

MOBILE: 1818-1859
AS HER NEWSPAPERS PICTURED HER

By
PAUL WAYNE TAYLOR

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in the College of
Arts and Sciences in the University of Alabama.

University, Alabama
1951

CONTENTS

Chapter I.	MOBILE, THE EARLY ANTE-BELLUM CITY.....	1
	Population, 1818-1830.....	1
	Location.....	2
	Americanization.....	2
	Expansion and growth.....	3
	Early public utilities.....	4
	The poor.....	4
	The maritime population.....	5
	Population, 1830.....	6
	Early municipal government.....	7
	Public officials.....	7
Chapter II.	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY.....	9
	The theater.....	9
	Public spectacles and events.....	12
	Sports.....	13
	Social and benevolent clubs.....	15
	Celebrations of public holidays.....	18
	Balls and dances.....	19
	Fashionable houses and resorts.....	20
	Music.....	21
	Literature.....	22
	Position of women.....	25
	The younger generation.....	25
Chapter III.	ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.....	27
	Chamber of Commerce.....	27
	Commission agents or factors.....	27
	Way-landings.....	32
	Cotton processing.....	33
	Cotton exports.....	33
	Growth and prosperity.....	34
	Panic of 1837.....	34
	Diversification of agriculture.....	35
	Manufacturing and industry.....	36
	Direct foreign trade.....	40
	The cost of living.....	42
	The city market.....	43
Chapter IV.	EARLY TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION....	46
	Roads.....	46
	City streets.....	47
	Harbor and bay.....	47
	River transportation.....	50
	Communication by mail.....	51

T378
T2167m 242290
1952

Chapter V.	JOURNALISM AND ADVERTISING.....	54
	Newspapers.....	54
	Conventional notices.....	55
	News content.....	55
	Letters to the editor.....	56
	Language of the day.....	56
	Obituaries.....	57
	Advertising.....	58
	Influence of newspapers.....	59
Chapter VI.	EDUCATION.....	60
	Early conditions.....	60
	Content of education.....	60
	Barton Academy.....	60
	Revenue for schools.....	61
	The Bethel school.....	63
	Denominational free schools.....	64
	Education Act of 1854.....	65
	Attendance.....	66
	Collegiate institutions.....	66
	Private education.....	68
Chapter VII.	RELIGION AND MORALITY.....	69
	Early situation.....	69
	Vagrancy.....	69
	The Sabbath day.....	70
	Tobacco.....	71
	Alcohol.....	71
	Temperance.....	72
	Early churches.....	73
	Mobile Bible Society.....	74
	Sunday schools.....	75
	The religious impetus.....	76
	Camp meetings.....	76
	Religious denominations.....	76
Chapter VIII.	CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.....	78
	Prevalence of crime.....	78
	Tendency toward violence.....	78
	Burglary and robbery.....	79
	Swindling, counterfeiting, and kidnapping.....	81
	Gambling.....	82
	Poisoning.....	83
	Arson or incendiaryism.....	84
	Crime among seamen.....	87
	Piracy.....	87
	Mutiny.....	89
	Rioting.....	90
	Law enforcement.....	91
	Civilian protective groups.....	91
	Efficiency of police.....	93
	Penal laws and punishment.....	95
	Penal institutions.....	96

Chapter IX.	SLAVERY IN MOBILE.....	98
	Role of slavery.....	98
	Value of slave property.....	98
	Social problems of slavery.....	99
	Crime among slaves.....	100
	Runaways.....	101
	Ordinances on slavery.....	102
	Separate maintenance.....	103
	Free persons of color.....	104
	Defense of the institution.....	106
	Abolitionism.....	108
	The Committee of Vigilance.....	109
	Southern Rights Association of Mobile.....	110
	Emancipation.....	111
	Mobile Emigration Society.....	111
Chapter X.	HEALTH OF THE CITY.....	113
	Prevalence of disease.....	113
	Problems of health.....	113
	Epidemic.....	114
	Curious beliefs on health.....	115
	Yellow fever.....	117
	Other causes of death.....	118
	Board of Health.....	118
	Medical expense.....	119
	Dentists.....	119
	Practice of medicine.....	120
	Hospitals.....	120
	Medical College of Alabama.....	122
	Drugs, medicines, and herbs.....	122
	Improbable claims and benefits.....	123
	Home remedies.....	125
	Baths.....	125
Chapter XI.	DISASTERS OF THE PERIOD.....	126
	Fire.....	126
	The "Burnt City", 1839.....	127
	Steam accidents.....	128
	Other accidents and minor disasters.....	130
	Flood and storm.....	130
Chapter XII.	FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION.....	132
	Harbor and bay.....	132
	Telegraph.....	134
	Public cab.....	134
	City omnibus or trolley car.....	134
	The "Penny Post" or carrier system.....	135
	Early interest in railroads.....	135
	Railroad construction.....	137
	The Mobile and Ohio Railroad.....	139

Chapter XIII.	FURTHER POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PERIOD.....	141
	Interest in politics.....	141
	National political affiliations.....	141
	Local politics.....	142
	The Reform Corporation.....	143
	Municipal affairs.....	143
	Political antagonisms.....	144
	Mayors.....	148
Chapter XIV.	THE LATE ANTE-BELLUM CITY.....	149
	Continued growth.....	149
	Statistics of population, 1840.....	149
	Occupational statistics.....	150
	Social statistics.....	150
	Population, 1850.....	150
	Public utilities.....	151
	Architecture of the city.....	153
	The maritime population.....	154
	On the eve of war.....	157
Chapter XV.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	158
Appendix A.	Cotton Crop of South Alabama: 1818-1859....	164
Appendix B.	Exports of Cotton From Mobile: 1828-1847....	165
Appendix C.	Average Yearly Prices of Cotton in Mobile: 1830-1859.....	166
Appendix D.	Table of Interments: 1837-1848.....	167
Bibliography	168

PREFACE

To draw a general picture of life in the Southern ante-bellum city of Mobile is the aim of this paper. The first chapter is intended to set the social, economic, and political scene, being given over to no specific phase of history. Social and cultural interests follow as a background upon which life in the city revolved. Economic and commercial interests were most significant factors in the stature and success of the ante-bellum city, and are therefore treated in some detail. Transportation and communication are delineated as separate chapters due to the strategic location of Mobile as a river and seaport town. Separate chapters have also been devoted to journalism, crime, and slavery in Mobile because these factors played such vital roles in determining the character of the place. Education has also received separate attention for it was in ante-bellum Mobile that free schools in Alabama had their origin and example. The general welfare of the city is portrayed in accounts of religion, health, and disaster there during the period. The last chapter is devoted to drawing a general picture of life and labor in Mobile on the eve of war.

A definitive history has not been attempted or accomplished in this paper. As a necessary limiting factor sources other than contemporary Mobile newspapers are not drawn upon directly in this text. Several other sources and references are, however, cited in connection with facts stated

as such in order to reinforce or clarify newspaper versions. Also some established authorities on various phases of the history of Mobile are pointed out as being more thorough and complete than newspaper accounts can be. Therefore all facts and conclusions contained herein are as they were drawn from contemporary newspapers. Thus this is a newspaper story of ante-bellum Mobile. This fact offers some qualifications to the validity and reliability of the material contents. While nearly every aspect of life in Mobile found some treatment in her newspapers, in few instances was this treatment definitive. Also newspapers had editorial policies and political prejudices; therefore it is well to view the evidence in the light of possible political implication. These qualifications have been considered throughout the paper. Notwithstanding these limitations, a valuable and interesting account of day to day life in ante-bellum Mobile may be found recorded in her newspapers.

Newspaper sources for this thesis are on microfilm in the library of the University of Alabama.

CHAPTER I

MOBILE, THE EARLY ANTE-BELLUM CITY

In 1813, the American government obtained from Spain that part of the present state of Alabama lying south of the thirty-first degree of north latitude. This territory included the city of Mobile, which was then "an obscure creole town" chiefly inhabited by the descendants of French and Spanish emigrants, to whom were added a few Americans.¹ By 1819, the year in which Alabama was admitted as a state to the Union, the American population of Mobile had increased rapidly. Exclusive of military personnel the population of Mobile in 1813 was 140 with a corresponding number of blacks.² When the General Assembly incorporated the city by an act of December 17, 1819, the populace numbered near 800 citizens. Three years later this number had soared to 2,800, and Mobile had begun in earnest her growth to eminence as a seaport and river town of the ante-bellum South. A contemporary foresaw this rapid expansion when he predicted that a few years would establish Mobile among the most favored portions of the Union.³

-
1. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 6, 1833. For an excellent treatment of the entire history of Mobile see Charles Grayson Summersell's Mobile: History of A Seaport Town. University of Alabama Press, 1949.
 2. Mobile Commercial Register, February 7, 1822, reprinted in the Mobile Register and Journal, November 30, 1848.
 3. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, April 23, 1819.

The original city of Mobile had been located at Fort Louis on the Mobile River at Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff. Recurrent floods prompted its citizens to move in 1711 to the present site of the city near the juncture of the Mobile River and Mobile Bay. This move proved favorable to the future of the city. It was not only a seaport town, but it also lay at the head of the extensive Alabama river system. Mobile Bay received the combined waters of the Tombigbee, Black Warrior, Alabama, Cahaba, Coosa, and Tallapoosa rivers.⁴ With the expansion of steam navigation the location of Mobile proved even more advantageous.

After almost a decade of Americanization there were within the corporate limits of Mobile 240 dwellings, 110 stores and warehouses, 2 churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic, 2 seminaries, 2 printing offices, a post office and custom house, an incorporated bank, a building used as a courthouse and county jail, 3 hotels, 3 bakeries, and several boarding houses.⁵ There were three operating wharves and three under construction. The population of 2,800 was estimated at being from one-third to two-fifths colored. Generally the buildings were of wood with Spanish architectural tastes still prevalent. A contemporary described the town as comfortable, but complained of

4. Mobile Commercial Register, February 7, 1822, reprinted in the Mobile Register and Journal, November 30, 1848.

5. Ibid.

a general deficiency of chimneys in all parts of the town.⁶ Expansion and growth were characteristic of the Americanization period of Mobile, as indeed they were for the whole antebellum period. But the Mobile of the 1820's was still considered "a seaport of the second order," as were most of the other port cities on the Gulf of Mexico, but she was already exhibiting all the characteristics of a port of the first order.⁷

Within the space of a year, some fourteen new brick buildings were under construction, a cotton press established, new streets opened and old ones improved, wharves increased in number, size, and convenience, low grounds drained and filled, and eleven steamboats, exclusive of barges and other river craft, were plying the waters to the interior.⁸

By 1829 Mobilians could boast of living in a "gay and smart little fashionable town... full of vigor and promise."⁹ She had begun to attract some attention among her older sister cities and could lay some claim to beauty. To those who approached her from the sea, she was "indeed fair to behold," but a contemporary reluctantly admitted that "her rear is not altogether so seemly."¹⁰

6. Ibid.

7. Mobile Argus, December 30, 1822.

8. Ibid., October 28, 1823.

9. Mobile Commercial Register, November 9, 1829.

10. Ibid.

As the city expanded, Mobilians early felt the need of providing for her growing urban population. According to the newspapers an adequate supply of pure water was one of her primary needs. In 1820 the city let the first water contract to the Aqueduct Company which agreed to supply the city by sinking wells. The Aqueduct Company failed to produce; its contract was revoked in 1824, and two years later new boring equipment was shipped from the North where boring had proved successful in supplying city water.¹¹ Evidently this method proved inadequate, for in 1830 Mobile borrowed \$30,000 to expand and improve its water system.¹²

Mobile also provided for its local poor, but this class increased so rapidly with the influx of population that its citizens felt compelled to put restrictions on the number of vagrant and destitute people who regularly found their way to Mobile from the outside by river or ocean vessel. An ordinance of 1818 directed all ships masters to present to the city authorities a complete passenger list and required bond of the ship master for each passenger who was liable to become a public charge. Such a person had twenty-four hours to leave the city or face a charge of vagrancy. This ordinance applied to both white and colored people, whether the colored

11. Ibid., December 12, 1876.

12. Ibid., August 31, 1830.

person was mulatto, slave, or free.¹³ Mobile recognized the need for caring for her own paupers according to contemporary accounts and retained an overseer of the poor. This charity was supported by an ordinance which levied an annual tax of \$1 per head on all the free male inhabitants of the town of Mobile of twenty-one to fifty years of age.¹⁴ The early American city of Mobile did not want to be burdened with destitution other than her own. It was illegal for a master to put ashore in town any sick or disabled seaman who was not an inhabitant of the town or county. For violations of this ordinance the master paid a \$10 fine and became liable for any expense incurred by the city in caring for such people. Written permission had to be obtained from the President of the Board of Commissioners of the city in order to land a person only long enough for medical attention.¹⁵

But the citizens of Mobile were not long in realizing the fact that as commercial activities of the city expanded, the welfare of the maritime population became synonymous with the welfare of Mobile, and began to take steps providing for them. The government of the city secured a fund for the care of seamen, but the movement for a permanent hospital for them in Mobile was not soon accomplished.¹⁶ Another move to aid

13. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, November 3, 1818.

14. Ibid., June 23, 1819.

15. Ibid., May 26.

16. Mobile Argus, December 5, 1822.

seamen was defeated when a committee on naval affairs indefinitely postponed an application to the General Assembly of a bill to impose a tonnage duty in the ports of Mobile and Blakeley for the benefit of sick and disabled seamen.¹⁷ The 1820's, despite much public sentiment for sailors' welfare, witnessed little improvement in the lot of the sea-going population but showed the way for future acts of charity by her people.

The census of 1830, reprinted in a daily newspaper, listed a population of 3,196 for the city of Mobile. Population of the county was 3,061, which was 135 less than the population of the city. There were almost two white males to every white female in the city, while this difference was less marked in the country. Free males of color were outnumbered by free females of color 174 to 200 in the city and were about evenly distributed in the county, 90 to 84 respectively. The number of slaves in the city and county were about evenly divided also, there being 1,175 in the city and 1,096 in the county. The white population of Mobile in 1830 was 1,647, which was slightly more than the 1,549 colored people.¹⁸ Thus whites and blacks in the city in 1830 were approximately the same in number.

17. Ibid., March 2⁴, 1823. Blakeley, named for Colonel Josiah Blakeley, was located across the bay from Mobile.

18. Mobile Commercial Register, November 9, 1830.

This population had been governed by a President and Board of Commissioners until the Legislature of the new state granted a charter to the city in 1819 providing for government by Mayor and Aldermen. According to newspapers, Mobile's first elected mayor was Addin Lewis, who was succeeded two years later by John Elliott. Samuel H. Garrow served from 1824 to 1826 and from 1827 to 1830 John F. Everitt was mayor. The elections of Mayor and Aldermen were held annually by ballot of the white male inhabitants who were twenty-one years of age, free holders in the city, taxpayers for twelve months during the year preceding that in which the election was held, and holders of a tenement or separate room for six months immediately preceding the election.¹⁹

Throughout the ante-bellum period the contemporary journals contained numerous complaints of the conduct of Mobile's public officials. A great many of these complaints stemmed from different political party views. But there also may be found many legitimate criticisms of public officers' conduct in office. The charges ranged from inattention and indifference to duty to corruption.²⁰ Perhaps one reason for complaint stemmed from the fact that public offices were not then considered full time occupations. In most instances

19. Ibid., March 19.

20. Mobile Argus, August 1, 1823.

the officer held one or more other positions or occupations and could devote but a limited time to each. When no particular individual was singled out, but the office in general was criticized , it may be safely assumed that there was adequate cause for complaint. The editor of the Mobile Argus stated in 1823 that he had seen much oppression on the part of Mobile constables and could no longer refrain from exposing their outrageous conduct. He referred to similar complaints coming from Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and New Orleans of "the fraud, the villainy, the corruption, and grinding oppression" practiced by constables and peace officers against a defenseless class of society.²¹

Fortunately such conditions did not continue and Mobile had progressed by 1830 to a firm position among the cities of the ante-bellum South. The city was growing and new additions were regularly being added to her business section, her municipal government was considered well established, her commercial facilities and activities were expanding, and her population was increasing rapidly.

21. Ibid., October 7.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

The social and cultural life of ante-bellum Mobile was rich indeed. In her society was manifest a typical example of gay life in a city of the old South. Because of her location, Mobile was a meeting place of the old world through her seaport, and of the new world through her river connections with the interior. Ante-bellum Mobile was both old and new. Physically she was old, founded in her present location in 1711 and peopled principally by French and Spanish descendants. In spirit and in fact she became modern in her period of Americanization in the early nineteenth century. The rapid influx of population, expansions and improvements in trade, commerce, and transportation gave her new vigor. Her social and cultural history for the period, consequently, is varied and picturesque.

The theater was a vital part of the social lives of the people if judged by the frequency and length of theater advertisements and notices in the newspapers of the day. Also judging from the newspapers, Mobilians liberally supported the theater. The first actual theater was built in Mobile in 1823 by Noah Ludlow and his name was prominent in theater notices for many years following that date. Before and after Ludlow's theater other buildings were occasionally used for various public performances. Usually the theatrical companies were set up

for the winter season or for a series of performances. From time to time itinerant entertainers came to town, not all of whom had a legitimate performance, as evidenced by the Mobile Argus editorial which complained of frequent impositions on the public by itinerants.¹ Theatrical performances often consisted of several parts - a drama, tragedy, and recitation, which was usually comical. Advertisements of the attractions were very colorful, as indicated by the advertisement of "the most tragical tragedy that ever was tragedized by any tragical company of tragedians" called the life and death of Tom Thumb The Great.²

In 1825 a touring stock company was organized to play a circuit of theaters. It passed the winter in Mobile, "a city of commerce and liberality," the summer in Huntsville, "the seat of health, wealth, and hospitality," and the intervening time in Montgomery. They traveled in steamboats and were paid "liberal salaries."³

Theatrical companies were large, even by modern standards. An announcement of the personnel of the company for the winter season of 1836-1837 listed twenty-three actors, eleven actresses, thirteen musicians, three scene

1. Mobile Argus, February 20, 1823.

2. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 24, 1824.

3. Mobile Commercial Register, June 3, 1825.

painters and artists, two "machinists", and one costumer, making a total of fifty-three for the company.⁴ The fact that the company could afford to pay fifty-three members gives support to the contention that Mobile liberally supported the theater. Performers, in fact, were very well paid. Celeste, a dancer, for "a few days" exhibitions made \$4,800, which was called "unreasonable" for her kind of talent, "perfect as it is."⁵ Another evidence of the lucrativeness of the theater is shown in a notice of the sale of the Mobile theater to Charles Cullom for \$35,100. Ludlow and Smith leased the building and traveled to New York to secure talent.⁶ Also Ludlow and Smith could afford to pay four members of the City Watch to attend each performance to preserve order.⁷ If four policemen were required to keep order evidently some of their patrons were rowdy and disorderly.

Visitors to the city usually formed a large part of each audience. The ladies waited for some event of novelty. Then sooner or later "a general gathering takes place" at the theater, and "the fashion being set, every evening brings its parties to enjoy the acting or perhaps to see one another."

4. Ibid., November 3, 1836.

5. Ibid., April 15, 1837.

6. Ibid., June 2, 1835.

7. Ibid., November 19, 1836.

Once the ladies set the fashion "the men-folk ... follow of course," and the season was successfully launched.⁸

Mobilians also liked to witness public spectacles, and such sights were often available to the curious. Hundreds witnessed a "bull Bait" at the race grounds performed by three Spaniards from Cuba.⁹ Large numbers also went to see "an Asiatic lion and lioness, an African leopard, a Peruvian Lama /sic/ and her young, a pair of Arabian camels, a Zebra an Ape ... and a variety of monkeys."¹⁰ Bare fist boxing was offered by the "celebrated pugilist" Samuel O'Rourke who, victorious in fourteen previous fights, had a "set-to with a scientific amateur."¹¹ This fight was staged in a Mobile hotel with tickets on sale at the bar. As an added attraction it was announced that in the course of the evening Mr. O'Rourke would bend a large iron poker by one blow across his naked arm. Fearing that this event might prove too sensational or spectacular, it was added that the display would be so arranged "as to please, without offending the most fastidious."¹² An appeal strictly to the curious was offered in showing as "an unprecedented novelty" a little Chinese

8. Ibid., November 18.

9. Ibid., May 11, 1824.

10. Ibid., December 11, 1826.

11. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, February 4, 1833.

12. Ibid.

lady, Afong Moy, in native dress who would sing a Chinese song and walk about on four inch feet. More curiosity was aroused by stating that the Chinese were extremely jealous of allowing their females to be seen by foreigners.¹³

Sometimes spectacles of a scientific nature were offered. Various panoramas were advertised frequently. Hugh Frazier Parker had great numbers to witness "the first Aerostat ever constructed in the Southern states" which he had built and in which he ascended.¹⁴ Eighteen days later Parker was welcomed back to Mobile amid great noise, crowds, and music by the "whole neighborhood." He landed 60 miles away on the Escambia River. A Mobilian described the feat as "unparalleled in the history of aerial voyaging".¹⁵

Such spectacular events were typical of the fare offered the people of Mobile for their amusement. Recreational sports also occupied a prominent place in the social life of early Mobile. One might expect that Mobilians would participate in water sports. The Mobile Regatta held boat races, and one of the more famous entries, Fairy of Seadrift Club, won the first regular regatta held in New Orleans.¹⁶ Thereafter Mobile entries in competition with

13. Mobile Commercial Register, March 21, 1836.

14. Ibid., March 14, 1842.

15. Ibid., April 2, 1842.

16. Ibid., January 10, 1839.

other racing boats of the South usually fared well.

A great deal of interest was also placed in horse racing. The Mobile Jockey Club was organized and held its first series of races as early as 1823.¹⁷ Their races were open to competition from all over the United States. Race horse owners were proud of their animals and during the racing season it was a common occurrence for an owner to issue a challenge offering to compete with all comers. Often these challenges were accepted and public interest centered on the contest for several days. The owner of the Tuscaloosa Roarer brought his racer to the Mobile course and declared himself "disgusted with the flatulent boasting of ... northern sportsmen," and stated that he was ready to "avail himself of their blind folly for the purpose of transferring their disposable funds to a more southern latitude"
His confidence in his horse amounted to \$20,000.¹⁸

In 1837 the Jockey Club built a new race track two and one-half miles below the city, complete with spacious stands. This was the noted Bascombe Race Course.¹⁹ Many owners had private stables there, including several out of town sportsmen, among whom were Colonel Garrison of Virginia, and Colonels Langford and Barnes from North Alabama. In 1843

17. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, December 1, 1823.

18. Ibid., February 23, 1824.

19. Mobile Commercial Register, March 24, 1837.

the Bascombe Course went under the control of an association of common stockholders. It was their purpose to make race week "one of jubilee." Still another purpose was their announced intention to clean up and control the races to make them attractive to the ladies, and thereby render the race course respectable.²⁰

Another sporting event which eventually became illegal in Mobile was cockfighting. H. W. Clements operated a regular cockpit in the basement of the Corinthian on Royal Street every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday nights.²¹ Evidently a cockpit was well patronized.

