence, spouses were often not listed. So why Lemuel Chambers? The luxury items that Chambers acquired from the Wolfe store suggest that he either made a comfortable living or spent as though he did. In March 1873, Chambers' entries included Port wine for \$1.00, salmon [probably canned] for 70¢, ham for \$1.35, wine for \$1.00, cigars for \$1.00, ½ gallon of wine for \$1.00, and a bottle of whiskey for 85¢. In January, he purchased a pipe for 50¢, brandy for \$1.20, oysters and lobsters for 30¢ [again, likely canned].³⁵⁵ From the scant examples available, it appears that Chambers had a rather expensive palate. Between his inclusion in the city directory and his expensive purchases, Lem Chambers seems to have done quite well for himself, especially in relation to his sharecropping counterparts in rural

³⁵⁴*General Directory of the City of Austin, Texas for 1877-1878* (Compiled and published by Mooney & Morrison, Houston, Texas), Austin History Center, 87.

³⁵⁵Wolf General Merchandise Store, AR 1991-72, Austin History Center, 52. Chambers appears in the ledger as Lem. Chambers.

Texas. While Chambers does not appear in the 1870 census, the 1880 census provides pertinent information regarding Chambers' circumstances at the time of his purchases from the Wolf store. He was only twenty-two years old in 1873. Further, the census reveals that he continued to work as a store laborer since his occupation was listed as "porter in store." Since his wife, Caroline, was eighteen in 1880, it seems likely that Chambers was unmarried in the early 1870s.³⁵⁶ Thus, his purchasing may reflect the ability to spend his disposable income on himself, a situation not unlike many young men both black and white who found themselves in similar circumstances.

A critical component to any discussion of race in nineteenth-century America is the issue of class; indeed, there appears to be an intrinsic link between divisions in race and divisions in class in Reconstruction Texas. In both urban and rural settings, blacks were relegated to the least desirable, lowest paying jobs—field work in agricultural settings and employment as servants, cooks, laundresses, porters, waiters and laborers in cities. According to Smallwood, lack of training and white discrimination cast urban blacks to the bottom of the socio-economic ladder and incomes from such employment permitted only the basest level of subsistence. In San Antonio, skilled or semiskilled labor was much harder to come by for blacks and, as a result, data from 1870 indicates that 63 percent of the city's freedmen worked as unskilled laborers.³⁵⁷ Lem Chambers'

³⁵⁶1880 Federal Census for Travis County, Enumeration District 138, OHS, 287. Apparently, Chambers also had a one daughter, Mary, at the time of the census.

³⁵⁷Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair*, 46-47. Smallwood asserts that a middle class among blacks certainly emerged in Texas, which included artisans, shopkeepers, small landowners, and the domestic servants of wealthy whites. Further, he also points out that a small number of blacks, very small, less than one percent of the black population, formed a distinct upper class, comprised of elected or appointed officials, ministers, and teachers, as well as owners of large businesses or large farms, see page 110.

success in Austin was the exception not the rule. Certainly the dictates of “progress” permeated the American consciousness in the period. The hope of many in the postbellum period was to reconstruct the nation into one consolidated economic and social whole, leaving no one behind. That aspiration entailed drawing everyone—of all races—into the mix. The issue is how would the lofty goals of national consolidation accommodate the deeply embedded racism that divided nineteenth-century America. The reality is that divisions persisted at both the local and the national level.

Ledgers from few stores better exemplify the racial and class divisions endemic to Gilded Age America than those from William McCampbell’s general store in Refugio, Texas. Located in south Texas, the racial composition of Refugio County reflected the increasingly complex and rapidly changing racial makeup of this cattle and cotton farming region. In the late 1800s, Texas experienced a shift in racial demographics as Mexicans from the south migrated further and further north seeking work. By the turn of the century, Mexicans composed a large percentage of the labor force in both south and central Texas. In *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, Neil Foley observes that “throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, black/white east Texas and Mexican south Texas were converging on each other, as Mexicans gradually moved north and southern whites and blacks pushed west onto the rich prairies of central Texas.”³⁵⁸ Ledger accounts from the W. E. McCampbell and

³⁵⁸ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 28-29. Identifying the regions of Mexican settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, Kenneth Stewart and Arnoldo De Leon note that most Mexicans lived in the sparsely population regions of southern Texas and two counties in south central Texas, Bexar and Goliad. Kenneth L. Stewart and Arnold De Leon, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos and Socioeconomic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 13. According

Bros. store not only mirror the region's racially heterogeneous population, but also demonstrate that in regions with diverse racial compositions white Texans tended to almost over-emphasize and demarcate racial and class distinctions, leading one to question the stability of such racial categories.

The following examples are typical of the entries found in McCampbell's account ledger for 1876-1877: "Lewis Roy (Col'd), 1876, July 13: 1 pair boots," "Marianna (Mex), 1876, June 8: 1 lb candles 25¢, 41/2 lbs flour 25¢, 1/2 lb leaf tobacco 40¢," and "Lee (Col'd), 1876, January 4, 1 lb candles 25¢."³⁵⁹ Like many of their contemporaries, store owners William and Thomas McCampbell distinguished race in their ledger books. However, these store owners went a step further by splitting their account holders into separate ledgers based on criteria (seemingly) associated with employment status. Laborers, who were usually black or Mexican, ended up in one ledger—the account ledger for 1876-1877, and employers, who were typically prominent white town residents, ended up in another—the ledger for 1877. It should be noted that dates for the year 1877 overlap in these two ledgers. Furthermore, daybooks, which listed all the sales recorded on a given day, included customers from both ledgers before the store owners split the transactions into the separate account ledgers. On June 11, 1877, for example, sales were made to A. J. West, R. R. Barber, B. F. West and Joe Toups, all of whom appear in the 1877 ledger. While sales were also made on this date to Arcadia (Mex), Telesferro (Mex), and Ann Shaw, all of whom appear in the 1876-1877 account ledger.

to the 1887 agricultural census, there were only 37 Mexicans out of a total county population of 1245. *Forgotten Texas Census*, 187.

³⁵⁹Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col 7597, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library [DRTL], San Antonio, Texas, 8, 9, 12.

Race seems to have played a major role in determining what ledger the retailers placed their customers in, although class also seems to have been factored into the decisions. Certain telling characteristics differentiate the two ledgers. First, not only are customers distinguished in the 1876-1877 ledger by race, a number of them appear without last names—significant because the same can not be said of customers appearing in the 1877 account ledger. For example, the 1876-1877 ledger includes the accounts of Phillisana (Mex), Nig (Col'd), Pancho (Mex), Mary (Col'd), Germo (Mex), Zano (Col'd), and Trinidad (Mex).³⁶⁰ What can be made of racialized entries that fail to include last names? If the store owners were so familiar with these customers that they did not require last names, why was noting their race so important? Rather than simply suggesting a lack of respect by store owners toward these customers, the practice implies a need to both determine and reinforce racial categories. Typical entries in the 1877 ledger, on the other hand, included both first and last names, examples include Felix Dubois, Dick West, Dr. John S. Ragland, Henry B. Heard, George Maley and H. V. Barrow.³⁶¹ It is worth noting that a number of account holders in the 1876-1877 ledger had Spanish surnames that were not racially identified in the ledger with the distinction (Col'd) or (Mex); examples include Masselina Lavacca, Pancho Selinas, Juan Sarratto, Hulian Roche and Casons Garcia.³⁶² Perhaps, these examples point to another form of racial hierarchy in the ledgers or at least to some fluidity in the store owners' seemingly over-determined racial categories.

³⁶⁰Ibid., 17, 28, 30, 47, 48, 61, 98.

³⁶¹Account Ledger 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros., DRTL, 25, 39, 53, 59, 67.

³⁶²Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros., DRTL, 25, 27, 53, 71, 100.

As a general rule, the store owners recorded women differently in the two account books. Examples of the few women who appear in the 1877 ledger are Mrs. Kate Duncan, Mrs. Susan Dugat and Mrs. Eliza Buck. All of these women's accounts included rather significant purchases, including such items as expensive pistols, jewelry, and table settings.³⁶³ Examples of women in the 1876-1877 ledger include Ann Shaw, Mary, Elvira Peters and Scott's Mexican woman; whose accounts, perhaps not surprisingly, include more modest purchases.³⁶⁴ The fact that Elvira Peters' name changed to Elvira Edwards during this period indicates that marital status alone did not account for the differences in titles. Rather, the differences appear to be related to some character assessment made by store owners. Single or married, Ann Shaw or Elvira Edwards surely merited the distinction of "Miss" or a "Mrs." Thus, the exclusion of such distinctions suggests that the store owners reserved these titles for specific women, perhaps those in the non-laboring classes. According to the ledger, both Shaw and Edwards received credits on their account "by washing" or performing some other unspecified labor for town residents.³⁶⁵

Figures from both ledgers are not only tied together in the daybooks which recorded daily sales, but interactions between the two groups can also be traced in entries from the account ledgers, particularly the 1876-1877 ledger. Under the account of Henry Neel (Col'd), a credit is issued "By amount to a/c B. F. West of \$1.80." West also applied credits to the account of Telesforo Caberro (Mex) and Henry Fields (Col'd), who

³⁶³Account Ledger 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros., DRTL, 31, 70, 479.

³⁶⁴Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, DRTL, 16, 47, 61, 72, 81, 108, 143.

³⁶⁵Ibid., 72, 81, 108, 120.

were all likely his employees.³⁶⁶ B. F. West was a prominent Refugio property holder, a “cowhunter” according to McCampbell’s 1877 ledger, and a frequent and reliable customer of the store.³⁶⁷ Appearing with West in the 1877 ledger, R. L. Dunman’s occupation was also listed as cowhunter and significantly, he served on the same city council as store owner William E. McCampbell, as both were elected to city council to serve in different capacities in 1875. R. L. Dunman credited the account of Hanibal Greenwood \$5.00 who appeared in the 1876-1877 ledger on June 2, 1876. W. B. Doughty another prominent town figure issued a credit to Zano’s account in March 1877.³⁶⁸ In short, the two classes overlapped in the ledgers, usually through the issuing of credits on particular accounts listed in the 1876-1877 ledger.

As ardent as racial attitudes and divisiveness might have been in the town of Refugio, Texas, the rationale behind the two ledgers probably had more to do with work status—laborers versus employers—than racial status. Still, there were certainly qualitative differences between the two books. The informality of the 1876-1877 ledger diverges from the respectful tones of 1877 ledger. Conveniently splitting along racial lines, customers in the former frequently appeared without either the last names or titles that so distinguished the latter. Of the hundreds of transactions listed in the ledgers, only a couple of account holders surfaced in both books: Viggo Kohler and J. S. Rafferty, neither of who had racial distinctions behind their names. Both of these customers went

³⁶⁶Ibid., 49, 90, 115, 121.

³⁶⁷Account Ledger 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, DRTL, 84. Huson, *Refugio*, 262.

³⁶⁸Huson, *Refugio*, 256. Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell, DRTL, 50, 83.

from the 1876-1877 ledger to the 1877 ledger.³⁶⁹ What merited Kohler and Rafferty's change in status and consequent shift in ledger status is unclear. If class and race were intrinsically linked in these ledgers, what does such evidence say about the perception of laboring whites? Does presence in a ledger largely reserved for racial minorities suggest that some laborers were considered less "white" than some of their counterparts? Significantly, most of store's customers remained firmly in the ledger to which they were originally assigned, an apt metaphor for a period in which boundaries of race and class proved to be for racial minorities at least, more fixed than fluid.

In examining the terms on which minority groups entered commercial relations, the question remains as to whether such groups faced price discrimination in their purchasing, especially in comparison to white customers. Obviously, some items do not lend themselves to direct comparisons because differences in quality were usually not recorded in ledgers, such goods include shoes, clothing, and fabrics. That said, a handful of items do allow for some comparison of prices charged to whites and African-American store customers. From the McCampbell & Bros. store, the following goods, purchased in similar quantities, were obtained by customers in both the 1876-1877 ledger and the 1877 ledger. In March 1877, a bottle of Wild Cherry Balsam was sold to Refugio town councilman Robert P. Clarkson for \$1.00. The same product was sold to Henry Elliot, recorded as (col'd), for the same price two months earlier. Elliot also purchased one cake of tar soap for 25¢ and shortly thereafter, Mrs. Kate Duncan paid the same price for the same product. According to the 1877 ledger, Zach Ballard paid \$1.00 for five plugs of tobacco in August 1877, while the 1876-1877 ledger records that Charlie McCampbell

³⁶⁹Account Ledger 1876-1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, DRTL, 77, 141; Account Ledger 1877, 327, 409.

(col'd) paid the same price for the same measure of tobacco in April. Finally, A. H. Barber purchased a box of caps for 20¢ in October and George Hall (col'd) paid the same price for caps in November 1876.³⁷⁰ Rather than a race-based pricing policy, these few examples suggest that customers in each ledger paid the same price for comparable items.

Perhaps the explanation for the fair pricing strategies by the McCampbells lies in the fact these store owners needed the business of their minority customers as much as these customers needed access to goods and credit. At the Hardeman & Barret store in Melrose, a comparison of items such as spellers, slate pencils, and spools of thread between white and African-American customers also demonstrates that prices did not vary between the different racial groups.³⁷¹ Significantly, Ownby finds a similar phenomenon in Mississippi stores during the same period.³⁷² There are likely two explanations for racially unbiased pricing strategies and both derive from merchants' need to both obtain and retain customers. First, merchants were vulnerable to competition from other dry goods operators—this was true for virtually all of the stores under analysis. In Refugio, for instance, Major James Wiley Ratchford and George Robertson Ratchford, George Vineyard, and Ben C. Ellis operated general mercantile firms in the 1870s that competed for customers with the McCampbell & Bros. store.³⁷³ Rather than being the only game in town, Scott Marler finds that many country stores

³⁷⁰Account Ledger 1877, 31, 79, 109, 458; Account Ledger 1876-1877, 22, 23, 26, 95, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, DRTL.

³⁷¹1870-1873 Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [1 vol.], ETRC, 12, 34, 59, 139, 144, 224, 393, 443, 493.

³⁷²Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 72.

³⁷³Huson, *Refugio*, 136.

often faced intense competition and, thus, were unable to establish territorial monopolies. He also cites the instability of the staple crop economy as another factor that undermined merchants' economic control over their clients and left them vulnerable to economic ruin.³⁷⁴ Since store owners in Refugio, Melrose, Jacksonville, and Nacogdoches all faced such conditions—competition and reliance on the vagaries of the market, perhaps these factors curtailed any desire to practice unfair pricing policies with regard to their African-American customers. Without doubt, store owners valued the business of their minority customers, even if they did not value these customers in other senses.

Store ledgers affirm the ubiquity of racial segregation in Gilded Age Texas, particularly for African Americans but also for Mexican Americans. The region was clearly still adjusting to life after slavery. Ledgers from this same period in territorial Oklahoma indicate that in Indian Territory race also proved to be a contentious and fractious issue. Initially pushed to the peripheries of “civilized” white society, Indians increasingly found themselves being pulled into the federal vision of national consolidation—an invitation to which they, like African Americans, had little choice to decline. As Elliott West notes, “Indians were not as enmeshed in white society as the freedmen, but they were being brought inside the house. Blacks and Indians found themselves suddenly moving from opposite directions into the national mainstream.”³⁷⁵ In frequenting and establishing accounts at their local dry goods store, Indians in pre-statehood Oklahoma participated in a market economy and, by extension, the national

³⁷⁴Marler, “Merchants in the Transition to a New South,” 165-192. A similar argument against territorial monopolies in Alabama is found in Kyriakouides, “Lower-Order Urbanization and Territorial Monopoly in the Southern Furnishing Trade,” 179-198.

³⁷⁵West, “Reconstructing Race,” 23.

economy. As in Texas, distinctions of race also surfaced in ledgers from Indian Territory, again testifying to the complex racial divisions evidenced during this period.

As racially divided as America was in the late-nineteenth century, one would think that divisions between minority groups would be less conspicuous in Indian Territory. However, racial identity and categorization proved to be almost as important to Indians in Indian Territory as it was to whites in other parts of the country. That said, politics and power in Indian Territory split along different racial lines than it did in other regions. After all, the government in Indian Territory was largely administered through representatives of the Five Tribes; consequently, political, economic, and social status in Indian Territory was directly linked to one's relationship with tribal officials. Indians in Indian Territory were not minorities to whites in the 1870s and 1880s, although that was quickly changing. In the postbellum period, white civilization increasingly encroached on Indian Territory, fractioning and undermining tribal power from both inside and outside the borders of Indian Territory. Racial politics in the region were not based on simple dichotomies between whites and Indians, or whites and blacks, but also between Indians and blacks and, significantly, between different Indian groups.

