THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN IN MCLENNAN COUNTY, TEXAS, 1850-1880

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, 1850-1880

It was hard for a reader to overlook the advertisement placed by Mrs. Naomi H. Kirkpatrick in the September 28, 1873 issue of the Waco *Examiner* newspaper. In big, bold letters she proclaimed that she expected her share of the public patronage as a dealer in family groceries and supplies. In the following weeks, Kirkpatrick would continue to promote her grocery business through a series of newspaper announcements. She clearly understood the necessity of advertising in order to survive in the competitive grocery business that developed in McLennan County, Texas by the mid-1870s. However, Kirkpatrick was by no means the only woman participating in the Waco marketplace. In actuality, large numbers of women maintained a public economic presence in McLennan County during the Reconstruction period.[1]

Prior to the Civil War, single women in the county survived by working, managing inherited estates, or relying on male relatives. In contrast, married women rarely worked outside of the home, hence they occupied a hidden place in the economic market of McLennan County. Southern society in the 1850s did not encourage open economic participation by women, especially those who were married. During the war, married women, now left alone without their husbands, joined their single counterparts by participating in the market in a variety of ways. They managed plantations, opened businesses, worked in Waco, initiated land trades, and advertised publicly. Throughout the war years, women's activities in the economic sphere reached a degree never witnessed before in the county. McLennan County residents understood the need for women to participate more actively in the economy

in order to help Waco compete with other cities commercially. Therefore women's activities were partially sanctioned.

I argue in this thesis that the Civil War and the ongoing urbanization of Waco provided the opportunity for large numbers of women to engage in the market. In addition, these women continued to actively work, trade, and negotiate within the market during the 1870s. Society encouraged this participation through praising editorials, patronage of women-owned businesses, partnership in female-initiated land trades, and a constant supply of work opportunities for women. To begin to understand the choices and actions of women in McLennan County during this period it proves necessary to trace their activities in the market from 1850 to 1880.

A detailed study of this period will yield insights about the way women lived and worked during the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction eras in history. Also, this analysis complicates the traditional version of urbanization and boosterism within Texas. As Waco changed into a commercial center, women not only witnessed this movement, but facilitated and aided the cities growth through their own labor and capitalistic endeavors. For purposes of clarity, within this work the term "market" refers to the variety of economic activities in which women participated. Domestic economy involved production within the home. Additional terms will be defined as they arise within the text.[2]

The focus of the study involves women of all classes. In addition, this work analyzes the lives and choices of both white and African-American women. In keeping with the theme of women's history, one of the goals of this work is to provide information on the categories of working-class African-American and white women. This text examines the economic agency of all types of women living within the county. Agency can be identified via a close

treatment of the sources; however the thoughts, motivations, and goals of said agents remains a more difficult task with which to grapple.

Thus, the organization of the work remains particularly important as it facilitates the pairing of broad themes and frameworks with vignettes of actual women's lives. The first five chapters proceed chronologically and focus on the experiences of white women. I trace the antebellum and Civil War periods in separate sections. The Reconstruction era serves as the focus of a chapter on workers and another one on capitalist women. The situation of African-American women differed so greatly from their white counterparts that it warranted a thorough treatment in the sixth chapter. The conclusion summarizes the previous arguments. Women of all classes and races shaped and responded to the economic situation within the county. Unfortunately, sources currently do not exist to adequately discuss Hispanic, Native American, or Asian women in the county. Perhaps in time information will emerge regarding the lives of these women whose stories appear, at present, to be lost to time.

The text relies heavily upon the works of preceding historians. As Texas remained a frontier in the 1850s, the work of Mark Carroll in *Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860,* provides a great deal of valuable information. Carroll shows that the frontier lifestyle fostered unusual domestic arrangements and sexual mores often resulting in women holding more power in society. From Carroll's argument it only takes a small step to connect the frontier lifestyle of McLennan County to the growth of women's desires, and abilities, to participate more prominently in financial matters. In certain circumstances, frontier women participated in the developing marketplace. Numerous essays explore the interaction between gender roles and labor within the collection

Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South. Covering topics from the very broad trends to specific occupations, this text provides much of the detailed descriptions necessary for any discussion of women working. For the Civil War period, works by historians LeeAnn Whites and Laura Edwards discuss the changing gender roles that coincided with the conflict. In *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: August, Georgia, 1860-1890*, Whites states that during the conflict women moved into the public sphere in order to help preserve the structures supporting white manhood, including slavery. Whites correctly captures the surprise of southern women who, because of their husbands' absence, were forced to work in order to survive. Indeed, the war period exposed a whole new generation of women to the possibilities of life in public. Edwards in *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* clearly traces the trials and deprivations that women faced throughout the conflict. In addition, women continued to struggle as the war created droves of widows.[3]