One very striking index to the social life of Mobile was the great number and variety of social clubs which she supported. These clubs were usually combined social and benevolent organizations; also there were some literary and fraternal organizations. Benevolence and charity were the characteristic marks of most of Mobile's organized society.

One of the most notable of the benevolent organizations in Mobile was the Female Benevolent Society, which was formed in 1829 to aid the poor. The ladies supplied food, clothing and medicine to the poor and needy. A visiting

20. Ibid., November 28, 1843.

21. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 3, 1851.

committee was maintained to determine the direction of their efforts.²² In 1835 the Benevolent Society began erecting a home for the poor, aided by a city appropriation of \$5,000 and several private donations.²³ By 1837 they had erected twelve brick tenements and were feeding, clothing, and educating some sixty to seventy children.²⁴ Once a year the society published in the newspapers a report of their work and financial receipts and expenditures for the year.

Another organization which took as its object care of orphans was the Orphan Asylum Society which later became known as the Protestant Orphan Asylum Society.²⁵ The ladies of this organization held annual fairs where they sold various articles made and donated by friends of the society to raise funds for the benefit of orphans resident in Mobile. These fairs were gala events; the newspapers advertised them widely and large amounts of money usually were raised. Ice cream and strawberry suppers were also fund raising social events. The Samaritan Society was also active in poor relief in Mobile, beginning its charitable work in September 1838, the year preceding the great epidemic of yellow fever.²⁶ One of

-
- 22. Mobile Commercial Register, June 23, 1829.
 - 23. Ibid., September 14, 1835.
 - 24. Ibid., January 28, 1837.
 - 25. Ibid., May 9, 1840.
 - 26. Ibid., September 20, 1838.

the most celebrated charitable societies of the later antebellum period was organized especially to meet the crises of each summer's attacks of yellow fever. Mobile's epidemic months were August, September, and October, and many residents of Mobile annually left the city during these months to escape the sickness. Disease took a heavy toll of those who stayed behind. Those who had to remain behind formed themselves into a club for mutual protection and care, calling themselves the "Can't-Get-Away Club."²⁷ This club had a long and distinguished tenure of service in Mobile.

The Mobile Franklin Society was organized there in 1835 "for literary and scientific" purposes with a primary object of furnishing the city with a library.²⁸ An act of the Legislature incorporated it January 16, 1836. This social and literary club functioned well for many years. The Mobile Typographical Society was yet another literary society functioning in Mobile, and was affiliated with the National Typographical Society.

The maritime population also had their organizations in Mobile. In 1851 the Baymen's Society was organized and at its first anniversary celebration all seagoing people in Mobile were invited to attend. If their organization had

27. Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 1, 1853.

28. Mobile Commercial Register, January 16, 1835.

any specific objective, it is not revealed in contemporary newspapers.²⁹

Mobile had a Young Men's Christian Association organized in 1856. Even as little as one year later this association was considered "permanent and useful" to the young men of Mobile.³⁰

All public holidays were annually celebrated in Mobile. Two clubs, The Striker's Club, established in 1841, and the Cowbellion de Rakin Society, established in 1831, annually presented public pageants on New Year's Eve. The latter club was described as having character and individuality. Their celebrations were planned far in advance and revolved about some central theme.³¹ The usual order of their program consisted of a masked parade and demonstration, a dance, and feast. The Cowbellions always vanished at midnight. Their pageants gained far fame and drew spectators from distant places. In order to accommodate the crowds the Cowbellions imposed a rule for their 1857 celebration that no gentleman could attend accompanied by more than three ladies! Also they requested that children be kept at home. Of their pageants, a contemporary stated that they drew such "crowds of strangers

29. Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 27, 1852.

30. Ibid., February 25, 1857.

31. Mobile Daily Register, January 3, 1845.

to witness their celebrations as the combined race meetings of the past twenty years have not mustered."³²

Especially did Mobilians celebrate the Fourth of July. This festivity was a combined and cooperative effort on the part of most of the town. Citizens held public meetings prior to the holiday to formulate plans and to establish an order of march for the parade. Usually the program consisted of prayer, an oration, reading of the Declaration of Independence, and a large public dinner liberally followed by patriotic toasts. One interesting toast accompanied by "guns and musick sic," was drunk to Congress: "Less talk and more action!"³³

Social life in Mobile reached its peak each time a large ball or dance was held. Descriptions of them in the newspapers of the day were lavish and eloquent. The larger balls usually commenced at ten o'clock and continued until one a.m., when the ball stopped and the entire company retired to a supper room. There they partook of food and drink which chroniclers expressed difficulty describing. Then the dancers returned to the ballroom where dancing continued "until bright Chanticleer proclaimed the dawn."³⁴ Some of the

32. Ibid., December 29, 1857.

33. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, July 7, 1819.

34. Mobile Commercial Register, March 1, 1830.

balls were attended by as many as 500 people. Mobile chroniclers were proud of the bright splendor of these social occasions and wanted it known abroad "how we do these things in Mobile."³⁵

A dancing school was taught by J. F. C. Mouttong, whose repertoire included set dances, reels, cotillions, and the waltz. Once a month he sponsored a public dance in which his pupils participated.³⁶

There were several fashionable houses or resorts to which Mobile society could go to entertain themselves. In the city, in addition to the Mansion House, the Alhambra, and various other hotels, there were some fine coffee and oyster shops where one could obtain fine food and choice liquor. Another popular establishment was the city bathhouse. A bath was considered a pleasant luxury. At the bathhouse on Three-Mile Creek one could get a warm shower or a cold bath, and also have access to a liquor bar, billiard table, and nine-pin alley. The price of the bath was fifty cents, and the shower, twenty-five cents, or for ten dollars one could purchase a season ticket. Men were the only customers of the bath until 1835 when the proprietor, "by request",

35. Ibid., March 22.

36. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, November 10, 1823.

37. Mobile Commercial Register, April 17, 1829.

set aside one night a week for the accommodation of the ladies who were asked to bring their own attendants.³⁸

The most fashionable resorts were located outside the city. They were referred to as "watering places." George B. Clitherall's Bel Crescent Hotel at Point Clear attracted guests from as far away as New Orleans. Point Clear was located twenty miles from Mobile on the east side of the bay. At the Bel Crescent there was excellent food, swimming, fine fish, wine, music, dancing, and "plenty of flirtation and love-making."³⁹ Undoubtedly with such attractions the Bel Crescent was well patronized.

Another of the finer guest hotels was Freeman's Hollywood House, located ten miles from Mobile on a high bluff. The grounds were beautiful. Attractions were excellent springs, hunting, bathing and "no mosquitoes."⁴⁰

Interest in music in ante-bellum Mobile was evidenced in 1849 by the formation of a Mobile Music Association, formed to promote music in the city. The association had a liberal backing and soon after its formation made plans to purchase a building for the organization.⁴¹

38. Ibid., May 20, 1835.

39. Alabama Tribune, July 21, 1849.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., July 15.

Well before this actual organization of a society devoted to music advancement, music was appreciated in Mobile. Grand opera had been offered and was well received by Mobilians. A Mr. Keene had made a comfortable living from a music shop. Keene offered for sale "guitars, violins, French Picollas, German Piano Fortes, clarinetts sic 7, flutes, Flageolets" and various sheet music consisting of ballads, cotillions, waltzes, and country dances.⁴² Also Mr. Keene announced that he was qualified to tune pianos.

Literary tastes were equally manifest in Mobile. The Franklin Society was formed in 1835 specifically to advance literary tastes in Mobile. As early as 1826 the Commercial Register further attempted to meet literary needs in the city by opening a reading room at its general offices. The reading matter it offered was primarily of interest to the commercial population, but it also offered literature much sought by the general populace. Its files contained all principle newspapers of the United States, London, and Liverpool, and magazines of this country and Great Britain, including North American, American Quarterly, Southern Review, Silliman's Journal, American Monthly, London Quarterly, Edinburgh Review, Blackwood's Magazine, and the London Literary

42. Mobile Commercial Register, December 5, 1835.

Gazette.⁴³ Such an array of literature lends strong evidence to the contention that Mobile in the ante-bellum period was not uninterested in literature.

A library was established in Mobile in 1827 under the auspices of the Mobile Library Association, which boasted of over 100 members. By 1829 it had invested \$1,000 in books and had some 1,000 volumes in its collection.⁴⁴ But even before this association there was an independent circulating library in Mobile which had a regular list of subscribers. The subscription price was \$2 per month. A six months subscription could be obtained for \$1.50 per month. The rules of the library are interesting in that they were very strict in comparison with modern standards. All books not returned at an expiration of one week were considered sold, and any non-subscriber had to deposit the full value of the book when taking it out. Any book which was lost, written in, or had leaves turned down, or otherwise damaged had to be replaced or paid for. And if such a damaged book belonged to a set, the whole set had to be bought or reasonable compensation made therefor.⁴⁵

The Mobile Argus offered book lovers some advice

43. Ibid., December 2, 1826.

44. Ibid., December 23, 1829.

45. Mobile Argus, December 9, 1822.

on the care of their books when it stated that a drop of "oil of Lavender" would prevent moldiness in books, ink, paste, and leather work. Book collectors, the Argus believed, would be glad to learn of the best method of preventing mold from injuring their libraries.⁴⁶

Mobile had one weekly periodical devoted to "literature, science, morality, and general intelligence." This periodical was the Mobile Literary Gazette. Its contents included poetry and excerpts of famous passages of literature. It also sponsored a state-wide contest among the ladies for the most original tale or short story, which it published.⁴⁷

Newspapers of the day frequently carried book reviews for the education of the public and book dealers placed detailed advertisements of their wares in the daily papers. In 1824 a Mobilian could buy Don Juan, The Three Perils of Women, The Present State of England, Moore's Irish Melodies, A New England Tale, and works by Virgil, Cicero, and Ovid.⁴⁸

Another periodical which Mobile read regularly was Godey's Ladies Book. This periodical was established in 1830 and claimed to have the largest circulation of any monthly periodical in the United States. The ladies of Mobile who

46. Ibid., June 19, 1823.

47. Mobile Literary Gazette, May 24, 1839.

47. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 18, 1824.

read it received the latest information on American fashions, embroidery, riding, dancing, popular music, romance and humor.⁴⁹ In fact some Mobilians considered that if a lady regularly read Godey's Ladies Book it was "infallible proof of intelligence and refinement"⁵⁰

Indeed the women of Mobile held a place of esteem. Many polite references may be found in contemporary newspapers which speak of the refinement and gentle character of the ladies. Especially were contemporaries complimentary when commenting on women in the field of literature. It was said that there was "no more delightful peculiarity in the literature of the present age than the worth and brilliancy of its female genius."⁵¹ The works of female authors created interest in Mobile as elsewhere, and women were urged to write for publication in at least one contemporary journal.⁵² There was some truth to the statement that the full development of the intellect and imagination of women is the triumph of modern times."⁵³

Young people seem to have occupied a place in the estimation of their elders in ante-bellum Mobile comparable to that of young people of the present day. Following is

49. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, January 1, 1833.
50. Ibid., October 19, 1840.
51. Mobile Argus, July 1, 1823.
52. Cf. ante, p. 24.
53. Mobile Argus, July 1, 1823.

an interesting letter written by a disgruntled old gentleman of Mobile concerning the younger generation of that city:⁵⁴

Isn't it really astonishing ... how much the manners of the age have degenerated? Why, sir, when you and I were boys, there was something like respect shown to age and experience. Now every young popinjay that can raise a moustache, takes precedence of us altogether. They elbow us at parties, crowd in before us at the theater, rub against us in the street, whip by at a furious rate, and scare our horses on the road, contradict and dispute us in our assertions most positively and dogmatically ... and finally, after engrossing all the time and attention of the ladies, have the assurance to thrust themselves into our game of whist, and beat us (by luck) at that. Foremost and first among the abuses of the present day is the inconsiderateness shown by this degenerate generation of young people.

⁵⁴. Mobile Commercial Register, March 25, 1835.

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

Mercantilists and tradesmen of Mobile early recognized the need of a governing body among themselves in business. Consequently in 1823 merchants and business men of Mobile gathered at the Globe Hotel and organized a Chamber of Commerce.¹ This group set up a tariff of charges and regulations relative to cotton storage, drayage, wharfage, insurance, and so forth, aimed at preventing frauds, correcting abuses, and adjusting disputes between tradesmen. It had an arbitration committee to which cases of dispute were taken. In 1837 this committee was increased to seven members who served for two months, as compared with the twelve months tenure of the appeal committee.² It was not until 1836 that the Chamber of Commerce was chartered by the state Legislature. At that time it was estimated that the group comprised fully two-thirds of all Mobile merchants.³

The preponderance of merchants in Mobile were associated with the great staple, cotton. A large body of these tradesmen were commission merchants or factors in the buying and selling of cotton and produce. These factors acted as

-
1. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 1, 1824.
 2. Mobile Commercial Register, January 4, 1837.
 3. Ibid., December 12, 1840.

agents for inland planters, receiving cotton or other produce on consignment from them and arranging sales of these commodities. In return the agent supplied plantation necessities for the season. These commission agents were necessary to the economic life of the planter, because money was scarce and a certain amount of barter was thus made necessary. Also transportation facilities of the age made it impractical for the planter to do his own bartering and trading. Once a year, usually, the planter accompanied his shipments by boat to Mobile and there made the necessary exchanges.

In spite of the economic necessity of the two groups for one another, factors and planters were not always in intimate relationship. Some distrust of the factor existed which developed into a corresponding distrust among many of the planters toward the city of Mobile in general. The Greene County Memorial and the Tuscaloosa Flag of the Union both accused Mobile commission merchants of fraudulent practices.⁴ One complaint of the planters was that they lost all control over the sale of their cotton once the bills of lading had been signed with the factor.⁵ The Commercial Register declared that this was an unfair complaint, for in most instances the planter had previously received advances on his

4. Mobile Commercial Register, December 23, 1836.

5. Ibid., January 7, 1837.

coming crop and sometimes those advances equalled the entire value of the crop. In the latter case it became the duty of the planter to repay in cotton the creditor agent as soon as possible after harvest. The planter did not lose all control if his advances equalled only a portion of his crop, but, the factors argued, the granting of an advance on a crop thereby purchased for them the privilege of selling all the harvest on which a partial advance had been made.⁶ And, it was estimated that not more than one in five hundred planters failed to receive such advances; therefore, those planters were ethically bound to consign their crops for sale to the factor.⁷

Among the more serious accusations was that the factor charged exorbitant commissions. Mobile factors charged a fee of 2-1/2 per cent for selling cotton on which no advance in provisions had been made, and 2-1/2 per cent on the amount of advances. It was estimated, during the heat of the controversy in 1837, that a factor usually sold 10,000 bales of cotton per year, for which he received a commission of about \$16,000 at existing prices.⁸ His usual expenses of rent, taxes, hired help, and so forth, would cost him about \$6,000 a year, leaving him \$10,000 earned. Also in order to be able to make sizeable

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

advances to his clients the factor often must obtain credit himself. He often had to pay rates of interest of from 10 to 11 per cent, which consumed much of his commission on advances. Too, the factor, in becoming a creditor for a season, assumed the risks of draught, disaster, and insolvency. These expenses and necessary risks cut into the factor's profits but still left him a comfortable living.⁹

Contemporary newspapers did not deny that some causes for protest perhaps existed but asserted that the majority of commission agents were honest and cognizant of their dependency upon the producer for economic security. But the charges and complaints were strong enough to be heard in the Legislature where "blind hostility" prevailed against Mobile.¹⁰ A law passed the House of Representatives which declared that all consignment and factorage business in Mobile was a "public liberty and franchise." It provided that any agent or factor must produce two witnesses to his moral character before the Judge of the County Court in Mobile, secure a license to operate, for which a bond of \$20,000 was required, and take the following oath:¹¹

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., December 13, 1837.

11. Ibid..

I ... do solemnly swear that I will honestly and faithfully discharge the business and duties of commission merchant, factor, broker, and agent for others in the city of Mobile and that I will not directly or indirectly, either as principal, partner, or agent be interested or concerned in the purchase of any cotton, or other commodity, or any goods, wares, and merchandise, that may be consigned, delivered, or entrusted to me to sell or dispose of.

The clause referring to the purchase of cotton by factors was prompted by accusations that factors usurped their duties as agent by buying and selling cotton independently.

Any violation of this statute cost the offender \$1,000 for each act. And his bond of \$20,000 could be sued upon by any injured party, one-half going on conviction to the suer, and one-half to the state, with the burden of proof that he had not violated the act placed on the defendant! Obviously this was an extremely unsavory piece of legislation to Mobilians. A storm of protests arose and the Mobile representative, General Bates, attacked the bill vigorously in the Legislature.¹²

Nevertheless, factors, merchants, and warehousemen in Mobile enjoyed economic prosperity in the ante-bellum period synonymous with that of the planters and shippers of cotton. Steamboats carried cargoes of freight and supplies

12. Ibid.

upriver to the planters and returned with cotton for which they received freight tolls. Thus cotton was the economic key to success for many classes of businessmen.

The practice of river steamboats stopping to discharge freight at unattended wharves, or "way-landings" of plantations was discontinued in 1835. Before that time steamboats landed goods at way-landings along the rivers, where usually there was no shelter or responsible person to receive the goods and pay freight charges. Then every summer agents for the steamboats made a circuit of the state settling accounts. In many instances in order to obtain settlement shippers had to allow many deductions for alleged damage and loss after goods had been left at way-landings. Believing some of these claims for deductions to be unreasonable, the owners of some twenty-five steamboats set up uniform freight rates and established a new policy. Thereafter any freight unloaded at a way-landing had to be prepaid by the shipping clerk, and goods had to be receipted for at the landing.¹³ This method proved to be much more efficient and profitable to the steamboat owners.

Mobile received the bulk of the cotton crop of South Alabama each year. From 1818 when the crop of the southern part of the state was given as 7,000 bales, to 1859, at the

13. Ibid., November 10, 1835.

end of the ante-bellum period, when the crop was over 700,000 bales, Mobile's economic prosperity increased proportionately.¹⁴

Cotton coming into Mobile via the Alabama river system was received into the various warehouses for processing prior to export. Sometimes these warehouses were inadequate to contain the shipments and open lots about town were pressed into service as storage places. During the season of 1836 exposure to weather caused as high as \$150,000 damage to cotton.¹⁵ Typical of the warehouses in Mobile was that of A. F. Stone and Company. Stone's rates may be taken as an index to cotton processing and servicing charges. Storage of round bales was twenty-five cents per month; square bales were twenty cents, and for two cents per pound including bagging, twine, and cording, a round bale was made square. Opening, picking, and packing cotton in preparation for export cost three cents per pound. The average weight of a bale of cotton in 1836 was 300 pounds.¹⁶

New Orleans usually led all Southern cities in cotton exports. Savannah, Charleston, and Mobile were grouped next in exports of cotton, generally in that order. Exports

14. Appendix A, p. 164.

15. Mobile Commercial Register, March 5, 1836.

16. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, December 22, 1823.

of cotton from Mobile were both coastwise to other United States cities and foreign, principally to Great Britain and France. Foreign ports received the bulk of Mobile's cotton, with Liverpool and other coastal cities of Great Britain annually receiving the largest amounts.¹⁷

In 1832 a committee of Mobile merchants was appointed to make a survey of the total import and export business of the city. At that time Mobile, with a population of about 4,000, had an aggregate export business of not less than eleven million dollars. The report of this figure was considered incredible, but in 1835, with the population counted at 6,500, it was stated that exports alone exceeded fourteen million dollars, and imports showed a corresponding increase. Real estate within the corporate limits increased two to three hundred per cent during the same period and "not one of the Banks in the city" has lost a dollar in seven years.¹⁸

This rapid economic growth and prosperity was interrupted by the Panic of 1837. That commercial year opened very favorably at 16 @ 20 cents on cotton. This quotation gradually declined until April when it reached its lowest point of depression, 5 @ 10 cents. The commercial season ended on September 30, with the extreme at 8 @ 12 cents as

17. Appendix B, p. 165.

18. Mobile Commercial Register, April 17, 1835.

compared to 16 @ 20 cents at the beginning of the season. Prosperity had fostered wide speculation. The fall of the price of cotton with a concurrent depression in the money market, the ensuing panic, the arrested demand for manufactured products and consequent reduction of the consumption of raw materials, all combined to produce a severe depression not only in Mobile and other cities of the United States, but abroad as well.¹⁹

The panic of 1837 helped to emphasize the dependence of the "planter" on the staple.²⁰ This dependence upon cotton to the relative exclusion of other basic articles of subsistence may be shown by a comparison of imports into the city before and after this depression. From October 1837 to March 1838 imports of bacon were 1,617 hogsheads. One year later, from October 1838 to March 1839, this figure was only 867 hogsheads. For the same periods, the decrease in imports of butter, lard, rice, and whiskey was about one-half. There was a 6,000 barrel decrease in imports of flour, and corn imports dropped from 19,740 bushels for the 1837-1838 season to 3,087 for the next season.²¹ A part of this reduction in imports of necessities may be explained in terms of decreased

19. Ibid., October 2, 1837.

20. "We like to say planter and not farmer." Mobile Commercial Register, October 15, 1836.

21. Ibid., March 14, 1839.

purchasing power caused by the depression, but contemporaries pointed specifically to the tendency of planters to produce more for themselves as a consequence of the panic of 1837. Also it was pointed out that buying power for salt, coffee, sugar, and molasses either increased over the period or remained the same.²²

Business and commercial activity in Mobile slowly regained some pre-panic prosperity, then began to decline again gradually until 1847 when the business of the city had reached its lowest point.²³ A reaction among Mobilians then occurred which tended to counteract the decline of the past several years. Contemporaries felt that advantages of Mobile as a commercial center had not been exploited, and that her average annual export trade of \$17,000,000 could be made substantially more. The reaction was described as a more cooperative spirit manifest between property owners and capitalists in bringing more and diversified manufacturing and industry to the city.²⁴

Manufacturing and industry in the early ante-bellum period in Mobile were limited. There was in 182⁴ a machine to cut roofing shingles which was considered "new and ingenious"

22. Ibid.

23. Mobile Register and Journal, September 18, 1847.

24. Ibid.

and which worked "with such exactness and precision" as to supersede all necessity for joining and shaving.²⁵ This machine greatly improved the building trades of the city.

The first mill to extract the oil from cotton seed in Mobile belonged to Samuel H. Garrow. It was noted that Garrow offered to pay for seed delivered to his mill a price sufficient to cover the entire expense of bagging and rope to pack cotton from which seed were taken.²⁶ This mill made possible a profitable by-product of the Great Staple to planters associated with the Mobile market.

Lumbering was another valuable industry in Mobile. The application of steam power to sawmills answered a great demand for building materials in Mobile. A mill of this type was erected in 1835 on the banks of the river one-half mile below the city, powered by an 80 horsepower steam engine and employing a total of thirty-six saws.²⁷ Lumber for domestic use and for export was second only to cotton in the commercial life of Mobile.