According to James Ronda, Indians residing in Indian Territory increasingly sought to define both their race and the region as separate from not just whites, but from blacks. In creating Indian Territory, whites established both geographic and racial boundaries between themselves and Indians. Ronda argues that Indians similarly desired to create a space of racial integrity separate from both whites and blacks: "a red man's

country.”³⁷⁶ In doing so, Indians established laws designed not only to keep whites out of Indian Territory, but also African Americans. Moreover, such laws restricted access by whites and blacks to the most critical component of tribal identity and power—citizenship. Significantly, there was far more fluidity in the ability of whites to marry into a tribe than blacks and many whites took full advantage of this opportunity. Still, the expectation of tribal leaders was that whites who crossed this boundary through marriage would “renounce their whiteness” and embrace being Indian.³⁷⁷ Ledger records from white store owners who married into tribes provide evidence of the racial and class divisions that existed in Indian Territory in the 1870s and 1880s. Such data attests not only to the importance of citizenship in demarcating identity and power in Indian Territory, but also to the need to create and identify boundaries of race between Indians and African Americans living in the region.

The pressure to open Indian Territory up to white settlement came from a variety of sources, including railroad officials, speculators of all kinds, farmers, and white interlopers already operating inside the region. For those seeking to exploit the territory’s economic potential, “Indian Territory was seen as an impediment to regional and national progress, and the issue now boiled down to a question—as it always had where Indian rights were concerned—of whose claims would be judged superior.”³⁷⁸ Ultimately,

³⁷⁶James P. Ronda, “‘We Have a Country’: Race, Geography, and the Invention of Indian Territory,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19 (Winter 1999), 739-755. For a discussion of racial classification among the Choctaws, see Jeffrey Burton, *Indian Territory and the United States, 1866-1906: Courts, Government, and the Movement for Oklahoma Statehood* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 119-120.

³⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 753-754.

³⁷⁸Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U. S. Indian Policy* (Middletown: Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 245.

allotment proved to be the death knell of tribal sovereignty in Indian Territory. With the General Allotment Act, the Curtis Act, and the dissolution of tribal governments in 1906, the job was complete. As Brian Dippie writes, “Then Indian Territory, the ‘shrunk residue’ of the millions of acres that once constituted Indian country, was wiped off the map.”³⁷⁹

Store ledgers from the period provide some insights into the pressures building inside of Indian Territory from white encroachment in the years preceding allotment and the subsequent demise of Indian lands. Out of necessity, white store owners fostered relationships with tribal members and, consequently, tribal officials figure prominently in various account books from the region. The nature of relationships that developed between store owners and tribal members ranged from impersonal economic and political business partnerships to social, highly personal relationships. Like their counterparts to the South, store owners distinguished race in their account ledgers, demonstrating that the racial distinctions that were prominent in the nation as a whole, transcended the boundaries of Indian Territory. Further still, distinctions were made between high ranking tribal members and non-tribal members, affirming the presence of social hierarchies in the region and desire by those in power to create a racial hierarchy based on citizenship.

Store owners James Jackson McAlester and Frederick Benjamin Severs gained access to Indian lands and resources through marriage into the Choctaw and Creek tribes respectively, and both became wealthy as a result. Many white Americans held mixed views on intermarriage between whites and Indians. On the one hand, intermarriage

³⁷⁹Ibid., 247.

allowed access to Indian resources and furthered the assimilation and “civilization” process which had been underway since the time of Thomas Jefferson. On the other hand, racial mixing was not condoned in late nineteenth-century America, especially because some expressed concern over the “passing” of the so-called Anglo-Saxon race.³⁸⁰ Still, there was a deep gulf between white attitudes regarding intermarriage of whites and Indians and intermarriage between whites and blacks, the latter being deemed almost the worst of all social taboos. According to Brian Dippie, ambivalence best characterizes American perceptions of white-Indian relations. In *The Vanishing American*, he suggests that “it was the Indian who was invited to join in the affairs of the nation, even to intermarry with the white race, while the black was consistently shunned.”³⁸¹ As Ronda has argued, Indians sought to protect their own racial boundaries within Indian Territory, and this entailed not only excluding blacks, but requiring that whites either stay out of Indian Territory altogether or relinquish their whiteness by marrying into the tribe.³⁸² To some degree, many tribal officials welcomed into their tribes entrepreneurial-minded whites who might advance the economic fortunes of the region (under the condition that they embraced their new Indian identity). These same tribal officials did not see similar economic benefits accruing through marriages between Indians and blacks. Indian leaders sought to strengthen the prospects of their respective nations and, as Ronda

³⁸⁰See Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1916).

³⁸¹Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 253.

³⁸²Ronda, “We Have a Country,” 753-754.

observes, “nation-building in Indian Territory meant racial separation, notions about ‘blood purity,’ and the power of race in the making of place.”³⁸³

The fact remains that whites could not get ahead in Indian Territory without at least marginal tribal support. Evidence of the fortuitous relationships forged by J. J. McAlester with important members of the Choctaw Nation appear throughout the account ledgers from his dry goods store. For example, the second entry in McAlester’s 1870-1872 Daybook is the sale of a pair of socks, a handkerchief, and a hat to Billy Pusley on October 8, 1870.³⁸⁴ Billy Pusley was the son of Joshua Pusley, a prominent Choctaw farmer who owned coal leases in the Nation. McAlester established a business partnership with Pusley family, through which he gained access to the region’s rich coal beds. Choctaw law forbade whites from extracting resources from their land, but tribal members did not face such restrictions.³⁸⁵ As part-owner of Osage Coal and Mining Company, McAlester reaped the benefits of selling the coal resources and transporting them out of the area via the MK & T railroad. Moreover, McAlester played a principal role in attracting the MK & T to the region. Through his marriage to Rebecca Burney, McAlester received full citizenship in the Choctaw tribe and legal access to the Nation’s coal reserves.³⁸⁶ Other respected Choctaw members who appear in the pages of

³⁸³Ibid., 755.

³⁸⁴1870-1872 Daybook, Box 29, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 5.

³⁸⁵Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* 117- 118.

³⁸⁶Through his relationship with the Pusleys and marriage into the tribe, McAlester certainly gained legal rights to the Choctaw Nation’s resources, and yet the dimensions and legalities of his exploitation of coal reserves proved to be a contentious issue among the Choctaws. As a result, McAlester was embroiled in a number of legal battles and personal conflicts with a number of Choctaw leader in the decades that followed. See Sparks, “James Jesse McAlester.”

McAlester's ledgers in the early years of his business include the Judge E.W. Folsom and Captain John Meshemahtubbie; the latter often traded deer skins with the store owner, receiving a credit on his account for his goods.³⁸⁷

Like his contemporaries in Texas, McAlester distinguished race in his ledgers by the now-familiar practice of including a racial distinction in brackets after the account holder's name. In the case of African Americans, McAlester used (Cold.) to distinguish race in his books. William Yates' account in the 1874-1875 ledger, for example, reads as follows: "William Yates (cold.), 1875 - January 16, 2 bottles of Wizard Oil \$1.00, one bottle of pills 25¢, one pair child's shoes \$1.00, two pair child's hose 70¢, Turner's Wonder 50¢ [medicinal product]."³⁸⁸ Reflecting the prevalence of coal miners in the region, the accounts of both George Trumbo and Richard Goram were listed in McAlester's ledgers with the distinction "(cold. miner)" behind their names.³⁸⁹ In 1876, McAlester recorded the purchases of two of his female employees in the following manner: "Vicy (cold. cook or nurse), July 10 - Bacon \$3.20, calico \$1.00, thread 10¢, snuff 50¢," and "Aunt Violet (cold. cook), May 27 - One pair shoes \$2.00, handkerchief 50¢."³⁹⁰ The informality of these entries is evocative of the manner used to record the accounts of black and Mexican laborers in ledgers from McCampbell's store in Refugio, perhaps because both of these women were evidently employees of the store owner.

³⁸⁷ 1874-1875 Daybook, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 29, 64.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 107.

³⁸⁹ 1875-1878 Daybook, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC,

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 214, 279.

These examples also demonstrate the need to create racial distinctions between not just whites and blacks, but Indians and blacks.

Related to the unique circumstances of operating a store in Indian Territory, McAlester's account records indicate that he developed a hierarchy of status which related to one's standing in the Choctaw Nation, at least as perceived by the store owner. Of note, racial overtones were prevalent in McAlester's constructed social hierarchy. For example, the store owner, himself a member of the Choctaw Nation, described Noel Cass, Dixon McKinney, and "Webster" all as "(Indian)."³⁹¹ However, the store owner did not distinguish any of the prominent Choctaw families with which he did business as Indian, specifically the Pulseys, the Folsoms, or the Meshemahtubbies. Further, as illustrated in his 1875-1878 ledger, McAlester distinguished tribal members from non-tribal members in his records by referring to the former as "(citizen)." For example, James Anacher, who purchased from the store a bottle of lung balsam for \$1.00 on November 25, 1875, is denoted in the ledgers as a "citizen." McAlester also recognized Judge Ellis Folsom, Salone Owens, G. W. Riddle, Sam Moore, Washington Wade, Eastman Pusley, and Wade Hampton as "citizens" in his ledger.³⁹² However, both Isam Jefferson and William Moore appear in the ledger with the distinction of (Indian) behind their names.³⁹³ Why the discrepancy? Perhaps the generic "Indian" simply implied that

³⁹¹1874-1875 Daybook, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 133, 183.

³⁹²1875-1878 Daybook, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 38, 75, 77, 115, 116, 121, 124.

³⁹³*Ibid.*, 74, 115.

although Jefferson and Moore were not members of the Choctaw Nation and they maintained affiliation with another tribe.³⁹⁴

Given that McAlester himself occupied a position of wealth and prestige among the Choctaws and that status and racial distinctions proved to be so important to tribal officials, the prevalence of social distinctions—identifying tribal citizens and Indians—in the store owner’s ledgers are hardly unexpected. Of course, the practice of identifying citizens and Indians in his ledgers in itself, does not suggest that McAlester either discriminated against or deemed his “Indian” clientele as inferior. Rather, the records provide evidence that the store owner affirmed the social and racial distinctions witnessed in the region as a whole. Citizenship was a critical component of establishing Indian identity. In example after example, ledger books affirmed perceived racial distinctions, and in doing so they also helped constitute racial identities, and in Indian Territory this included citizenship. Differentiating citizens from non-citizens was not issue that divided the Choctaws. The level of one’s Indianness also proved to be a polemical issue. Distinctions between full-bloods, mixed-bloods, and intermarried citizens also divided those living in the Choctaw lands. According to Angie Debo, full-bloods proved to be more politically inclined, while mixed-bloods and intermarried citizens—like McAlester—usually devoted themselves to money-making. Despite their commercial focus, Debo maintained that these groups were by no means politically aloof, choosing instead to

³⁹⁴With no census for the period and the fact that these are both rather common Choctaw names, it is difficult to establish tribal affiliation. Many of the citizens listed above, including McAlester himself, appeared in *Hastain’ Index* from 1908, a compilation of Choctaw-Chickasaw deeds and allotments. Isam Jefferson does not appear in the index and unfortunately there are a multiple of William Moore’s listed. The index is almost thirty years after the fact which is also problematic. *Index to the Choctaw-Chickasaw Deeds and Allotments*, E. Hastain, ed. (Muskogee, Okla., 1908).

influence politics from behind the scenes.³⁹⁵ Astutely, many traditional full-bloods perceived both the close ties and the business focus of mixed-bloods and whites as a threat to tribal lands and sovereignty.

McAlester's customers obtained a wide range of goods from the store, demonstrating both the sophistication of the store owner's stock and the diverse tastes of his clientele. Suggesting that education and self-improvement were priorities among citizens of the Choctaw Nation, Judge Ellis Folsom's account included the purchase of a reader and an arithmetic book on January 3, 1876. Wade Washington similarly bought educational materials from the store owner, charging a slate and pencil and a grammar book to his account in the early months of 1876. The purchase of an accordion for \$8.50 by Wade Hampton, another citizen of the tribe, suggests that McAlester's customers did not restrict their purchases to necessities or staples.³⁹⁶ At the cost of \$8.50, Hampton's accordion would have been an expensive strain on the budgets of many of his contemporaries. Certainly, not all of McAlester's clientele engaged in such extravagant spending. Staples like tobacco, coffee, bacon, corn, and flour appeared most frequently on customer's accounts. Indicating that hunting and trapping were still important to many in the Choctaw nation, both Sam Moore (citizen) and William Moore (Indian)

³⁹⁵Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Nation*, 144, 163-166. Also see, Sparks, "James Jackson McAlester," 21-22. Miner, *The Corporation and the Indian*, 64. Duncan Aldrich finds similar rifts among the Cherokees during the same period, noting the connection of whiteness with the merchant class. Aldrich finds that a high percentage of mixed-bloods engaged in retailing in the Cherokee Nation in the nineteenth century: "Most merchants who were neither white nor half blood had either a grandfather or great grandfather who had been a white trader who married into the tribe." Duncan M. Aldrich, "General Stores, Retail Merchants, and Assimilation: Retail Trade in the Cherokee Nation, 1838-1890," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 57 (Summer 1979), 130-132.

³⁹⁶1875-1878 Daybook, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 75, 116, 124.

purchased three steel traps on the same day in 1875. Three months later, William Moore received a credit on his account “by furs,” which settled his balance.³⁹⁷

“Basics” best describes the items purchased by customers of Choctaw store owner, W. N. Jones, who operated a general store in Cade, Indian Territory in the early 1870s. Maintaining a position of wealth and prominence in the Choctaw Nation, Jones served as principal chief of the Choctaw Nation and maintained a large cattle ranch which employed, according to one source, “a great many Indians to handle his cattle and ponies.”³⁹⁸ The store owner recorded customer accounts in his ledgers in both English and Choctaw, sometimes employing a mix of both. A typical entry from his ledger reads as follows: “Henry Buhring: 1874, January 17, two shirts for \$3.00 each, one pair pants \$4.00, February 7, one plug tobacco \$1.00.”³⁹⁹ Items that most frequently appeared on customer accounts were tobacco, calico fabric, flour, finished clothing items, boots and shoes (recorded in ledgers as “sholosh,” the Choctaw word for shoes). One notable exception, is the account of Simeon Levi, who is distinguished in the account book as “Dr. To W. Jones.” Levi purchased from the Jones store an assortment of spelling books and a quire of writing paper on April 28, 1873.⁴⁰⁰ Still, judging from the relatively few accounts listed in the ledger and the heavy emphasis on staple goods, it appears that this general store was a relatively modest operation, established to service the basic needs of the region’s largely ranching clientele.

³⁹⁷Ibid., 115.

³⁹⁸Interview with Charles Middleton, Indian Pioneer Papers, Vol. 63, WHC, 28.

³⁹⁹1871-1874 Ledger, J-2, 1137, Dovie Jones Collection, WHC, 22.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid., 12. For translations, *English Choctaw Dictionary*, 5th Ed., Will T. Nelson, ed. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Council of Choctaws, 1975).

Operating a dry goods store in Okmulgee, the capital of the Creek Nation, retailer Frederick Benjamin Severs did not, like McAlester, differentiate “Indians” from “citizens” of the Creek Nation in his store ledgers. However, there are some important similarities between F. B. Severs and J. J. McAlester. Severs, like McAlester, gained citizenship into the tribe through marriage and his relationship with Chief Samuel Checote. Clearly, the store owner developed strong ties to influential members of the Creek Nation. Between fostering key relationships with tribal leaders and capitalizing on lucrative business ventures, Severs emerged as a man of wealth and prominence among the Creeks. The pages of his account ledgers are chock-full of important tribal leaders, including the Creek Chiefs Checote, Pleasant Porter and Moty Tiger.⁴⁰¹

While Severs did not indicate distinctions between Creek members and non-members in his ledgers, he did distinguish the race of his African-American customers in his ledgers. On September 29, 1869, for example, a “Blk Woman” settled with the store owner a \$2.25 balance on a pair of shoes. A week later, Tom, a “Blk Man,” purchased a ½ gallon of molasses from the Severs store.⁴⁰² In other entries, the store owner used the distinction “cold.” to identify his black customers; for example, Macher “Cold. Man” purchased a pair of shoes on December 14, 1869 and Andy Fields (Cold.) charged two bars of lead and \$4.00 cash to his account, he also paid (Solomon cold.) 50¢, recorded as a debit on his account.⁴⁰³ A few general observations can be made regarding these entries. The most obvious point is that Sever recognized racial distinctions in his ledgers;

⁴⁰¹1869-1871 Daybook, F. B. Severs Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society [OHS] 10, 14, 24.

⁴⁰²Ibid., 55, 58.

⁴⁰³Ibid., 128, 215.

at least he distinguished African Americans. Secondly, the majority of entries for black customers did not include last names, mirroring the informal tone employed by store owners in Texas ledgers. Finally, Sever's African-Americans customers tended to stick to staples in their purchasing patterns, rarely acquiring more than a few items—surely, shoes and molasses can hardly be considered luxury items.