Immediately following the war, women tried to reshape their lives. Reconstruction remains one of the most controversial periods in the history of the United States. For the national perspective the most notable exploration comes in Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1865-1877*. Foner's analysis provides a good context for this study as the political turmoil faced by residents in McLennan County actually paralleled that occurring throughout the entire South. In 1910 Charles William Ramsdell published the first academic history of Reconstruction in Texas. Recently, Carl Moneyhon, noted Reconstruction historian, took Ramsdell's text and updated it for the modern period. In *Texas after the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction*, Moneyhon traces the political events that unfolded in Texas during the late 1860s until the mid-1870s. Citizens of Texas lived in

an environment characterized by political unrest and repeated outbursts of violence against freed people. In an excellent treatment of the period, Randolph Campbell analyzes the county-level politics of Reconstruction in *Grass-Roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880*. Campbell shows that the fifteen years following the war were characterized by violence and social upheaval. Therefore, using Campbell's findings it is clearly possible to see how societal fluidity loosened gender constrictions, thus allowing more women to interact with the market.[4]

As men supported women's entrance into the market economy in hopes of gaining assistance in securing Waco's prominence, it proves vital to examine texts focusing on the emergence of cities in the South. In *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, historian Edward Ayers describes in detail the development of cities in the early 1870s. The rise of urban areas spurred a desire among individuals to participate more heavily in the marketplace. Women also felt the lure of capitalism. Ayers' work shows that although the memory of the war remained fresh on southerner's minds, urban city-dwellers looked forward to the possibilities inherent in urban growth. The role of the city booster no doubt impacted the development of metropolises and the collection of essays *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South* addresses boosterism and other issues. Feeding off of the emergence of an urban consciousness, boosters promoted their cities in the hopes of attracting productive members of society. Boosters used whatever methods necessary to insure the economic vitality of their particular city, including, as in the case of Waco, encouraging women to participate in the local economy.[5]

Women working in Waco found themselves adhering to a wide-ranging history of female market activity in the United States. Women's historians continue to struggle to

uncover information regarding the exact breadth of women's participation in the economy. In a synthesis of labor history Lynn Weiner in *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the U.S. 1820-1890*, explores the rise of laboring women. This work places the activities of Waco's women within a broader, national context. No social phenomenon exists in a vacuum and the developments in McLennan County can reveal a great deal about national gender roles and the societal adaptations accompanying Reconstruction and urbanization.[6]

Texas women who desired a more prominent place in the burgeoning marketplaces of the nineteenth-century operated within a carefully defined set of legal strictures. These laws, many descended from the Spanish, impacted the way women conducted their lives. In an article entitled, "Married Women's Property Rights and the Challenged to the Patriarchal Order," Angela Boswell traces the development of gendered property laws in Texas. She finds that although the regulations restricted female businesspeople the community knowingly ignored illegalities in order to conduct business with women. Her findings in this area support my assertion that Waco women actively participated in commerce, often in a blatant way. Undoubtedly, the best treatment of Texas laws applying to women comes from Kathleen Elizabeth Lazarou's work *Concealed Under Petticoats: Married Women's Property and the Law of Texas, 1840-1913*. Through a vigorous analysis of legal records Lazarou's text provides an invaluable reference for anyone investigating a nineteenth-century Texas topic. Lazarou serves as the source of the legal context during McLennan County for the period examined, including the chapter on African Americans.[7]

With regards to African-American women the works that come closest to my topic, not surprisingly, belong to historians who routinely study African Americans and gender

issues, namely Catherine Clinton, Rebecca Sharpless, and Carol Lemley Montgomery. In two articles within collected works, Clinton explores the gender and racially based challenges that black women faced. Her arguments support my claim that gender continued to impact the lives of black women, even beyond slavery. The focus of the articles remains gender and African-American women, thus she establishes no connection to economics. On the other hand, Rebecca Sharpless in her unpublished manuscript discussing African-American women in Texas from 1874 to 1900, briefly describes a few of the occupations open to black women in the 1870s. However, because of her desire to study the entire lives of these women, she spends only a few pages on the economic aspects. In a dissertation that studies the mutually intertwined concepts of race, gender, and labor, Carol Lemley Montgomery examines the withdrawal of black women from field labor using gender as her theoretical framework. She explores how African-American women armed with a relative and restricted "freedom" lived daily under the entrenched southern patriarchy of Alabama with little hope of attaining True Womanhood. Lemley's work correctly stresses the importance of looking at the relationships between race, gender, and labor. However, while Lemley explores women withdrawing from the workforce, I focus my attention upon those women who continued to work throughout 1850 to 1880.[8]

In addition, a handful of micro-studies serve as valuable guides as to research and organization. To begin with, Suzanne Lebsock's path-breaking *The Free Women of Petersburg* inspired this study by showing that women chose to work in eighteenth-century Virginia, thus laying the groundwork for the question as to why women's work had been virtually ignored for Texas a century later. Randolph Campbell's study *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas 1850-1880* represented an invaluable guide to

source materials at the county level, as well as a solid manifesto of the value inherent in local research. Campbell does not focus his analysis on women's lives, however he shows that research at the county level often reveals surprising details about society-at-large. Following Campbell's footsteps, Elizabeth York Enstam conducted a study of women in Dallas entitled *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920*. Enstam finds little change in gender roles during Reconstruction, however she does not take the interpretational perspective of looking at women's roles within a growing and competing Dallas marketplace. Instead, she traces the changes affecting women's work within the home and how domestic production transferred into the public market. Enstam's work represents the first true attempt to reconcile women's gender roles with their obvious presence in the market. In another county study, Angela Boswell in *Her Act and Deed* explores women's lives in detail. She notes that women grew more financially active during the war. By focusing primarily on deed and probate records she takes a more rigid view of women's economic behaviors. Also, her county did not have a major urban center during her period of study, therefore she had no way of tracing women's economic activities as they relate to city growth.[9]