During the later ante-bellum period there was a great deal of agitation for a cotton factory in Mobile. Even until 1850 Mobile exported raw cotton and imported finished cotton goods. In 1849 an establishment called the Mobile

25. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, April 1, 1824.

26. Mobile Commercial Register, May 31, 1834.

27. Ibid., May 1, 1835.

Manufacturing Company was organized and attempted to meet its costs by public subscription. It was estimated that \$80,000 would be required to establish such a business.²⁸ Soon after the announcement of its organization the company received \$65,000 in subscriptions, but there the plan languished for over a year. During its period of financing, Mobile editors frequently rapped the knuckles of local capitalists who had amassed fortunes in Mobile but who seemed reluctant to co-operate in its drive to diversify industry. Of the seeming failure of this venture one anxious citizen wrote to the effect that "there is too much of that filthy, dollar and cents spirit abroad to sustain any scheme that will not pay usurious interest."²⁹ However, the company was finally capitalized with a stock of \$100,000 and established on Dog River four and one-half miles from Mobile. The factory, 182 feet long, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ feet wide, and three stories high, was built of brick at a cost of \$27,000. It contained 176 looms, 40 carding machines, and 5,040 spindles. The factory hired 200 people, three-fourths of whom were female, who could produce 6,000 yards of yard-wide sheeting per day.³⁰ The company also built a large boarding house on its location which accommodated

28. Alabama Tribune, May 3, 1849.

29. Ibid., May 5.

30. Ibid., June 8, 1850.

forty workers. In addition, twenty cottages for workers with families were erected. These cottages were five room structures with kitchens attached. This factory-community was named Fulton, and was an extremely valuable adjunct to the economic life of Mobile.³¹

By 1850 Mobile also had several foundaries at which articles of iron could be cast. Skaats and Company were prepared to cast and finish all parts of steam engines and boilers with the forty laborers it employed. Workers for this company drew \$12 per week. The iron it used came from Pittsburg and Scotland, but which should have come, said the editor of the Mercantile Advertiser, from Alabama.³²

Mobile had one steam flour mill by 1850, belonging to Stoddart and Company, on the corner of Commerce and Church Streets. It was a three-story brick building equipped to mill eighty barrels of flour and grind 200 bushels of corn meal per day.³³ Stoddart and Company exemplified the attempt at diversification and self-dependence of Mobile by manufacturing its own barrels.

Shipping interests were extended and broadened in Mobile by the building of a dry dock. A public celebration

31. Ibid.

32. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, May 30, 1850.

33. Ibid., May 8, 1851.

attended its launching on July 4, 1850. It was 220 feet long and 62 feet wide, capable of admitting "any ship which comes in the Bay."³⁴ This dry dock was a vital and much needed addition to the commercial force of the city.

In addition to the manufacture of cotton goods and the similar establishment of industry closely connected with her economic activities, Mobile began at the end of the period to yield locally some other products which were previously items of import. Naval stores, in which South Alabama abounded, were then being processed by the Southern Oil Company which was producing pitch and turpentine from resin.³⁵ Commercial activity in naval stores, ship building and repairs, production of lumber, shingles, lathes, and iron foundry work all combined to diversify commerce and business of Mobile.

Another change in commercial operations from which Mobile benefitted was the beginning of direct commercial intercourse with foreign ports. Until 1835 imports of dry goods, hardware, and similar items direct from Great Britain were not uncommon but there had been no direct trade with either the European or South American continents. In 1835 the first direct importations from South American and European ports

34. Ibid., May 26, 1850.

35. Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 3, 1859.

occurred with the arrival in Mobile of the Belvidera from Bordeaux and the Eagle from Rio de Janeiro bringing cargoes of wines, brandies, fruits, and coffee.³⁶ Mobile and the South had formerly received most commodities in a circuitous manner. Direct foreign intercourse was described as a new era and an omen of future commercial eminence to Mobile.

Mobile and South Alabama made other attempts to diversify economic activities. Fishing had long been exploited as a commercial venture.³⁷ Also there were early attempts to grow sugar cane as a substitute for cotton. A large body of marshland in the bay between Mobile and Blakeley was partially drained in an attempt to make a sugar plantation. This experiment failed and was discontinued because of the death of its originator.³⁸ Efforts to cultivate grapes for local wine production were also attempted in Mobile.³⁹ One such experiment was successful and the product was later being advertised locally for sale as "conversation" wine.⁴⁰

Many other products passed through the Mobile market such as beeswax, tallow, brick and hides, but cotton remained throughout the ante-bellum period by far the most

36. Mobile Commercial Register, December 17, 1835.

37. Mobile Argus, December 5, 1822.

38. Mobile Commercial Register, December 16, 1826.

39. Ibid., October 16, 1829.

40. Ibid., April 23, 1835.

important item of business. Commercial interests overshadowed agricultural interests in the economic life of Mobile for the entire period.

The cost of living in Mobile increased rapidly. In 1828 Seth Stodder was proprietor of the Globe Hotel, one of the better establishments of its kind in Mobile. His prices for room and board may be taken as typical. Board per week at the Globe was \$5.00 with an additional charge of only \$1.00 for lodging. Thus for \$24.00 per month in 1828 one could obtain room and board at the Globe where the table was supplied with the "best provisions the market affords, and the bar with the best liquors."⁴¹ Just nine years later board alone had increased threefold. The Commercial Register complained of the unreasonableness of "Sixty dollars per month, and sometimes more for Board!"⁴²

A great deal of the blame for the high cost of living was laid at the door of Mobile's grocery dealers, who had "run up the substantial articles of living to a most extravagant price."⁴³ An early scheme to defeat them and obtain food at cheaper prices was devised in 1837. Anyone who wished to purchase food supplies subscribed their required amount. This money was then invested in cotton, which was shipped to New

41. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, October 28, 1823.

42. Mobile Commercial Register, May 13, 1837.

43. Ibid., May 26.

Orleans to be sold for food. Then the food, cheaper in New Orleans than in Mobile, was shipped back to Mobile and parceled out according to subscriptions. This collective purchasing agency was evidently popular for "\$2,000 was subscribed within ten minutes after the paper was prepared."⁴⁴

One reason merchants could charge high prices for food in Mobile was because they enjoyed a virtual monopoly. The monopolies were accused of draining municipal coffers, saddling the treasury with debt, and retarding growth in population by driving away prospective citizens.⁴⁵ The city market was regulated by ordinance. The market place was municipally built and owned and stalls were rented to highest bidders by the year. No other vending of foodstuffs was permitted within the corporate limits outside of market hours. With a river and bay teeming with fish, ample cultivations of foodstuffs all around the city, and an abundance of beef in the surrounding country, Mobilians had to pay prices for fish, vegetables, and beef "higher than in any civilized country in the world."⁴⁶ Meat could be sold in the city only at the stalls of the butchers in the market, who bought beef "dirt cheap" and sold it "gold dear." An example of how this system worked occurred in 1836 when a farmer from a nearby county

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., November 8, 1838.

46. Ibid.

drove a herd of cattle into Mobile and offered to sell it to the butchers for ten cents a pound. Beef was then selling on the market for twenty-five cents a pound, but the butchers offered and held out for seven cents. The cattleman was forced either to accept the butcher's price, drive his herd back home, or push on to New Orleans. He chose to do neither; he built a pen outside the corporate limits of the town and contracted to supply hotels and families with beef for "one bit" per pound, which was one-half the current market price. "So necessary did they think it to abate this dangerous precedent," that within a week the butchers bought out the farmer at his own price.⁴⁷

The fish market was described as being "iron bound", and an almost exclusive monopoly of Spaniards. They regarded it as their "prescriptive right", and it required "more than ordinary nerve" to trespass upon them. The trade, however, was lawfully open to all enterprise.⁴⁸

The basic reason behind these exclusive marketing rights was revenue. The annual rent of stalls in the market place usually netted about \$40,000. The city built "the finest market in the United States", rented the stalls to the highest bidders and forbade by ordinance selling at any other

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., November 9.

place. Contemporary newspaper editors denounced with bitter invective this "ornamental monument to minicipal folly"⁴⁹ which granted "divine rights" and "put its hands into every man's pockets."⁵⁰

Some regulation and standardization of food selling in early Mobile were without doubt necessary, but the evidence seems to indicate that there was too much minicipal control operating to the economic disadvantage of citizens.

49. Ibid., March 28, 1858.

50. Mobile Commercial Register, November 8, 1838. Further economic aspects of the history of Mobile are excellently blueprinted in Charles Grayson Summersell's, op. cit.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Transportation and communication were very real problems to Mobilians. Efforts to improve both constituted a major activity in ante-bellum times. Roads and streets were opened, improved, and maintained. River transportation was accelerated and made safer. Harbor facilities were repeatedly a subject which called for needed improvement.

Roads and streets were under the supervision of the Judge of the County Court and the Commissioners of Revenue and Roads of Mobile County. A statute passed in December 1816 under the Territorial Government was in effect for many years and stipulated "That all persons residing ... in said town of Mobile ... shall be compelled to perform all the duties imposed by the laws of the Territory relating to roads"¹ One of these duties was the giving of ten days labor per year on roads. In 1834 this time was reduced to five days labor, as the population increased and labor became more and more restricted to maintaining existing roads.² Then on December 27, 1841, the Legislature passed a law setting up a Road Court, giving it all authority previously held by the County Judge

1. Mobile Commercial Register, May 9, 1826.

2. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 1, 1834.

and Board of Commissioners of Revenue and Roads. To the new Road Court was appointed one commissioner from each of the seven wards of the city and one from each company beat in the county. Each held office for three years.³

Mobilians very early discovered that dirt streets were unsatisfactory. Sidewalks in town were made of board or were shelled. There were gutter sluices to take off surplus water, but these continually became filled with sand and debris. To alleviate this situation the town began the practice of paving its streets with shells.⁴ This situation proved much more satisfactory. Sidewalks and streets nevertheless had to be constantly repaired.

An early effort to improve navigation in the port and harbor of Mobile was the authorization of a tonnage duty of five per cent on all vessels entering the port.⁵ There was a sand bar across the entrance to Mobile Bay which excluded ships of large draft. Mobilians spent a great deal of time, money, and effort in attempts to remove this barrier. Large vessels unable to reach the wharves at the port, were forced to be loaded and unloaded in the bay by lighters. This fleet

3. Mobile Commercial Register, March 11, 1842.

4. Ibid., January 14, 1837.

5. Ibid., February 10, 1826.

of lighters, towed by other smaller boats, added greatly to the facilities of the port.⁶

Citizens of Mobile tried to secure appropriations from Congress to dredge the channel. In 1837 a memorial was presented to Congress for aid in deepening the channel across Dog River bar in the bay.⁷ Efforts to remove the bar were ineffectual and other schemes to circumvent the disadvantage were attempted. A Major Belton of the army invented a device to transport vessels of any burden to the wharves. He attached to the sides of vessels elevators "formed in such shape and in such capacity, and arranged to be so inflated by proper machinery, as to reduce the draft of water to any degree required."⁸ The Commercial Register was delighted with the prospects and after some study said, "We are unable to detect any fallacy in the scheme or in its operation."⁹

Evidently there was some fallacy in Major Belton's plan, because two years later the problem was still taxing the knowledge and ingenuity of engineers. In 1839 a Mr. McKeon had an invention to reduce the draft of ships by the inflation of "India Rubber Bags."¹⁰ Evidently these were giant water

-
6. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, March 6, 1833.
 7. Mobile Commercial Register, January 6, 1837.
 8. Ibid., May 27, 1837.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Ibid., January 16, 1839.

wings used partially to float vessels. Neither did this ambitious idea solve the problem and it long remained a disadvantage to commerce and communication in Mobile.

Mobile was favorably situated for good transportation and communication. Her gulf port gave her access to other countries as well as to coastal cities of this country. Also her position as a river port gave her contact with most of the state through the Alabama river system and tributaries. Not many miles from the northern extremity of the Alabama system flowed the Tennessee River with its tributaries. A connection of these two water systems was early recognized as desirable to Mobile. Trade communications between the two had been effected by a short overland haul, but as this was quite inconvenient and expensive, there was a strong movement to dig a connecting canal. Such a short canal was proposed as early as 1823 which would extend from the Okoa, a branch of the Tennessee, to the Conasauga, a branch of the Coosa, for a distance of nine miles and 21¹/₂ yards.¹¹ This was not built although "all agree that there are no obstacles to this ... canal."¹² Just what the drawbacks were which prevented its construction are not clarified in contemporary newspapers.

11. Mobile Argus, June 9, 1823.

12. Ibid., April 4.

River transportation was largely dependent upon the weather. In dry weather the rivers were low, and only vessels of very shallow draft could navigate. Early river transportation was by flatboat, but these could navigate only downstream. The development of the steam engine revolutionized water transportation, for boats could travel upstream as well as downstream. Early steam engines, like any new mechanical development, had to be constantly improved upon. A new steam engine was developed in 1824 by A. Coon. It was said to be safer from accident, smaller in size, less expensive to operate, but constructed on a new principle which produced more power and greater velocity. The wheel made seventy revolutions per minute, propelling its boat along at twelve miles an hour.¹³

The first attempt by a steamboat to navigate the Tombigbee above its juncture with the Black Warrior was the Cotton Plant, out of Mobile, in 1823.¹⁴ Its destination was Columbus, Mississippi. This event marked the permanent opening of the interior to trade with Mobile.

The Emeline was a steam and ferry boat on regular runs across the bay to Blakeley. If not delayed by strong currents she made three crossings daily.¹⁵ The Emeline charged

13. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, April 1, 1824.

14. Mobile Argus, March 24, 1823.

15. Ibid., April 14.

\$1.50 for passengers, \$3.50 for horses with or without riders, 75 cents for children and servants, \$4 for heavy vehicles, and \$2.50 for gigs and sulkies.¹⁶ The Emeline was typical of the packets running out of Mobile. Each day's papers listed packets for other destinations, such as Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, and Selma. In 1827 there were twenty-two steam vessels, exclusive of other river craft, navigating the waters emptying into the bay.¹⁷ Ten years later there were some thirty-seven steam vessels belonging to Mobile.¹⁸

Steam travel in the ante-bellum period was relatively slow. The Tuscaloosa, in 1824, made the run from Mobile upstream to Tuscaloosa in four days and seven hours, which was considered excellent time in view of the fact that she made the journey against a strong current matted with driftwood, and stopped seventeen times to discharge freight. The return trip was made in thirty-eight hours, "the quickest run ever made on these waters."¹⁹

All waters over which steamboats regularly passed from port to port were established in 1823 as Federal Post Roads.²⁰ This obviated a great many of the difficulties which Mobilians experienced in their communications by mail with

-
16. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, November 27, 1823.
 17. Mobile Commercial Register, December 19, 1826.
 18. Ibid., October 2, 1837.
 19. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 22, 1824.
 20. Mobile Argus, April 28, 1823.

northern cities. Mail communications before that time had been very erratic and irregular, but the establishment of steam routes as post roads systematized mail delivery better than before. But the difficulties and uncertainties of transportation still left Mobilians much to desire in regularity and promptness of mail service.

Postmasters and carriers were favorite targets for attack during the ante-bellum period. Failure of the mail to arrive on time was the principle cause for criticism, but one early postmaster and carrier was upbraided for failure to cover his mail bag with oil cloth or bear skin, as his contract required. The covering protected the bags from wind and weather.²¹

Deliveries of mail were so very uncertain that "when it does arrive it is attributed to accident", and someone suggested that it would soon be necessary for the postmaster to advertise mail arrivals.²² Mobilians seemed to be convinced that mail failures were much more acute in their city than elsewhere.

Mobile's editors were more verbose in their complaints because they were forced to depend to some extent on newspapers of other cities for large sections of news in

21. Ibid., August 19, 1823.

22. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 8, 1824.

their own papers. When these newspapers failed to arrive editors admitted that the brevity of their news sections was due to the failure of mail arrivals. Also business interests in the city were very much dependent upon mail communications for their commercial transactions. In fact there was a strong suspicion that repeated absence of information on the cotton market indicated that there was improper interference with the mails by speculators. This suspicion became so strong that a reward of \$1,000 was offered for evidence of that nature.

23. Mobile Commercial Register, May 27, 1825.

CHAPTER V

JOURNALISM AND ADVERTISING

Mobile was blessed "if newspapers in abundance are a blessing." So spoke a contemporary editor in 1838 commenting on the number of newspapers in Mobile in relation to population.¹ A comparison of the newspapers of two other Southern cities with the number in Mobile will illustrate this fact. New Orleans in 1838 had six daily newspapers for a population of about 80,000. Charleston's population of 40,000 supported only three dailies, which was the same ratio as that of New Orleans. Mobile with a population of only 15,000 in 1838, supported five dailies.²

The most recurrent name in the history of Mobile journalism for the ante-bellum period was that of the Register. Beginning in 1821 the name Register was included in the title of a newspaper in Mobile for the entire period. In 1859 it became the Mobile Daily Register. Before that time it had absorbed directly or indirectly the Gazette, Patriot, Advertiser, Times, Evening News, MERCHANTS and Planters Journal, and the Examiner.

1. Mobile Commercial Register, November 20, 1838.

2. Ibid., See also Charles G. Summersell, op. cit., for a description of Mobile Newspapers of the ante-bellum period. (1)

Early newspapers in Mobile were printed twice a week during the winter commercial season and once a week during the four summer months. Later in the period papers were printed daily the year round. The city edition was obtained for \$8 yearly and the country edition for \$5. Advertisements cost \$1 per square inch for the first insertion and 50 cents for each continuance thereafter.³

Advertisements in these early newspapers reveal a great deal about the life of the times. Small pictures of a running figure carrying a bag tied to the end of a stick carried across the shoulder were used as captions to runaway slave notices. The capture or commitment of a runaway was illustrated by a small picture of a white man dressed in a large hat, swallow-tailed coat and vest, holding a cane, and with his other hand resting on the shoulder of a Negro. Advertisements of fire insurance were usually illustrated with a large and imposing figure of an eagle, its wings spread wide and holding in its beak a streamer on which was printed "Indemnity" or "Protection."

News content of early Mobile newspapers were brief compared with modern standards, but the journalistic quality of their items compares favorably. One can trace many important political issues of ante-bellum times in the papers.

3. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 1, 1824.

Some of them daily printed a segment of the laws of the United States. Other contents usually included poetry, book reviews, a passenger list of arrivals to the city by steamboat, tables of imports and exports, lists of interments, destinations of vessels, and similar information. In 1837 the newspapers began to publish weather reports giving the temperature, direction of the wind, and condition of the sky as cloudy, fair, or hazy.⁴

Letters from private citizens to the daily papers were as much or more common as they are in modern times. Letters were often in the form of essays and sometimes consisted of several parts published on successive days. Citizens expressed themselves regularly on major issues of city, state, and nation. Usually they remained anonymous, signing some name appropriate to the theme of their communication, such as Freeholder, Voter, Philo-Inquisitor, Vindex, Sebastian, Anti-Slavery, Brutus, South, or Mobile.

One can find in the language of the day many words and phrases no longer in popular use today. One can also find certain expressions of slang which are typically considered modern. The expressions "gassing" or "blowing off" were used to denote verbosity and the description "rubbed out"

4. Mobile Commercial Register, June 7, 1837.

was used at least once to refer to a killing. Many English words were soon adopted into the French language in Mobile following the influx of American settlers. Such words as "dock", "wagon", and "packet" were accepted by the French in conversation and in writing. On French restaurant menus one could find "ros-bif" and "bif-stek."⁵

The writing of obituaries was formal and eulogistic. There writers displayed their command of language best, in highly stylistic phraseology which characterized this form of composition. A writer of the obituary of a distinguished lady of Mobile, Mademoiselle Bouquet, stated that it was not "the intention of the individual upon whom has devolved the melancholy duty of making this communication, to indulge in terms of exaggerated encomium" Then he proceeded to tell of her "graceful innocence sic of manner and a form so soft and feminine, that none could approach her with indifference" He continued: "Alas! how changed the scene - how did our hearts sink within us ...at the ominous tidings Long will the remembrance of her amiable qualities be embalmed in the most cherished recollections of our bosoms."⁶ Such melodic and ornamental language was typical of this type of journalism in ante-bellum times.

5. Ibid., January 15, 1835.

6. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 3, 1824.

A different kind of picturesqueness may be found in vivid and colorful advertisements of products and services.⁷ A hair oil manufacturer declared that "a fine head of hair is esteemed the greatest ornament of nature" which could easily be obtained by using Rowlan's Macassar Oil. In addition to its beautifying effects on the hair, it was claimed that the oil would also "produce eye-brows and cause hair to grow in bald places."⁸

Advertisements by Mobile barbers were as prolific and profuse as barbers are traditionally supposed to be in conversation. John Brown published notice that, "Under the shade of his barber pole, in Royal Street ... he continues to shear, shave, cut, and trim with all the elegance and style for which he is so celebrated." Brown promised to "keep the even tenor of his day" and vowed his determination "to go on with his accustomed success, whatever may occur, and whatever may be the conglomeration of ideas, the concatenation of events, or the amalgamation of parties."⁹ Perhaps Brown's statement was prompted by the fact that he was faced with some imposing competition. Richmond Richards, graduated from a distinguished barber school in Paris, announced himself to

7. Cf. post, pp. 122-123.

8. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 15, 1824.

9. Ibid., January 26.

the Mobile public as "Professor of Shaving" and a "connoisseur at perfuming" who also was adept at hair cutting. He promised to dispense his favors with the "most complaisant benignity and suavity." Richards described his place of business as an establishment.¹⁰

Where bearded heroes, beardless youths are made,
and beardless youths receive heroic grade;
Shaving's! a science - else an artless art,
'Tis matter for the head, and not the heart,
As Shakespeare, when he lived, was wont to say,
And I, like Shakespeare, labour for my pay.

It would seem that these rival barbers, whose advertisements appeared almost simultaneously, were engaging in a battle of learned words in order to convince Mobilians of the relative smartness or fashionableness of each.

Newspapers with their various contents exerted a tremendous influence in the lives of Mobilians. The newspaper was the chief source of local, state, and national news. Mobile newspapers not only recorded contemporary history, but many times helped to shape it through editorial policies.