F. B. Severs' general store in Okmulgee, Creek Nation was a long way from the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, Texas, even farther from William McCampbell's merchandise firm in Refugio, Texas, yet distinctions of race appeared in ledgers from all three stores, especially in the form of shorthand qualifiers identifying customers as African American. It is important to keep in mind that ledgers were not written for public consumption; in fact, it was unusual for more than a few people to view such records, specifically store owners and, if they could afford them, their clerks. So why was distinguishing race so important to these store owners? In all likelihood, the answer lies in the period itself. In late nineteenth-century America, few issues divided the nation more than that of race, particularly in the South (or in the regions neighboring the South). In accordance with federal prerogatives, *all* Americans were to be integrated into the national economy and indeed, general stores provided an excellent forum for such economic inclusion. Customer records from Texas and pre-statehood Oklahoma indicate that persons of all racial categories frequented stores, established credit, and purchased both luxury and staple items from retailers. However, it is one thing to shop together, it is another thing entirely to bridge deep-seated racial divisions. Perhaps in such an environment, store owners felt that such distinctions needed to be clarified more than ever, even in their personal logs.

Ledgers also indicate that some store owners developed social hierarchies in their records, drawn from both racial and class distinctions. At the McKinney & Brown store, a handful of black customers, like Sandy Chandler and Perry Bolden, “secured” the right of credit for other blacks. In Refugio, store owner William McCampbell divided his customers’ accounts into separate ledgers, probably denoting one’s employment status, although race seems to have been somehow configured into the equation. While in Indian Territory, McAlester distinguished “Indians” from “citizens,” a distinction that confirms that not only was race important in this region, but it was tied to the related issues of identity and citizenship. In effect, store ledgers demonstrate the persistence of social divisions and distinctions in late nineteenth-century America, particularly in regard to race. And whether it was at a dry goods outlet located in rural Texas or one situated in the heart of Indian Territory, store owners were sure to record not only their customers’ names and purchases, but also the color of their skin.

Chapter Five - The German Imprint

In a letter relaying the experiences of her life on the Texas frontier to an interested New York banker, store owner Anna Martin added in a postscript the following apology: “Excuse my poor English as I have lived all my life in a German settlement and all my dealings were most with Germans. We don’t speak anything else in our home, only German. But I love my adopted Fatherland and my sons are good loyal Americans.”⁴⁰⁴ Ledger entries from Martin’s general store indicate the preponderance of Germans in the small settlement of Hedwig’s Hill; in fact, virtually all of the customers listed in her store records from the 1880s were of first- or second-generation German descent. Unlike the divisions of race and class that distinguished store owners from their clients at other stores in Texas, Anna Martin had more in common—socially and culturally—with her customers than she had differences. In a period that featured so much social upheaval and divisiveness, Hedwig’s Hill was a community built on cohesiveness, continuity and shared culture and value systems. This largely immigrant settlement paralleled similar pockets of ethnic clustering that occurred throughout nineteenth-century America in both rural and urban settings. Rather than melting into some amorphous American identity, these nascent communities retained much of their own unique cultural identities, while concurrently exchanging their rituals, language and values with persons from different backgrounds and ethnic origins. As such, German-owned stores provide another layer to the already complex fabric of commercial relations on the south central plains.

According to Terry Jordan, a geographer who has written extensively on immigration patterns in Texas during the nineteenth century, by the last decades of the

⁴⁰⁴Letter from Anna Martin to M. Chapman dated 1904, Homer Martin Papers, Microfilm M381, SWC.

century, Germans were the largest European immigrant group in the state. In 1887, the roughly 130,000 Germans in Texas constituted the second largest ethnic group in the state—second only to African Americans—and made up well over half of the European migration.⁴⁰⁵ Germans began arriving in Texas in the early 1830s, although significant immigration did not occur until a decade later. Although briefly interrupted by the Civil War, steady German immigration continued into the postbellum period, climaxing in the 1880s and dropping off by the end of that decade. Thus, by 1890, the German imprint on the state of Texas was well established.

Although Anna Martin's family settled in a small agricultural hamlet, Jordan notes that many German immigrants to Texas chose cities and towns rather than rural areas. Cities like Galveston, which served the Germans as a welcoming port, acquired a large percentage of Germans from the 1840s onward. During his visit to Texas in the 1850s, Frederick Law Olmstead estimated Galveston's German population at 3,500, which was roughly one-third of the city's population at that time. As he moved further inland, Olmstead estimated that San Antonio's German population at approximately 3,000 residents, again roughly one-third of the city's population.⁴⁰⁶ Olmstead's observations are worth noting. He wrote, "In social and political relations, the Germans do not occupy the position to which their force and character should entitle them. They mingle little with the Americans, except for the necessary buying and selling." Further, he continued, "The manners and ideals of the Texans and of the Germans are hopelessly

⁴⁰⁵ Jordan, "A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas," 411.

⁴⁰⁶ Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey Through Texas: or, A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978. Reprint of the 1857 edition by Dix, Edwards and Co., New York), 160, 424, 428.

divergent, and the two races have made little acquaintance, observing one another apart with unfeigned curiosity, often tempered with mutual contempt.”⁴⁰⁷ In short, Olmstead focused on German differences, rather than any cultural similarities between them and other “Americans.” With this in mind, it can be said that the advantage for immigrants of shopping at German-owned stores was that they did not enter commercial relations as outsiders. Indeed, both German store owners and their clients shared their “otherness” status.

The high number of German immigrants in Texas towns and cities mirrored national patterns. According to Roger Daniels, a large percentage of German migrants who came to America during the Gilded Age settled in mid-sized urban centers, especially cities in the Midwest. Daniels asserts that, while many German immigrants remained in northeastern cities, the majority migrated inland to the region often described by demographers as the “German Triangle,” comprised of the three midwestern cities of Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.⁴⁰⁸ As in Texas, Germans constituted the largest immigrant group in America during the decades following the Civil War, representing approximately twenty-five percent of the total immigrant population nationally during the 1870s and 1880s. While German immigrants clustered in centers in the Midwest, Daniels concedes that there were “occasional German-bloc communities elsewhere” citing Anaheim, California as an example.⁴⁰⁹ He notes that about one German-born person in

⁴⁰⁷Ibid., 431.

⁴⁰⁸Roger Daniels, “The Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age,” in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), 76.

⁴⁰⁹Ibid., 65, 76.

four was engaged in agriculture in 1870, and at that date Germans comprised more than a third of all foreign-born farmers in the United States.⁴¹⁰ As discussed earlier, Texas also proved to be a popular destination for German immigrants of the period. Jordan observes that from 1881 to 1885, for example, 5,106 Germans departed from Bremen, Germany alone for the Texas port at Galveston.⁴¹¹ In addition to Galveston and San Antonio, other towns and cities in Texas which benefitted demographically from German immigration in the mid-nineteenth century included Houston, Austin, Indianola, New Braunfels, Gonzales, and Victoria.⁴¹² German immigrants maintained their demographic presence in such cities well into the 1880s, prompting Jordan to observe that “one should look to the urban scene in Texas for some of the deepest continental cultural imprints.” Regrettably, there is little in-depth scholarship tracing the cultural influences of Germans in pre-industrial towns and cities in Texas.⁴¹³ Of course, not all of those who passed through Galveston settled in cities and towns; some opted to establish their homes in the rural agricultural areas of central Texas, such as Hedwig’s Hill in Mason Country.

Extant ledger records from general stores in nineteenth-century Texas largely tell the story of the rural German immigrant experience, rather than the urban. These ledgers highlight the early migrations that took place primarily during the 1840s and 1850s. Unfortunately, there are only a handful of ledger collections that provide insights into the German immigrant communities that settled in mid nineteenth-century Texas. The

⁴¹⁰Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (Princeton: Visual Education Corporation, 1990), 151.

⁴¹¹Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 55.

⁴¹²*Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁴¹³Jordan, “A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas,” 409-410.

collections include a ledger from Hermann Fisher's store located twenty miles northwest of New Braunfels, Texas in the Hill Country of northern Comal County and a loose collection of ledger information from Herman Ernst's account book from his store in Industry, Texas (the first German town founded in Texas in 1838). However, neither of these collections furnish as valuable a window into the lived experiences of the German immigrants on the Texas frontier as the ledger collection from Anna Martin's store in Hedwig's Hill. The fact that Martin also recorded her life experiences provides an invaluable first-hand account of life in both early Texas and the small immigrant community of Hedwig's Hill.

Given that many of the Germans who settled in the region arrived in Texas in the mid- to late-1840s, the term frontier aptly describes this inchoate stage in Texas history. Evidently, Anna's first experiences in Texas were marred by fear. In her letter, she provided the following description of those early years: "It was horrible for a young girl just growing to womanhood who had seen all the nice things young girls had in Germany and then taken abruptly away in the wilderness of Texas without any future where we could not go a step from the house fearing the Indians would all kill us." In the years during and after the Civil War, the situation apparently worsened: "From 1861 to 1865 and till the seventies, we had a horrible time here on the frontier. All the bad element running away from the battlefields gathered here on the frontier and robbed and killed man and beast all around us. And the Indians we had to deal with also, but the Indians we knew were our enemies, but the others we did not know, friend or foe."⁴¹⁴ As daunting as the task seemed in the early years, life on the frontier fortunately improved

⁴¹⁴Ibid.

for Anna and her family, as it did for many of the immigrants who arrived on American shores in the mid nineteenth century.

After landing in ports along the Texas coast, most German immigrants journeyed inland, some eventually making their way to the north slope of the Llano River in Hill Country and forming the community that came to be known as Hedwig's Hill. Once they established their homesteads in Hill Country, these immigrants truly "settled" in the area. Indeed, there is ample evidence of these first-wave immigrants in the records from Anna Martin's store in the late 1880s, forty years after their arrival. The story of Henry Julius Behrens provides a fitting example. In the fall of 1845, Henry Conrad Behrens sailed with his wife Sophia, their eight-year old son, Henry Julius, and their three daughters from Bremenshaven, Germany aboard the *Gerhard Hermann*, arriving in Galveston, Texas on January 10, 1846.⁴¹⁵ The Behrens family traveled with other German families who also appeared some forty years later in the Martin store records, including the families of Conrad Pluenneke and Christian Leifeste. After taking a second smaller ship to Indianola, Texas, the Behrens departed for New Braunsfels, Texas on February 2, 1846 and, shortly thereafter, moved on to the new German settlement of Fredericksburg. They stayed on in Fredericksburg for a few years before moving to the north bank of the Llano River in 1849, creating a new settlement called Castell. According to Behrens, life in Fredericksburg was difficult, at best: "Some days [we] didn't have anything to eat and

⁴¹⁵There is a discrepancy with this date, the family arrived either on December 10th or January 10th depending on the source one uses—see "Henry Julius Behrens," in *Mason County Historical Book* (Mason County Historical Commission, 1986), 8 or an earlier version, similarly titled the *Mason County Historical Book* (Mason County Historical Commission and Mason County Historical Society, 1976), 13, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX. I have gone with the latter date since it is derived from an early interview with Behrens. Regardless of the arrival date in Texas, both sources have the family leaving for New Braunsfels on February 2, 1846.

very little to wear...We took a stocking each [he and another boy] and went to the camp [Ft. Martin Scott] which was a short distance. [We] picked up the grains of corn that oxen (and horses) had scattered while eating.”⁴¹⁶ Such scraps served as family meals, sustaining the Behrens through their most trying periods in frontier Texas. Shortly after the family moved to Castell, Henry Conrad Behrens acquired a grant of land from the German Immigration Company in late 1849. Unfortunately, Behrens never lived to enjoy his new land as he was killed by Indians in 1850. The tract of land was located four miles north of Camp Mason, near the area where, in 1853, the small community of Hedwig’s Hill was established. Young Henry left the area briefly in the 1860s, serving under Captain Davis in the 2nd Frontier District, Texas State Troops stationed at Camp Davis in Gillespie County.⁴¹⁷

Behrens evidently returned to Mason County after the Civil War, appearing decades later in the pages of Anna Martin’s general store ledgers. He purchased from the Martin store, for example, sugar, bacon and a gallon of oil on March 5, 1888.⁴¹⁸ By the time of these purchases, Henry’s relationship with the Martins had spanned over thirty years. He began working as a butcher for Karl Martin, Anna’s husband, in 1857; Martin had a contract to supply beef to Fort Mason. Henry’s sister, Sophie worked as a domestic servant in the Martin household during the same period. By the 1880s, Henry Julius Behrens had emerged as a prosperous farmer and rancher; he established a community

⁴¹⁶“Henry Julius Behrens,” *Mason County Historical Book* (1986), 9.

⁴¹⁷*Ibid.*, *Mason County Historical Book* (1976), 13,14.

⁴¹⁸Day Book II, 1887-1888, Hedwig’s Hill Store Records, SWC, 266.

school in the mid-1880s that bore his name, the Behrens Community School.⁴¹⁹ In 1881, he traveled to Austin to purchase lumber for a new school house, located only a few hundred yards from his house. Operating out of the same building, Behrens organized a Sunday School in 1883 for the community's young people. From meager beginnings, Behrens had achieved, by the 1880s, enough success to enable him to give something back to his community. Behrens interest in developing educational facilities in his region suggest that community activism and moral improvement crossed ethnic, as well as racial, boundaries.

The experiences of Henry Behrens and his family were not unlike many of his German contemporaries who emigrated to Texas in the mid to late 1840s and early 1850s. The German community in Hedwig's Hill was defined by its commitment to the region and by the longevity of the members' relationships to one another—many of these families literally met on the ship crossing the Atlantic. From landing to settlement, they experienced their new land together. Further, as Anna Martin noted in her 1904 letter, written almost fifty years after her family arrived in America, she had lived all her life among Germans, “in a German settlement,” where her “dealings were most with Germans.” Hedwig's Hill was an oasis of German culture—a tightly-knit German enclave, steeped in German traditions and values situated in heart of Texas. Reflecting the pluralistic trends of the period, the immigrants who settled in the region left an indelible imprint on the region, both socially and economically. They were both Germans and, as Anna noted, “good loyal Americans.”

⁴¹⁹“Henry Julius Behrens,” *Mason County Historical Book* (1986), 10. *Mason County Historical Book* (1976), 15.

In many ways, Anna Martin's immigrant experience mirrored that of her longstanding friend and customer, Henry Julius Behrens. As a teenager, Anna traveled with her family from Bremen, Germany to Galveston, arriving at the port December 10, 1858, on Anna's fifteenth birthday. Her family also took a steamer from Galveston to Indianola, leaving that location shortly thereafter to venture inland to the small community of Hedwig's Hill. Earlier that year, Anna's uncle, Louis Martin, named the small settlement Hedwig's Hill in honor of his mother. Anna and her family resided with her uncle while they waited for her father to join them in America; he had remained in Germany six months after his family's departure in order to settle his affairs.⁴²⁰ Anna's father had owned a small business that had fallen on hard times. She wrote, "When I was nine years old, he [Anna's father] established business for himself in Solingen, the great steel manufacturing town." However, she continued, "In 1858, my father failed in his business. My mother who was from an aristocratic family, and all well to do, could not face poverty among her wealthy relations and friends so she left old Germany with her six children, of which I was the oldest, without telling anybody good-bye."⁴²¹

Apparently, the Martins' hard-luck story was not that unusual in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, the German economy was undergoing the first shift to industrial capitalism—and, unfortunately, all of the social and economic growing pains associated with such transformation. Historian Mack Walker has argued that a principal impetus behind much of the German migration to Texas in the mid-nineteenth century was a reaction against modernity, more specifically industrial

⁴²⁰Letter from Anna Martin to M. Chapman dated 1904, Homer Martin Papers, Microfilm M381, SWC.

⁴²¹Ibid.

capitalism, which had increasingly pressured small family farmers off their land and drove small independent artisans and merchants out of business. Walker asserts that for the small German craftsman or family businessman, modern industry and capitalism exposed him to a scale of competition that threatened to overwhelm not only his economic independence, but his dignity and status as well.⁴²² It appears that the Martin family business could no longer compete in a rapidly changing economy where large industrial firms bankrupted small family enterprises. Perhaps on the Texas frontier, the small German craftsman or businessman could regain his place, dignity and honor again. Like the scores of other immigrant boarding ships to America, Anna's parents hoped to find prosperity and make a fresh start in their new land.

Walker relates the reaction toward industrialism by immigrants to the artistic Biedermeier movement popular in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century. Named for a form of artistic and cultural expression which celebrated stability, privacy, serenity, traditional values, and home-seeking, the Biedermeier style reflected a reaction against the massive cultural and economic changes associated with industrialism.⁴²³ The Germans who migrated to Texas in 1840s and 1850s sought to return to a more traditional, pre-industrial world. To be sure, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, America could hardly be considered pre-capitalist. However, industrial capitalism affected different regions of the country in profoundly different ways. By and large, the Germans who migrated to America during the Biedermeier period avoided the

⁴²²Mack Walker, "The Old Homeland and the New," in *German Culture in Texas, A Free Earth: Essays from the 1978 Southwest Symposium*, eds. Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 76-77.