Before conducting a county study it proves imperative to understand as much as possible about the county environment during the period in question. Local historian Roger Norman Conger devoted much of his life to studying his beloved Waco. Within *Highlights of Waco History*, Conger provides a detailed general history of the region. Conger's text supplies vital local contextual information. In addition, former Baylor University historian Patricia Ward Wallace published a series of profiles of Waco women within *A Spirit So Rare: A History of the Women of Waco*. Wallace conducted interviews with residents and mined family-held papers collections, thus providing personal information that now remains

untraceable. Wallace focused primarily on prominent Waco women, although this study seeks to illuminate the lives of common women too, as a testament to their own importance in the story.[10]

A county study serves as the proper sphere in which to study the economic situation faced by women from 1850 to 1880. Numerous studies explore broader geographical areas or timeframes often at the cost of losing a solid base for their assertions within local, county-level data. A county study allows for a focused concentration on one area, thus providing information to illuminate the lives of women in the market. Counties within Texas are so diverse that no one county serves as representative; however McLennan County possesses particular attractions for the historian focusing upon nineteenth-century women. To begin with, McLennan County possessed a large enough population during its first thirty years of existence to allow for a reasonable statistical study. The 1860 census showed a total population of 6,203 divided into 3,799 whites, 2,404 blacks, and three Indians. The 1870 census showed a population of 13,488 divided into 8,861 whites, 4,627 blacks, and twelve Indians. The 1880 census showed a population of 26,934 including 19,276 whites, 7,643 blacks, twelve Indians, and three Chinese.[11]

Additionally, McLennan County possessed an agriculturally based economy from the 1850s onward. The Blackland Prairie geological formation, covering three-fourths of the county, provided rich, nutritious soil for producing crops, especially cotton. Thus, the county entered the Cotton Kingdom in the 1860s and 1870s. The agricultural focus of the county economy allows for an accurate analysis of the agricultural labors of women. In addition, by the mid-1870s the county seat, Waco, had grown greatly in size. By 1880 the Waco City precinct polled 7,295 people out of the total population of 26,934. Accordingly, McLennan

County developed enough of an urban economy to allow for an analysis of urban employment options and capitalist endeavors of women. And, finally, McLennan County possesses a rich assortment of extant records dating back to the county's creation in 1850. Records providing information on the invisible figures of history, in this case women, African Americans, and the laboring classes, prove extraordinarily difficult to find in usable quantities, hence my decision to follow the sources.[12]

[1]Waco *Examiner* (Waco), 28 September 1873, p. 1.

[2]A similar definition of market can be found in Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, "Introduction," *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 6.

[3]Mark Carroll, *Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xix, xx, 77, 101; Delfino and Gillespie, "Introduction," 1; LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War As A Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 22, 40; Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 39, 74.

[4]Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988); Carl Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 1-5; Randolph Campbell, *Grass-Roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 2, 7-8, 176.

[5]Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 20, 28, 64-5; Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield, "Southern Urban History," *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*, ed. Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield (London: National University Publications, 1977), 5, 8-10.

[6]Lynn Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1890* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985), 3, 14, 19, 24, 32.

[7]Angela Boswell, "Married Women's Property Rights and the Challenge to the Patriarchal Order: Colorado County, Texas, " *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing With The Powers That Be*, ed. Janet Coryell, Thomas Appleton, Jr., Anastatia Sims, and Sandra Gioia Treadway (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 4, 89-106; Kathleen Elizabeth Lazarou, *Concealed Under Petticoats: Married Women's Property and the Law of Texas 1840-1913* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986). For additional information on the Spanish influence upon Texas property laws, as well as general data on frontier property laws see Jean Stuntz, *Hers, His, and Theirs: Community Property Law in Spain and Early Texas* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2005).

[8]Catherine Clinton, "Bloody Terrain: Freedwomen, Sexuality, and Violence During Reconstruction," *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past*, ed. Catherine Clinton (London: Duke University Press, 1994), 142; Catherine Clinton, "Reconstructing Freedwomen," *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 310, 318; Rebecca Sharpless, ""Us Has Ever Lived De Useful Life": African American Women in Texas, 1874-1900" (TMs, Date Unknown), 11-16; Carol Lemley Montgomery, ""Charity signs for herself": Gender and the Withdrawal of Black Women from Field Labor, Alabama, 1865-1876" (Ph.D. diss., University of California Irvine, 1991), vi, 252.