10. Ibid., January 29.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

Education in ante-bellum Mobile before 1826 was almost exclusively private or semi-private. Some charity schools were the only free ones to exist before that time with the exception of church schools. An epidemic in 1819 left many children destitute who were provided free education the following year.¹ In 1823 Mrs. E. Woods' Female Seminary was reopened.² In the same year Sylvester Reynolds advertised for young ladies and gentlemen to attend his day and night school.³ Reynolds taught the usual subjects of English grammar, writing, arithmetic, and double entry book-keeping. Textbooks advertised that year included Webster's and Pickett's spelling books, an English reader, Daboll's arithmetic, Morse's geography, Enfield's Speaker, the Columbian Orator, Goldsmith's Rome, Blair's Lectures, Valpy's Greek Grammar, and various other supplies including testaments, foolscap, paper, pencils, quills, ink powder, slates, "wafers", and sealing wax.⁴

The famous Barton Academy was created in 1833. It was named for Willoughby Barton who was responsible for most of the money on which the school was operated. It was semi-

-
1. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, January 1, 1820.
 2. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, November 24, 1823.
 3. Ibid., December 22.
 4. Ibid., December 24.

private, part of the expense coming from a general fund and part from tuition of students. A Board of School Commissioners was established to administer funds setting up three schools in the city, two for boys and one for girls and two schools in the county. Tuition per pupil was \$2 per month and \$1 per month was added from the general fund.⁵ Barton Academy was rented to a teacher who taught subjects designated by the Executive Committee of the School Board. This committee reserved the right to send from five to ten underprivileged children there free of charge. The teacher received a salary according to the number of children he taught. In the country the teacher boarded free of charge among his pupils, received \$1 per month from the parents of each pupil, and \$150 from the Board for each ten months term.⁶

This system was slightly altered in 1835 to require county schools to admit free of charge all pupils in the respective vicinities whose parents were unable to pay. This provision was a condition for receiving the annual appropriation from the School Commissioners.⁷

Revenue for schools was set at a one per cent tax on real estate sales at auction in a statute passed by the

5. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, October 28, 1833.

6. Ibid.

7. Mobile Commercial Register, December 18, 1835.

Legislature in 1836. This bill also consolidated existing laws under which the Board of School Commissioners operated. Other usual sources of revenue were kept in the new law.⁸

By 1838 Barton Academy was being designated as Barton Institute. Two additional departments were organized, one for girls and the other a monitorial school for boys. The institution then consisted of four departments. The Classical and Scientific Department was under the direction of Algernon S. Vigus who taught English and the classical and scientific branches, including geology, mineralogy, natural philosophy, and chemistry. There was an Advanced French Department which offered "advanced basic" subjects in the classical and scientific fields. The Juvenile Department was for children under eight years of age. The Monitorial School for boys was divided into squads of eight to twelve boys over which presided a monitor chosen for his "Scholarship, fidelity, and general good character." A Superior Monitor presided over the entire department. Each monitor was responsible for the conduct and attendance of those in his squad.⁹

Mobilians were proud of Barton Institute. There were in 1838 no free schools as such but provision was made

8. Ibid., December 21, 1836.

9. Ibid., October 1, 1838.

to care for those who were unable to pay. Feeling for free schools was evident then in the daily papers. Public sentiment was, however, still opposed to co-education.

The first entirely free school in Mobile began holding classes in the gallery of the Bethel Church on May 7, 1845. Enrollment soon increased to over 100 scholars and the school had to expand to the main floor of the church and hire two additional teachers. The school was financed partially by private donations. Also the Mobile School Commissioners gave \$25 a month and the city granted it \$35 per month. For the first six months 223 students attended the Bethel School, 120 boys and 103 girls aged from five to fifteen. Disciplinary problems were handled by the entire school who, after being informed of the offense, reached an agreement on the punishment. The guilty one could confess and ask for clemency, and if a majority of the students agreed, he was pardoned. It was stated that disobedience rarely occurred.¹⁰ The Bethel School was non-sectarian and charged no tuition.

Another experiment in free schools was begun in 1848 with the establishment of the Creole Free School. It was entirely free but admitted Creole children only. For its first two years in operation it served from sixty to seventy pupils.¹¹

10. Ibid., November 17, 1846.

11. Mobile Daily Advertiser, May 2, 1850.

A school for the blind was established in 1852 by a Mr. Ellis. Ellis supplied all the books and other supplies a blind scholar would require. This school, too, was supported by benevolence.¹²

Denominational schools in Mobile which were free to pupils in 1852 were those supported by the Catholic, Episcopat, and Methodist Churches. The average attendance at these three denominational free schools was 600 annually.¹³ Also the Trinity Parish Free School had a number of pupils in attendance. The Mobile School Commissioners helped to finance these denominational schools. In 1851 they voted to give \$350 to the Methodist School, \$300 to the Trinity Parish School, and \$500 to the Catholic School. They also contributed \$650 to the Bethel School and \$200 to the Creole School. It was pointed out that these institutions were able to get competent teachers for \$300 to \$500 a year.¹⁴

In spite of these several free denominational schools, the census of 1850 showed 1,⁴⁸⁴ children not attending any school in Mobile County. This fact further stimulated interest in free education but it was not until 185⁴ that it was achieved. A. B. Meek, Mobile representative in the

12. Ibid., December 17, 1852.

13. Ibid., August 15.

14. Ibid., January 8, 1851.

Legislature and former editor of the Register, successfully sponsored the Education Act of 1854 which set up public school systems at public expense.¹⁵ In part this Act provided that from December 15, 1853, certain specific taxes would support public schools. Money came from all objects of taxation included in the revenue laws of the state, except licenses, in an amount equal to one-fourth of the amount levied by the Commissioners of Revenue for the tax of the county. These taxes were levied and collected by the tax collector and banked for the use of the School Commissioners. Also a tax of one-half of one per cent on all actual sales of real estate, slaves, horses, mules, and other property sold at auction within the county, was included. In addition a specific list of license taxes were to be collected by the Judge of Probate for use of schools on the following:¹⁶

1. Dramatic performances, \$50.
2. Equestrian or circus performances, \$50.
3. Feats of agility or strength, \$25.
4. Cock fights, bear fights, dog fights, or any contest between animals, \$10 per fight.
5. Exhibitions of any museum of wax figures, \$5 or for any "monster prodigy or deformity", \$25.
6. Musical concerts, except religious, \$5.
7. Lectures, sports, shows, or exhibitions for public amusement, \$15 for each occasion to which admission was charged.
8. Retail of spirituous liquors in the city, \$50.
9. Ninepin and tenpin alleys, \$10 for each alley.
10. Billiard tables, \$15 each.

15. Ibid., February 1, 1854.

16. Ibid.

A year after the passage of the Education Act there were four schools listed in the city. Barton Institute had become Central School with an enrollment of 854, West Ward School, 142, Bay School, 30, and 53 were in the Creole School. In 1855 there was a total of 1,079 public school scholars. A number of Catholic Schools were operating with a total attendance of 1,081, part of whom were required to pay. Also there were listed ten public schools in the county with a total enrollment of 1,533 pupils.¹⁷

Two years later 1,331 attended city schools. The number of county schools had been increased from ten to twenty-five with a total faculty of seventy-eight, an approximate average of three per school.¹⁸ In the city school system the highest salary was paid the principal of the boy's grammar school. He received \$1,800 annually. The principal of the girl's high school earned \$1,300 a year and the principal of the girl's grammar school made \$800 annually.¹⁹

There were several attempts during the ante-bellum period to establish institutions of higher learning in Mobile. The earliest attempt was that of the Reverend Norman Pinney, who opened a Collegiate Institute for boys November 7, 1836.

Daily Advertiser

-
17. Ibid., October 11, 1855.
 18. Mobile Daily Register, December 4, 1857.
 19. Ibid., June 27, 1858.

Pinney requested that no one apply for admission without a probability of his remaining a permanent scholar. The full course was said to include all the branches taught in higher colleges in the country. Beginning tuition was \$300 a year. There was a faculty of seven including the Reverend Pinney, who was Principal and Professor of Belles-Lettres and Moral Philosophy. The other six faculty members headed the departments of Latin and Greek, French, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Spanish, and Penmanship.²⁰ Three years later Pinney had to close his doors for lack of support. He dissolved the college and opened a private school for young boys.²¹

The Mobile Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies was opened January 18, 1837, by the Reverend W. S. Stone. It was advertised as being comprehensive of all branches of learning whether "substantial or ornamental." The Reverend Stone announced that he would accept only a few young ladies to be received as members of his family.²² The degree of success enjoyed by Reverend Stone in his ladies college project cannot be determined from available contemporary newspapers.

Another institution of higher learning grew out of the Education Act of 1854 which established a public school

20. Mobile Commercial Register, October 29, 1836.

21. Mobile Literary Gazette, August 9, 1839.

22. Mobile Commercial Register, January 18, 1836.

system. This act made necessary a large number of teachers, and the School Commissioners recognized the need of training people specifically in the art of teaching. Consequently in 1855 they voted to establish a Teacher's Institute in Mobile. It was the first of its kind in Alabama.²³

In spite of the new system of public schools, private education long remained popular in Mobile as evidenced by the fact that there were twenty-three private schools in Mobile with 721 scholars a year after the public school system was established.²⁴ Mrs. Hale's Select Female Academy was operating as late as 1859 as one of the oldest and best recognized private schools in Mobile.²⁵

23. Mobile Daily Advertiser, October 11, 1855.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., August 7, 1859.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGION AND MORALITY

Mobile early began to show regard for the respectability of the city. Her position as a river port and seaport made her susceptible to the influx of some undesirables among her changing and increasing population. So many vagrants found their way to Mobile that the city enacted strong vagrancy laws as early as 1818.¹ Among these vagrants were a great many people who became public charges as paupers, and the ordinance of 1818 was aimed primarily at this class. But the situation grew worse and in 1819 the city passed a stronger ordinance to discourage disorderly persons as well as vagrants. It provided that all persons "of evil life or ill fame ... begging, drunk, or loitering about tippling houses ... who are grossly indecent in language or behavior, all public prostitutes or such as lead a notoriously lewd and lascivious life ..." were required to give one year's security to keep the peace.²

The city also aimed an ordinance at keepers of disorderly houses, or anyone who entertained a disorderly person in his home. Such a person was subject to pay \$10 for the

1. Cf. ante, p. 4.

2. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, March 3, 1820.

first offence and \$25 for subsequent like offences.³

Other attempts to regulate public morals by ordinance extended to retailers of alcoholic beverages. Retail liquor stores or bars were directed to close at 9 o'clock p.m. during the commercial season from September 15 to March 15. They were also never to be open on the first day of the week, "commonly called Sunday."⁴ Ordinances relating to the Sabbath were further extended to include the entire citizenry. No worldly business or employment, ordinary or servile work was permitted on Sunday. Even further, "shooting, sporting, hunting, gaming, racing, fiddling, or other music for merriment, no playing, pasttimes or diversions" were allowed on Sunday. No waggoner, carter, drayman, slave or servant could load or unload vehicles, nor drive cattle, sheep, or swine on Sundays in Mobile.⁵

Within a few years it was recognized that this ordinance was too severe, that certain types of business activities were necessary or desirable on Sundays, consequently the ruling was changed on petition to prohibit business on Sundays only after 11 o'clock, a.m.⁶

3. Ibid., May 26, 1819.

4. Mobile Commercial Register, February 24, 1826.

5. Ibid., February 3.

6. Ibid., July 2, 1835.

Tobacco was widely used and accepted in Mobile but the use of tobacco was considered immoral by some, as well as injurious to health. Others considered the use of tobacco intolerable. A widow embarked with her three marriageable daughters "for the Mobile Market" from Connecticut in search of husbands, since the North "had long supplied the South with notions and young men" and the latter were scarce in Connecticut. They were disappointed to find very few young men at church. Those they saw on the streets were smoking cigars. The ladies considered both these conditions deplorable. Therefore, the daughters determined not to smile on any man smoking a cigar and to place a ten-pace quarantine between themselves and "those whose breath is impregnated with the odor of that disagreeable weed."⁷ The fact that many young men did not go to church and did use tobacco spoke poorly of the manners and morals of Mobile's young gentlemen.

Although whiskey was consumed in large quantities in Mobile and constituted a major item of trade, there was a large faction of the population opposed to it in all forms. In 1823 advertisements of alcoholic beverages in a single daily newspaper included Superion Old Irish Whiskey, Old Rye Whiskey, peach, cherry, and raspberry brandy, Jamaica and Portland Rum, Swan Holland and Pierpont's Gin, and Teneriffe and Madiera Wine.⁸

7. Ibid., April 11.

8. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, December 18, 1823.

The habit of drinking so revolted the morals of many that temperance societies became very popular, not only in Mobile but also in the nation. Of the influence and rapid formation of temperance organizations a contemporary predicted in 1829 that they were "destined to form a feature in the history of the United States."⁹ The Mobile Temperance Society was formed April 5, 1835, in Government Street Church. There whiskey was declared an immense evil to both physical and moral being. Officers and an executive committee were elected and upwards of 100 became members of the society by taking the temperance pledge.¹⁰

Temperance at that time did not include all beverages of alcoholic content. Wines and malt liquors were not prohibited in early temperance pledges. One opinion was expressed contemporaneously that "planting of one vine-yard, is a more important step toward reform in the use of spirituous liquors, than the institution of a Temperance Society ..."¹¹ In 1839, not having had the success with temperance for which they hoped, friends of the idea formed a Total Abstinence Society.¹²

9. Mobile Commercial Register, October 13, 1829.

10. Ibid., April 11, 1835.

11. Ibid., October 16, 1829.

12. Mobile Literary Gazette, July 19, 1839.

This society remained fully operative for several years, being called in 1842 the Mobile Washington Total Abstinence Society.¹³

In spite of the efforts of temperance organizations, drinking was common among the populace for the period. Hotel, restaurant, and resort advertisements always spoke of the fine stock of liquors available at their respective establishments. It was also very fashionable to provide a refreshment room with brandy, Burgundy, and champaigne at social events.¹⁴ But the citizens did not always confine their drinking to such polite places or occasions. Daily recordings of the Mayor's Court always included several arrests for overindulgence.

Moral and religious interests lagged behind economic and commercial interests during the early stages of growing ante-bellum Mobile. The fact was recognized in 1825 with the observation that other interests of Mobile were being served very well while there existed "a special necessity" to promote moral interests in the city.¹⁵ The population was said to justify and require additional churches. At the time there were only two churches in Mobile, one Catholic and an independent Protestant Church. A Methodist Church was

13. Mobile Commercial Register, February 5, 1842.

14. Ibid., March 22, 1830.

15. Ibid., May 27, 1825.

under construction, but "lingers in its completion," and it was determined that a Presbyterian Church was to be built soon.¹⁶

An attempt to serve better the religious and moral interests of the city was begun as a consequence of this recognized need. In 1825 the Mobile Bible Society was organized in affiliation with the American Bible Society. Its purpose was to supply the Scriptures "without note or comment" to needy people of the city.¹⁷ The Bible Society was supported by donations and sale of life memberships at \$10. The society was interdenominational by 1836 and all beliefs were urged to contribute to a "Bible Depository" for the use of the poor and ignorant.¹⁸ The next year the society set up a "Vigilante Committee" of thirty volunteers who visited every family in Mobile and immediate vicinity to furnish a copy of the Scriptures to all who did not have a Bible.¹⁹ If a person was able to pay, the Bible was sold to them at cost, or if not able to pay, they received the Book as a gift. The committee reported that they were very kindly received in all homes, that the Mobile population was fully furnished with the Word of Truth, and that destitution in the city was considerably less than

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., June 10, 1825.

18. Ibid., December 21, 1836.

19. Ibid., September 15, 1837.

had been anticipated.²⁰ A total of 270 Bibles and 40 Testaments were distributed, about one-third of which were sold at cost. An undetermined number were given to people from the country who came in asking for Bibles. Two dozen Bibles and one dozen Testaments were given to the hospital, stamped City Hospital, Mobile. The committee also reported several requests for Bibles written in French and a few wanted German and Spanish translations.²¹

Religious forces were also at work in educating the young in religious and moral principles. A notice on Sunday Schools in Mobile appeared in 1825 with the announcement that the Mobile Sunday School Society was to reopen in the Protestant Church using a supply of books obtained from the American Sunday School Union.²² The exact date of the origin of Mobile's Sunday Schools is undetermined, but from 1825 to 1829 it was noted that the schools were well organized with full classes and achieving happy results.²³

It was a regular practice of churches to rent or lease their pews. Notice was given in advance and members gathered to bid at auction on the pews they wished to occupy for the following year. The bidding evidently was spirited

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., November 11, 1825.

23. Ibid., January 8, 1829.

because in 1835 it was recorded that rental of pews for the Government Street Church amounted to \$3,265.²⁴

Church facilities expanded rapidly in the middle period of ante-bellum times. By 1835 the Methodist Church had been "handsomely" enlarged and new Episcopal and Baptist Churches were under construction. Plans were also laid for a new building for Catholic worship.²⁵ The cornerstone was laid in 1845 for the Bethel Church, which was a non-sectarian house of worship for the especial use of seamen.²⁶

Camp meetings were a regular feature of the religious life of Mobile. Attendance at these meetings was numbered in the hundreds and sometimes thousands. Camp grounds were located a few miles outside the city where tents were pitched for as long as two weeks. Twelve to fourteen ministers directed the camp meeting of the Methodist Church in 1845, holding four services daily, at eight and eleven o'clock a.m. and at three and eight p. m.²⁷

By 1855 there were in the city and county of Mobile thirty-two churches for the white population. By denomination they were: three Episcopal, eleven Methodist, five Presbyterian, five Baptist, six Catholic Churches and two

24. Ibid., January 13, 1835.

25. Ibid.

26. Mobile Register and Journal, April 30, 1845.

27. Ibid., June 21.

Jewish Synagogues. The Bethel Church served seamen of all faiths. There were also three churches exclusively for the colored population. The Good Shepherd Parish Church was a colored Episcopal Church and State Street and little Zion were colored Methodist Churches.²⁸ Most slaves attended the church of their masters in the ante-bellum period. Usually balconies were reserved for the slave congregation. The Negro spiritual of today is a product of the experience of Negro slaves with early American religious hymns.²⁹

28. Mobile Daily Advertiser, October 31, 1855.

29. This thesis is particularly advanced by George Pullen Jackson in his several works dealing with the general subject of spirituals. See especially his Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America.

CHAPTER VIII

CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Crime was a major problem which Mobilians had to combat. It was not until the late ante-bellum period that the newspapers began recording court proceedings, but there may be found frequent editorial comment on the prevalence of crime in Mobile from the beginning of the period.

"Scarcely a night passes without some noted depredation ...", chronicled the Commercial Register in 1837.¹ Two years later Mobile was described as being "pregnant with condemnations of the ill-organization of society." So many crimes were committed that the people had grown accustomed to them and "submitted with a shrug."²

Scenes of violence were a common occurrence. Within the space of a few days one can find recorded a robbery and murder committed within sight of the police station, a man shot to death downtown, an affray between two individuals at which a third party presided with a cocked pistol to prevent interference, and the stabbing of the ticket taker at the theater by a young man who also drew a pistol and accidentally shot off one of his own fingers!³ Such acts of violence

1. Mobile Commercial Register, November 22, 1837.

2. Ibid., March 30, 1839.

3. Ibid., April 10, 1837.

were said to be of daily occurrence between strangers "from nobody knows where", who carried "Bouy Knives, two feet long large pistols, Dirks, Sword Canes ... and used⁷ scandalous language."⁴ At this time Mobile was very close to the yet untamed frontier of the lower South, which fact probably accounts for the presence of many of these hardy strangers. In deploreding these situations, the Advertiser spoke of the case involving a Mr. Weston, an agent for a theatrical group in Mobile in 1849. A boy outside was making noises and disturbing the show when Weston went out to silence him. For his effort Weston received a dirk wound in the stomach. The opinion of the paper held that it was bad enough for a grown man to have a dirk, but the best advice it could give a boy carrying one, was that he use the dirk to build a gallows, for sooner or later the gallows would be necessary.

Robbers and burglars were very prevalent types of criminal nuisances in Mobile. These "practiced gentry of the older cities" were so active that Mobilians believed themselves the special objects of organized gangs.⁶ Before 1830 house-breaking and robbery were not of very common occurrence, but they rapidly increased.⁷ Citizens were repeatedly warned against the "depredations of the light-fingered gentry."⁸

4. Ibid., April 27, 1836.

5. Mobile Daily Advertiser, June 15, 1849.

6. Mobile Commercial Register, March 22, 1830.

7. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, April 17, 1841.

8. Ibid., January 15, 1833.

Many thieves of Mobile were both bold and ingenious, and did not stop with the pettiness of housebreaking and stealing. In 1849 a well-dressed stranger appeared in the exchange office of John Silsby, stating that he had lost a \$50 bill with a torn corner drawn on an Ohio bank, and asked if it had been exchanged there. When the clerk turned to investigate the stranger struck him with a pistol. But the clerk raised such an alarm that the thief dashed up Dauphin Street, himself crying "stop thief" until he lost himself in the crowd. His "stop thief" policy had saved him momentarily, but later he was identified and arrested.⁹

Another attempted robbery had aspects of being perpetrated by a modern gang. Effecting an entrance to W. O. Pope's exchange office on Water Street, robbers broke a padlock on an iron chest, put powder in the keyhole, and blew open its outer door. They were stopped there, for the chest had three doors. Evidently they had overcharged the first lock because the explosion blew heavy objects even into the street. Not only were the thieves foiled in the attempt, but suffered worse from the explosion. Tracks of blood were traced to Dauphin Street, evidencing sufficient punishment in the opinion of the Daily Advertiser.¹⁰

9. Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 15, 1849.

10. Ibid., April 30.

Swindling, counterfeiting, and kidnapping were also present in Mobile, but news of these were not conspicuous in journals of the day. Thomas W. Haney, who was "conspicuous in conversation for self-commendation" and described as "a good looking man for a scoundrel", was called a swindler for leaving town and failing to meet his hotel bill.¹¹ No evidence of swindling on a large scale is recorded. Neither was counterfeiting a very persistent evil, although counterfeit money was passed from time to time in the city. In 1833 this crime was punishable by death, a sentence many Mobilians considered disproportionate to the crime. A man was convicted and sentenced to hang for passing a pewter counterfeit Mexican dollar, but public sentiment would assure his eventual pardon, it was said.¹²

Mobilians, however, were not as forgiving to the offenders in a kidnapping case in 1835. A child was abducted and held for \$30,000 ransom by five Frenchmen, all brothers. The recipient of the ransom money was seized and then forced, under "extra-legal" examination, to reveal the hiding place of the gang. Citizens commandeered the steamboat Don Juan and went fifteen miles up the Mobile River to an island where

11. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, March 4, 1824.

12. Mobile Daily Register, February 5, 1859.

13. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, May 3, 1833.

the child was given up unharmed, despite previous threats of murder. What occurred on the island is not recorded, but "neither of the brothers returned with the expedition."¹⁴ Later the Richmond Whig stated that it had learned through private letters from Mobile that the Frenchmen were hanged from a tree. In quoting this statement, the Commercial Register denied the truth of the report and claimed that the Frenchmen were then safe in Europe.¹⁵ Thus the exact fate of Mobile's kidnappers is not conclusively determined.