⁴²³*Ibid.*, 74-75.

industrial centers of the Northeast and instead headed inland either to smaller centers in the Midwest or to rural areas like the Hill Country in central Texas. They did not expect to escape capitalism altogether, rather they hoped to return to an earlier period of capitalist development—a period before large-scale industrial firms virtually swallowed up small family enterprises.⁴²⁴

Much like the Anglo-American immigrants who were attracted to Texas through the *empresario* system, a vast land grant in west-central Texas initially drew German immigrants to the area. The grant was obtained through an association called the *Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas* (translated as the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas), generally known in English and German as the *Adelsverein*. Comprised of an assortment of wealthy princes and noblemen from numerous provinces throughout Germany, the *Adelsverein* acquired a huge tract of land, approximately two million acres, from the Republic of Texas, allocating it for the purpose of German settlement. The association then used enticements to draw settlers to the new colony. Future settlers would pay a fixed sum to the association and receive in exchange passage to America, a grant of land and a free log house. The project was initially supervised by Prince Carl von Solms-Braunsfels and later by the Baron von Meusebech. Beginning in 1844, German emigrants boarded ships destined for Galveston, then went by smaller ship to Indianola, the *Adelsverein* port on Matagorda Bay, and then

⁴²⁴Most of the early Texas settlers, especially those in the 1840s migrations, came from the same regions in Germany—the Middle and High German provinces of Nassau, Electoral Hesse, Upper Hesse-Darmstadt, Alsace, Thuringia, the Heilbronn area of Württemberg, as well from the Low German areas of Oldenburg, southern Hannover, Brunswick (Braunschweig), the Münsterland, and Mecklenburg—the Wetterau, a region in Upper Hesse-Darmstadt, north of Frankfurt-am-Main was a particularly important source of Texas settlers. Lesser numbers came from Holstein, Waldeck, Anhalt and portions of the Prussian Rhine Province. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 33.

proceeded inland. From 1844 to 1846, approximately 10,000 German settlers were shipped by the *Adelsverein* alone, including a number who wound up patronizing Anna Martin's store.⁴²⁵

Examples of immigrants who arrived in the initial years of the *Adelsverein* and later appear in Martin's ledgers from the 1880s, include Jacob Bauer, George and Bernhardt Durst, Henry Hasse, Jr., John Keller, Fritz Kothmann, Christoph and Henry Leifeste, Conrad Pluenneke, Conrad Simon, and Conrad Wisseman.⁴²⁶ Many of the other names who appear in the store ledgers arrived in America, like Anna Martin herself, in the late 1840s and early 1850s. As was the case with the Behrens family, some not only left Germany at the same time, but traveled on the same ship. Jacob Bauer sailed to America with his parents, Melchior and Rosina Bauer, on the ship, the *Element*, which landed at Galveston on October 22, 1846. Similarly, George and Bernhardt Durst traveled with their parents, John and Christina Margarethe Durst, and their siblings on the *Element*, landing in Galveston first, then proceeding to Indianola and Fredericksburg, before settling in the Hedwig's Hill community. Forty years later, Jacob Bauer and the Durst brothers ended up only pages apart in the ledger records for Anna Martin's store. Literally growing up with the community, these immigrants would have a lasting impact on the small settlement of Hedwig's Hill and the Hill Country region in general.

⁴²⁵Walter Struve, *Germans & Texas: Commerce, Migration, and Culture in the Days of the Lone Star Republic* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 46-48. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 41-43.

⁴²⁶See Customer Account Book I, 1884-1891, 4, 13, 39, 46, 50, 129. Day Book I, 1885-1887, 10, 351, 383, 398, 506, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC. For family histories, see *Mason County Historical Book* (1976), 10, 60, 98, 131, 151, 165, 205, 241, 277, 278.

The German colony established by Friedrich Ernst in 1831, in northwestern Austin County, predated both the founding of the republic of Texas and *Adelsverein* migration, the latter by more than a decade. On April 16, 1831, Ernst received a land grant from the Mexican government which enabled him to begin farming in the region. He planted fruit trees and began growing crops, including tobacco. Demonstrating a great deal of commercial initiative, Ernst produced cigars from the tobacco and sold them in the nearby towns of San Felipe, Houston and Galveston. Enthusiastic about the potential of his new country, Ernst wrote a letter to a friend back in Germany which was subsequently published in a local newspaper. As a result of this letter, Friedrich Ernst is credited with starting the first steady stream of German migration to Texas. Ernst founded the town of Industry in 1838, noted for being the first German town in Texas. While the town's founder died in 1848, the small community pressed on, shifting its economic focus from tobacco to cotton in the 1850s.⁴²⁷

Remnants of this small, historic community are captured in ledger records from Hermann Ernst's general store which operated in Industry during the period under analysis, the 1870s and 1880s. The store actually opened for business in the late 1830s during the very earliest stages of German migration. It was initially owned and operated by John G. Seiper, Friedrich Ernst's son-in-law, who also served as the community's postmaster. Apparently, Seiper was named postmaster in 1838, although the first written records of the post office in Industry were from December 23, 1840.⁴²⁸ The son of

⁴²⁷Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 41. *The New Handbook of Texas*, Volume 3 (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996), 850.

⁴²⁸Miriam Korff York, *Friedrich Ernst of Industry: Research on Life, Family, Acquaintances, and Conditions of the Times* (Giddings, Texas: Nixon Printing Company, 1989), 61.

Friedrich Ernst, Hermann Ernst took over the management of many of his father's businesses when Friedrich died in 1848. After the death of John Seiper in 1855, Hermann also assumed operation of the community's general store. Born in 1827, Hermann was merely a toddler when his family traveled to Texas in 1831. He became so acculturated to his new land that his father characterized his son in a letter written in the 1830s by saying, "My Hermann is growing remarkably and is turning into a real Mexican."⁴²⁹ Evidently, little Hermann absorbed much of the cross-cultural exchange experienced between these newly-arrived Germans and the locals.

As a retailer, Hermann occupied a position of importance in the small community of Industry. Through his store, Ernst established relationships with virtually all area residents and account records indicate that the store owner served as a middle man between his largely cotton-farming clientele and outside markets. Many of his clients paid their store accounts with bales of cotton which Ernst, in turn, hauled to Brenham, Texas to be distributed and sold. Cattle were also brokered out of Ernst's store. On March 1, 1882, for example, three bulls and one heifer were sold to the store owner for \$38.00.⁴³⁰ Like many of his counterparts in other areas of Texas and Oklahoma, Ernst's prominent role in the local economy parlayed itself into a position of elevated social importance in the community. Hermann Ernst assumed responsibility for administration of Industry's modest educational system. Ernst, for example, was in charge of paying the local school teacher through the store—the local school teacher was paid \$1.50 a year for each child taught. The store owner paid the teacher, a year in advance from October 1 to

⁴²⁹Ibid., 148.

⁴³⁰Ernst (Herman) Account Book, 3C61, The Center for American History (CAH), The University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

September 30 in 1875 and 1876. School repairs and school taxes were also assessed and charged to customers' accounts through the store. In December 1881, for instance, Simmons School House assessed a tax of \$1.50 for each pupil, which was subsequently applied to customers' accounts. School teacher, T. R. Simmons was paid for teaching through Ernst's store; he received a \$14.75 credit for teaching school which was recorded on his account in November 1883.⁴³¹ Clearly, German immigrants placed a high priority on providing their children with an education, a situation not unlike many of their contemporaries in the African and Native American communities or, for that matter, other ethnic communities in the country.

Between 1846 and 1850, Ernst F. G. Knolle and his brother Frederick purchased a large tract of land adjacent to the Ernst league, establishing themselves as prominent landholders and cotton producers in the region. In 1857, Knolle and another investor, Andreas Buenger, constructed the town's first cotton gin.⁴³² In all likelihood, this same Ernst Knolle made the following purchases from Hermann Ernst's store in 1876: E. Knolle (Sen.) bought 10 yards of calico from the store owner on April 24; he purchased 10 bottles of lye, soda and medicine on May 9, and six cups and saucers on June 19, 1876.⁴³³ The presence of both Hermann Ernst and E. Knolle in ledgers recorded several decades after they arrived in the area suggests that, like those who settled in Hedwig's Hill, the German immigrants in the Industry area tended to remain in the region, establishing long-standing communities and relationships with their fellow expatriates.

⁴³¹York, *Friedrich Ernst of Industry*, 153. Ernst Account Book, 3C61, CAH.

⁴³²*The New Handbook of Texas*, 850.

⁴³³Ernst Account Book, 3C61, CAH, 82.

Perhaps not surprisingly, German farming practices heavily influenced the agricultural development of the areas settled by the new immigrants, particularly in the Hill Country of west-central Texas. From the earliest periods of migration, the western German settlements were characterized by numerous kitchen gardens which featured an array of vegetables both consumed and sold by the settlers. A wide range of vegetables were raised in these kitchen gardens, including varieties of vegetables not grown in Anglo-Americans gardens, such as kohlrabi, mustard, parsley, and leek.⁴³⁴ Another variation more common among German settlers than their southern Anglo-American counterparts was the practice and preponderance of haymaking; Terry Jordan attributes such differences to their respective agricultural heritages. Evidently, the draft animal of choice of the German western settlements was the ox, which again differentiated Germans in the area from Anglo-American settlers. Oxen were cheaper to purchase than horses, the latter being the draft animal of choice for most non-Germans; also the cost of keeping oxen was less than that of keeping horses. Jordan observed that, "In the ante-bellum period, and even as late as 1870, the ox was in almost universal use among the Germans, in contrast to the Anglo-Americans of the same area, who relied much more on the horse."⁴³⁵ While economic considerations played an important role in the discrepancy, it is also significant that the ox had been the traditional farm draft animal of Germany, proving that traditional farming practices endemic to their homeland crossed the ocean along with the settlers themselves.

⁴³⁴Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 135.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*, 141, 143.

In Mason County, cattle ranching eventually developed into the region's primary agricultural activity. This was especially true for the 1880s, the period covered in the ledgers from Anna Martin's store. In fact, Prince von Solms-Braunsfel had predicted the suitability and profitability of cattle to the region as early as the 1840s, noting in his earliest correspondence that "Cattle should take the first place among domestic animals."⁴³⁶ Cattle ranching was first established in the area not by Germans, but by Mexican settlers around San Antonio. By the time the Germans arrived in the Texas Republic, Anglo and Spanish herding practices had converged, ultimately shaping the nature of ranching in southern and central Texas. Recognizing the suitability of the land on which they settled and, no doubt, drawing from what they observed amongst Mexican and Anglo-Americans, the German immigrants entered in the business of cattle ranching shortly after their arrival. The physical environment of Mason Country was well suited to raising cattle. With gently sloping ground, natural topography that allowed for protection from the cold, open ranges, and abundant grasses, little effort was needed on the part of immigrants to successfully raise cattle. Still, though the physical environment lent itself to ranching and the new immigrants eagerly pursued the venture, the development of the cattle industry in Mason County was a gradual process, beginning in the 1840s and continuing to the present day.⁴³⁷

The German imprint on the Texas frontier was by no means restricted to the realm of agriculture. From the arrival of immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, German

⁴³⁶Prince von Solms-Braunsfel cited in Margaret Bierschwale's *A History of Mason County, Texas Through 1964*, ed. Julius E. Devos (Mason, Texas: Mason County Historical Commission, 1998), 192.

⁴³⁷Ibid. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 144, 147.

cultural influences shaped the development of Hill Country in west-central Texas. After all, Anna Martin described Hedwig's Hill as a "German settlement," and as such German rituals, routines, values and language strongly influenced the *Kulturebe* (cultural heritage) of the community.⁴³⁸ While ledgers from Anna Martin's store indicate that many of her customers stocked up on staples of the German diet, such as sauerkraut, mustard, and vinegar for pickling, the great majority of items listed on their accounts were interchangeable with those of non-German consumers at general stores not only throughout Texas and Oklahoma, but across the nation and overseas. Indeed, staples such as tobacco, sugar, flour, bacon, coffee and fabrics appear most frequently on customer accounts at the Martin store.⁴³⁹ Moreover, the purchasing of items like sauerkraut was not restricted to German immigrants. Account entries from the Gauntt Bros. store in Athens, Texas reveal that non-German consumers also purchased the flavorful German cabbage. In 1887 and 1888, for example, J. G. Stewart, William Davis, and store owner William [Bill] Gauntt, all acquired large quantities of sauerkraut from the store.⁴⁴⁰ Such evidence suggests that German immigrants in central Texas did not simply produce items for their own consumption, but German commodities were sold at general stores, including those not owned by German immigrants. Moreover, commodities—such as sauerkraut—proved to be popular with Germans and non-Germans

⁴³⁸Gilbert J. Jordan, "German Cultural Heritage in the Hill Country of Texas," in *German Culture in Texas*, 176-188.

⁴³⁹For examples, see Daybook III, 1888-1890, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 1, 3. Also see Fischer (Hermann) Store Records, 2D144, May 30 and July 27, 1886.

⁴⁴⁰Gauntt Bros. Ledger, 1887-1888, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 45, 49, 259.

alike. At least at the level of consumption, the German imprint was felt in the daily lives of both Germans and non-Germans living in the Hill Country of central Texas.

Records from Anna Martin's store demonstrate that German cultural influences also had a decidedly seasonal element to them, particularly when it came to the Christmas holiday. Entries from Martin's store provide valuable insights into the significance the German immigrants of Hedwig's Hill placed on perpetuating their holiday customs, as reflected in their Christmas purchasing. A number of historians whose research focuses on the subject of Christmas in America argue that, through a selective reworking of older European customs, Americans by the late decades of the nineteenth century recast the Christmas holiday to fit American culture, most especially American middle-class culture.⁴⁴¹ Over the course of the nineteenth-century, the middle class emphasis on social order, moral probity, and Protestantism refashioned Christmas from its more secular, less-genteel, roots to more ordered and "respectable" holiday, both religiously and socially. According to Elizabeth Pleck, Victorians remodeled the Christmas holiday to fit their own social norms: "Santa Claus, the exchange of presents, a decorated evergreen tree, and Christmas cards—all were major new elements added to Christmas by the Victorians."⁴⁴² The new elements that formed the basis of the Americanized version of the holiday drew upon on older European icons and rituals, particularly German traditions. On the transformation of the European figure of Santa Claus, historian Penne

⁴⁴¹Penne L. Restad, *Christmas in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996). Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying & Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁴⁴²Pleck, *Celebrating the Family*, 43,

Restad writes that “Through this American saint, parents schooled their children in the subtle inflections of the dawning Victorian era, coaching them on the fundamentals of pluralistic Protestantism, demonstrating their affection, and domesticating the new forces of the marketplace by buying toys and other gifts.”⁴⁴³

As one might imagine given that so many Texans migrated from southern states, southern influences also shaped Texas holiday rituals, proving at least as important as European cultural traditions. Indeed, ledger records from Texas stores suggest that holiday rituals in the state drew heavily upon both European and southern traditions, sometimes creating an interesting hybrid of the two. According to Thomas Clark, southerners placed their own unique stamp on the American Christmas season. Unlike their Yankee brethren, those living in the South saved their fireworks for Christmas instead of the Fourth of July.⁴⁴⁴ Prior to the 1830s and 1840s, fireworks had also been part of Christmas celebrations in the North; however, part of the process of making Christmas more sacral and more ordered in the North, at least in the eyes of middle-class reformers, involved extirpating public fireworks displays and encouraging private celebrations in the home.⁴⁴⁵ Such reforms were far less successful in the South. For southerners, noise and public spectacle were all part of the fun. In fact, once the last fireworks fizzled out, more adventurous southerners resorted to the use of black-powder and anvil for their noisemaking celebrations. Clark observed anvil shooting was part of every Christmas affair: “Country stores, school and church grounds boomed with

⁴⁴³Restad, *Christmas in America*, 54.

⁴⁴⁴Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 100.

⁴⁴⁵Schmidt, *Consumer Rites*, 35.

thunderous impacts of these black-powder charges, and evidence of this primitive custom has lingered in many farmyards.”⁴⁴⁶

Besides fireworks and black-powder, a variety of holiday food selections and gifts frequently appeared on southern shopping lists, including oranges, apples, dolls, nuts, oyster crackers, coconuts, Roman candles, Jew’s harps, rattlers and a variety of specialty candies—such as kisses, rolls, and candy trunks.⁴⁴⁷ In keeping with the southern flavor of its economy and culture, Texas shopping lists often mirrored those in other parts of the South. For example, ledger entries from William Wadsworth’s general merchandise firm in Matagorda, Texas, located just inland from the Texas gulf coast, indicate that southern traditions heavily influenced regional holiday consumption patterns. A number of account entries exemplify this point. On December 21, 1885, W. S. Stewart purchased two dozen apples, three rubber dolls and a dozen fire crackers and F. L. Rugeley charged a toy pistol to his account. On Christmas Eve, the following items were charged to customers’ accounts: George Bedford purchased two boys hats and a dozen fire crackers, Harry Sirrell purchased 1 lb candy, Jonathon H. McCain purchased 1 lb of stick candy, C. D. Bruce purchased ½ dozen fire crackers and 1 lb of candy, A. C. Bruce purchased a dozen apples, 1 lb of candy, and ½ dozen fire crackers, and H. Cookenboo purchased two dozen apples, three packages of fire crackers, and 2 lbs of candy.⁴⁴⁸ Clearly, candy and firecrackers were popular Christmas purchases with Matagorda residents.