[9]Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Peterburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), xx, xviii; Randolph B. Campbell, *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983); Elizabeth York Enstam, *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), xiv; Angela Boswell, *Her Act and Deed: Women's Lives in a Rural Southern County, 1837-1873* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 3, 7, 95.

[10]Roger Norman Conger, *Highlights of Waco History* (Waco, TX: Hill Printing & Stationary Company, 1945); Patricia Ward Wallace, *A Spirit So Rare: A History of the Women of Waco* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1984).

[11]United States Bureau of the Census, *A Compendium of the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880); Compiled from the Original Returns of the Tenth Census Parts I and II* (Washington, D.C., *1883)*, 373.

[12]Sandra Denise Harvey, "Going Up Bell's Hill: A Social History of a Diverse, Waco, Texas Community in the Industrial New South, 1885-1955" (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1995), 2; Campbell, *Grass-Roots*, 4; United States Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 304.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN ANTEBELLUM MCLENNAN COUNTY, 1845-1861

In 1845 Sarah Ann Walker moved onto her tract of land in what would later become McLennan County. Her one league and labor of land was located in an ideal spot, just opposite the mouth of the Bosque River and on the east bank of the Brazos River. Her plot allowed her direct access to the two main water supplies for the region. She also used other natural water sources, raised crops in the Blackland Prairie soil, and gathered fresh fruit from the Indian peach trees. However, life on the frontier remained a struggle for survival and Sarah was no stranger to hardship. She received the 4,600 acre land grant because she held Headright Certificate Number One from the Republic of Texas. In addition, Walker supposedly rode 300 miles on horseback in order to warn Sam Houston of an impending attack by the Cherokees. After the excitement of the revolution, Sarah married her first husband's cousin Jim Bob Walker and moved to central Texas in the hopes of settling down. Sarah would build a homestead, but without her second husband who died in the late 1840s. His death left her on the Texas frontier with nine children to care for, ranging in age from a newborn infant to teenagers. To Sarah, life equaled hardship.[1]

Throughout the 1840s, a visitor traveling through the central Texas region would have noticed scattered, sparse settlements. Despite the lack of dense population, various groups of Anglos tried to settle here from the 1830s onward. Around 1844 George Barnard arrived in the area and established an Indian trading post at Tehuacana Creek. Other families followed Barnard and by 1849 Anglo settlers had taken over the area earlier occupied by Indians. By 1850 the Texas legislature created McLennan County out of parts of Milam, Robertson, and Williamson counties. Women played a prominent role in these early days as

most of the men did not come alone, as typical of frontier migration, but instead chose to travel with their entire family. The population of the county in the early period consisted primarily of southerners or previous inhabitants of Texas. The journey to Texas proved particularly difficult; however, numerous women made the trip. For example, in 1830 the debutante Miss Catherine Fulkerson married Shapley Prince Ross in Missouri. By 1839 they began a trip to Texas with Catherine leaving a life of luxury for one filled with uncertainty. When they finally arrived in what would later become McLennan County, Catherine took comfort in wearing her lavender silk dress, a remnant of her days as a plantation belle, when milking the cow.[2]

Although she tried to lighten her mood by wearing a fancy dress, by milking the cow Catherine performed one of the tasks required to keep her family alive on the frontier. For a long period, George Barnard's trading post represented the only way to buy manufactured goods in the county and the selection was sparse. Therefore, women on the frontier turned to home production to create necessary items. All classes of women participated in domestic economy to varying degrees as no commercial alternative existed. For that reason, procuring and preparing food remained a major concern for women. Often with the help of slaves, women raised various animals. Cecilia Scott kept both chickens and turkeys. She later bartered or sold what her family did not consume. Women also preserved or prepared foods from the wild. Through hunting settlers could procure deer, coyotes, rabbits, bobcats, beaver, opossums, fox, raccoon, mink, skunks, squirrels, antelope, buffalo, bear, and wild hogs. The meats from these animals was then eaten immediately, salted, dried, or smoked. Perhaps to relieve the monotony of their diet, women planted small gardens with a variety of vegetables. Commentary on the garden remained a consistent fixture in almost any pioneer diary. A

deep-seated concern for productivity accompanied women's efforts in home production. Cecilia Scott actually purchased seeds, probably from Barnard's store or a neighbor, which she then planted in her garden.[3]

The production of "necessities" took up a great deal of time on a homestead. To create light, women used beef tallow, wild honeybee wax, or a saucer of fat. Some families bought candle moulds and made their own candles at home. Asa Rhodes, an early McLennan County pioneer, in his diary noted two transactions for candle moulds during the 1850s. Other women gathered materials for medicines, such as mustard plasters, onion poultices, and sage tea. Creating clothes represented one of the biggest tasks within the home. Homespun garments served as a testament to hours spent spinning, weaving, and sewing. Some women tried to imitate southern fashions, but the resulting outfit always ended up being more functional than fashionable. During the antebellum period, McLennan County women consistently tried to ensure that home production remained the primary way of getting an item, in part because they did not possess any other options. They understood that the household served as the main unit of production and that their role, as women, was to create a self-sufficient home. The women engaged in household production did not view their efforts as "work" and neither did society at the time. If pressured to categorize their labors, they would have most likely answered that they "helped" on the homestead. Therefore, women did trade and barter, however society did not openly recognize or encourage these contributions.[4]