Until 1826 certain types of gambling were legal in Mobile. Before that time an annual license of \$250 legalized faro banks, roulette, keno, and lotto.¹⁶ But these games of chance, and others, were declared illegal in 1826 and a fine of \$50 became the penalty for wagering. Hotels, taverns, and boarding houses were subject to having their licenses revoked for permitting gambling. However there was some difference between enacting the law and enforcing the law, and gambling flourished in the port city. At called public meetings Mobilians voiced their disapproval of gambling and reasserted their determination to enforce anti-gambling statutes. They considered additional legislation unnecessary if the existing

14. Mobile Commercial Register, July 29, 1835.

15. Ibid., September 24.

16. Ibid., May 6, 1825.

17. Ibid., February 3, 1826.

statutes were upheld.¹⁸ Gambling, that "fashionable and seductive vice", was said carried to "runicous extent" in Mobile. The city was called a resort of strangers who came to prey on its citizens, calling themselves "professional gentlemen."¹⁹ Gambling remained an illegal activity and a public nuisance throughout the ante-bellum period despite popular sentiment from time to time to curtail its operation.

Maliciousness seemed to be at the root of a number of crimes. At times this maliciousness reached serious proportions. In 1849 a public well was poisoned, creating much excitement and consternation, and resulting in thirteen deaths as well as many cases of illness. At first, health authorities believed the epidemic was cholera, but a closer inspection uncovered the poisoned well.²⁰

A slave was credited with the poisoning of the family of Mr. Beverly Walker, who recovered only after serious illness. The source of the poison was traced to some coffee into which one of Walker's slaves had mixed "the seed of the Jamestown weed."²¹ It was illegal in Alabama for any slave to possess drugs of any kind for fear that he might use the drugs to poison a white person, but here was a slave who concocted his own special brand!

18. Ibid., July 20, 1835.

19. Mobile Literary Gazette, June 14, 1839.

20. Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 24, 1849.

21. Ibid., October 10.

Maliciousness in the setting of fire was another serious and constant menace to Mobile. Undoubtedly most of the fires were undesigned, occurring accidentally in a highly combustible environment, but there is sufficient evidence to confirm contemporary belief that incendiaries were also at work.²² Accounts of fires of questionable origin were of frequent notice in the newspapers; consequently arson was one of Mobile's worst criminal activities.

After a very destructive fire in 1826 at Captain Duncan's store on Alabama wharf, police were able to ascertain the origin of the blaze as definitely "the effect of no accident." Circumstances fixed the guilt on the incendiary but he "decamped" before capture.²³ Several fires in 1830 evoked the fear that unless they were halted, fires "placed by design" would destroy the city. On April 13, a fire was attempted with gunpowder placed under a house and a trail of the powder lighted. It was discovered by a slave and extinguished.²⁴ On April 27 a small fire was found kindled under a staircase.²⁵ These and other attempts at willful burning aroused the citizens who determined to organize a voluntary corps of security to combat this menace.²⁶

22. Cf. post, pp. 126-127.

23. Mobile Commercial Register, January 27, 1826.

24. Ibid., April 13, 1830.

25. Ibid., April 27.

26. Ibid., April 10.

The editor of the Commercial Register believed there was a connection between the fires of 1830 and the arrest of Joseph A. Miller, leader of a gang of jewel thieves. He pointed to "a rash" of fire immediately following the arrest and thought Miller's gang was bent on revenge.²⁷

In 1839 Mobile was especially harried with fire. Citizens were so alarmed one of them declared that if any of the fires could be traced to an incendiary "... a lamp post might be his swinging place ... without benefit of clergy."²⁸ Wood shavings and "lucifer matches" were found inside an unfinished house of William Austin, but it was not determined who had placed them there. It was pointed out that a wind could have carried a blaze from Austin's house down all of Government Street.²⁹ Rewards for conviction of arsonists steadily grew with each new blaze during the year.

There was some speculation and evidence as well that many burnings were committed in order to collect fire insurance. When the drygoods and millinery store of Cullen and Smith burned suspicion of arson pointed to the owners. A special agency, the Board to Investigate Origins of Fires, examined the evidence and found it had been deliberately

27. Ibid., April 6.

28. Ibid., April 3, 1839.

29. Ibid., January 2.

set, that it was fired in two separate places, and that judicial action was warranted.³⁰ Investigation by the mayor further involved James F. Kernan with one of the partners, Smith. The fire was discovered fifteen minutes after Kernan and Smith left the shop for the day, all doors were found locked, and no one found inside. Moreover, Smith had a motive in that he had \$13,400 fire insurance on stock valued at less than \$8000.³¹ When a home burned on Dauphin Street, its owner, John Fischer, was arrested on suspicion of having committed a deliberate act of incendiarism. Fischer was examined and sufficient evidence was produced to commit him for trial in criminal court.³²

When both the Madison House and the Waverly House were destroyed by fire in 1850, supposedly at the hands of incendiaries, a Voluntary City Patrol was organized. So alarmed were citizens that enough people volunteered for this watch to furnish fifty men per night.³³

Evidence in contemporary journals is conclusive that there were many illegal fires in Mobile. These fires were perhaps the most notable source of lawlessness, destruction, and public indignation for the times.

30. Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 25, 1849.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., August 16.

33. Ibid., August 15, 1850.

Crimes were committed both by and against sailors associated with the port of Mobile. Sailors of Mobile were no more unlawful than other portions of the population despite popular contention to the contrary. But plenty of crime of all sorts at the hands of the seagoing population was committed.

In the early 1820's piracy flourished in the Gulf of Mexico. Speaking in 1822, the editor of the Mobile Argus said, "Within the past three years, there has been seldom a month in which some new act of robbery and murder has not been committed by them."³⁴ Pirates operating about the gulf were said to be so formidably organized that unless proper measures were taken all prospect for gain through commerce and ocean trade must cease.³⁵

The most notorious pirate of them all was the elusive Paddy Scott, who furnished material for more than one article in Mobile newspapers. In 1824 Paddy Scott, already of "considerable celebrity" in Mobile, broke jail while under indictment for piracy of the Barbarette. In the same year Scott and his crew of ten, armed with cutlasses, pistols, and muskets, boarded the English brig, British Tar, from their man-of-war launch. This act of piracy occurred inside

34. Mobile Argus, December 9, 1822.

35. Ibid.

Mobile Bay.³⁶ Again in 1824 Scott was active, being captured and indicted for piracy of the Centilla. This time he was sent to Cahawba for safekeeping, but again he escaped, and threatened to burn Mobile. He was captured and jailed in Mobile two years later and an armed party of his associates were driven from the jail to prevent their effecting his release.³⁷ But later, in September, Paddy and an associate, Smiley, succeeded in escaping. Smiley sawed off his irons, asked for water, assaulted the jailor, freed Scott, and both fled.³⁸ The next month, October, it was noted that Paddy Scott was jailed in New Orleans for piracy.³⁹ Evidently he again successfully evaded justice, for three years later he and several of his gang were reported lurking among the islands about the Bay of Biloxi in a stolen vessel.⁴⁰ The question was then prompted angrily: "Are there no means of bringing this arch scoundrel to justice?"⁴⁰ He was next heard from near Baldwin County in a series of raids in 1837.⁴¹ An appeal for help was sounded and the United States Ship, St. Louis, was sent to Mobile to prevent Scott's escape

36. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, May 3, 1824.

37. Mobile Commercial Register, June 6, 1826.

38. Ibid., September 26.

39. Ibid., October 17.

40. Ibid., March 20, 1829.

41. Ibid., August 28, 1837.

by water. Major Hall of Baldwin County headed a band of volunteers to prevent his escape by land.⁴² This well laid and seemingly impenetrable trap evidently also failed for Scott was reported still free two years later.

At last account Paddy Scott was arrested in New Orleans in 1839.⁴³ The New Orleans Courier, quoted in the Commercial Register, described Scott at the time of his capture in 1839 as "pale faced, with a Scottish physiognomy, above average size, and on the wrong side of forty."⁴⁴ For well over fifteen years Paddy Scott had harrassed shipping in the gulf and bay; he had escaped justice after capture at least six times.

Not many cases of mutiny are recorded. In two instances mutiny was charged against seamen for physical assault on ships' officers. The Eliza Jane was discharging cargo at Mobile Point when five crewmen refused to do duty, attacking the captain and first mate. The revenue cutter, Alabama, secured the mutineers and brought them to Mobile for punishment.⁴⁵ Some years later aboard the Waverly in the bay, a crewman, William Gulickson, began beating a dog

42. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot for the Country, September 1, 1837.

43. Mobile Commercial Register, October 21, 1839.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., February 5, 1826.

on the poop deck, then attacked the second mate who admonished him to stop. Gulickson was joined in his attack by three more of the crew. The second mate was then joined by the first mate and the mutineers by four more of the crew. After the attack, the eight crewmen went below and tried to fire the ship. The ship's officers intervened and the mutineers pushed off in the small boat.⁴⁶

Other affrays involving sailors occurred on shore. A riot broke out between several boatmen, masters of boats, and several "disorderly housekeepers" on the landing. One man was killed and several more were badly beaten and cut.⁴⁷ Another wharf riot involved dock hands at the wharves. When the steamship, Empress, was being unloaded by Negroes, there was "quite a demonstration made by the Dagoes", who attacked the colored hands and drove them away hoping to get their jobs. But police interference restored order to the scene and the blacks to their jobs.⁴⁸

There were other crimes involving individuals of the maritime population of Mobile. Several murders are recorded, some few robberies, and several personal affrays as well as piracy and mutiny.

46. Ibid., November 12, 1834.

47. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, March 15, 1820.

48. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 23, 1852.

Law enforcement agencies in the city were challenged to meet and arrest the crime rate. Usually they were equal to the task. In 1826 a contemporary complimented their efficiency with the statement, "Mobile is about the last place ... abandoned characters should think of visiting, for ... very few of them escape detection and punishment."⁴⁹

In the same year the City Watch was organized. Police constables made a roll of all white males over sixteen residing within the taxable limits of the city, and added to it the names of newcomers to the city after a residence of ten days. These men served in rotation, their names being drawn from a box. Failure to report for duty resulted in a \$2 fine, but anyone could furnish a substitute. The mayor chose a captain who in turn assigned beats. For disobedience to orders or for neglect of duty, a fine of \$10 was imposed.⁵⁰ The City Watch had full power to stop all suspicious persons, quell riots, make arrests, and disperse disorderly gatherings of slaves.⁵¹

In 1835 the City Watch was transformed into a body of fixed personnel consisting of a captain, lieutenant, and twenty-three privates. The captain was paid \$85 a month, the lieutenant, \$75, and each private drew \$45 per month.⁵² Each

49. Mobile Commercial Register, May 9, 1926.

50. Ibid., February 7.

51. Ibid..

52. Ibid., April 16, 1835.

member was required to bear his own expense for arms and uniform. The captain and lieutenant each carried a white mounted sword suspended by a black morocco or leather belt, and a brace of side pistols. Privates were armed with muskets and bayonets. The uniform consisted of blue jackets with standing colars and red or yellow braid along the seams, and white pantaloons trimmed in the same manner. Each wore a leather or morocco cap. Jackets were added for winter wear. The captain was distinguished from his patrol by a cotton knot on each shoulder, and the lieutenant with one cotton knot.⁵³

A voluntary group, called the Civil Patrol Guard, was organized to aid the regular force in time of need. They wore no uniform and kept their arms at home, being called to previously designated places of rendezvous in time of Alarm. Anyone could join or withdraw from the group at will, and there were no fines for neglect of duty.⁵⁴

The system of regular police was altered in 1836 to abolish the offices of marshal and deputy marshal in favor of that of one constable in each of the four wards of the city. This change came about as the result of a petition signed by 225 citizens.⁵⁵

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., September 14.

55. Ibid., April 23, 1836.

As a result of the numerous fires which swept the city in 1839, the Young Men's Protective Association was formed to aid police in apprehending incendiaries.⁵⁶ They were convinced that proper vigilance could put a stop to this lawlessness. Similarly, as a result of the fires, the Civil Patrol Guard changed its name to the Property Guard.⁵⁷

In times of civil crisis police authorities were sometimes criticized for inefficiency. The night guards were said "never to be found" when needed, and further, "such is the want of all faith in the protective power of the city police" that most store owners had resorted to their "primitive rights" and armed themselves to protect their own property.⁵⁸ The same dissatisfaction which spoke for many was expressed in the question, "Where do police and guards sleep o' nights?"⁵⁹

Much of this criticism was doubtless justified but there were some qualifications. The city was not well lighted at night, there were always numbers of strangers in town, and the city was too large to be adequately protected by the relatively small police force. In 1842 the number of watchmen

56. Ibid., October 21, 1839.

57. Ibid., May 11.

58. Ibid., February 8.

59. Ibid., July 7, 1840.

had been increased from twenty-three to forty-five. Of these, four were used on day duty, two were assigned to the guard-house, two to the powder magazine, and two to the bell tower. This left thirty-five men for night patrol duty. These were further divided into two reliefs, one going on duty from 8:30 p.m. to 12:45 a.m. with the other relief taking over until daylight. Thus no more than seventeen men at any one time were available to guard the entire city of some 150 squares.⁶⁰ One other cause for possible neglect of duty was said to be the small salaries paid watchmen. They were forced to obtain additional daytime employment, which caused them to attend negligibly to their night duties. It was proposed to reduce the number of the watch and increase the salaries in order to attract and demand more dutifully minded watchmen.⁶¹

With the addition of mounted guards in 1853 the patrol became much more effective. They were then able to range further and to reach deeper into the outskirts of the city.⁶² Another valuable addition to the agency of law enforcement was the inclusion in 1859 of several special police officers within the regular force.⁶³

60. Mobile Register and Journal, May 5, 1842.

61. Mobile Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1856.

62. Ibid., January 22, 1853.

63. Mobile Daily Register, April 16, 1859.

Law enforcement agencies in early ante-bellum Mobile were further hampered in their activities by inadequate penal function. They were more often able to get their man than they were able to keep and punish him. There was a great tendency in the ante-bellum period to acquit accused persons, who often had the weight of evidence against them. Many convicted persons were subsequently pardoned, and public sentiment was against this general tendency. A statement was made in 1839 commenting on the number of crimes committed in comparison to the number of sentences of the law actually executed.⁶⁴ In 1849 the Daily Advertiser abhorred the relatively few numbers of convictions and punishments. It stated that the age in which they lived was thickly crowded with crime, and so had murder multiplied that ingenuity in its commission was frequently tortured in an effort to excite greater horror or greater novelty than preceding ones.⁶⁵ The paper further deplored the fact that although little doubt of guilt existed in many cases, trials seldom resulted in conviction, and in the event of conviction, the general press were wont to make martyrs of the convicted. The press was too prone to forget the crime - to believe instead the many protestations of innocence and heap sympathy in print upon the convicted.⁶⁶

64. Mobile Commercial Register, March 30, 1839.

65. Mobile Daily Advertiser, August 15, 1849.

66. Ibid.

Neither were penal institutions and facilities conducive to effective law and order. The Mobile jail in 1822 was said to be capable of containing prisoners "in the daytime, if well guarded!"⁶⁷ There was then no courthouse as such, but the city had use of a building for this purpose, and plans were laid to build a courthouse and a new jail. The city was very much in need of a more secure place of detention as evidenced by the number of jail breaks and escapes which occurred with regularity. Judge Hale of the County Court aptly expressed the situation in his charge to a Grand Jury in 1823: "There is but little business before the court; the prisoners having, by means of a voluntary jail delivery effected through the insufficiency of the prison, saved the constituted tribunal the trouble of passing on their respective cases."⁶⁸

By 1835 the needs of the city had again outgrown prison facilities and there was a demand for a larger jail. It was suggested that the new jail be built away from the downtown area "where the ears of our families may not be shocked daily by the screeches of criminals suffering the infliction of legal penalties."⁶⁹

-
67. Mobile Commercial Register, February 7, 1822, reprinted in the Mobile Register and Journal, November 30, 1848.
 68. Mobile Argus, September 2, 1823.
 69. Mobile Commercial Register, February 27, 1835.

The legal penalties for heavy offenders were hanging, whipping, cropping, or branding. Minor offenders were usually briefly jailed and fined. Citizens recognized the need for a penitentiary where criminals could be more adequately and humanely punished. This feeling was overwhelmingly expressed in 1834. In conjunction with the election of candidates to the General Assembly, the sheriff, coroner, and other county officers were directed to "take the sense of the people" relative to the establishment of a penitentiary. The result showed 707 for and only 193 against erecting such a place of detention.⁷⁰

Thus the maintenance of law and order through the creation of adequate police and penal facilities was an ever present problem to Mobilians in the ante-bellum period. The conclusion seems warranted that legal authorities were generally, but not always, able to cope with the criminal element in the city with varying degrees of success, despite the disadvantages under which they labored.

70. Ibid., August 6, 1834.

CHAPTER IX

SLAVERY IN MOBILE

The institution of Negro slavery played a major role in the economic life of Mobile. Just as slavery was an integral part of plantation economy, it was also important to the economy of Mobile. Cotton was basic to the economic success of both plantation and port city; slave labor was fundamental to the production and processing of cotton. Slave labor was used to some extent in cotton warehouses and presses, and on the wharves to load and unload cotton. Others were skilled craftsmen, such as carpenters, barbers or cooks. Principally, slaves were domestic servants.

It was estimated in 1824 that the average value of slaves in Mobile was \$332, and four years later the average value was \$259. In 1840 slaves were said to be at least double these figures in value.¹ In the same year the slave population was given as 3,882; thus it is evident that Mobilians had considerable sums of money invested in slave property.² By 1850 the number of slaves in Mobile had increased to 9,172, about one-third of the 20,404 given as the total white population.³ There was a much smaller percentage

1. Mobile Commercial Register, June 1, 1840.

2. Ibid., October 9.

3. Mobile Daily Advertiser, March 13, 1851.

of slaves in Mobile County than there were in other Alabama counties, due principally to the fact that the former was predominantly commercial rather than agricultural.

But slavery was not only an economic asset; it was also a social problem. The Negro was forced to adhere to the white man's moral and legal codes of conduct, and he could only be expected to break with these codes from time to time.

Ignorance and superstition often motivated actions of slaves. Sometimes their ignorance and superstition led them to commit crime. One such act shocked Mobile. Five slaves went to the graveyard and exhumed the body of a man buried the same day. They cut off the fingers, toes, and tongue, then carefully reburied the remains. Then the five returned to their quarters to dry their trophies before a fire. Perhaps their foray would have gone undiscovered except for the stricken conscience of one of them who confessed next morning. They believed that a finger, toe, or tongue of a dead man possessed charm which assured the owner success in games of chance.⁴ Two of the five received fifty lashes and the other three were sentenced to thirty-nine lashes at a special court held to try the grave robbers.⁵

4. Mobile Commercial Register, March 9, 1847.

5. Ibid., March 10.

Hate often prompted insubordination and acts of violence among slaves. Slaves belonging to the brickyard in Mobile killed their overseer, Mr. Magee, when he attempted to flog Rachel for refusal to work. Rachel, the "chief actress in the scene," rebelled and was joined in her attack by three other women and three men. The murder was witnessed by another slave belonging to a neighboring plantation. He brought news of the crime into town. A party went to the brickyard and secured a confession from one of the slayers. It was learned that they had severely beaten Magee, tortured him for three hours, and thrown him while yet alive into the river with two to three hundred pounds of iron weighing him down. Yet shortly after the crime the killers were found "fiddling and dancing" with elation at having ridde themselves of their hated overseer.⁶ In another instance murder was motivated by desire. A slave killed Oustahaba, an Indian, over possession of his wife, Mahoka.⁷

These incidents were typical of the crimes of slaves which were sometimes prompted by strange motivations. Crimes by slaves of as serious a nature as those above were of uncommon occurrence, but the record abounds with various other infractions of the law. A citizen complained in 1834

6. Ibid., December 19, 1826.

7. Ibid., March 16, 1829.

of negroes racing horses, gigs, and carriages laden with drunken slaves on the surrounding roads on Sunday afternoons.⁸ Another commented that there were insufficient police in town on Sundays to prevent Negroes from fighting and killing one another.⁹

There was much general trouble emanating from the Negroes of Mobile. Growing insurrection among the slave population was noted in 1859 in consequence of numerous acts of violence and insubordination.¹⁰

Slaves ran away from their masters often and for various reasons. Some were treated cruelly, some were just bold and adventurous, some wanted to escape work, and others had committed crimes, hoping by flight to escape punishment. Still other slaves were incited to abscond by slave sympathizers, and there were some cases of Negroes being stolen from their masters. Advertisements of runaway slaves were of frequent occurrence in the newspapers.

Advertisements and descriptions of runaways reveal much about the slave population. Basil spoke both English and French fluently.¹¹ Maria was "tolerably tall, very nice

8. Ibid., September 22, 1834.

9. Ibid., September 26.

10. Mobile Daily Register, April 5, 1859.

11. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 12, 1824.

made ... and commonly goes pretty well dressed."¹² Bob was bow-legged, very stout, and inclined to stoop. Barby had a "pleasant, and yet simple countenance," and had one of her great toes cut off.¹³ Davey was described as saucy and roguish and always full of life. The top part of his right ear had been cut or bitten off, over which he always wore a handkerchief for concealment.¹⁴ Other physical deformities of slaves were described as aids to apprehension.

In order to control the slave population there were several special ordinances relating only to slaves. All trade with slaves was prohibited. It had long been a matter of complaint during the summer months, in the absence of their owners, that slaves sold articles belonging to their masters and appropriated the profits.¹⁵ Neither was a slave permitted to go at large or hire himself out to work without his owner's approval. Any slave away from his place of employment was considered a runaway. Slaves hired out by their masters were required to wear badges secured by the owner at the mayor's office. There were designated places in the city to which all slaves authorized for hire had to repair for

12. Mobile Argus, September 9, 1823.

13. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, January 1, 1824.

14. Mobile Argus, July 29, 1823.

15. Mobile Commercial Register, October 30, 1829.

assignment. Ten lashes was the punishment for refusing to work or failing to report to the place designated. A day's work for such a hireling was sunrise to sunset, with one-half hour off for breakfast and one and one-half hours for dinner, except during the summer months when two hours were allowed for dinner.¹⁶

The city permitted no balls, dances, or other assemblages of colored people without a special permit or license. In no case was permission to assemble granted to extend past one o'clock a.m. It was the duty of the City Watch to disperse these gatherings at that time. A slave could obtain a pass to remain out only until nine o'clock ordinarily. For exceeding the time limits of his pass a slave was punished by the patrol with the lash, exceeding ten stripes.¹⁷

The practice of allowing slaves to maintain separate quarters other than those provided by their owners was permitted in Mobile. But "crime and licentiousness has existed among the Mobile slave population for some time" said the Commercial Register.¹⁸ This was attributed largely to an excess of liberty and freedom from restraint, in allowing slaves to hire themselves out and rent separate living quarters

16. Ibid., February 3, 1826.

17. Ibid., February 7.

18. Ibid., July 10, 1847.

Under that system the owners required of the slave a monthly fee from his labors, which the slave acquired honestly or dishonestly, "they coming more and more to rely on the latter."¹⁹ Their "shanties" were said to be rendezvous of the idle and criminal, the gambler and drinker. Thereby the slave's morals "in nine cases out of ten" were ruined, his industry turned to laziness, his honesty to dishonesty.²⁰ In consequence thereof a city ordinance was passed in 1847 which forbade separate maintenance.²¹ But separate maintenance had become so implanted in the domestic life of slavery in Mobile and so many owners preferred the system to private quarters and personal work, that the ordinance was amended to allow the system, provided the slave registered his owner's written permission and paid an annual \$5 fee. Further evidence of the prevalence and popularity of the private maintenance system for slaves in Mobile was the fact that over 200 permits were issued during the first year. Also 100 more were arrested for failure to obtain permits.²²

Free persons of color also presented problems to Mobilians. The city contained an unusually large number of these people, 713 being listed in the census of 1850. The

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Mobile Daily Advertiser, May 21, 1850.

free Negro was often an unwholesome influence on the Negro slave, and efforts were made to limit the association of the two as much as possible. Free persons of color were in a class to themselves. They were free, yet they were subject to restrictions not imposed upon white citizens. So many free Negroes had found their way to Mobile that in 1820 an ordinance required all those free persons of color then living in the city with terms of residence less than three years to report for registration at the mayor's office.²³ The authorities wanted to know who they were and where they could be found in Mobile. An ordinance of 1830 prohibited all further entrance of free Negroes and mulattos into Mobile by allowing only those resident in the city at the date of the ordinance to go at large.²⁴ After 1832 it was illegal for any free person of color to enter the state for a period longer than thirty days. If within twenty days from that time the free colored person were yet within the state, he became liable for sale as a slave.²⁵

The disquieting effect the presence of free Negroes had upon slaves made these restrictions desirable, and citizens naturally wanted no more free colored persons in Mobile than was necessary. This feeling was reflected in 1830 in a

23. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, March 2, 1834.