⁴⁴⁶Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 100.

⁴⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 104-105.

⁴⁴⁸Daybook 1885-1886, Wadsworth (William B.) Ledgers, 2H127, CAH, 226, 231, 248, 249.

The impact of Christmas on general consumption patterns in rural outposts in Texas and Oklahoma varied significantly depending on both the location and the economic fortunes of the population. Those living in poverty could ill-afford to partake in the lavish spending that was becoming increasingly associated with the Christmas holiday, a celebration both defined and perpetuated by the middle class. This was true for both the rural and urban poor. An examination of ledger entries from the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, Texas, during the month of December in the late 1870s and early 1880s, suggests that area residents were either not willing or not able to spend their hard-earned dollars on goodies for the Christmas holiday. In fact, Christmas seems to have had little impact on the shopping patterns of many of the store's clientele. For example, the purchases for Dr. J. T. Simpson in the week leading up to the Christmas holiday from the McKinney & Brown store include: On December 19—an undershirt, coffee, and a bottle of snuff, on December 20—six yards of cotton strip fabric, on December 21—ticking fabric and a spool of cotton, on December 22—coffee, and, on December 26, 2 lbs of shot.⁴⁴⁹ Simpson's purchases were not unusual. While speciality items like apples and peaches appeared on the account of store owner, W. A. Brown, most of his customers did not veer from their usual shopping habits during the holiday season.⁴⁵⁰ Further, items usually associated with Christmas shopping such as toys, candles and firecrackers only sporadically appeared on the shopping lists of those who frequented the store during the month of December. The fact that many store customers did not engage in extravagant Christmas spending should not be interpreted as lack of

⁴⁴⁹Ledger F, 1883, Brown and Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 522.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., 545. Ledger H, 1885, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 516.

enthusiasm for the holiday itself. Indeed, it seems likely than many living on a tight budget celebrated Christmas on their own terms and chose to perhaps buy practical items for their family or gave homemade gifts.

The Christmas holiday performed important cultural work in communities throughout Texas and Indian Territory, particularly in newly established settlements like Jacksonville and McAlester. Even though the December holiday did not significantly alter the spending habits of many customers at the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville, Christmas still left its mark on lives of town residents. The town hosted a public holiday celebration in 1874 during which a “committee of gentlemen” presented every child in the community with a Christmas present. After the gift-giving celebration, all the town residents came together under a community Christmas tree, exchanged “Merry Christmases” and happy good nights and then dispersed to their homes. Reporting on the success of the 1874 Christmas celebration in Jacksonville, *The Texas Intelligencer* observed: “We believe this was the first public Christmas tree ever given in our town, and we heartily rejoice at its success; for all occasions of this kind bring out the better side of human nature, serve to develop kindly generous feelings, and bind closer the golden links of friendship and love.”⁴⁵¹ In effect, the holiday celebration presented an opportunity for town leaders to demonstrate their generosity, promote community cohesion, and elevate civic boosterism.

The small coal mining community of McAlester also celebrated the Christmas holiday with a community tree. In 1876, the *Oklahoma Star* encouraged town residents

⁴⁵¹*The Texas Intelligencer*, January 9, 1875, reprinted in the *Cherokee County Banner*, June 1, 1917.

to come out and join in the festivities.⁴⁵² Again, the Christmas holiday provided civic leaders with the opportunity to cement social cohesion and celebrate community spirit. Meanwhile, J. J. McAlester took advantage of the holiday to advertise to potential customers that his store was well stocked with Christmas goods, including drums, hobby horses, wax-dolls, whistles, rattle-boxes, and stick and fancy candies.⁴⁵³ At a national level, the Americanized celebration of Christmas provided an opportunity for social unity and contributed to the effort of creating a cohesive national identity. The holiday festivities pulled together disparate groups into a collective whole. Christmas performed a similar cohesive role at the local level in communities like Jacksonville and McAlester.

For the German immigrants of Hedwig's Hill, Christmas was not only a celebration of the present, but a cultural link to the past and, by extension, the old country. Christmas was a significant event in the German communities of central Texas. The consuming rites of German immigrants residing in the Hedwig's Hill community suggest that not only did they attach deep significance and importance to the Christmas holiday, but they generally stayed true to their traditional holiday customs. While Christmas in Hedwig's Hill was very much a German affair, it appears that residents incorporated at least some Anglo-customs, particularly the southern purchases like firecrackers and gunpowder. Still, many of the traditions that would eventually be considered American Christmas customs can be traced to northern Europe, especially Germany and Holland, including Santa Claus (*Sankt Nikolaus*), Kris Kringle

⁴⁵²*The Oklahoma Star*, December 16, 1876.

⁴⁵³*Ibid.*

(*Christkindlein*), and the Christmas tree (*Tannenbaum*).⁴⁵⁴ In addition to these holiday icons, a German Christmas included such rituals as advents wreaths, lighting candles and leaving them in their windows “so the Christ Child, who might be wandering in the dark streets, would know he was welcome to enter,” and, most importantly, decorating a Christmas tree and placing gifts under the tree, to be opened by family members on Christmas Eve.⁴⁵⁵ As early as the 1830s, the German holiday ritual of gift exchanging among family members inspired Americans to incorporate such a custom in their own holiday celebrations. In *Christmas in America*, Penne Restad cites George Ticknor’s visit to Dresden in 1835 as an early example of such cultural exchange. In Dresden, Ticknor observed the German holiday ritual firsthand, which consequently awakened him to the idea of trading gifts within the family. So impressed with what he saw, Ticknor wrote there, “was nothing very valuable or beautiful in what was given, yet it was all received with so much pleasure by the parents and the elder brother, that the children were delighted, and kissed us all round very heartily.”⁴⁵⁶ In accordance with traditional customs, the Christmas tree was usually decorated secretly by the parents or the older children on the afternoon of December 24. Then, after the family dinner, a little bell was rung or the children were told that *Weihnachtsmann* had come and had prepared a tree and left presents for them.⁴⁵⁷ The children could then proceed to the Christmas room, and gleefully see what goodies awaited them under the Christmas tree. Early evidence of

⁴⁵⁴Jordan, “German Cultural Heritage in the Hill Country of Texas,” 176.

⁴⁵⁵Elizabeth Silverthorne, *Christmas in Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990), 65.

⁴⁵⁶Restad, *Christmas in America*, 71.

⁴⁵⁷Jordan, “German Cultural Heritage in the Hill Country of Texas,” 178.

the German Christmas tradition in Texas can be found in the writings of Friedrich Hermann Seele who traveled to Texas in the winter of 1843. In recollecting his first holiday celebrations in the state, Seele described his visits to German homes which featured not only Christmas trees, but also an array of presents for the household's children.⁴⁵⁸

While all family members exchanged gifts, German parents usually gave much more to their children than they received; thus, for the most part, nineteenth-century Germans shared present day perceptions of the holiday: Christmas was for kids. Ledger entries from Anna Martin's store reflect the heavy emphasis her German clientele placed on gift giving, especially when it came to their children. In addition to a number of grocery items, for example, D. Kothmann purchased two dolls, two toy pistols, and a toy monkey from the store on December 17, 1885. Conrad Pluenneke, who served the Hedwig's Hill community as both a doctor and a preacher, included in his purchases from the Martin store on December 19, 1885: two children's hats, two yards of ribbon, two dozen apples, one cap, toys, two dolls, one dozen plates, candy and a set of cups and saucers. On December 21, 1885, A. A. Reichenau charged to his account candy, a toy gun, slippers, a doll, and "Xmas" candles. On the same day, John Keller purchased candy, three Winchesters center fire, fire crackers, a toy, a dozen Christmas candles, 2 lbs of currants, and a bottle of wine. Cattle raiser Jakob Bauer acquired from the store on December 22, a doll, four trumpets, three french harps, mixed candy, fire crackers, and one and half dozen apples. And finally, Fritz Kothmann, another resident cattle rancher,

⁴⁵⁸Hermann Seele, *The Cypress and Other Writings of a German Pioneer in Texas*, Translated by Edward C. Breitenkamp (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 96-97.

purchased eight dozen apples, toys for \$1.00, mixed candy, stick candy, seven different types of picture books, lemons, two yards of satin, and toys for \$2.25.⁴⁵⁹

Account entries from Anna Martin's ledgers provide ample evidence of the kinds of specialty items acquired before the Christmas holiday by her predominantly German clientele. The presence of firecrackers on customer accounts suggests that Germans in the region shared some holiday rituals with their American neighbors. Still, the fact that so many of Martin's clientele not only made special Christmas purchases, but focused their purchases on their children—who were so fundamental to traditional German gift giving—indicates that continuity, rather than change, largely shaped Christmas in Hedwig's Hill in the mid 1880s. The small German settlements of the Hill Country had yet to experience the adoption of an Americanized version of the holiday, one that would be drawn from a myriad of cultural influences, including, but not limited to, northern Europe. And while the immigrants living in Hill Country began absorbing outside cultures from the moment they stepped off the ships in Galveston harbor, they clearly remained largely committed to their German cultural traditions well into the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In order to provide for her family after her husband's sickness, infirmity, and ultimate death, Anna Martin faced enormous challenges on the Texas frontier and unfortunately her upper-class upbringing in Germany had not prepared Anna for such challenges. There can be no doubt that Anna, like many of her German contemporaries, needed to adapt to the conditions of her new environment. And yet, the continuity of the Hedwig's Hill community is fascinating. Germans who literally traveled to America on

⁴⁵⁹Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 183, 185, 189, 188, 190, 194.

the same ships, developed new communities together, and maintained ties with each other forty, fifty and sixty years after their initial arrival. And while such cohesion distinguishes the rural German immigrant experience in Texas, Terry Jordan notes that there is still much scholarly work to be done on the German urban experience in Texas during the nineteenth century. Whether they were part of the *Adelsverein* program or in one of the later waves of migration, the German immigrants cited in Martin's ledgers followed remarkably similar paths in establishing new homes in central Texas. These immigrants left an indelible imprint on their new surroundings, affecting, from the outset, the region's social and economic development. In the Hedwig's Hill community of Texas, German influences were felt in the realms of agriculture, consumption patterns, diets, and holiday rituals. They engaged in a system of cultural exchange with those outside of the German community, profoundly shaping the emerging cultural identity of the Hill Country in central Texas, while remaining committed to their own ethnic heritage.

Chapter Six - Commodities from a Local, Regional, and National Perspective

By now, it should be clear that store records provide a unique look at the day-to-day lives of persons living in Texas and Indian Territory in the 1870s and 1880s.

Ledgers detail not only *who* engaged in commercial relations, but *what* types of goods were purchased by those who frequented general stores. Shifting the focus to the goods recorded in ledgers enables us to see both what was available locally as well as draw comparisons with purchases made by consumers in other regions of the country. In doing so, this chapter focuses exclusively on the commodities themselves and addresses a number of important questions: Do such commodities help to define this region in any meaningful way? How do consumption patterns in Texas and Indian Territory differ from other regions of the country? Does the sale of any commodity in these regions provide new insights on any longstanding historical questions? Do commodities from these regions reflect larger national trends? Moreover, does local purchasing shed any light on the larger social questions of the period?

At a national level, there can be no doubt that alcohol was one of the most contentious commodities available to consumers in the period under analysis. Many people—including women, Christian reformers, and employers—considered the elimination of the sale of alcohol as the most prevalent social issue of the day. Reformers abhorred the effects of drinking on working-class families, pointing to the link between drinking and violence. Further, employers argued that alcohol consumption led to less productivity in the workplace. The concern over alcohol in late nineteenth-century America was serious enough for Frances Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, to describe the temperance campaign as a war: "There is a war about

this in America, a war of mothers and daughters, sisters and wives. There is another sort of war and I want to have the boys and girls follow me as I talk to them and I think I can make you understand me. There is a war between the rum shops and religion. They stand against each other, insurmountable and unassailable foes.”⁴⁶⁰ A war? Surely, such language points to the contentiousness of the product and the high intensity that some reformers brought to the temperance movement.

The spirit of reform captivated middle-class Americans in particular, as alcohol consumption and the social problems associated with it increasingly became the subject of national debate. One of the many ramifications of this debate was that it inspired middle-class women to participate in social reform movements, a political role for women that was relatively rare before this period. Such female activism was by no means welcomed by all, especially in the more-traditional southern states. In the 1820s, the period during which temperance became a mass movement, advocates promoted the idea of moderation when it came to alcohol use, but this stance hardened over time so that by the 1870s and 1880s temperance meant total abstinence from alcohol.⁴⁶¹ With the battle lines drawn, exponents on both sides of the issue lobbied legislatures at the local, state, and national level to adopt their position. Not surprisingly, ledger records provide fascinating insights on both the popularity of this controversial product and the effects of temperance crusades in early Texas and Indian Territory during the period.

⁴⁶⁰Richard W. Leeman, “*Do Everything*” *Reform: The Oratory of Frances E. Willard*, Great American Orators, Number 15 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 112-113.

⁴⁶¹Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11.

Two events that transpired during the same week in 1874 demonstrate that the West had a rather divided mind on the subject of alcohol consumption. On February 24, 1874, the ladies of Manhattan, Kansas, as part of a much larger national women's crusade, embarked on a campaign to close down the saloons in their community. They sent postcards to saloon keepers in Manhattan which threatened that they [the Ladies Committee Temperance] would enter the saloons and use prayers, pleading, and singing in an effort to close down the salacious businesses. Similar campaigns were waged in other eastern Kansas cities, including Fort Scott, Leavenworth and Lawrence. These efforts made little headway against saloon owners in the short term, but planted the seeds for long term success, as Kansas enacted prohibition in 1880.⁴⁶² While there was clearly success for temperance advocates in midwestern states like Kansas by the late nineteenth century, the same could not be said of the urban industrial centers of the Northeast. In fact, temperance reform faced stiff opposition in cities from Democratic-leaning ethnic communities who favored the continuing sale of alcohol. Thus, temperance success was initially achieved in small rural centers and not in industrializing urban centers with large immigrant populations.

That said, successful temperance campaigns similar to the Kansas efforts were slow to materialize in Texas. On February 28, 1874, four days after the ladies of Manhattan initiated their assault on local saloons, John Craft made two purchases of whiskey from the J. L. McInnis store in Webberville, Texas; his first purchase cost 50¢

⁴⁶²Nancy G. Garner, "'A Prayerful Public Protest': The Significance of Gender in the Kansas Woman's Crusade of 1874," *Kansas History* 20 (Winter 1997-1998), 218. According to Garner, the national woman's crusade was so popular amongst women reformers that, during the winter and spring of 1873-1874, more than fifty-six thousand Anglo-Protestant women participated in the campaign to close down saloons with prayer and hymns, 215-216.

and his second 75¢.⁴⁶³ It is quite unlikely that, after leaving the McInnis store, Mr. Craft met with spirited opposition from the ladies of the Webberville community. And why should he? After all, he was merely conducting a legal sales transaction at his local store. Similar transactions took place in a wide range of towns, cities, and rural outposts across nineteenth-century Texas. For example, during the same month of February, H. Boldebuck purchased a ½ gallon of whiskey from the Charles Wolf mercantile firm in Austin. Shortly thereafter, Jesse Delona purchased an equally potent spirit, a full bottle of gin, from the same Austin store.⁴⁶⁴ While temperance reformers directed their attacks at saloons, general stores discreetly provided alcohol to customers willing to make the investment, and there were plenty of buyers. As Thomas Clark observed, no other place, including the saloon, afforded a man the golden opportunity to get drunk, while accomplishing the shopping for his household.⁴⁶⁵ To the chagrin of many temperance advocates in the region, Texas was wet. It remained so for the next several decades—statewide prohibition would not be enacted until 1919.⁴⁶⁶ Scholars focused on identifying why men consumed alcohol, particularly in rural settings, have stressed its role in rituals of male bonding. Men gathered together to swap stories, share common complaints, combat boredom and tediousness, and generally celebrate their gender unity;

⁴⁶³J. L. McInnis Ledger, 1874-1875, AR 1994-57, AHC, 10.

⁴⁶⁴Wolf Ledger, 1872-1875, AR 1991-72, AHC, 19, 147.

⁴⁶⁵Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 15.