By the mid-1850s the town of Waco grew into the city of Waco. The population of Waco in 1849 was 749 white citizens, with a good number of those being female. With the arrival of more businesses and an increased population, the opportunity for women to engage

in the market grew slightly. However, women who participated economically during the antebellum period did so on a situational basis, which did not receive general societal support. To begin with, husbands often left their wives alone on the frontier for long periods of time. As historian Mark Carroll argues, the frontier altered relationships and traditional gender roles. According to Carroll, men adopted pragmatic beliefs regarding relationships as opposed to the more romantic ideals of the south, whereas women changed their ideas of masculinity and felt open to new roles. For McLennan County the frontier period of the 1850s fostered a nascent understanding of economic realities and altered gender structures within women that would grow into maturity and be awakened during the Civil War and afterwards as the city needed their assistance to compete.[5]

For the antebellum period the relationship between women and land in the county tells a story of survival and the beginnings of market awareness by a handful of individual, wealthy women. As life in the county focused upon agricultural pursuits, land proved particularly important to survival and rose in value as more settlers arrived. The land within McLennan County sat directly on the Blackland Prairie geological formation. Thus, the rich, black soil created the ideal environment for large, valuable cotton crops. By the late 1850s when farmers realized the true potential of their land the number of trades skyrocketed. A few women were large landowners. As mentioned earlier, Sarah Ann Walker possessed a substantial tract of 4,600 acres. In addition, the taxation rolls from the 1850s and early 1860s can provide some indication as to land ownership. In 1853 women claimed 13,972 acres of land out of a total county claim of 140,219 thus making their percentage of total ownership 10%. The value for women-owned acres was $23,362 which equaled 11.2% of the total acre value for the county. In some ways the numbers prove misleading, though, since only two

women for that tax roll actually claimed to own acreage: Mary L. Barrett with 13,672 and J.W. McKisick acting as agent for his wife with 300 acres. Most women landowners of the antebellum period lived upon large tracts of land; this was necessary to survive as a single or widowed female on the frontier. These women were not the norm. The majority of women played only a small part in antebellum land transactions, but no doubt witnessed the dealings of these landed women.[6]

Texas law also regulated the activities of all women within the state. The Texas Married Women's Property Acts of 1840 and 1845 passed as a legacy of the financial worries of the 1830s and 1840s. Lawmakers were acutely aware that men frequently deserted their wives in the move to Texas and often even after their arrival to Texas. In a move to try to protect women from becoming destitute due to irresponsible husbands, the act passed. Taking a cue from the Hispanic interpretation of the law the community property system was adopted. Community property included the accumulation of assets by the husband or wife during the marriage. The items excluded from community property included: property owned prior to the union, gifts or inheritance, property given from one spouse to another, and purchases made with natural proceeds of the sale of separate property. Under the law, upon the death of their husbands women automatically received one-half of the estate, unless other family members disputed their claim. As Carroll writes, the "functionality and fairness" of the law gave wives considerable power. As a protective measure, the law allowed women to sue their husbands for mismanagement, reduction, or damage to community property. Even more wary women could arrange a written premarital agreement which would in the future insulate a woman's half of the community property from her husband's creditors. In addition, according to Texas law a married woman could make her own will, contract for "necessaries"

for her family such as food, clothing, and domestic supplies, as well as exercise a veto over the sale of her separate property or the homestead. Additionally, as Kathleen Lazarou notes, "If a wife held a public office or operated a business, she could contract in relationship to those activities without the consent of her husband. With respect to the community, she could contract, but she needed her husband's approval." Married women of the antebellum period in the county rarely took advantage of their ability to contract, but this attitude would change during the war period.[7]

Texas law did not forget the *femme sole*, or single woman, and created certain guidelines for her behavior. In numerous cases the status of a single woman resulted from being widowed or inheriting a large estate and choosing to remain unattached. The term *femme sole* came from the English common law term for a woman legally recognized by the law as able to conduct her own business. Single women held all of the rights associated with full property ownership. They could contract, sue, or be sued. In the legal documents a notation was often made next to the name of a *femme sole* indicating her status. Upon marriage, the status of *femme sole* disappeared and the tenets of the married women's property restrictions came into force.[8]

Women approached land transactions differently depending on their particular situation in life. Some widows chose to interact consistently with the market in the hopes of making enough money to survive. In a few cases these women purposefully avoided male assistance and managed their affairs independently. Sarah Ann Walker represented the epitome of the bold, clever, frontier woman. After the death of her second husband, she chose not to remarry, despite the fact that she probably had numerous suitors. In fact, in the 1850s men often joked about the desirability of landing a widow with a ready-made farm.