24. Ibid., April 21, 1830.

25. Mobile Commercial Register, September 2, 1834.

report from Montgomery. That city's young men, in the wake of a wave of fire and crime, set out to rid Montgomery of all those without visible means of support. One who came under their scrutiny was a free colored man who was living with a white woman "with no ostensible means of support." He was taken to the river, placed in a canoe without a paddle, and cut adrift on the current. The editor of the Commercial Register predicted the probability of his coming on until he reached Mobile's wharves, in which case "It will be well to look to the manner in which this fellow may paddle his canoe among us."²⁶

Mobilians were quick to defend the institution of slavery in their city. They recognized the inherent evil as well as the inherent good attached to domestic servitude, but they took exception to exaggerated abolition propaganda. As early as 1829 "the horrors of slavery" as a headline to paragraphs in many of the "liberal" Northern newspapers was answered by Mobile editors. Reference was made to recent criminal actions in Mobile in which a slave was involved. Of three persons capitally convicted in a single court action the slave was indicted for killing his master and an Indian and a white man were indicted for murder. The white man was

26. Ibid., April 31, 1830.

hanged; the Indian was pardoned; and the fate of the slave was suspended for more than a year on a legal technicality. This case was commended to abolitionists as an example of the "severity practiced on our offended slaves."²⁷ Another example of particular note was the case of Jack Waters, Mobile slave. Jack had taken to the swamps as a runaway slave, from whence he came as necessity dictated. For more than twelve months he had "kept the city in a constant state of alarm." He was captured after tiring of the swamps and taking over a vacant dwelling on Government Street. Jack was convicted of assault and battery with intent to kill and sentenced to be executed.²⁸ This sentence was suspended on the grounds of irregularity. The law required that thirty days should elapse between sentence and execution, and it was discovered that there were but twenty-nine days from date of sentence to date of execution. Before a second sentence could be pronounced, Waters was pardoned for his crimes and set free.²⁹ Public sentiment even before his trial and pardon was evidenced favorably toward Jack by a voluntary subscription started to purchase his domestic freedom. This subscription raised between four and five hundred dollars!³⁰ The facts of the Waters case were

27. Ibid., November 30, 1829.

28. Ibid., November 23, 1830.

29. Ibid., April 23, 1831.

30. Ibid., August 21, 1829.

offered as another illustration of the treatment afforded slaves in the South.

Editorial opinion was voiced also on the treatment of Negroes in the North. Washington Goode, a Boston Negro, was convicted of murder. It was said a huge throng of people attended his funeral, after an attempt to secure his release by a petition signed by some 25,000 had failed. This incident evoked the comment in Mobile that "an honest nigger" could very well starve in the North, but a criminal one, on whom sympathy and emotion could be expended, would find respect and honor there. It was also pointed out that no such petition or no such sympathy was raised for a Miss Blaisdell, a white girl concurrently convicted with Goode. Northern sympathy was "likely to take on a dark hue in these times" said the Daily Advertiser.³¹

Abolitionism had a wide effect on Mobilians. Abolitionist's tracts had been circulated in Mobile as early as 1835. "None but the absolutely insane - mad with a thirst for blood" could look without horror on the implications of these tracts, it was declared.³² As in many other Southern cities, Mobile citizens called a public meeting to adopt measures to halt the influx of these "incendiary tracts"

31. Mobile Daily Advertiser, May 22, 1849.

32. Mobile Commercial Register, August 12, 1835.

through the mails. They adopted resolutions calling on Northern cities to take steps to stop the abolition movement. A Committee of Vigilance was organized and vested with authority to meet whatever emergency that arose. Determination that the schemes of abolitionists would be frustrated was unanimously voiced.³³

Less than two weeks after the inception of the Committee of Vigilance the ship Warsaw arrived in Mobile with four persons of color aboard. In consequence of state and city statutes forbidding further emigration of free Negroes into Alabama and Mobile, they were taken into custody. A search of their luggage revealed numerous copies of the "Strugglers", incendiary tracts published under the auspices of the abolitionist, Tappan. Other papers established that the Negroes were agents for "that fiend of mischief."³⁴ The Committee met and decided to send the four back North on the return voyage of the Warsaw, because it was "not against such miserable instruments of iniquity as these, that the indignation of the South is awakened. It is the master spirits of the conspiracy, the Tappans, the Buffums, the Garrisons, and the Thompsons that must be made to feel our resentment."³⁵

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., August 21, 1835.

35. Ibid.

Several days later the four blacks, two men and two women, were shipped for New York, and Mobile and the South awaited legislative action of the North.³⁶

It is remarkable that these four colored abolitionists were allowed to leave the city since legal punishment was prescribed by statute for such occasions, but one of the "supposed emissaries" received a little "Lynch discipline" before being deported.³⁷

Expected prohibitive legislation from the North curtailing the activities of abolitionists in the South had not come by 1851 and the Southern Rights Association of Mobile was born. Twelve resolutions were adopted at its inception which set forth Mobilians' attitudes and beliefs regarding slavery and the federal nature of the government. They also stated their grievances and demanded of the non-slaveholding states not only to cease their attacks on Southern institutions, but also to present new guarantees to uphold them.³⁸

There was in Mobile a relatively large element with anti-slavery sentiment who did not agree with the tenets of the Southern Rights Association.³⁹ These, however, were in the minority and most Mobilians believed that domestic

36. Ibid., September 2, 1835.

37. Ibid.

38. Mobile Daily Advertiser, May 27, 1851.

39. Ibid.

servitude was of potential benefit to the slave. Still others believed the institution was a positive good. In defense of slavery the editor of the Daily Register suggested the probability that "at no distant day" African slavery would spread southward through Mexico and Central America, but even before then it would be reinstated by France, England, and Spain in their western colonial possessions. Further he proclaimed that "Everyday is strengthening and extending this highest form of social civilization, and the period is at hand when the great co-arbiters of national destinies will unite with us in approving and adopting that wise and humane system."⁴⁰

Southerners had attempted to solve the problem of slavery themselves in several ways. An emancipation law was passed in Alabama in January 1834 which allowed judges to emancipate slaves at the request of the owner. The owner was required to post notice sixty days in advance in the newspapers. Another condition for such emancipation was that the slave was free only after removal from the state.⁴¹

Another effort to solve the slave problem was the establishment of emigration societies to remove freed Negroes from the states. The Mobile Emigration Society was formed in 1851 to arrange for the emigration of those free persons of color "as desire, or ought", in the opinion of an executive committee of the organization, to be sent to Liberia or

40. Mobile Daily Register, February, 1858.

41. Mobile Commercial Register, March 3, 1834.

some other place outside the country.⁴² A \$2 fee qualified anyone for membership in the Emigration Society. The extent of the operations of this society is not recorded in the newspapers.

None of these solutions was satisfactory and the colored population remained a problem.⁴³ Freedom for individuals was not the solution to cure the ills of slavery as long as the institution itself existed. A freed slave was not wanted in the South, neither could he live satisfactorily in many non-slave states. A free Negro, Jesse Oxendine, sold his considerable property in Mobile in the 1840's and moved to the free state of Ohio. There he soon lost all his property and savings, unable to get work because employers favored white labor. In answer to his requests for work he was told that Liberia was the place for him. In desperation, Oxendine wrote back to the authorities in Mobile and requested permission to return. He was reminded of the laws governing the entrance of free Negroes into the city. In reply Oxendine wrote that he preferred to be a slave on any Southern plantation than to be free in any Northern state. He returned to Mobile in 1849 and his preference was granted.⁴⁴

42. Mobile Daily Advertiser, March 27, 1851.

43. Many of the problems of slavery are definitively treated in James Benson Sellers, Slavery In Alabama.

44. Mobile Daily Advertiser, March 27, 1849.

CHAPTER X

HEALTH OF THE CITY

Epidemic and disease were ever a threat to the security of Mobile. It was a matter of much concern to Mobilians that their city be a healthy place in which to live, but sickness and death from disease annually exacted a heavy toll from the populace. Cholera and especially yellow fever were the most destructive diseases the city had to endure.

Several city ordinances were invoked in an effort to maintain good health. Police were instructed to inspect all yards and lots in the city to prevent accumulations of filth, kitchen stuffs, oyster shells, or shavings. Stagnant water was prohibited with a directive that owners must fill up to the sills under their buildings with sand or earth.¹ These and other preventive measures of a general nature were permanent features of the health program. Special policies were adopted to meet temporary threats of disease. In 1832 when three cases of cholera were found in Mobile, an ordinance was quickly passed to prevent the use or further introduction of oysters.² The importation of oysters was again temporarily prohibited in 1833 because of the presence

1. Mobile Commercial Register, February 3, 1826.

2. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, November 21, 1832.

of cholera in New Orleans.³ It is interesting to note that oysters were considered a source of the dreaded cholera.

A good supply of pure water was another health problem of Mobile. Water was piped in from Spring Hill after attempts with wells had proved unsatisfactory.⁴ From Spring Hill the water passed through hollowed wooden logs, then through lead pipes to the faucets of the city. Upon examination, a Dr. Jones pronounced this system of supply impure. Neutral salts in the water acted upon the lead in the pipes during warm weather to produce varying degrees of lead poisoning. The result was severe stomach cramping and colic for consumers every summer. Dr. Jones recommended the substitution of iron piping for the leaden ones. His recommendation was carried out in 1835 when the mayor ordered from New York 10,000 feet of iron pipe to replace the leaden ones.⁵

The summer months of August, September, and October were the months for greatest sickness. During these months deaths from disease ran highest.⁶ During the summer the city was greatly depopulated. It was long the custom for a great portion of people to leave Mobile for more northern climates

3. Ibid., January 1, 1833.

4. Cf. ante, p. 4.

5. Mobile Commercial Register, April 23, 1835.

6. Appendix

during the off-season summer period.⁷ Those who remained as residents were often forced by disease to remove themselves short distances outside the city. Even the public offices were moved outside the city in 1825 and only seven men remained to guard property.⁸ During this and similar times newspapers advised everyone against entering the city except for very urgent reasons. With the coming of frost each autumn the city was considered relatively safe for inhabitation.

Early Mobilians held some curious beliefs concerning health. In 1825 it was conceded that yellow fever had not been traced to a definite cause, but some thought the disinterment of the bodies from the old burial ground had been the principal cause of disease that year.⁹ Many more denied that yellow fever was caused locally and insisted that "northerly winds ... sweeping over the long marshes and swamps" brought the fever.¹⁰ The great epidemic in 1839 was attributed in part to lack of rain which caused streams to dry up into stagnant pools. Here they were very near the truth of the matter; however, they believed that such stagnation caused vegetable

-
7. Such summer migrations were secondarily motivated by health. Much of the trade and commerce of Mobile were not locally financed. Thus absenteeism, or the spending elsewhere of money made in Mobile, was characteristic.
 8. Mobile Commercial Register, August 9, 1825.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Ibid., September 25, 1829.

matter to decay, which poisoned the air. It was thought this poisoned air gave off "noxious exhalations ... from the decay of vegetable matter" and produced the fever.¹¹ It was not yet perceived that these stagnant pools were breeding places for the germ-carrying mosquito. Also natives believed that strangers, unaccustomed to this atmosphere, were more susceptible to fever than were native inhabitants. It is possible that natives may have become partially immunized to the infections of mosquitos.

Disease in 1829 prompted some advice on how to escape the sickness. People, it was said, should only visit town in the middle of the day, and harbor no fear of the disease, for fear alone could produce the illness.¹² Next, one should be temperate in his diet, eat only small amounts of simple foods and drink only claret and water "to keep the system cool and open to the actions of medicines ... a stomach filled with rich viands and brandy or strong wines can only admit of obstructed and delayed action of the remedies."¹³ The giver of this advice pointed to the French population of Mobile who traditionally followed similar eating and drinking habits with relatively good health. But there were those, accustomed to ardent spirits, who felt that a sudden change to claret would of itself be dangerous to health. It

11. Alabama Tribune, May 27, 1849.

12. Mobile Commercial Register, September 25, 1829.

13. Ibid.

was said that these people, during epidemic, "keep above fever heat" with spirits, hoping to avoid illness. This preventive, it was pointed out, could be fatal, for alcohol in free use impaired one's vital powers. The free imbiber arose in the mornings with a "furred tongue, a nausea at the stomach, and a little headache."¹⁴ These symptoms were recognized as the first signs of fever as well as the result of keeping above heat with spirits. The victim could not be sure of the source of his symptoms; "therefore he resorts to a mint julep, drinks until the tone of his system raises him above his pains and his fears"¹⁵ The adviser had one more bit of advice - if the above precautions and a stout heart failed, then a "wise man will repent of his sins ... and set about the last arrangement of his worldly concerns!"¹⁶ There was more truth than jest in that statement, for man was fairly helpless in the wake of cholera and yellow fever, and medical science offered little to abet his stout heart.

In addition to the usual visitations of disease in Mobile there were times of prolonged epidemic. The worst epidemic of fever in the early period occurred in 1839, when there were 339 deaths listed for the first twelve days of September of that year. There were insufficient nurses

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

to attend the numbers of afflicted "although \$40 per month" had been offered nurses.¹⁷ By the end of that September only a single Catholic priest was left in town to conduct rites for the dead.¹⁸ There was also a shortage of doctors as the Howard Association of New Orleans sent a physician to Mobile to aid in the epidemic.¹⁹ This doctor decided to remain in Mobile after the epidemic has run its course. The worst yellow fever epidemic of the entire period came in 1853. Toward the end of October of that year 1,256 deaths had been recorded.²⁰

It is interesting to note other causes of death recorded in obituary columns of the day. Roswell Stanly died of mortification in the leg.²¹ "Bilious fever" was fatal to John Lynch.²² A fourteen months old child succumbed from teething, and Margaret O'Brien died of "Marasmus".²³

There was no Board of Health in Mobile during the early ante-bellum period. In 1836 a three man Board was set up which consisted of Doctors Mordecai, Perrine, and Wook-cock.²⁴ There was no Medical Board in effect before then but

17. Ibid., September 27, 1839.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., October 18.

20. Mobile Daily Advertiser, October 29, 1853.

21. Mobile Argus, September 9, 1823.

22. Ibid., June 16.

23. Ibid., September 9.

24. Mobile Commercial Register, August 15, 1836.

it was little more than an association of doctors. A function of the Medical Board was to set up uniform prices within the profession in 1825. For verbal medical advice the physician charged up to \$5, but for advice by letter up to \$10 was asked. Visits in town were a standard \$2, but if the doctor had to cross the bay to Blakeley he could demand as much as a \$25 fee. It cost \$35 if he made the crossing in an open boat. For all visits to Blakeley or to the country outside the city, the fees were doubled if the visit occurred in rain or at night.²⁵ Thus if a resident of Blakeley required the attention of a Mobile doctor at night or during a rain, and if the doctor travelled in an open boat, the patient could be charged as high as \$70 for a single visit. All general medicines cost 50 cents per dose. Bleeding was a popular medical treatment at the time, and for \$1 patients received the blood-letting treatment in an arm or leg. It was also customary at the time for doctors to pull teeth. A dollar per tooth was standard.²⁶

By 1832 Mobile had at least one professional dentist. He charged for extracting and "separating" teeth, \$1, for inserting natural teeth, \$6 to \$10; for inserting artificial teeth, \$5; for "stopping" teeth with gold, \$2 per tooth, and for fillings with tinfoil only \$1.50 was charged. It can only

25. Ibid., May 27, 1825.

26. Ibid.

be surmised that the dentist obtained the natural teeth for those insertions from the mouths of his former patients! It is also interesting to note that dentists sometimes filled teeth with tinfoil. And, in keeping with social ideas of the day, "ladies may be attended at their residences if required."²⁷

The Daily Register listed 41 practicing physicians in Mobile in 1859 who served the approximate 30,000 population. It was estimated that their combined practice netted \$200,000 annually, but of which a third was never collected.²⁸ Each of the 41 doctors therefore had an annual cash earning of slightly more than \$1,600, assuming that each had an equal practice.

Adequate hospital facilities were slow to develop. Space and facilities were often insufficient to care for all the sick, especially during epidemics. During a siege of smallpox in 1835 city authorities were compelled to open a temporary hospital in the suburbs. Admission to that hospital was obtained on application to the mayor and/or aldermen. Medicine and other facilities were provided the indigent free of charge. It also accommodated slaves at the expense of their masters.²⁹

-
27. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, November 20, 1832.
 28. Mobile Daily Register, July 13, 1859.
 29. Mobile Commercial Register, March 11, 1835.

The city hospital was reorganized in 1836 in an effort to provide better service, by the separation of medical and surgical facilities with a doctor over each. Heretofore these services were all combined under one doctor.

Further evidence of the inability of hospital facilities to meet health requirements of the city was the establishment of a private hospital in 1837 on Government Street by Dr. H. S. Le Vert. It ministered to sick gentlemen only. Often young men and strangers to the city had been attended in hotel rooms because of the lack of sufficient hospital rooms and nurses. Dr. Le Vert's hospital was complete with an apothecary's shop and staff of nurses.³⁰ In 1853 Dr. Le Vert was chief surgeon at the United States Hospital in Mobile. It was noted that there had been only seventy-nine deaths to occur in that hospital from 2,355 admissions over a four year period.³¹ The origin of this hospital is not dated in the newspapers.

Demand for a medical college developed in the 1850's. A group of physicians in 1855 elected trustees to a proposed medical college and petitioned the city for an appropriation of \$20,000 to further the project.³² Nothing came of this effort for several years. What evidently came to be the Medical

30. Ibid., January 10, 1837.

31. Mobile Daily Advertiser, April 15, 1853.

32. Ibid., November 17, 1855.

College of Alabama as a branch of the University of Alabama began functioning in 1859. It had been a private medical school formed by Dr. J. C. Nott. After Nott's appropriation failed to materialize he and other Mobile physicians set up an independent faculty. The faculty included Drs. Nott, Ketchum, Anderson, Ross, Gordon, and Huestis. In 1859 the Legislature granted the school a charter of incorporation. The plan of Dr. Nott and his associates to start by private enterprise and hope for state appropriation later was successful.³³

It is interesting to note advertisements of the various drugs and medicines offered for sale in ante-bellum Mobile. In addition to the familiar Epsom salts, castor oil, ether, camphor, calomel, and magnesia, opium also could be purchased on the market. Such unfamiliar items as jalap, gummed scammony, pearled barley, manna, musk, cephalic snuff, hawk's bills, conserve of roses, spirits of hartshorn, and emetic tartar were other advertised products.³⁴ There was also an abundance of medicinal herbs and roots available, such as prickly ash bark, lily root, skunk cabbage root, thorn apple leaves, maiden hair, sassafras, black henbane, deadly nightshade, snakehead, feverfew, coltsfoot, cat mint, and others.³⁵

33. Mobile Daily Register, April 3, 1859.

34. Mobile Mercantile Advertiser, November 10, 1823.

35. Ibid., March 1, 1824.

It is noteworthy that there was a particular malady for which these herbs, roots, and drugs were supposed to be beneficial. It is also remarkable that each citizen could purchase teeth forceps and pocket surgical instruments.³⁶ Bard's Midwifery, Hamilton's Purgatives, Cox's Dispensatory, and Bell's Surgery were for sale to the interested reader.³⁷

Advertisements making highly improbable claims for medicines and health practices were common.³⁸ One such product was appropriately named the Medical Cure-All. Costing \$2.50 per bottle it was good for "scrofula, or king's evil, ulcerated or putrid sore throat, long standing rheumatic affections, cutaneous diseases, white swelling and diseases of the bones and other afflictions of⁷ debilitated constitutions."³⁹ Liberal testimonials attesting the merits of this product accompanied this advertisement. The producer also announced that he would supply gratis all charitable institutions and all poor people if the city would appoint a distributing agent. Whether or not Mobile made such an appointment is not determined.

Dr. Hull advertised his Worm Lozenges with statistics. He claimed that thousands and tens of thousands "pine

36. Ibid., November 10, 1823.

37. Ibid., February 26, 1824.

38. Cf. ante., p. 58.

39. Mobile Commercial Register, June 4, 1824.

away and die of worms" and that it had been estimated that in the United States 100,000 children died annually from the effects of worms alone.⁴⁰ Dr. Hull's Worm Lozenges were the antidote.

Dr. Christie's Galvanic Belt, Bracelets, and Necklace, with their "mysterious powers of galvanism and magnetism," according to advertisements would remove and permanently cure all nervous diseases, strengthen weakened bodies, and give tone to organs. They would cure fits, cramps, paralysis, palsy, gout, lumbago, neuralgia, heart tremors, curvature of the spine, and hip complaints. Dr. Christie recommended his treatment instead of the "usual mode of drugging and physicking the patient till exhausted nature sinks hopelessly under the infliction."⁴¹

In addition to testimonial statements which reinforced claims of the healing powers of these medicines and medical appliances, there was also a money-back guarantee attached to some products. It was claimed that not one in fifty of the users of the celebrated Strengthening Plaster in the United States and West Indies had demanded their money back.⁴² In view of the seemingly exaggerated claims of its healing powers this fact seems remarkable.

40. Mobile Register and Journal, March 27, 1844.

41. Ibid., February 15, 1849.

42. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, October 12, 1832.