⁴⁶⁶According to H. A. Ivy, a Texas prohibitionist, while a number of counties vacillated between wet and dry in the 1870s and 1880s, there were only three dry counties in Texas by 1887 - Jasper, Rockwall, and Jones. H. A. Ivy, *Rum on the Run in Texas: A Brief History of Prohibition in the Lone Star State* (Dallas: Temperance Publishing Co., 1910), 27.

not surprisingly, a general store equipped with ample kegs of whiskey provided an excellent forum for such bonding.⁴⁶⁷

Despite the obvious popularity of alcohol among both urban and rural Texans, temperance reform made important inroads in the state during the 1870s and 1880s. Through organizations like the United Friends of Temperance and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, reformers relied on moral suasion to preach against the effects of alcohol on the family. Dr. William Carey Crane, a prominent member of the United Friends of Temperance, reported to his organization in 1871, "Less than two years ago there was not a council of temperance in this great State. Now there are nearly two hundred councils in existence. Then other organizations exerted some influence in special localities, and even now are doing good, but at this time, the order of the Friends of Temperance is a moral power in every quarter of the State."⁴⁶⁸ Frances Willard visited the state on a speaking tour in 1882 in an effort to bolster support for local chapters of the organization in the southern states.⁴⁶⁹ Women had particularly important roles in temperance campaigns. The temperance movement was profoundly vested in protecting the notion of domesticity—a drunkard, it was argued, threatened the sanctity and welfare of the family; thus, women attacked drinking establishments in the name of their homes. The opportunity temperance reform gave women to participate in public debate

⁴⁶⁷Ibid., 14, 15, 37, 99. Allan M. Winkler, "Drinking on the American Frontier," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 29 (June 1968), 431, 434, 435. Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 16, 51. Ownby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 11.

⁴⁶⁸Ivy, *Rum on the Run in Texas*, 20.

⁴⁶⁹James D. Ivy, *No Saloon in the Valley: The Southern Strategy of Texas Prohibitionists in the 1880s* (Waco, Baylor University Press, 2003), 7.

challenged traditional perceptions of whether it was appropriate for women to engage in such activities, and this was especially true in the South.

In *No Saloon in the Valley*, James Ivy traces the development and success of temperance campaigns in Texas in the 1880s. His study culminates with the statewide referendum on prohibition in 1887, which ultimately failed. Ivy also discusses the impact and legacy of Frances Willard's visit to Texas in 1882, asserting that her visit was marred by the conservatism and paternalism of southern society. As well, the fact that so many Texans lived in rural isolation impeded farm women's ability to participate in the larger temperance movement. Willard's influence in Texas was stunted in part because she was a northerner. Given the freshness of events surrounding the war, southerners were deeply suspicious of northern reform movements. Nevertheless, Willard's visit infused life into the Texas temperance movement, a movement which had actually started pushing for a statewide prohibition amendment as early as 1881. Most gains in Texas were made at the local level, a number of small towns and communities passed local option laws within three years of Willard's visit. Even if women's participation in temperance reform challenged nineteenth-century perceptions of women's roles, Ivy contends that they clearly performed an important function in early reform.⁴⁷⁰ And while temperance advocates in the 1870s and 1880s did not successfully ban the sale of alcohol in Texas, their movement attracted enough attention to push their agenda into the public consciousness, fomenting both support and opposition among Texans.

Both federal and tribal law restricted the sale of liquor in Indian Territory. In 1890, when Indian Territory and the Unassigned Lands became two separate districts, the

⁴⁷⁰Ibid., 7-23.

new Oklahoma Territory permitted the sale of alcohol, while Indian Territory remained dry. Among the Choctaws, laws forbidding the sale of alcohol dated back to the early years of the nineteenth century, a fact which prompted historian Angie Debo to describe them as “the first people in the United States to enact a ‘prohibition law.’”⁴⁷¹ Despite these early restrictions, such laws proved difficult for tribal administrations to enforce. According to Debo, “The Indian police experienced great difficulty in keeping liquor out of the Nation, especially after the coming of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad. Certain wholesale merchants of St. Louis disguised shipments of liquor in almost every package.”⁴⁷² Although J. J. McAlester received much of his stock from St. Louis merchants, his ledger records do not indicate that he sold alcohol through his retail establishment.⁴⁷³ The same can be said of G. B. Hester’s store in Old Boggy Depot, W. N. Jones’ store in Cade, and F. B. Severs store located in the Creek Nation. If any of these retailers broke the law by selling alcohol, they were not inclined to record such evidence in their books. Considering Debo’s assertion that laws governing the sale of alcohol were largely ignored by both merchants and railroad representatives, it seems clear that someone was selling liquor in Indian Territory. However, there is no clear evidence that any of these merchants engaged in such activities; thus, if they sold alcohol, they did so clandestinely.

⁴⁷¹Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* 48, 177.

⁴⁷²Ibid., 189. Federal law restricting the sale of liquor in Indian Territory prompted particularly entrepreneurial saloon keepers to set up shop just outside of the borders of Indian Territory, see Blake Gumprecht, “A Saloon on Every Corner: Whiskey Towns of Oklahoma Territory, 1889-1907,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 74 (Summer 1996), 146-173.

⁴⁷³1874-1875 Sales Ledger, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 153, 179, 229, 289, 293.

If the sale of alcohol was officially prohibited in Indian territory, the same could not be said of Texas, where general store owners offered a wide variety of liquor options to their customers. The popular product could be sold in full gallons, half-gallons, bottles, quarts, pints, flasks, and, on rare occasion, barrels. Although whiskey was the spirit of choice for most store customers, retailers in some locations offered their clients a variety of liquor choices, including brandy, gin, ale, wine (both port and claret), and champagne.⁴⁷⁴ Further, just as temperance reformers cautioned, ledger records indicate that there were a number of store customers who not only purchased alcohol, but did so frequently and in large quantities. At the Rowlett store in Nacogdoches, for example, Ben McLain purchased a bottle of whiskey on September 4, 1869, a quart of whiskey on September 10, and a pint of whiskey on September 12.⁴⁷⁵ The purchases of Judge Goodlaw in the spring of 1873 from the Wolf mercantile store in Austin would likely have alarmed most temperance advocates. Goodlaw bought whiskey by the bottle, gallon, or half- gallon from the store owner on February 28, March 2, 5, 8, 10, 15, 17, and 24.⁴⁷⁶ There appears to be nothing moderate about Goodlaw's consumption habits.

Given the obvious popularity of alcohol in late nineteenth-century Texas, it is significant that a number of stores in this study, either in whole or in part, opted out of selling alcohol to their customers. At the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm in Nacogdoches,

⁴⁷⁴For examples, see the following collections: Wolf Ledger, 1872-1875, AR 1991-72, AHC, 12, 52, Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [1 vol.], 4, 44, 172, 173. J. L. McInnis Ledger, 1874-1875, AR 1994-57, AHC, 53, 55. Account Book, 1848-1850, Lockranzy, Texas Ledger [1 vol.], A1982.339c, DeGolyer Library, SMU. R. C. Doom Day Journal, Box 1, File 1, SHRL, 5, 171, 178. L. B. Wood Day Book, 1859-1862 [1 vol.], Polk County Records, SHRL, 321, 326, 330, 343.

⁴⁷⁵Account Ledger, 1869-1873, Rowlett Store, B-39 [1 vol.], ETRC, see date.

⁴⁷⁶Wolf Ledger, 1872-1875, AR 1991-72, AHC, 92.

alcohol does not appear in the hundreds of accounts listed in the store's two surviving ledgers. The same can be said of accounts at the Gauntt Bros. store in Athens, Texas.⁴⁷⁷ Is it possible that these stores' customers were not interested in purchasing the controversial product? Further, amidst the numerous accounts listed in the Brown & Dixon company records from Jacksonville—ledgers which spanned several decades—alcohol is also noticeably absent from the purchases charged to customers' accounts. An exception to this pattern is the entry made on John Pinkard's account on May 12, 1883 which reads, "cash for whiskey—50¢."⁴⁷⁸ A similar anomaly occurs in the account records from William McCampbell's store in Refugio. Generally, alcohol does not appear under customers' recorded purchases; however, an exception emerges in the account of Mrs. Susan Dugat from May 16, 1877. Like Pinkard, Mrs. Dugat's account was debited one dollar for "cash for whiskey."⁴⁷⁹

A few possible scenarios might explain these unusual entries. The first is that apparently both W. A. Brown and William McCampbell demanded that their customers pay for alcohol with cash. If this was the case, it is strange that there are not more indications of people needing to make such charges to their accounts—after all, in the 1870s Greenback era, hard currency was an elusive commodity that was available to few. One wonders about the multiple "cash charges" assessed to Lon Dixon's account for amounts like 30¢, 15¢, 60¢, and 20¢ in the spring of 1885.⁴⁸⁰ Could these be cash

⁴⁷⁷Clark & Hyde Mercantile Collection [2 vols.], ETRC. Gauntt Bros. Ledger, Baylor University.

⁴⁷⁸Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 167.

⁴⁷⁹Account Ledger, 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col.7597, DRTL, 70.

⁴⁸⁰Ledger H, 1885, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 39.

charges for whiskey? It is not clear from such examples that either of these stores provided the whiskey that Pinkard and Dugat purchased, only that they provided the cash for the whiskey.

Perhaps, it was pressure from the temperance camps that explains why store owners either did not sell liquor or were reluctant to record such transactions in their ledgers. For example, there was a vibrant temperance movement in the community of Jacksonville in the 1870s. According to the *Texas Intelligencer*, a lovely temperance display was set up by the good citizens of Jacksonville outside of the Masonic Hall during the 1874 Christmas season. In addition to a decorated pulpit, organizers and presenters—including the Good Templars, the Friends of Temperance, and the children of the Band of Hope—gave speeches, played music and marched in procession for onlookers: “light after light was springing into existence and adding to the beauty of the scene.” The editors noted, “There is always a charm and glamour which hang about the words and deeds of lovely women, and we can only say that these fair champions of Temperance did their devoirs nobly—and many a manly heart beat high as its owner listened to their earnest appeals for a cause which is so worthy of manly support.”⁴⁸¹ Did the effectiveness of such campaigns lead W. A. Brown to curtail the sale of alcohol at his store? Possibly. While some stores in both urban and rural centers sold alcohol freely and in large quantities to their customers, other stores seemed averse to either selling alcohol or to keeping a paper trail of such transactions. Moreover, some store owners no

⁴⁸¹*The Texas Intelligencer*, January 9, 1875. There was also an active chapter of the United Friends of Temperance in Nacogdoches in the mid-1880s. A minute book from the year 1885-1886 includes a list of the organization’s members, reports on council meetings, officer elections, and treasury records. *United Friends of Temperance*, Fairview Council, Nacogdoches, Texas Minute Book, 1885-1886, [1 volume], B-37, ETRC.

doubt supported temperance, but may have sold whiskey for “medicinal purposes.”

Regarding the sale of this contentious product, it is difficult to assess the full impact of the temperance campaign in explaining the presence of alcohol at some stores and its absence at others.

Account entries from Texas stores with a largely German customer base serve to complicate the matter of alcohol consumption even further. As a general rule, Germans immigrants tended to be staunch opponents of prohibition legislation, and the situation was no different in Texas. James Ivy argues that this pro-alcohol stance often resulted in Germans being the subject of vehement attacks by both nativists and prohibitionists: “They drank beer publicly, they were often Catholic, and they or their parents were of foreign origin.”⁴⁸² However, the fact that Germans were also perceived as being solid, respectable, middle-class citizens compounded matters for prohibitionists, especially since many of the German immigrants had ties to the state that went back much further than their xenophobic critics. During the period, the prevailing stereotype of Germans was that they were notorious alcohol consumers, and ledger records from both Fischer’s Store and Industry support such perceptions. Both whiskey and wine found their way onto customers’ accounts at Hermann Ernst’s store in Industry; as in the case of Emil Knolle, whose purchases on August 10, 1879 included both items.⁴⁸³ By far the spirit of choice at Herman Fischer’s store, whiskey frequently appeared on the accounts of the store’s largely German clientele. Apparently, neither store maintained a cash-only policy and thus customers were able to charge alcohol to their account at both locations.

⁴⁸²Ivy, *No Saloon in the Valley*, 63.

⁴⁸³Ernst (Herman) Account Book, 3C61, CAH, 98.

However, the same consumption patterns do not hold true at Anna Martin's store in Hedwig's Hill. Unlike at Ernst's and Fischer's stores, whiskey is noticeably absent from her customers' accounts. Wine, however, appears on a handful of accounts recorded during the mid-1880s. For example, Mrs. Simon charged a bottle of wine to her account on November 16, 1885, Charles Martin purchased a gallon of wine from the store on March 15, 1886, and Gottlieb Brandenberger purchased two bottles of wine on August 18, 1887.⁴⁸⁴ It should be noted that some historians have argued that Victorians did not consider wine to be in the same league as spirits like whiskey, rum, or gin. Consequently, wine frequently graced the tables of respectable, otherwise temperance-supporting, middle-class Americans.⁴⁸⁵ With regard to beer, many of Martin's store customers may have brewed it themselves, rather than pay the retailer to do so for them. Still, it is peculiar that whiskey does not appear on customers' accounts, especially in relation to its popularity in other German stores. Significantly, this period in Martin's ledgers coincides with the prohibition campaign of 1887. Perhaps, the prohibition debate "tempered" Martin's sale of alcohol. Another possibility is that, like many women in the middle class during this period, Anna Martin favored temperance and intentionally chose to curtail the sale of certain "hard" liquors, at least in her establishment. Finally, perhaps selling whiskey was thought to be "unladylike," prompting Martin to avoid such a characterization.

In the 1870s and 1880s, middle-class norms effectually placed respectable women solidly in the temperance camp at a time when opinions on the subject became deeply

⁴⁸⁴Day Book I, 1885-1887, 145, 269. Day Book II, 1887-1888, A111.7, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, SWC, 103.

⁴⁸⁵Murdoch, *Domesticating Drink*, 66-67.

divisive, often splitting groups along class and ethnic lines. While the widely held perception was that refined women did not drink, recent evidence suggests that, whether it was through medicine in tonics, recipes, or fine dining, middle-class women consumed alcohol, albeit usually in private spaces.⁴⁸⁶ If it was not socially acceptable for women to drink, the same could not be said of other vices. According to H. Wayne Morgan, drug addiction, and more specifically opiate consumption, was significantly more socially acceptable than drinking among middle-class women of the period. Morgan cites the findings of one doctor in 1891, who observed, “As a rule, women take opiates and men alcohol, both seeking the same pleasurable results. A woman is very degraded before she will consent to display drunkenness to mankind; whereas, she can obtain equally if not more pleasurable feelings with opiates, and not disgrace herself before the world.”⁴⁸⁷ It appears that escapism through inebriates divided the nineteenth-century middle classes along gender lines.

To be sure, it would be presumptuous to assign an addiction problem to any of the general store customers in Texas and Oklahoma who purchased “medicinal” products. Nonetheless, it should be noted that addiction to opiates was a very real social concern in the late nineteenth century, a problem prevalent in both rural and urban environments. While salt-of-the-earth farmers hardly conjure up images of serious opiate abusers, the reality was that rural settings proved especially susceptible to the problem of drug addiction. Morgan provides a number of explanations to account for the problem of rural

⁴⁸⁶Ibid., 52-62.

⁴⁸⁷H. Wayne Morgan, *Drugs in America: A Social History, 1800-1980* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 40. Patricia M. Tice, *Altered States: Alcohol and Other Drugs in America* (Rochester: The Strong Museum, 1992), 41-71.

vulnerability to opiate addiction. Doctors were overworked and often spread too thin to administer drugs to rural people; consequently, many in rural areas self-diagnosed their illnesses and self-medicated. Obviously, non-specialists knew very little about the danger of habitually taking opiates, although it is not clear that the medical profession fully understand the dangers either. Whether it was to escape the rigors of the workday or to alleviate the doldrums of rural isolation, people consumed opiates for many of the same reasons that they drank alcohol. Further, cheap mail delivery increased the amount of all consumer items, including medicines, available to those living in outlying rural communities. Particular opiates, like laudanum and paregoric, were popular among rural families who used such items to alleviate pain and tranquilize crying babies, the aged, and the infirm. Moreover, Morgan asserts that “many people, especially women, were taking maintenance doses of opiates without knowing it, just as many upright temperance supporters used tonics that contained alcohol.”⁴⁸⁸ Since the story of much of the south central plains is largely a rural story and the sale of medicinal products seemed to have a particular impact on rural regions, the sale of such products at general stores merits some attention.

Of the various medications listed in store ledgers, the frequency of paregoric in account records suggests that this opiate was particularly popular among consumers in this region. Paregoric, a milder form of camphorated tincture of opium, was generally used to relieve the pains associated with colic in babies, although adults could also find relief in the mild opiate.⁴⁸⁹ The liberal usage of paregoric by concerned parents to pacify

⁴⁸⁸Morgan, *Drugs in America*, 32.