Avoiding such advances, Walker decided literally to live off her land. She created a fully functional farm, but also cashed in on the increasingly competitive land market in the county. Since she was situated on a prime piece of real estate, Walker began selling off pieces of her land grant. From the deed record it can be determined that in one transaction she and four of her children sold 130 acres of land on the Brazos for $3,600. In addition, to make supplemental income Walker leased some of her land. She possessed a strong desire to be in complete control of her finances, even riding horseback to collect rent from tenants.[9]

Walker also controlled her household. Like most owners of large farms in Texas, Walker possessed numerous slaves. Her slave women traveled with her before she finally settled on her tract in McLennan County. Walker needed slave women to care for her children. Josie, an older slave woman, saw to it that Walker's children were clothed, dressed, and fed. Interestingly enough, Walker brought an equally intense personality to the management of persons in her household. When the children would cry, she would yell an order to Josie to whip them. But, Walker's discipline was not limited to her younger children. The older boys of her household, in particular, often felt her wrath. In one instance Walker's son George sold a prized slave cook for $2,000 without asking Walker's permission. At this open breach of her authority, Walker disciplined her son by whipping him and the replacement cook whose pancakes were not satisfactory. Legally, Walker possessed the right to conduct her slave sales as she saw fit. George could not just assume ownership of his mother's property because of his gender or household position. Walker's sons got into trouble once more when they interfered with her slaves. After the birth of a red-haired child by one of her female slaves, Walker furiously whipped her sons as punishment against pass trespasses and as a warning against future indiscretions. The interesting question remains

regarding Walker's motives. Was she trying to enforce a code of morality, trying to protect her property, or perhaps both? No matter what her exact motives, Walker remains an example of a woman with exceptional financial influence who stepped out of her traditional female role far earlier than most women in the county.[10]

Walker's status as a widow represents one of the primary reasons that she was able to participate so fully in land transactions. Widows conducted land trades in order to sell, grow, or protect their property. The land records of the antebellum period are filled with the dealings of rich women; however in numerous cases these women attached themselves to male relatives who served as agents or representatives. Widows would sell off land to new settlers. When W.W. McNeill wanted to buy a homestead he went to Bridget McGary, one of the wealthiest women in the county, and paid $2,700 for a nice piece of land. By selling land in this manner, women gained a nice cache of cash for use in case of emergencies, as well as a steady income for day-to-day expenses. It must be noted; however that independent land transactions by women at this period were much rarer in the records than in the Reconstruction period. At this point only the wealthy recorded their land dealings, whereas in later years a more general subsection of the population can be found in the records, not just the extremely wealthy.[11]

When independent women did show up in the records they typically bought land from male settlers, married couples, or even other women. Elizabeth S. Bowen in 1851 paid $300 to James Wilkinson and John McLennan for a 640 acre tract on the South Bosque River, ten miles west of the Brazos River. Other women bought land directly from married couples. In one of the smaller transactions in the record for the 1850s, Eveline Toole paid $100 for six acres of land owned by Thomas and Mary Barron. Perhaps Toole purchased the land out of a

desire to set up a homestead on the outskirts of the developing town of Waco. Or, maybe she wanted the land as part of a larger investment plan, intending to later sell it to newcomers to the region at an inflated price. As early as 1854, records exist showing independent land trades between women. On April 2, 1854, Elizabeth Konaga bought a piece of land from Bridget McGary. McGary was one of the original seven people, and the only woman, who received a land grant in 1835 for part of the territory in Bosqueville, a small McLennan County settlement. McGary lived on her grant and sold off portions to survive until her death in 1856. Most likely, McGary, who appeared fairly regularly in the land records, did not sell the land to Konaga as a sign of female bonding or as a bid to assist another women; instead Konaga probably paid the right price and received her land, just as any other citizen male or female. The land records of the antebellum period do not show the development of a woman's culture. They also do not show society either encouraging or openly discouraging wealthy women from participating in the market.[12]

Married women appear in the records, usually in cooperation with their husbands. The ledger would note "Frank and Laurel Barnes" or "George Burney and Sarah Burney" or "George Burney and wife." In these transactions the couple might be attempting to sell some of their community property, thus requiring the consent of both partners. Or, on occasion the woman sold some of her separate property and the husband is listed simply as a sign of support, or agreement with her actions. For example, in 1850 Frederick A. Hill bought land from Columbus Reed and Sarah Reed for $300. Both Reeds acknowledged the sale by placing their separate marks, two X's, at the bottom of the page. On rare occasions, a married woman would conduct her independent business but be referenced only by her married name. When F.C. Downs sold a town lot in Waco the buyer was "Eliza wife of H. M. Ramsey," and

she paid $18 cash. This practice of identification shows that while some women embraced the frontier mentality and shed the gendered ideas of the south, on the other hand, other women continued to be identified as the dependent property of their husbands.[13]

Although the deed records remain a vital source of information, the deed of trust records also provide a great deal of insight into the lives of women in the county. The deed of trust records show the proceedings between debtors and creditors. In an interesting turn of events, however, only one case from the antebellum McLennan County deed of trust records involved a woman. The case, no.13 on the docket, centered on a dispute over a title to a slave named Hector. William S. Fridge, the plaintiff, claimed that Elizabeth Johnson, the defendant, held a false title to the slave. From the records, it is evident that while the wealthy women of the county might have engaged in credit-granting they did not do so in the public, legal sphere. The absence of women from the deed of trust records serves as further proof as to the situational nature of women's interactions with the market prior to the war period.[14]