Some peculiar remedies were at times offered to cure rare or troublesome afflictions. A home remedy for "bleeding of the lungs" was "one-half tumbler of gin sling, well covered with powdered nutmeg." This cure, given "with unshaken confidence" following actual and repeated experience, had never been known to fail by one writer.⁴³

A bath was also considered by Mobilians to have its healthful effects. It was recognized that cleanliness promoted good health, and baths were considered by one editor even a necessity of life in the Mobile climate. He considered that in the warm season, everyone should enjoy a bath "as often as once a week."⁴⁴

43. Mobile Commercial Register, February 17, 1826.

44. Ibid., April 13, 1835.

CHAPTER XI

DISASTERS OF THE PERIOD

The present city of Mobile was literally born of disaster. Floods had prompted the transplantation of the city from Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff to Mobile Bay in 1711. But even after this move, the city of Mobile was plagued with disasters such as floods, storms, fires and epidemics.

Fire caused a great deal of damage to Mobile throughout the ante-bellum period. The first fire engine arrived in Mobile from Boston aboard the schooner Romeo in 1818.¹ With the arrival of the engine came a demand for the establishment of a regular fire department. In that early year Mobile was said to be entirely composed of wooden buildings, and so arranged that fire could lay the city in ruins and blast the fortunes of many.² This prophetic statement proved only too true more than one time in Mobile history.

One of the first moves to combat the successive menace of fire was the division of the city into two wards for fire protection. The city offered a prize of \$20 to the first fire company to arrive at the scene following the alarm. As an added incentive to prompt and efficient action all firemen were exempt from duty with the night patrol.³

-
1. Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, November 3, 1818.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Mobile Commercial Register, January 4, 1826.

Another action to reduce the fire hazard of the city was an ordinance which prohibited all building of structures other than brick or stone within the corporate limits east of St. Joseph and St. Emanuel Streets and between the northern boundary of the city and Canal Street. Special permission was required from the city authorities for non-observance of this ordinance.⁴

Extensive damage by fire occurred in 1827 to river front property, and it was this occasion more than any other which led to the replacing of wooden structures with brick ones. After 1839 Mobile was called the "Burnt City."⁵ Fire during that autumn accompanied one of the worst of many yellow fever epidemics. Panic and depression had followed close on the heels of a previous epidemic of fever in 1837. The fires of 1839 consumed entire blocks of buildings in the city. One such fire which occurred in October of that year caused total damage estimated at \$120,000 of which only \$72,000 was covered by insurance. Hardest hit of the insurance companies were the Alabama Life and Trust Company, the Georgia Insurance and Trust Company of Augusta, the Mobile Insurance Company, and the Ocean Insurance Company of New Orleans.⁶

4. Ibid., March 9, 1829.

5. Ibid., January 8, 1841.

6. Ibid., October 7, 1839.

Fire almost continually raged in the city from September 28 to October 14, 1839, a period of over two weeks. Fire companies in New Orleans offered to send three men from each of their companies to relieve the beleaguered Mobile firemen.⁷ Also the city of New Orleans, as did other cities, formed relief agencies to offer aid to stricken families of Mobile.⁸ In addition to produce and other supplies New Orleans contributed more than \$7,500 of the total \$13,588.68 listed as the combined donation of Mobile's friends during their crisis.⁹

The year 1839 was also one of a notable crop failure. That year only 252,240 bales were produced in South Alabama as compared with 446,042 bales the following year. Someone made the statement that from personal observation he knew that many large plantations were planted three successive times in 1839 and still failed to produce a stand of cotton.¹⁰

Disasters resulting from steamboat accidents were common. Steam boilers sometimes blew up, generally being fatal to numbers of crew and passengers. The Tom, on its regular mail run between Mobile and Blakeley, exploded in 1834 killing three and scalding four others badly.¹¹

7. Ibid., October 21.

8. Ibid., October 18.

9. Ibid., October 28.

10. Ibid., October 9, 1840.

11. Ibid., September 3, 1834.

The boilers of the Ben Franklin, a passenger boat between Mobile and Montgomery, blew up in 1836. This was described as a terrible tragedy and one which caused gloom and despair in the city. The forward part of the boat was blown out "as if from the mouth of a vast mortar, and among the flying fragments human bodies were wheeling through the air to an immense height."¹² Ten people were killed, nineteen were badly wounded, and four could not be accounted for.¹³ It was said that one body was blown over a hundred yards and "some say who saw it, 200 feet high."¹⁴

The catastrophe of the Ben Franklin and other similar accidents led to the foundation of the City Inquest. Its duty was to investigate the nature and origin of all public accidents and publish its findings. The purpose was to place guilt if there had been negligence, or to protect the reputations of innocent victims of accident if the calamity was determined to be unavoidable.¹⁵ On the extent of such accidents reference was made in 1840 to "a long catalogue of those who have been sacrificed by the careless use of steam."¹⁶

Explosions aboard steamboats were not always the result of careless use of steam. Several like tragedies

12. Ibid., March 14, 1836.

13. Ibid., March 17.

14. Ibid., March 14.

15. Ibid., March 18.

16. Ibid., December 16, 1840.

are recorded as the result of gunpowder explosions. The Alabama was being discharged of her cargo when gunpowder exploded, severely injuring her captain and destroying much of her wares.¹⁷ Later in the same year the brig Adamant blew up and was abandoned to flames as a total loss in the bay. Gunpowder was aboard without knowledge of the captain. It was noted that the practice of shipping gunpowder in disguise had become too common a source of fatal accidents.¹⁸ Appeals to merchants apparently did not restrain them. Insurance companies adopted a procedure of cargo inspection to determine that there was no explosive aboard, and that the ship was a safe conveyance before they paid any claim.¹⁹

There were numerous other mishaps to river and ocean going vessels. Snags and sand bars were very destructive impediments to safe passage. These wrecks caused a great deal of damage and loss of property, and often the striken vessel had to be abandoned as she lay.

The brig Mary Cole was struck by lightning in a minor storm in 1826. The "fluid" descended and killed a seaman.²⁰ The severest storm the city had to endure fell in August, 1852. Heavy rains flooded the city and high winds

17. Ibid., May 9, 1826.

18. Ibid., June 2.

19. Ibid., October 31.

20. Ibid., May 26, 1826.

blew more water in from the bay. Trees were uprooted, houses unroofed, and men waded up to their armpits on Water, St. Francis, Dauphin, Conti, and Government Streets. Large boats were torn from moorings and washed ashore to rest on dry land when the flood subsided.²¹ The original estimate of damages ran to a million and a half dollars, but was amended to half a million and citizens rejoiced that it had been no worse, since "sometimes within a week as much has been lost on cotton."²² One hundred carts were employed to clean debris off the streets before the fire department washed them down. Old floors were taken up and replaced after draining away water standing beneath them. According to the oldest inhabitants the flood of 1852 was the highest in memory although they recalled smaller ones in 1812 and 1821.²³

21. Mobile Daily Advertiser, August 26, 1852.

22. Alabama Tribune, August 29, 1852.

23. Ibid. This notable disaster, as well as others of the ante-bellum period, is also recorded in Summersell, op. cit.

CHAPTER XII

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The most significant developments toward the improvement of Mobile's harbor facilities occurred in the late ante-bellum period. A survey of the United States coastline by the Federal government gave Mobilians access to valuable information on their bay and harbor in 1847. Citizens corresponded with Professor Alexander D. Bache, Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey, asking him to investigate possibilities for improving the harbor from the upper to the lower bay. In their letter, signed by over 700 people, they stated Mobile's assets and emphasized the national as well as the local significance of such a survey. Professor Bache conducted "a general hydrographic survey" of Mobile Bay and supplied the city with a chart and report of his findings.¹

The bar at the mouth of the bay was found to be moving seaward at approximately 65 yards per year with a consequent deepening of the water three and one-half inches. In 1847 the depth of water which could be carried over the bar at the entrance to the bay was twenty and three-fourths feet at mean low tide. The rise and fall of the tide was approximately one foot. In six years time the water had deepened one and three-fourths feet there. Over the bar the

1. Mobile Register and Journal, August 31, 1847.

channel varied from one-half mile to one mile in width, and averaged seven fathoms deep down to Fort Morgan. Professor Bache further found that there was a secure anchorage for large vessels northwest from Fort Morgan in eight fathoms about one-half mile out in the bay.²

The first real improvement came after Congress appropriated \$50,000 to deepen the channel through Choctaw Pass and at Dog River bar. Contracts were let with a New Orleans citizen to supply a dredge and an additional boat, and a Pensacola citizen contracted to supply four dumping scows. Their machinery was reportedly able to dredge 2,500 cubic yards of earth per day at a cost of five cents per cubic yard. The exact success of this operation is not recorded in the newspapers, but hope was held to reach a depth of ten feet at mean low tide.³ Evidently the 1853 appropriation of Congress was inadequate for the task, because a year later Mobile citizens were still seeking means to deepen the channel more.⁴ Plans were made to carry on the work at local expense and to petition Congress for reimbursement. At this time Mobile was especially anxious for better harbor facilities because railroads were seeking favorable seaport connections

2. Ibid., September 18.

3. Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 18, 1853.

4. Ibid., January 24, 1854.

and Mobile was apprehensive lest she fall behind in the competition.⁵

The first communication with New Orleans via telegraph came in 1848. Ceremonies were to attend this contact on June 4 but someone cut the wires, delaying the transaction.⁶ Again this occurred on June 7, but the vandal was discovered and communication effected. Communication by telegraph advanced rapidly with the advance of railroads. On April 7, 1858, the Mobile and Ohio Railroad granted telegraphic rights to the Magnetic Telegraph Company to construct a line along the route of its road.⁷

The first public cab made its appearance on Mobile streets in 1841. Mr. Cullem, proprietor of the Mansion House, was responsible. Citizens were immediately attracted to the vehicle, and nicknamed it "Charlie."⁸ "Charlie" became a familiar sight on public streets of Mobile.

The first railway or trolley car appeared in 1858 on Government Street. In announcing the forthcoming public railway the Daily Register supposed that "an omnibus will be placed upon it, drawn by horses."⁹

5. Ibid., November 18, 1853.

6. Mobile Register and Journal, June 5, 1848.

7. Mobile Daily Register, April 9, 1858.

8. Mobile Commercial Register, April 22, 1841.

9. Mobile Daily Register, April 20, 1858.

The cab and the railway greatly facilitated transportation within the city; however, the principle means of locomotion still was a man's feet or perhaps his gig or sulky.

Urban communication by mail was expedited with the establishment of the "penny post" or carrier system in Mobile which was authorized by the Postmaster General May 2, 1859. Under the new system people without private post boxes received mail at their doors, "a privilege only allowed big cities." Mobilians rejoiced at being recognized as "some place." With the advent of the penny post Mobile had ceased for all time to be a "one horse town."¹⁰

Building railroads was by far the most important development in transportation and communication in the late ante-bellum period. One of the first railroads in Mobile was the short run to Cedar Point incorporated January 9, ¹¹ 1835.¹¹ It was completed two years later and celebrated with a public barbecue.¹² This railroad extended into the bay from Mon Louis island to service heavy ships.¹³

Efforts to connect the waters of the Tennessee with those of Mobile by railroad were continued. A meeting was held in Tuscaloosa in 1835 to popularize and gain support for such a railroad by correspondence with other

10. Ibid., May 1, 1859.

11. Mobile Commercial Register, March 14, 1835.

12. Ibid., August 16, 1837.

13. Ibid., April 9, 1835.

sections.¹⁴ In May of 1835 a meeting was held in Mobile and the city agreed to subscribe for \$500,000 of stock in any company chartered by the Legislature to build the road.¹⁵ It was resolved that the continued prosperity of Mobile eminently depended upon the proposed railroad. In June \$5,000 was appropriated by the city to survey possible routes.¹⁶ A contract was signed with A. A. Dexter as surveyor. Mobile felt it owed itself the obligation to finance all surveying costs.¹⁷ Success of the Mobile and Tennessee Railroad seemed assured at first as all the stock allotted to Mobile citizens by the commissioners of the road was taken by September. In fact there was some resale of stock by original purchasers for as much as ten per cent profit.¹⁸

Then in November a state-wide railroad convention was held in Tuscaloosa with Philip McLoskey, Henry Hitchcock, and George W. Owen representing Mobile.¹⁹ It was not until December that the road was actually incorporated by the state Legislature with stipulations that building must be commenced in two years and completed in ten in order to retain the charter.²⁰ Subscription books for sale of stock were opened

14. Ibid., April 6.

15. Ibid., May 21.

16. Ibid., June 6.

17. Ibid., June 12.

18. Ibid., September 30.

19. Ibid., November 30.

20. Ibid., January 9, 1836.

in the respective court houses of the state the first Monday in August, 1836.²¹ But Mobile did not get the needed cooperation from the rest of the state and stock sold very slowly at \$100 a share. Mobile had financed the survey and stock sold in Mobile city and county was sufficient to save the charter from forfeiture. There the matter rested as a painful disappointment to Mobile.²²

At the same time two shorter roads, which were intended to serve the interior, were also languishing for lack of support. Mississippi had a company chartered to build a railroad from Jackson to the Alabama line from where its promoters hoped Alabama would extend it on to Mobile. Also the West Point Railroad out of Montgomery was intended to concentrate trade of the central part of the state at that city, from where it would proceed down the Alabama and on to Mobile.²³ Stock in this company was taken but subscribers failed to comply with cash. There was no lack of spirit and ambition, no lack of plans, but there was a serious shortage of capital with which these companies had to work. Mobilians knew the time was "past ripe" for some positive action in railroad building to supplement her river trade.²⁴

21. Ibid., May 11.

22. Ibid., November 22.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

A great deal of the blame for the ineptness of the several railroad projects in the state was placed on the Legislature. At an internal improvements convention in Montgomery in 1837 it was pointedly brought out that "Every Southern state, with the exception of Alabama, has directed its legislation to the encouragement ... of railroads" by the granting of banking privileges.²⁵ The convention further stressed the importance of railroads in developing the resources of the state, in uniting distant peoples, and in removing sectional feelings. The motivating philosophy behind citizens' lack of financial support of railroads was expressed as a reluctance to invest in anything when agriculture offered immense and immediate profits.²⁶ Thus the Legislature must take the initiative to instill confidence in the soundness and ultimate profitableness of a network of railroads.

Progress was very slow. Year after year passed with little more than editorial warnings of the consequences unless Mobile could effect overland trade connections with the interior. Railroads with termini directly on the Atlantic Coast threatened to divert trade of the interior and deal a mortal blow to the economy of Mobile. Partially this threat was realized. The River State Review described Mobile in 1845

25. Ibid., April 11, 1837.

26. Ibid.

as having closed its eyes in desperation, folded her arms, and let nature take her course.²⁷ Fear was expressed that it had already been determined that Mobile would thereafter get only a poor share of the trade of the lower South.

Mobile finally rallied to meet this threat in 1848 when the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was commenced under the able promotion of Marshall J. D. Baldwyn. This railroad accomplished the long sought connection with the Tennessee Valley and extended to intersect the waters of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers as well. Mobile amply supported its share of this undertaking, both surprising and pleasing a great many people. The Noxubee, Mississippi, Rifle said that since " ... we had not seen the citizens of Mobile give any other evidence of zeal than in words, we were disposed to doubt"²⁸ "They seem ... to have caught the right spirit at last," said the Tuscaloosa Observer enthusiastically.²⁹

Private subscriptions to stock were animated and citizens even subscribed stock by taxation. The Alabama Legislature on January 5, 1850, approved an act which imposed a tax of 25 cents per hundred dollars on Mobile real estate for benefit of the railroad.³⁰ Again in December, 1851

27. River State Review, N.D., quoted in Mobile Register and Journal, November 4, 1845.

28. Noxubee Rifle, N. D., quoted in ibid., May 2, 1848.

29. Tuscaloosa Observer, N. D., quoted in ibid., May 9.

30. Mobile Daily Advertiser, February 28, 1850.

the Legislature approved another act which authorized a tax of two per cent on Mobile real estate, but also made it subject to approval of real estate owners in Mobile. On February 14, 1852, those owners overwhelmingly agreed to be taxed with only seven dissenting votes.³¹ That day of the affirmative vote" ... will be remembered as the dawning of a day of prosperity" that only the Mobile and Ohio Railroad could afford.³² Two years later the state appropriated \$500,000 and work continued apace.³³ By 1857 five locomotives, six first class and three second class passenger cars, and eighty freight cars were in operation on the road.³⁴

At the end of the fifties over 450 miles of the railroad was completed. During the commercial season of 1858-1859 the Mobile and Ohio shipped 137,430 bales of cotton into Mobile, and earned \$772,955.92 from its combined operations.³⁵

The Mobile and Ohio proved a life line to Mobile and undoubtedly would have continued so, except for the disruptions of war soon after. Mobile had been dangerously slow to take advantage of rail transportation. This fact and that of a harbor difficult of access by large vessels posed threatening problems to her economic life.

31. Mobile Daily Advertiser, Feburary 15, 1852.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., February 9, 1854.

34. Ibid., February 24, 1857.

35. Ibid., September 3, 1859.

CHAPTER XIII

FURTHER POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PERIOD

Mobilians took a very active part in politics of the day, both local and national. By far the preponderance of material contained in newspapers was of a political nature. Because of the dominance of commercial interests Mobile was traditionally conservative in politics; Whig appeal was therefore strong among the merchants and business men in Mobile. It was stated in 1836 that two hundred and upwards had usually been conceded as the Whig majority in Mobile.¹

Political majorities during the ante-bellum period in Mobile County were Democratic, then Whig, and again Democratic. In 1824 Andrew Jackson received a comfortable majority, and again in 1828 Jackson carried Mobile County. Once again in 1836 Mobilians voted Democratic "contrary to all expectations."² But in 1840 Mobile County took a separate path from the state and voted for the Whig candidate, William H. Harrison, against Van Buren. It was not until 1852 that Mobile County returned to the Democratic column, voting for Franklin Pierce and his running mate, Alabamian William R. King. In 1856 it was again a Democrat, Buchanan, for whom Mobile County cast a majority.³

1. Mobile Commercial Register, November 15, 1836.

2. Ibid., November 15, 1836.

3. Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 15, 1856.

Participation in local politics of Mobile was animated. Political meetings were well attended and private citizens often wrote their views on political issues for publication. When the city authorities, with John F. Everitt as mayor, announced the intention of the city to purchase for \$190,000 city square 151 on which to build a new City Hall, a public meeting was held to determine the climate of public opinion.⁴ The meeting was scheduled for January 16, but was postponed until January 19, because of short notice. But the day before the second meeting was to be held the city authorities met and confirmed the purchase, "thereby treating the citizens with contempt...."⁵ The next day the public meeting was held with knowledge of the decision of the previous day. Citizens, indignant at having their voice forestalled, resolved "That the late purchase of square No. 151, by the Mayor and Aldermen ... was inexpedient, the price exorbitant, and contrary to the best interests of the city."⁶ It was argued that city finances would not permit such an expenditure in the face of needed capital for water piping, lighting, and paving. Another cause for protest was that certain of the Aldermen were financially interested in the square

4. Mobile Commercial Register, January 15, 1836.

5. Ibid., January 27.

6. Ibid., January 20.

and had appropriated public money to purchase their own property.⁷ Nevertheless the sale was completed after clear titles and deeds to the property were affirmed.⁸ A month later someone asked where the money for the purchase was located since the city orders for ordinary debts and work performed for the city were "daily refused payment."⁹

This episode and others offered fertile ground for criticism and were largely responsible for a change in the city government. Municipal affairs continued unsettled during the tenure of Mayors George W. Owen in 1837 and George Walton in 1838. But in 1839 Henry Chamberlain was elected and practically a new Board of Aldermen accompanied him into office. They immediately became known as the "reform Corporation."¹⁰

They made several changes and amendments in the city charter which were regarded as "putting the axe to the root of the evil" of hard times and corruption in the organic law of the charter.¹¹ Under Chamberlain a Common Council was created to work with the mayor and Board of Aldermen. More efficient provision for the collection and disbursement of revenue was also made. The new charter contained a freehold property qualification to vote for members of the Common Council, and it

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., February 13.

9. Ibid., March 21.

10. Ibid., April 3, 1839.

11. Ibid., December 16, 1839.

placed all jurisdiction over revenue with that body.¹² Thus those who paid the taxes spent them. Lack of precision in operating the city treasury was long a characteristic of Mobile city finance.

The new charter of 1839 also abolished the City Guard, "that fungus", and all policing was left to the regular force under a Recorder. Evidently this and the above were popular moves for they were "unanimously" adopted at the "largest meeting of citizens ever assembled in Mobile."¹³ But citizens did not remain satisfied with government under this charter. Edward Hall, a Whig, was elected in 1840 to the office of mayor and trouble continued. When in that year Democrats defeated Whigs in New York state elections, Mobile Democrats met to celebrate the victory and offer congratulations. The chairman of this meeting, Colonel William R. Hallett, and Charles Cullom were arrested and fined by the Recorder for disorderly conduct at an unruly meeting. The Democratic press reacted violently, called the meeting "most respectable", hailed this revival of the Sedition Law, and charged that the rights of free men to assemble peacefully had been invaded. The incident was further said to be without precedent since the Hartford Convention; that the Constitution had been violated by the "paltry" police court led by

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

one man, and that this man was "notoriously unmindful of the law."¹⁴ A strong call was sounded to remove the Recorder from office, to place upon the city administration the "brand of infamy", and to commend the ingredients of "this poisoned chalice ... to their own lips."¹⁵

Sharp lines were drawn between Whig officials and many of the citizenry by this controversy. The opposing presses had always sniped at each other, but now they blasted away freely. The Commercial Register was Democratic and the Daily Advertiser was Whig. Theirs was a regular feud stirred further by an incident involving bakers. The city charter allowed the mayor and aldermen to fix the price of flour and profits on bread making. An ordinance of 1826 fixed the price of 47 ounces of "superfine" bread at 10 cents per loaf. In 1840 these regulations remained the same and bakers refused to sell at that price. Consequently on May 7, 1840, the Recorder seized the bakers' carts and contents, then arrested the bakers and fined each \$20 and \$2.50 in costs.¹⁶ They appealed and were upheld by Judge Porter, who ruled that seizure had come before judgement in an unauthorized manner, and therefore the actions of the Recorder were illegal.¹⁷

14. Ibid., April 27, 1840.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., May 7, 1840.

17. Ibid., May 21.

The Democratic Register made a political issue of the fact that all but one of the bakers in town were Democrats and assigned that motive to the Recorder.¹⁸ The role of the Recorder became increasingly more distasteful to many Mobilians.