⁴⁸⁹Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 204.

their crying babies prompted stern warnings from many in the medical profession; in fact, one doctor described paregoric as “the nemesis of the nursery.”⁴⁹⁰ Still, few in isolated farming communities areas knew of the dangers associated with the substance and proceeded to administer the medication to their children, liberally when they deemed it necessary. As noted, there are ample examples of paregoric purchases in the ledgers, including its purchase by store owners L. T. Barret, A. C. (Lon) Dixon, and J. J. McAlester.⁴⁹¹

While seemingly the most popular opiate listed in account records, paregoric was by no means the only habit-forming drug available to customers in the region. Laudanum, opium, morphine, and cocaine also provided pain relief for rural consumers and each found their way into ledgers records from the period. Laudanum, an opium derivative sold in liquid form, was a particularly dangerous concoction that was created by mixing opium and either water or alcohol.⁴⁹² Vials of laudanum were purchased by E. Taylor, Doctor George S. Hyde, and store owner William Clark from the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm in February 1873.⁴⁹³ D. W. Dorsey made a similar purchase from the Hardeman & Barret store on April 20, 1870.⁴⁹⁴ Moreover, Sam Cartlidge included a

⁴⁹⁰Morgan, *Drugs in America*, 38.

⁴⁹¹Ledger 1870-1873, B-38 [1 vol.], Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, ETRC, 604. Ledger F, 1883, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 11. Sales Ledger, 1877-1880, #154, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 190.

⁴⁹²Morgan, *Drugs in America*, 2.

⁴⁹³Day Book I, October 1872 - June 1873, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 107, 112, 144. Morphine purchases appear on pages 55, 58 and 1870-1872 Daybook, Box 29, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 162. For cocaine examples, see page 4.

⁴⁹⁴Ledger 1870-1873, B-38 [1 vol.], Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, ETRC, 1.

bottle of laudanum among his purchases from J. J. McAlester's store on December 4, 1875.⁴⁹⁵ Finally, "Gillette" purchased two bottles of laudanum from F. B. Severs store in Okmulgee on January 8, 1870 and two more bottles on January 18, 1870.⁴⁹⁶ Significantly, these examples represent only a small portion of the customer accounts which included these harmful, possibly hazardous substances.

Besides opiates, general stores sold other medicines to their clientele which, while not necessarily habit-forming, were potentially dangerous in their own right. Account entries from William Wadsworth's store in Matagorda, Texas provide a number of representative examples. On October 26, 1885, Jonathon McNabb purchased a bottle of chloroform from the store owner and, on that same day, George Bankston purchased a bottle of glycerine. William Baxter obtained a bottle of "nitro" from the store on October 30, 1885, as did D. P. Moon on November 4, 1885. In other examples, bottles of chloroform were purchased by James Williams and Mrs. C. Williams on November 5, 1885. A. A. Duffy acquired one ounce of arsenic and carbolic acid on December 1, 1885, assumedly not for ingestion. On December 3, 1885, Ed Savage bought a bottle of quinine, an extremely popular pain medication during the period, and a box of "capsules" from the store owner. Finally, on December 7, 1885, Mrs. Uzzell purchased nitro, castor oil, paregoric, and "Rx 5010."⁴⁹⁷ Given the potent nature of her other purchases, one can only imagine what merited a prescription. Thus, within a six week period, several

⁴⁹⁵Sales Ledger 1875-1878, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 7.

⁴⁹⁶Daybook 1869-1871, F. B. Severs Collection, OKHS, 149, 153.

⁴⁹⁷Wadsworth (William B.) Ledgers, 1885, CAH, 4, 6, 20, 35, 40, 133, 140, 155. Quinine was also used for the treatment of malaria, which was common in lowland regions.

transactions involving a number of possibly dangerous substances transpired at the Wadsworth store. Appearing among the purchases of John Dagan from J. J. McAlester's store in January 1872, was a bottle strychnia, derived from strychnine, which was used for myriad medical purposes. Again, the danger posed by the powerful drug, however, can hardly be overstated.⁴⁹⁸ While it is true that folk medicine had long involved risky treatments with both positive and negative results, the increased availability of powerful substances like laudanum, chloroform, and strychnine, in the late nineteenth century presented potentially new problems for rural consumers. If poorly administered, such products could lead to addiction or death.

In addition to the products listed above, a number of traditional remedies that were commonly found in country households offered their own share of risks to the infirm. The king of the medicinal "standards," according to Thomas Clark, was turpentine. He observed, "Everything from a cut finger to worms, backache, kidney trouble, sore throat, rheumatism, croup, pneumonia, toothache, and earache was treated with this cheap native antiseptic."⁴⁹⁹ Turpentine frequently appeared on the account records from general stores in Texas and Oklahoma. In an effort to treat their children's sicknesses, caring parents forced their little ones to ingest heaping spoonfuls of sugar doused in the foul product. Needless to say, after ingesting turpentine, whatever poisons lay within were quickly purged. As Clark astutely noted, "Southern kidneys paid a heavy price for its frequent use."⁵⁰⁰ Still in use today, castor oil, or castoria, was another

⁴⁹⁸1870-1872 Daybook, Box 29, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 91.

⁴⁹⁹Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 204.

⁵⁰⁰*Ibid.*

common purgative employed by farm families and, thus, it regularly appeared on store accounts in the region. Further, vermifuge, a medicine used to purge intestinal worms, frequently appeared under customer accounts, examples include entries from William Wadsworth's, Hermann Fischer's, and F. B. Sever's stores.⁵⁰¹

Perhaps, more alarming as a purgative than either turpentine or castor oil was the common use of calomel by country dwellers, who used the drug to purge build-up in their intestinal systems. On September 14, 1869, Mr. Cothran purchased a bottle of quinine, oysters, calomel, and castor oil from F. B. Severs store in Okmulgee, Creek Territory. Future Choctaw principal chief, Pleasant Porter purchased calomel and castor oil from the store on January 5, 1870.⁵⁰² Due to the drug's apparent popularity, store owners carried large quantities of calomel on their shelves, readily available for sale. Calomel was a mercury-based drug that was given in "rounds" of broken doses by store owners. Consequently, the drug required much precision on the part of store owners, so as to not inadvertently poison their customers. In reality, however, store owners were neither doctors nor pharmacists and the amount of dosage was purely guesswork on their part. Thomas Clark surmised that "it was in the selling of opiates and calomel that the country stores perhaps made their most serious medicinal mistakes."⁵⁰³ Again, neither store owners, nor their clientele were fully aware of the dangers associated with the drugs they ingested to bolster their immune systems and remedy their health troubles.

⁵⁰¹For examples, Daybook #2, 1886, William B. Wadsworth Ledgers, CAH, 27. Hermann Fischer Store Records, 1879-1904, 2D144, May 28, 1886. Daybook, 1869-1871, F. B. Severs Collection, OKHS, 46.

⁵⁰²Daybook, 1869-1871, F. B. Severs Collection, OKHS, 44, 147.

⁵⁰³Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 205.

In conjunction with these medicinal products, general stores carried scores of other medicines, elixirs, tonics, seltzers, powders, and pills purported to cure virtually all medical ailments. Promising to work miracles, such items sold under names like Wilholf's Chill Tonic, Ague Tonic, Balsam Wild Cherry, Harter's Ague Tonic, Pain Killer, Seidlitz Powders, Hanebury Drops, Thompson's Elixir Water, Smith's Tonic Syrup, Liver Medicine, Allen's Lung Balsam, Wizard Oil, Jaynes Expectorant, Turner's Wonder, St. Jakob's Oil, Elixir of Life, and Wonderful Eight.⁵⁰⁴ Since the sale of these products preceded the passage of laws regulating medicines, specifically the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, the ingredients which enabled these products to remedy ailments is largely a mystery. Many bottled and packaged drugs drew upon the soothing powers of both opiates and alcohol; tonics were especially notorious for containing alcohol. Needless to say, consuming these miracle-cures, once again, involved some degree of consumer risk—this was especially so for children and those aspiring to “clean” living. One would think that the laws of supply and demand would weed-out especially dangerous or altogether ineffective medicinal products, although this was clearly not always the case. Access to consumer information regarding the safety of administering such drugs was clearly limited in the predominantly rural communities under consideration in this study. No doubt, trial and error also played an important role in dictating consumers' choices. In the end, store customers in Texas and Indian Territory

⁵⁰⁴Account Ledger, 1876-1877, 14, 57. Account Ledger 1877, 109, 193, W. E. McCampbell & Bros. Records, Col.7597, DRTL. Daybook 1885-1886, William B. Wadsworth Ledgers, CAH, 38, 40, 60. Daybook, 1869-1871, F. B. Severs Collection, OKHS, 4, 19, 34, 48. Sales Ledger 1875-1878, #153, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 10, 18, 29, 38. Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig's Hill Store Records, 29, 56, 450.

took their chances with the medicinal products they purchased; indeed, sometimes desperate situations called for desperate measures.

Scores of products exchanged at general stores in Texas and Indian Territory confirm that these regions were primarily agrarian in nature and depended on cash crops like cotton and cattle for their economic viability. This was clearly the case in the predominantly cattle-raising communities of Hedwig's Hill and Refugio, as well as cattle, corn, and cotton-growing communities like Webberville, Athens, Fischer's Store, Industry, Matagorda, and Melrose. In Melrose, for example, most of the customers listed in the store records for the Hardeman & Barret general merchandise store were farmers, specifically cotton farmers. Underscoring this point, the 1870 census indicates that of the 350 households listed for the community of Melrose, roughly 80% of the households listed were headed by "farmers."⁵⁰⁵ Stores situated in larger towns like Jacksonville and Nacogdoches also drew on a predominantly cotton-producing countryside for their customer base. Cross-referencing ledger records with census data indicates that, by a large margin, the majority of customers listed in the McKinney & Brown records were "farmers."⁵⁰⁶ The same can be said of customers for the Clark & Hyde mercantile firm in Nacogdoches.⁵⁰⁷ In such communities, the town maintained an intrinsic link with the surrounding countryside, economically and socially. Only Austin, with a population over 4,000 in 1870, provides an exception to the rule.⁵⁰⁸ And while the main industry in

⁵⁰⁵*The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870, An Edited Census*, 104-140.

⁵⁰⁶Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC; *1880 Federal Census of Cherokee County*.

⁵⁰⁷Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC; *The People of Nacogdoches County in 1870*.

⁵⁰⁸Census records indicate that the population of Austin in 1870 was 4, 428. *Tenth Census of the United States 1880, Population*, (Washington, D.C., 1883), 455.

McAlester was coal mining, it, too, can be considered a rural community in the 1870s and 1880s with strong ties to the surrounding coal-rich countryside.

Consumption trends in Texas and Indian Territory reflect the region's rural identity. Indeed, such purchasing patterns mirrored those of farmers residing in agricultural regions throughout the country. The most popular purchases featured in ledgers were basic items like tobacco, flour, coffee, salt, potatoes, shoes, and domestic fabrics. For example, store owner L. T. Barret purchased coffee, sugar, ten yards domestic, and thread from his store in June, 1870. James Daughtery purchased sugar, coffee, salt, tobacco, and candles from McAlester's store in January 1872. And finally, Doctor Hyde purchased from the Clark & Hyde firm in June, 1873, a package of tobacco and two yards of calico.⁵⁰⁹ These few examples (and literally thousands of similar entries) demonstrate that generally consumers in these regions, particularly tenant farmers and sharecroppers, exercised fiscal restraint in their purchasing. Most people could simply not afford luxuries and, as a consequence, most consumers stuck to household necessities.

Similar purchasing practices can be found in studies of other agricultural regions. According to Ted Ownby, rural Mississippians rarely purchased expensive luxury goods. Far more typically, "customers who made large single purchases were not buying special goods but bulk quantities of subsistence goods like cloth, shoes, and salt." African-American customers, Ownby argues, were especially prone to subsistence shopping: "The basic economic structure for rural African Americans consisted of the necessity for

⁵⁰⁹Daybook II, Clark & Hyde Mercantile, ETRC, 61; 1871-1872 Daybook, Box 29, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC; 1870-1873 Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, B-38 [1 vol.], ETRC, 22.

hard and steady labor with the hope for eventual land ownership, and a denial of the comforts and pleasures available in consumer goods.”⁵¹⁰ Substantiating this point further, William Hampton Adams and Steven Smith found that black sharecroppers who purchased items from Henry Long’s general store in Waverly Plantation, Mississippi tended to stick to basic food items and clothing, such as sugar, rice, pork molasses, cloth, and shoes, rather than specialty goods.⁵¹¹ In short, basics tended to be the focal point for rural Mississippians, especially for African-American sharecroppers.

In his study of a country store in rural Alabama, Kenneth Wesson finds similar fiscal conservatism in the shopping patterns among tenants and sharecroppers in this region of the agrarian South. Wesson examines John C. H. Jones general store in Fairfield, Pickens County, Alabama, a region primarily engaged in cotton production. Like the cotton-producing regions of Mississippi, a large portion of Jones’ clients were African-American sharecroppers. Referencing an 1873 account ledger, Wesson notes that, after whiskey, the most popular items sold at the Jones store were tobacco, sugar, and coffee. Bacon was also a popular product at the store, followed by flour, molasses, and cooking oil.⁵¹² In terms of dry goods, Jones sold plenty of fabrics, ready-made clothes and shoes, building material, farming equipment, and guns and powder. Indeed, there was little difference in the types of goods sold at this Alabama store from items sold at the McKinney & Brown store in Jacksonville or McAlester’s store in the Choctaw Nation.

⁵¹⁰Owby, *American Dreams in Mississippi*, 17, 80.

⁵¹¹Adams and Smith, “Historical Perspectives on Black Tenant Farmer Material Culture,” 527-529.

⁵¹²Wesson, “The Southern Country Store Revisited,” 164-165.

Perhaps it is not unexpected that sharecroppers in the South shared similar consumption patterns with their neighbors in Texas and Indian Territory, given that many in these regions also engaged in cotton production. However, similar patterns can be found in other rural regions where sharecropping was not the principal economic industry. For example, James Wettstaed's study of consumption patterns in an Ozark mining community suggests that miners generally limited their spending to basic staple items. Wettstaed asserts that the most frequently purchased items from the Stone, Manning, and Company were fabrics, clothing, and food. He breaks purchasing down into these percentages: fabric (17.9%), clothing (23.3%), food (11.5%), and sewing items (9.7%). Breaking these categories down further, Wettstaed notes, "The single most frequently purchased item was whiskey (4.4% of total purchases), followed in order by shoes (4.1%), tobacco (4.1%), salt (3.7%), coffee (3.5%), calico (3.1%), domestic (a type of fabric, 3.1%), and gunpowder (2.8%)."⁵¹³

Not surprisingly, there are stark similarities in the spending patterns of Ozark miners with their counterparts in the McAlester region. A few examples underscore this

⁵¹³Wettstaed, "Early 19th Century Life in an Ozarks Mining Town," 89. In his study, Wettstaed considers items like tobacco and whiskey to be "indulgences." I'm not convinced. Tobacco, for example, appeared as frequently on customer accounts in Texas and Indian Territory as items like salt and potatoes. To be sure, tobacco can hardly be considered a basic necessity; however, it appears that many consumers in the region considered it a staple. Store ledgers from the 1870s and 1880s indicate that tobacco was typically sold to consumers either by the plug, in twists, loosely by the pound, or, in the case of snuff, by the container. Rolled cigarettes were just beginning to be introduced in this period, so they rarely appear in ledgers. An exception appears in ledgers from the Gauntt Bros. store in Athens. According to the store's records, both Will Sullivan and Wade Renfrow purchased packaged cigarettes in November 1887. 1887-1888 Ledger, Gauntt Bros., Baylor University, 73, 77. For a discussion of tobacco in American culture and the shift to packaged cigarettes, see Iain Gately, *Tobacco: The Story of How Tobacco Seduced the World* (New York: Grove Press, 2001); Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 1993).

point. Coal miner Mike Dunn's purchased from McAlester's store on January 21, 1875 such staples as flour, sugar, and soap and weeks later he bought more flour, cheese, lard, and a coffeepot.⁵¹⁴ That same year, U. A. Keith, a fellow miner, purchased sugar, tea, tobacco, flour, salt, thread, and denim.⁵¹⁵ Bowing to practical considerations, McAlester's advertising emphasized the staple nature of his stock. As noted earlier, the store owner stressed in ads he placed in local newspapers that his dry goods store offered clothing, boot, shoes, hardware, queensware, tinware, hats, caps, blankets, fruit, and potatoes.⁵¹⁶ McAlester neither emphasized the availability of specialty goods in his stock nor his ability to acquire such goods. One has to believe, however, if there was a steady demand for luxury items from eastern centers, the store owner would have done his best to meet such demands.