Land did not represent the only type of property that women held within the county. Other items owned by women included: slaves, horses, cattle, sundries, and miscellaneous items. From 1851 to 1860, women claimed for taxation purposes anywhere from 1.5% in 1855 to 12.5% in 1852 of the total slave numbers in the county. Depending on the year of the antebellum period, women owned anywhere from eight to seventy-nine slaves. In addition, in 1851 women owned nine horses, which rose to 253 by 1860. As for cattle, women claimed fifty head in 1851 and the antebellum high number of 2,923 head in 1859. Furthermore, women claimed $4,863 in miscellaneous property in 1860. When it came to livestock and slaves, the tax rolls showed the participation of women of all levels of society, to varying

degrees. Some women only claimed one horse for example, whereas others might own thousands of dollars in property.[15]

The question can be asked as to how women received any property in the first place. Probate remained the way that most women initially acquired property in the antebellum period. When women such as Walker married numerous times they accumulated property each time a successive husband died. A longer life expectancy for women meant that they could become quite wealthy through the process of losing one husband after another. In addition, life on the frontier increased the opportunity for an early death for males. The gender imbalance on the frontier also made it fairly easy to acquire a new husband, if desired. When a woman's husband died she held the rights to the community property of the estate, provided there were not any heirs to contest her claims. If heirs did exist, she would have to divide up her deceased husband's community and separate property according to his wishes. In 1855 when J. L. Edwards died he left behind his wife, Susannah, and their seven children. Susannah then appeared at the probate court, which gave her an allowance of $503.60 to live upon until the estate was finalized. She also received the value of certain items from the estate, as opposed to taking the actual items, which instead went to auction. She took $273 for 39 head of cattle valued at $7 apiece, $75.60 for 63 hogs, $90 for 30 sheep, $50 for one yoke of oxen, and $15 for farming tools. Three months later Susannah returned to court and requested $2,900 total for her part of the community property. Her request was granted. With that money and the homestead Susannah was free to remarry or stay single with a decent amount of savings.[16]

However, not all husband/wife probate cases went as smoothly as that of J. L. Edwards. As a typical rule, the more property the case involved the more contentious it had

the potential to become. Some wives fought to defend their rights to a portion of the community property, especially if their husband died intestate. In one case spanning seven years, the relatives of Andrew Roberts continually grappled in court to determine how his estate would be divided. The children of Andrew Roberts argued that their mother, Cynthia, through her remarriage to James Maffitt lost all claims to Roberts' estate. Technically, Cynthia did lose all claims to the community property; however part of the problem involved deciding exactly what that property encompassed. Through a series of lawsuits, the court divided the land and sold the slaves. One daughter, Sarah Jones, received $681.60 in cash, not a small inheritance by any means. For women, married, widowed, or single, the key to any level of financial independence sprang directly from receiving an inheritance that would be identified as a woman's separate property.[17]

Even in the antebellum period in the county women could receive substantial inheritances from other women, usually their mothers. In the 1859 deed records Caroline Taylor published her last will and testament. Taylor's willingness to state her desires in such a way shows an understanding of her responsibility as a property holder to take care of those around her. In a very precise manner, Taylor enumerated who got each item after the "certainty of death" takes its hold. To her mother, Mrs. Sophia W. McCann goes the slaves Mack, Jim, Milton, Susan, Rose, Adlade, Milley, Ann, Dick, and Emma. Sophia also received all remaining monies. To her son Felix Taylor she forgave $8,000 out of an $8,808.90 note that he owed her. To Felix's wife, Ann Troupe Taylor, she gave "all of my household furniture excepting blankets and linens." To Bessie, third daughter of Felix and Ann, went all of her silver spoons, including one dozen dessert and tea spoons, two silver ladles, sugar tongs, and one pie turner. To her "dear friend" Martha Templeton, she willed

her silver forks, ivory handled knives, pickle knives, fruit knives, salt spoons, pie knife, and the portrait of Taylor. To a friend Mrs. Sarah Richardson went one blanket and one breast pin "to be made of my[Taylor's] hair." Taylor's brother received all of her books, while her sister got Taylor's ruby jewelry set. Other sisters got jewelry, a gold thimble, a rose wood work box, and a bohemian toilet set. Finally, Taylor ordered that her executor should sell her house and use the proceeds to execute her final order. She proclaimed that, "I will that my executors convey to a free State and there emancipate my servant girl Henrietta and her child Adah and deposit in safe keeping the sum of One Hundred Dollars to be appropriated toward the payment of their expenses until she can get into a situation to make a living." It cannot be determined if Henrietta did indeed make it to a free state; however, the intricacy of Taylor's will shows distinct evidence of "personalism" as defined by Suzanne Lebsock in *Free Women of Petersburg*. Taylor divided her estate on the basis of personal ties, as opposed to formal obligations. She rewarded loyalty and ignored those people who were below her attention. Through her estate, a few women benefited enormously and became quite wealthy, including a servant girl.[18]