Antagonism between the two opposing political forces flared into open aggression in 1840. In late May a band of men roughly estimated to number from 50 to 100 marched on the office of the Register late at night. They forced entrance through a door which they "shivered to atoms", and uttered oaths freely in demanding "satisfaction" from the editor of the Register for his sharp political criticisms. It was said the men were directly from a Whig meeting "reeking with hard cider and patriotism."¹⁹ Among the mob were the editor of the Whig Advertiser, members of the Boards of Council and Aldermen, and it was asserted that the mayor himself was present. The authorities refused to quell the ensuing disturbance although the guard house was less than a hundred yards away. Even a week later the Recorder had made no arrests for the destruction of property and threats made on the Register editor.²⁰

One week later the Register editor attended another meeting of Whigs at which nothing was said or done to dis-

18. Ibid., May 13.

19. Ibid., May 22.

20. Ibid.

countenance their raid of the previous week. The Whigs, said the Register, had by their inaction accepted the odium of the Recorder and his lesser officials. He also claimed to have reliable information that "the outrage was prompted... and premeditated"²¹ The editor of the Register evidently was not deterred in his criticisms, for following the attack on him, he continued to cast barbs at the opposition. He recalled that "always" before an important election "steamboats are filled with Whigs", and cited the arrival of the Lalla Rookh from Columbus with numerous Whigs aboard.²²

Evidently the office of Recorder became very unpopular with a majority of citizens for it was abolished in 1842 with the advent of Charles A Hoppin as mayor. The city charter was amended to place all duties of the Recorder on the mayor, raise his salary to \$3,000, and abolish all property qualifications for voters.²³ Hoppin at first refused to assume the duties of Recorder, saying that he had not been elected for that purpose. The opinion was then voiced that perhaps he had not been elected to receive the salary raise either. The next day Hoppin, "under legal advice", agreed to perform the duties of Recorder.²⁴

21. Ibid., May 30.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., January 13, 1842.

24. Ibid., January 14.

The usual tenure of office for mayors of Mobile was only one year, or two at the most, but Hoppin served for four years. The only other mayors during the antebellum period to serve as long as Hoppin were Jones M. Withers and Charles C. Langdon, who served two terms.²⁵

25. Mayors of Mobile and their terms in office were as follows:

1846-47	Blanton McAlpine
1848	J. W. L. Childers
1849-51	Charles C. Langdon
1852	Joseph Seawell
1853-55	Charles C. Langdon
1856-60	Jones M. Withers

Compiled from aggregate issues of the Mobile Register, 1846-1860.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LATE ANTE-BELLUM CITY

Into the late ante-bellum period Mobile continued to grow in size and in numbers. The city limits were considerably expanded westward and northward into land which "the primeval forest occupied but a short time ago."¹ In the late thirties it was said that there was not an honest and industrious bricklayer, carpenter, plasterer, or mechanic but who had all the work he could possibly do. Improvement of real estate was called useful and valuable - "No Orange Grove speculations, no bubbles nor water lots."² According to a census conducted by a Mr. McCulloch in 1838 there were 13,621 people in the city and 4,415 in the county that year. Men outnumbered women roughly two to one in both city and county. There were 6,174 slaves included in the total population, of which only 1,704 lived in the county.³ The United States Census of 1840 attests to the accuracy of Mr. McCulloch's count in 1838 by indicating slight overall increases.⁴ It further showed there were in Mobile in 1840 almost twice as many people aged twenty to thirty, male and

-
1. Mobile Commercial Register, April 18, 1835.
 2. Ibid., August 1, 1838. Orange Grove real estate was a term referring to seasonal swamps, land sometimes under water and relatively useless.
 3. Ibid., October 16, 1838.
 4. Ibid.. The two year increase in population was 705 according to J. B. D. De Bow, Statistical View of the United States pp. 194-195.

female, than there were in any other age group.⁵ There were only 146 people over fifty years of age, thirty over sixty, and only two were over eighty in 1840. Mobile was then evidently a city of young people.

Just 100 persons were engaged in agriculture in 1840, while commerce employed 924 and manufacturing and trade embraced 1,130 citizens. There were 217 ocean going seamen and 571 were navigating the rivers and lakes.⁶ It is therefore obvious that occupations associated with commerce and trade greatly overshadowed that of agriculture in ante-bellum Mobile, city and county.

The census of 1840 reveals some interesting social statistics on Mobile. One hundred twenty seven were pursuing the learned professions. Five persons were deaf and dumb and two were insane. Also in 1840 there were five academics and grammar schools to serve 191 pupils, and eight primary schools with 115 in attendance. In addition there were 300 pupils listed as public charges. Two hundred whites over twenty years of age could not read and write.⁷

The census of 1850 enumerated a population of 7,048 in the county and 20,404 in the city, making a total of 27,452 citizens in Mobile County that year. Of the total, 9,172

5. Ibid., October 9, 1840, confirmed by the Sixteenth Census, Vol. I.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

were slaves and 713 were free persons of color.⁸ Thus the percentage of slaves in the total population was relatively small; the percentage of free persons of color was relatively high.

Public utilities and services expanded to care for the growing population. Improvements carried out in 1830 in the system of supplying water proved insufficient and new and better methods were sought.. The supply of water at the city spring at Spring Hill was sufficient but there was not enough pressure to supply additional services demanded in Mobile. Consequently the dam at the spring was raised and a large reservoir was built at the base of the hill.⁹ Even this was only temporarily satisfactory and an additional dam and reservoir were located on Three-Mile Creek.¹⁰ These facilities were under control and management of the city government.

Soon it was believed that private enterprise might better serve the civic welfare in this utility and the city decided to lease the water works at auction for twenty years.¹¹ In advertisements of the auction the city stipulated prices to be charged by the new management. The annual rate for families was \$1 per member; for business establishments in

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., April 3, 1836.

10. Ibid., June 3.

11. Ibid., August 12.

town, \$5 to \$20; for steam mills, tan yards, and brick yards, \$100 each; and for all water craft, 70 cents per hogshead.¹² In January of 1837 Judge Henry Hitchcock leased the water works and installed a steam engine to increase the pressure from the site on Three-Mile Creek.¹³ Hitchcock, however, was unable to fulfill the terms of his contract due to financial losses in the panic of 1837.

The water situation languished in its unsatisfactory condition until 1840 when Albert Stein bought the lease. The question of adequate water was an issue at every city election and when Stein also failed to produce sufficiently an investigation was launched.¹⁴ Stein gave as his reasons for short supply the constant waste through fire plugs, occasional broken pipes, and insufficient elevation at the reservoirs. The investigating committee refused to accept this explanation, but as Stein's contract provided that he was only required to supply such water as the eight inch pipes could carry, and it appearing this was being accomplished, he was cleared of all blame. Consequently a call was sounded for larger pipes.¹⁵ Never in the ante-bellum period was there a water supply considered adequate for the needs of the city.

12. Ibid., September 7.

13. Ibid., January 6, 1837.

14. Mobile Daily Advertiser, November 23, 1851.

15. Ibid.

The desirability of better illumination on the city streets occurred to Mobilians in the thirties, with propositions to light the city with gas. Oil dealers and candle chandlers opposed the installation of gas with warnings that gas distillations were unhealthy, injurious to water, expensive, and explosive. These conditions were labeled as untrue by those who claimed gas lighting was safe, inexpensive, and brighter than lighting with oil. These people believed that gas lighting would also effect a "moral reformation" by discouraging crime and other deeds requiring the cover of darkness.¹⁶

In 1837 a gas light contract was awarded to J. H. Caldwell. Caldwell's installation of gas lighting was both welcome and successful. Additional lamps were added from time to time as the city expanded.¹⁷

Architecture in the city was both a record of public taste and a picture of the appearance of Mobile in antebellum times. The Bank of Mobile in 1849 was said to be decidedly the most imposing and classic building, in good proportion and of masterful design and execution. The Custom House was described as "an abortion and disgrace" to the city.¹⁸ The Episcopal Church was an imposing structure and its interior decoration was in excellent taste. The first

16. Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, December 31, 1833.

17. Mobile Commercial Register, June 16, 1837.

18. Alabama Tribune, August 19, 1849.

Presbyterian Church was "remarkable for nothing except the architect's determination to overdo a deficiency of taste in the distribution of a multitude of pillars."¹⁹ Barton Academy was called a showy and handsome building. The two city hospitals were classed as "fine specimens" or architecture, and the other churches were described as "simple" structures. It was predicted that a cathedral under construction would be an ornament to the city.²⁰ Private buildings and homes were contemporaneously described as being "disregardful of interior comfort and convenience."²¹

R
Seafarers came to occupy an increasingly more respectable position in Mobile society. Their value to society became more and more recognized; their needs became more apparent. Several previous efforts to alleviate some of the hardships facing seamen away from home having failed of fruition, Mobile in 1835 determined to promote the welfare of that part of her population.²² A public meeting held in the basement of Government Street Church in April, 1835 formed itself into the Mobile Port Society.²³ Its aims were to supply means of moral and social improvement to sailors by encouraging the establishment of institutions for their

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Cf. ante, p. 7.

23. Mobile Commercial Register, April 25, 1835.

benefit. Also it was to provide non-sectarian religious education for sailors.²⁴ Thereafter the Mobile Port Society met annually on Christmas Day.

Seamen in the locality needed assistance especially during the summer months. They were then usually out of work when many boats were laid up for the idle months. A relief movement came from within the trade itself when a number of steamboat men, commanders, owners, and agents saw the desirability of protecting their sailors. These men joined together to provide relief to their hands during the commercial off-season.²⁵ This was extremely beneficial for often sailors were hard pressed during periods of forced inactivity. Top wages for them in 1838 was only \$18 per month even when they worked.²⁶

A place of worship for the exclusive use of sailors was next provided. It was started by a group of ladies who held regular fairs to raise money for the project. Twice a week these ladies met at the home of a Mrs. McCoy to make by hand articles to sell at the fairs.²⁷ These fairs were usually well attended. In late 1838 they were able to secure and outfit a room on Commerce Street as a bethel. Services were held

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., May 25, 1835.

26. Mobile Shipping and Commercial List, January 27, 1838.

27. Mobile Commercial Register, April 26, 1838.

There for sailors every Sunday for several years.²⁸ Shortly thereafter a reading room was added to the chapel for the pleasure of leisure hours. There was no charge of any kind for this service.²⁹

Improvement of another side of the welfare of men of the sea was envisioned with a call for a teacher to reside in Mobile the year round to minister to the temporal well-being of sailors. The combined clergy were invited to assist in this undertaking.³⁰

In 1846 a boarding house for sailors in port was acquired by the Ladies Bethel Society. They took over the Church Street House on the corner of Church and Water Streets, and a gentleman and his family were engaged to operate it. Prices of food and lodging were fixed low in order that seamen might be attracted to it.³¹ By 1849 the ladies were in the process of buying another home for sailors in port.³²

In the fifties a Bethel ship was in operation on Mobile waters. It served both as a hospital and as a place of worship.³³ As usual worship aboard ship was non-sectarian.

28. Ibid., November 7.

29. Ibid., November 9.

30. Ibid., November 19.

31. Ibid., December 2, 1846.

32. Mobile Daily Advertiser, June 7, 1849.

33. Ibid., February 17, 1857.

Provision of the Bethel ship was the last of several benevolent and beneficial gestures made the maritime population by Mobile in the ante-bellum period.

The picture of Mobile on the eve of war was an industrious and prosperous one. It was stated that more building was done in 1859 alone than had been done in the combined years since 1852.³⁴ Workers and artisans commanded high wages and were kept constantly busy. A contemporary summed up the scene aptly when he said that Mobile henceforth could no longer be called the "one-horse town that croakers for the last fifteen, twenty, or thirty years have persisted in calling it."³⁵

34. Ibid., May 22, 1859.

35. Ibid.

CHAPTER XV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Rapid expansion and growth attended the Americanization of Mobile in the early 1800's. Increase in numbers, size, and in volume of trade were favored by the strategic position of the city as a point for both receiving and disbursing the trade of the Southern interior. Some early problems facing the city were an adequate supply of pure water, numbers of poor and needy citizens, and provisions for an itinerant population of seafarers.

A very full and active social life was engaged in by Mobilians. The theater was the most characteristic of social and cultural institutions in Mobile. Curiosity of the populace was manifest by a strong inclination to the spectacular and sensational in entertainment. Recreational and spectator sports such as boat and horse racing were popular. The city supported a great many social clubs as well. Usually benevolence and charity characterized social organizations in the city. Cultural tastes were further evidenced by strong interests in literature and music. The populace marked all public holidays with cooperative celebrations. Balls and dances were held periodically and usually were lavish and gala occasions. Some very fashionable resorts were available for the pleasure of Mobilians on the shores of the bay and Gulf. The position of women in the culture of the day was an honored one, and young people, in view of their elders, might have belonged to any younger generation of any age.

Raison d'estre for the importance of Mobile in the ante-bellum South was her commercial and economic activities, and to it cotton was the key. A very necessary and important part in this activity was performed by Mobile's commission merchants or factors. In spite of the economic interdependence of the two, the city of Mobile did not always enjoy the trust and good will of many inland planters. Evidence, however, does not support this distrust of Mobile by planters.

Lack of adequate capital was a constant impediment to commercial business and trade of Mobile. Panic and drought often combined to emphasize the need for diversification in agriculture of the state and industry of the city. Much of the business activity of Mobile was financed by outside capital, thus absenteeism, or the spending elsewhere of money made in Mobile, was a characteristic of ante-bellum times. The cost of living and value of property steadily rose to approach a state of unreasonableness. The city controlled the sale of foodstuffs, and bestowed monopolistic selling rights to food merchants. This system operated to the economic disadvantage of the citizenry.

Developments in transportation and communication and the economic success of the city were interrelated. Roads and city streets were built and improved. River transportation was greatly advanced with the development and improvement of the steam engine. Improving the port and bay of Mobile constituted a major problem which was never satisfactorily solved in the ante-bellum period. Communication by mail

was slow and highly irregular. Railroad construction developed very slowly and it was only at the end of the period that Mobile awoke to the necessity of tying herself to the interior with overland communications. It may be concluded that her delay would have been economically fatal had not the Civil War interposed to nullify and curtail considerably railroad building which had been already done in Mobile and in the South.

The newspapers of Mobile exerted a tremendous influence on the lives of contemporaries. Newspapers were the principal dispensers of news of the city, state, and nation. Issues of great significance, such as internal improvements, the tariff, nullification, secession, and the bank were printed in detail in daily newspapers. In addition to recording history, newspapers often helped to shape it. The language of the day found in these newspapers was colorful and picturesque. Advertisements revealed much of the life of the times in descriptive terms.

Early education in Mobile was largely privately operated. Many provisions were made to educate the poor and the orphan. Most scholars had to pay all or a part of the expense of education until 1854 when the Education Act of that year became law. Public free education in Mobile dates from its enactment. Advertisements of schools and curricula indicate that the calibre of education was relatively high for the period. Census figures for 1840 reveal that there were only 200 illiterate adults in a population of approximately 20,000.

Religious interests lagged behind economic and political interests in ante-bellum Mobile. Many efforts toward the end of the period to quicken the religious life of the city achieved some results in the number of churches and in church attendance. Camp meetings also were very popular religious demonstrations. Temperance organizations largely failed to quench the thirst for alcoholic beverages in Mobilians. Drinking, smoking, and gambling were considered Mobile's chief immoral habits.

Crime was also a major vice in Mobile. Crime of all sorts, especially violence and thievery, prevailed. Law enforcement agencies were generally, but not always, equal to the task confronting them. Penal codes were largely outmoded and inoperative, and penal institutions were in a relatively sorry condition for most of the period. Efforts to improve both partially succeeded. That arsonists or incendiaries were sometimes responsible for illegal fires in Mobile seems to be substantiated. There was also crime among the maritime population, but they were not conspicuous as an unlawful element of the population.

Slavery was not as important to the economy of Mobile as it was in counties more devoted to agriculture; however, slavery did play an important role in Mobile. Slaves were used in the processing and handling of cotton at the port and also served as skilled artisans and domestic servants. Slaves were a social problem as well as an economic asset. Their commissions of crime and disorderly behavior necessita-

ted many rules and regulations. Concluding from the number of runaway slave advertisements in Mobile newspapers, the city was a favorite rendezvous for blacks in flight. Separate maintenance of slaves was a characteristic of the institution in Mobile. Mobile was also a favorite place of migration for free persons of color, evidenced by the large number of them resident in the city. This class also presented problems to the domestic peace of the city. Mobilians defended slavery in the face of abolitionist attacks, and made their own efforts to solve problems in relation to it.

Disease threatened the city constantly, especially during the summer months of epidemic. Yellow fever, cholera, and malaria were most prevalent. Disease and absenteeism combined to depopulate the city greatly in the summer. Many curious beliefs and superstitions were held concerning causes of disease and cures for them. Never did they realize that the mosquito was the cause of much of their ill health. Hospitals and medical facilities were usually inadequate for the needs of the city. Advertisements of drugs, medicine, herbs, and roots in abundance and claiming improbable curative powers were common in the newspapers. The testimonial and money-back guarantee on these cure-all's were not uncommon.

Disaster in the forms of disease, fire, and flood plagued the city. Minor disasters such as travel accidents and explosions also regularly took their toll. Both the elements of nature and of chance combined to give Mobile her

full share of trouble in the ante-bellum period. This fact seems warranted from the almost daily accounts of death and destruction recorded in her newspapers.

Early Mobilians actively engaged in politics. Commercial and wealthy Mobile was traditionally conservative in politics. Whigs usually held a slight advantage over Democrats in the ante-bellum period. Local political harangues and agitations produced minor changes in the administration of local city government from time to time. On occasion the local political pot reached the boiling stage marked by physical and vociferous violence.

During the ante-bellum period men usually outnumbered women two to one. Statistics in the newspapers on age groups indicate that Mobile was a city of young people, with the group aged twenty to thirty predominant. Mobile could also be classed as a highly literate city. A fair portion of the population were usually dependent upon society for support. The seagoing population constituted a major portion of society and were well recognized and rewarded for their efforts. Commerce occupied the citizenry to the relative exclusion of agriculture, and the city of Mobile greatly overshadowed the county for the entire period. Mobile at the close of the ante-bellum period presented an industrious and prosperous picture.

APPENDIX A

COTTON CROP OF SOUTH ALABAMA 1818-1859¹

YEAR	BALES	ANNUAL INCREASE	ANNUAL DECREASE
1818	7000		
1819	10000	3000	
1820	16000	6000	
1821	25390	9390	
1822	45423	20033	
1823	49061	3636	
1824	44924		4137
1825	58283	13359	
1826	74379	16096	
1827	89779	15400	
1828	71155		18624
1829	80329	9174	
1830	102684	22355	
1831	113075	10391	
1832	125605	12530	
1833	129366	3761	
1834	149513	20147	
1835	197847	48334	
1836	237590	39743	
1837	232685		4905
1838	309807	77122	
1839	251742		58065
1840	445725	193983	
1841	317642		126083
1842	318315	673	
1843	482631	164316	
1844	468126		14505
1845	517550	49424	
1846	421669		95881
1847	322516		69153
1848	438324	115808	
1849	517846	79522	
1850	350297		167549
1851	451697	101400	
1852	549772	98075	
1853	546514		3258
1854	538110		8404
1855	454595		83515
1856	659738	205143	
1857	503177		156561
1858	522843	19666	
1859	704406	181563	

1. Mobile Commercial Register, October 3, 1836, and
Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 3, 1859.

APPENDIX B
EXPORTS OF COTTON FROM MOBILE²

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN	FRANCE	OTHER FOREIGN PORTS	TOTAL FOREIGN	U.S. PORTS	GRAND TOTAL
1828-29	30042	5321	1846	37209	34300	71509
1829-30	43195	9788	8380	61363	41702	103065
1830-31	63543	4975	3301	71819	40535	112354
1831-32	54748	18074	100	72922	53773	126695
1832-33	77201	22343	2416	101960	27398	129358
1833-34	96180	15256	5704	117140	32134	149264
1834-35	88739	24236	2462	115437	82333	197770
1835-36	125858	21661	3915	151434	86580	238014
1836-37	139756	29406	2962	172124	58648	230772
1837-38	157114	61123	5908	224145	85876	310021
1838-39	125623	22304	2008	149935	99700	249635
1839-40	257985	80528	16195	354708	85394	440102
1840-41	149854	57204	9181	216239	103637	319876
1841-42	185414	49544	6919	241877	77161	319038
1842-43	283382	55421	27209	366012	115882	481894
1843-44	204140	53005	12381	269526	195697	465223
1844-45	268849	68929	52936	390714	131282	521996
1845-46	208082	66821	26832	301735	115898	417653
1846-47	131151	39293	19774	190221	116801	307022

2. Mobile Register and Journal. September 2, 1844, September 2, 1847.

APPENDIX C
AVERAGE YEARLY PRICES OF COTTON
IN MOBILE 1830-1859³

YEAR	AVERAGE PRICE	YEAR	AVERAGE PRICE
1830-31	9-2/8 @ 11-2/3	1845-46	6-1/4 @ 8-1/2
1831-32	9-1/4 @ 10-5/8	1846-47	9 @ 11-1/8
1832-33	9-1/4 @ -	1847-48	5-3/4 @ 7-7/8
1833-34	10-3/8 @ 13-1/2	1848-49	5 @ 7
1834-35	14-1/2 @ 17-1/2	1849-50	10 @ 12
1835-36	14-3/4 @ 19	1850-51	8-3/4 @ 12
1836-37	10-2/3 @ 16	1851-52	6-3/4 @ 9-1/2
1837-38	7-1/4 @ 12-5/8	1852-53	7-3/4 @ 11-1/4
1838-39	12-1/8 @ 15-1/2	1853-54	6-3/8 @ 10
1839-40	8-3/4 @ 8-5/8	1854-55	5-3/4 @ 10-1/4
1840-41	8-5/8 @ 11-3/8	1855-56	6 @ 10-3/4
1841-42	9-1/8 @ 10	1856-57	10-5/8 @ 13-3/4
1842-43	5-3/4 @ 8	1857-58	8 @ 13
1843-44	6-1/2 @ 8-7/8	1858-59	9-1/8 @ 12-3/8
1844-45	4-1/2 @ 6-1/2		

3. Mobile Register and Journal, September 5, 1842, September 2, 1844, and Mobile Daily Advertiser, September 2, 1855, September 2, 1859.

APPENDIX D

TABLE OF INTERMENTS⁴

YEAR	MONTHS OF EPIDEMIC			TOTAL
	August	September	October	
1837	74	75	200	349
1838	44	52	68	164
1839	189	380	120	689
1840	46	66	46	158
1841	47	70	81	198
1842	46	72	110	228
1843	56	90	164	310
1844	47	58	60	165
1845	40	20	45	105
1846	28	41	41	110
1847	52	79	69	200
1848	68	78	66	212

4. Alabama Tribune, May 27, 1849.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Newspapers

- Alabama Tribune (1844-1859). Microfilm J-78-79; F-90.
- Mobile Argus (1822-1823). Microfilm J-8-9.
- Mobile Daily Advertiser (1833-1859). Microfilm I-85-100; F-69; J-1-7.
- Mobile Gazette and Commercial Advertiser (1818-1821). Microfilm F-76; J-12; S-37.
- Mobile Literary Gazette (1839). Microfilm C-100.
- Mobile Mercantile Advertiser (1823-1851). Microfilm I-85-86.
- Mobile Register (including Mobile Commercial Register, Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot, Mobile Commercial Register and Patriot for the Country, and Mobile Register and Journal), (1823-1859). Microfilm J-16-18, 20-47, 71; F-83-84, 86.
- Mobile Shipping and Commercial List (1838). Microfilm F-74, 78.

All microfilm copies of newspapers are located in the library of the University of Alabama, University, Alabama.