Necessity purchasing was not limited to those living in the cotton-producing and mining regions of the country. Doris Fanelli's study of consumption patterns in rural Delaware in the early nineteenth century suggests that the agrarian consumers in this region also focused their purchasing on basic needs—including fabrics, sewing items, and food products. Fanelli's conclusions are based on her examination of a daybook from William Polk's general store located in the community Saint George's, Delaware.⁵¹⁷ And finally, Elizabeth Perkin's analysis of consumption in frontier Kentucky also highlights the importance of staple items to consumers in this predominantly rural region. Items

⁵¹⁴1874-1875 Daybook, #152, M2046, J. J. McAlester Collection, WHC, 54.

⁵¹⁵*Ibid.*, 31.

⁵¹⁶*Oklahoma Star*, December 16, 1875.

⁵¹⁷Doris D. Fanelli, "William Polk's General Store in saint George's Delaware," *Delaware History* 19 (1981), 212-228.

that appeared most frequently on customer accounts in Kentucky included dry goods such as cloth, ready-made clothing, and haberdashery, as well as food items such as tea, coffee, sugar, spices, and whiskey.⁵¹⁸

The common thread between these studies and the purchases of those residing in Texas and Indian Territory in the late nineteenth century is that *most* rural people, *most* of the time, acquired basic necessities from their general store, rather than expensive luxuries. To be sure, there were notable exceptions to this rule. Store owners often extended their purchasing beyond common necessities and so did a number of their clients—on occasion. There is clear evidence, for example, that a handful of African-American customers, such as Charles Menefee and Sandy Chandler, were able to acquire specialty items from east Texas stores that went well beyond household staples.⁵¹⁹

Moreover, many African Americans demonstrated their commitment to education

⁵¹⁸While Perkins notes the availability of luxury items on the Kentucky frontier—and this is largely her point—the fact remains that common necessities appeared most frequently on customer accounts, particularly among customers in the lowest tax levels. Perkins, *The Consumer Frontier* 498.

⁵¹⁹Ledger 1870-1873, Hardeman & Barret General Merchandise, b-38 [1 vol.], ETRC, 225. Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 228. Examples of expensive six-shooter purchases at the McCampbell Bros. store in Refugio are also worth mentioning. For example, on January 15, 1877, Felix Dubois purchased a “colts pistol” from the store for \$20.00. In February, Mrs. Kate Duncan charged a “14 shooter per Daniel” to her account for \$32.00 as well as an extra box of cartridges for \$1.00. The same month, Robert Martin also bought a 14 shooter for \$32.00, along with cartridges. In March, S.T. Ballow obtained an “Imperial 16 shooter” for the impressive price of \$45.00. John Welder purchased a six-shooter for \$20 in May. In October, Mrs. Susan Dugat charged a six-shooter to her account “per Peter,” at a cost of \$22.50. And finally, in November, R.P. Carr bought and returned a six-shooter for \$22.50. Ranging anywhere from \$20.00 to \$45.00, guns were an expensive purchase and not all store customers could afford such an investment. In fact, all of the firearms purchases appeared in the 1877 ledger reserved for successful town residents, and not their laborers (who tended to be either black or Mexican). Significantly, guns do not appear in the 1876-1877 ledger which lists common laborers, seemingly along racial lines. Account Ledger 1877, W. E. McCampbell & Bros., DRTL, 25, 31, 70, 75, 75, 100, 129, 133, 140.

through their purchase of readers and spelling books from retailers. During the Christmas season, consumers living in the south central plains often acquired special holiday treats for their households, particularly German immigrants in the Hill Country. Still, the fact remains that most consumers in this largely agrarian region exercised considerable restraint in their purchasing; indeed, few could afford not to be cautious in their spending. The small communities of the south central plains were mainly comprised of farmers who struggled with the debt-cycles and the uncertainties of a cash crop economy. Those who engaged in cattle or mining fared only marginally better. Ultimately, poverty and debt, or at least the fear of exacerbating already-tenuous economic conditions, significantly influenced consumer spending at general stores on the south central plains.

If the purchasing patterns of consumers in Texas and Indian Territory closely resembled those living in other rural areas of the country, was there anything signally exceptional about this region from a commercial perspective? Part of what made this region unique in the late nineteenth century was its location at the intersection of two converging frontiers—the cattle and the cotton frontiers; indeed, both industries figure prominently in ledger records from the south central plains. In a cash-short economy, many rural inhabitants relied on an intricate system of exchange with local retailers, wherein they received credit from local store owners in exchange for their bales of cotton or year-old calves. Thus, ledgers are a testament to the integral relationship between store owners in the small communities of Texas and Indian Territory and the outlying agricultural hinterland.⁵²⁰ At the McKinney & Brown store, for example, Sandy Chandler received a \$66.00 credit on his store account on November 12, 1881: “By cash

⁵²⁰ McAlester’s ledgers indicate that credit also an important role in mining communities, as local miners cashed their company’s check at McAlester’s store to cover their debts.

on cotton.” March Kessentiner received \$50.70 credit “By net proceeds 1 b/c [bale of cotton]” on November 21, 1881. And finally, Perry Bolden received a \$44.80 credit on his account on December 12, 1881: “By net proceeds 1 b/c.”⁵²¹ At Anna Martin’s store in Hedwig’s Hill, Henry Kensing received \$15.00 credit for 2 “one year old calves” on June 28, 1886. The following day, Fritz Lorenz received a \$112.50 credit for fifteen “one year old calves.”⁵²² Ledger evidence suggests that in both locations the role of credit proved to be crucial to the choreography of commercial relations in Texas and Indian Territory in the 1870s and 1880s.

In short, the story of the south central plains in the late nineteenth century is predominantly a rural story. That said, the issue that remains is how this region—comprised mainly of farms, ranches, and small town sites—fits into the larger national narrative of the period. One could argue that America was still very much an agrarian nation in the 1870s and 1880s, although this period coincides with the “age of the city” when northern cities experienced accelerated urbanization. Demographically, America was in transition in the late nineteenth century. Between 1880 and 1890, for example, the urban population increased by 56 percent, the total U.S. population by 26 percent, and the rural population by only 13 percent—most urban growth was focused in the northeast region of the country.⁵²³ While America was becoming increasingly urbanized during this time period, much of it remained rural until well into the twentieth century; this was

⁵²¹Ledger D, 1880-1881, Brown & Dixon Company Records, ETRC, 178, 289, 303.

⁵²²Day Book I, 1885-1887, Hedwig’s Hill Store Records, SWC, 362, 364.

⁵²³Robert G. Barrows, “Urbanizing America,” in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 92.

especially true for the South and the Great Plains. Therefore, the daily experiences of those living in the south central plains of the late nineteenth century fit comfortably in the larger rubric of rural culture in nineteenth-century America.

One would expect luxury purchases like parasols, fine china sets, fancy fabrics, and jewelry, to distinguish class among agricultural consumers, particularly because such areas were so far removed from eastern supply centers. Such luxuries, however, were rare in countrified settings. In many ways, more common items prove to be equally telling indicators of consumer behavior and attitudes in this region during the 1870s and 1880s. The appearance of alcohol and drugs in ledgers not only highlights the very real social problems of addiction that plagued the nineteenth century, but also enables a discussion of the prevalent attitudes regarding consumption of such items. For example, the greater social evil for respectable middle-class women was not opiate addiction, but alcoholism (although the former was clearly a problem, particularly in rural areas). Ledger records provide insights on how these larger social issues affected consumers in this region. Temperance campaigns, for example, reached down from a national level and influenced those living in farming communities of east and central Texas. Rural conditions proved especially conducive to drug addiction, partly because of isolation, but also because of the lack of both medical knowledge and doctors. The polemics of such products were not limited to debates among middle-class reformers in the East, but similarly found relevance in the lived experiences of persons residing in the small communities and outposts in Texas and Oklahoma. For the most part, consumption patterns in Texas and Indian Territory reflected the agrarian nature of the region. Concern over debt and economic uncertainty meant that most farmers exercised restraint

in their spending—a pattern that resembled consumer purchasing in other rural areas of the country.

Conclusion

From the pages of ledgers recorded over a century ago, a broad and dynamic account of late nineteenth-century America emerges. Ledgers provide evidence of the day-to-day experiences and community life of persons living on the south central plains. They also detail the intricacies of commercial relations in this region from a local, regional, and national perspective. Indeed, ledgers demonstrate that class, gender, race, and ethnic distinctions were determined and reinforced on a daily basis during commercial transactions carried out at general stores. Further, store records indicate that the social and cultural issues that affected Americans living in other parts of the nation during this period, similarly impacted those living in remote regions of Texas and Indian Territory—in communities like Hedwig’s Hill, Fischer’s Store, Okmulgee, and McAlester. The immigrants from Europe and southern and eastern areas of the United States who settled in these communities brought with them the problems, attitudes, and value systems prevalent in the regions from which they came. For them, there was no boundary that separated the West from other parts of the nation or, for that matter, communities overseas.

The merchants who recorded transactions in these ledgers probably thought nothing of their historical significance, and yet such evidence provides valuable insights into their social and economic experiences, as well as the experiences of their customers. As a group, store owners were an interesting sort. They were an amalgam of the cultural dispositions that prevailed in late nineteenth-century America. Some appeared as brazen profit-motivated entrepreneurs, exhibiting the cut-throat capitalist drive commonly associated with the Gilded Age, while others displayed the high degree of moral probity,

community responsibility, and social refinement, generally associated with the middle and upper classes. In describing merchants, it is not enough to fall back on the Victorian description, as is often the case in histories of the West. Frankly, the term is too vague to adequately capture the nuances of this multi-faceted group. In Indian Territory, store owners like James J. McAlester and Frederick B. Severs capitalized on the region's economic potential, amassing great wealth and prestige in their respective communities. In the postbellum period, store owners like William Clark III and Lyne T. Barret transitioned from their role in the slave-holding elite to that of the merchant elite. Except for gender, the rags-to-riches experiences of Anna Martin's life might easily be found in the pages of a McGuffey reader or an Alger novel, both so popular with readers of the period. As a woman, Martin was by no means a typical nineteenth-century store owner, yet she, like her retailing contemporaries, possessed remarkable business savvy and engaged in economic activities beyond retailing, including ranching and banking. As a social and economic elite, store owners demonstrated a commitment to the moral and social development of their communities through their involvement in the establishment of churches and schools. In this regard, they reflected the kind of communal responsibility that was closely associated with the middle class. Other store owners displayed aspects of all of these qualities, again affirming the heterogeneity of the merchant class in this region.

Both Anna Martin's and the McCampbells' store ledgers highlight the interconnection of the store owners with their clientele and the local economy; in both of these cases, ranching proved to be the dominant economic activity in the region. In the communities under analysis, store merchants played a pivotal role in the economic

fortunes of their store customers. Merchants not only supplied their clients with the goods necessary for daily survival, but served as creditors, marketing agents, postmasters, and links to more cosmopolitan centers in the East and overseas. In especially remote locations, store owners faced little or no competition, which enabled them to monopolize their clients' consumption choices. In other locations, merchants faced competition from other retailers, forcing them to compete for customers and limiting their ability to exploit their clientele. In both cases, it was their extension of credit which placed store owners in control of many of their customers' economic fate. This proved to be an especially precarious situation for sharecroppers and tenant farmers—significant since both represented an enormously important, and growing, segment of the agricultural population of Texas in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For the most part, store owners dictated the terms on which their clients entered commercial relations. Because of the vagaries of the market however, merchants were similarly dependent on their clients for their economic well-being. Indeed, theirs was a relationship of mutual economic dependence. Despite this fact, merchants were hardly the social equals of their largely farming clientele. Store owners not only catered to the needs of their customers, they assumed the responsibility of advancing their respective communities' economic, social, and moral development—a privileged position, indeed.

In commercial terms, Thomas Clark's early study of country stores concluded that women maintained only a marginal, largely insignificant, presence at general stores; as a consequence, their roles as rural consumers has been largely overlooked by historians. Certainly, in terms of real numbers, women frequented stores less often than their male counterparts. Moreover, accounts tended to be listed under the male head of household's

name, further obscuring women's experiences with general stores. That said, store ledgers reveal that women played an important role as consumers, particularly those who were engaged in employment as "hoteliers" or dressmakers (examples of the few employment opportunities afforded women in the late nineteenth century). Ledger evidence also challenges notions of domesticity that limited women's work experience to housework and raising families. In fact, a number of circumstances drew women into employment that extended beyond the needs of their immediate families. In frontier outposts like McAlester, women worked because they had to, typically performing tasks traditionally regarded as women's work such as cooking, washing, and sewing. To be sure, work was available to women in frontier settlements, although such work tended to be limited in scope.

Ledgers from the McCampbell & Bros. store in Refugio provide evidence of not only the types of labor women performed in small communities, but also indicate that issues of race and class played a significant role in shaping opportunities available to both women and racial minorities. During Reconstruction, issues of race proved deeply divisive, not just in Texas, but in all parts of America. General stores served as a common ground for persons of all races and ethnicities, effectively providing a forum for integration into the national economic mainstream. However, store records demonstrate that divisions persisted, even in the largely private ledgers and account books of store owners in these regions. Further, such records suggest that divisions of race were determined and "made" during commercial encounters, reflecting the racialized perceptions of those in charge of recording transactions. Evidence from McAlester's store in the Choctaw Nation indicates that similar divisions of race and class prevailed in

Indian Territory, partly because tribal leaders sought to establish a racial identity in this region that was separate not just from blacks, but from whites. Again, the deep-seated racial attitudes that plagued the nation, similarly affected those living in the counties and territories of Texas and territorial Oklahoma.

As the largest ethnic minority in Texas in the 1870s and 1880s, Germans left an indelible cultural imprint on the areas in which they settled, particularly in the Hill Country of central Texas. Rich in detail, the ledgers from Anna Martin's store in Hedwig's Hill are especially important in providing critical insights into the German experiences in Texas. Martin's German clientele both influenced and were influenced by their new environments, although they retained much of their unique cultural identity. While these ledgers confirm many prior observations made by historians regarding the German community in Texas, they also present challenges to earlier generalizations regarding this immigrant group. The residents of Hedwig's Hill exhibited remarkable resilience, maintaining their cultural traditions and remaining committed to each other and their region. Ledger entries from Martin's store also invoke questions regarding this German settlement and the issue of temperance. The evidence suggests that earlier perceptions regarding this group need to be amended to include possible exceptions to the generalization that Germans whole-heartedly supported the sale of alcohol. German influences were felt in the realms of agriculture, stock-raising, consumption, and holiday rituals, profoundly shaping the cultural identity of central Texas.

Both the persons who frequented general stores and the goods exchanged reveal not just the consuming patterns of the period, but shed light on some of the larger social issues associated with consumer goods. As noted, alcohol proved to be an

especially contentious product among the middle classes in the nineteenth century. This was clearly the case in Texas during the 1880s, when the temperance campaign gathered momentum, culminating in the prohibition vote of 1887. When it came to alcohol consumption, standards of behavior generally split along class, gender, and ethnic lines. While the temperance movement was certainly alive and well in Texas during the period, it garnered little success in abolishing the sale of alcohol from saloons—the usual target of reformers—or from the more discreet location of general stores. The prevalence of medicinal products in ledgers underscores the fact that rural consumers often had to deal with health issues on their own, due in part to the shortage of doctors in such areas. To be sure, consumption patterns in the predominantly agricultural region of the south central plains were not unlike those in other rural areas of the country. Debt and economic uncertainty led consumers to limit their spending to necessity items. In fact, for most general store customers, frivolous spending was the exception, not the rule.

From general store ledgers, the picture that emerges of the south central plains is one of people living a simple life. For the residents of Texas and Indian Territory, this entailed making the most out of often challenging circumstances, avoiding unnecessary excesses, and doing all they could to get by. As consumers, most store customers exercised restraint in their purchasing, generally adhering to the basic needs of their households. The exceptions that challenge the pattern of necessity-spending reflected circumstances that were unique to particular groups. For example, store owners sought to establish themselves as the social elite; as such, their purchases extended well-beyond household necessities. Able to finally pursue an education, many African Americans included in their purchases primers and spelling books, a significant economic sacrifice

given that so many freedmen lived in poverty. Seeking to retain their cultural connections to their past, many German immigrants celebrated the Christmas holiday by purchasing special holiday gifts and treats for their families (a tradition replicated by many in their homeland). As a record of consumption, ledgers provide direct evidence of which consumer items were deemed important enough to make it onto the shopping lists of persons who were often on a woefully-limited budget.

Finally, ledger records connect the interests, values, and social concerns of local people to the national social and cultural concerns of the period. Such evidence enhances our understanding of how issues like domesticity, Reconstruction, immigration, and temperance played out at the local level. Indeed, the residents of Texas and Indian Territory wrestled with the many of the same social and economic challenges as those living in other parts of the nation. Seemingly mundane names and figures in ledger books provide fascinating and important glimpses into the consumer experiences of persons living in this region in 1870s and 1880s. To access this rich period in American history, one need only open an account ledger from a general store, an institution situated at the heart of communities in nineteenth-century rural America.

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