On occasion a woman preferred to keep probate matters simple and out of the court. For example, Bridget McGary's last will and testament ordered that $2,500 went to each of her two daughters. She also ordered that her property be divided between them as "their own property to be used and enjoyed by them." She further declared that no proceedings shall be held in court except to compile an estate inventory and grant letters of administration. Through her actions, McGary expressly guaranteed that her daughters would possess a measure of independence and security from their husband's actions. Along those same lines, some girls received substantial estates from their fathers. In 1860, William Evans bequeathed

to his daughter Sarah Rebecca Robertson one hundred acres of land adjacent to his current homestead. He also ordered that, upon his wife's death, Sarah would receive the servant girl Ann. Therefore, in a county without a major commercial center, interactions with the market by women usually connected in some way to maintenance of probate earnings. As the city of Waco grew after the antebellum period, women would use their probate monies to further their claims to the growing market.[19]

During the antebellum period, women's activities in managing property other than land was, again, highly situational. They were occasionally involved in selling or buying slaves. With the agricultural basis of McLennan's economy during the antebellum period, slaves represented a valuable and fluid commodity, easily traded among neighbors. In some cases, women joined their husbands when buying or selling slaves. One bill of sale from 1852 notes Nicholas and Mary Ann Battle receiving $900 from George Barnard for the slaves "Amy Y and child Margaret." Women also sold property to their neighbors out of necessity. In his diary, Asa Rhodes, a Bosqueville farmer, records how he and a neighbor Thomas Scott bought one hundred head of cattle from Olivia Bush, a recent widow. She probably could not, or did not want, to manage such a large herd or needed the cash on hand. In some instances women experienced an increase in fortunes simply because a male relative felt like looking out for them. When John Sleeper's uncle Washington Chamberlin loaned Sleeper $500 it was agreed that the interest on the loan set at 6% yearly would be paid to Sleeper's sister, Clara. At the end of each year, Sleeper faithfully paid his sister $30 until he paid off the balance of the note three years later. The logic behind why Clara received the interest does not exist in the historical record, but is it possible that she was simply the beneficiary of male chivalry or dumb luck. Either way the Sleeper transaction remains further

proof that women's presence in the market was highly situational and only slightly impacted women's role in society.[20]

One of the situational causes for women's movements into the market connects to men's increased absences from the home. As men continually left their wives on the frontier for long periods of time, women struggled with isolation and loneliness. Out of necessity they learned how to manage the homestead. Husbands did not always understand the difficulties their wives faced while they were away. Some men even felt okay about joking about abandoning their wife on the frontier in favor of an easier life. One man wrote his "dear" wife, "Don't you think I am doing well. . . . I lost my heart yesterday. . . . .A most brilliant young-grass-widow came on board and my heart jumped right out of me. Oh me. Oh me. What a magnificent woman and what dreams-what dreams I did have last night. But my dear Mary, is better to me than all the world." After reading such a letter, who could blame women such as Mary for learning as much as they could about the management of the household, just in case their husband made good on his "dreams."[21]

Catherine Ross was one woman who felt the impact of the frontier lifestyle on her daily existence. Although she did relish wearing her silk dress to milk cows, Catherine was under no illusion as to the struggles involved in being one of the first settlers in McLennan County. Her family lived in a double log cabin with a fireplace. During 1854 her husband began to spend more time away from home on cattle drives. Then, in 1855 to 1858 he left to serve as Indian agent on a Brazos reservation. These continued absences started to make Catherine act in an increasingly independent manner with regards to household management. In 1858 when he left to Fort Belknap, Catherine made the decision, without consulting her husband, to build a "substantial" house for her family off of South Thirteenth Street in Waco.

Catherine supervised the construction. She was later remembered as an "excellent businesswoman and . . . one of the most gentle and lovely ladies in the land." The independence of her lifestyle obviously bred in her a desire to make unilateral decisions, even when it came to the usually forbidden realm of economics.[22]

A few women in the county engaged in the market as workers. The employment options available verify what is already known about the antebellum years of the county. Without a large city center, women did not have broad urban job opportunities. The choices of work reinforced the fact that until the war, McLennan County really was a rural county. Waco did not become an urban locale until the mid-1860s. The 1860 census showed fourteen women engaging in domestic work; all of these women came from male-headed households. Most likely these women traveled with families or became widowed and worked to survive. Coinciding with the earlier discussion regarding land ownership, fifteen women claimed an occupation of "farmer," "farming," or "planter." These women belonged to, or were the matriarchs of, female-headed households. They also all possessed some measurable real or personal property, as denoted by the census-taker. One woman claimed to be a "farm laborer." In addition, two women were stock-raisers living in the same household, headed by a woman with significant property. The 1860 census shows that women's occupations were highly skewed towards agricultural pursuits. Furthermore, most of the women mentioned were wealthy, heads of households who ran farms for a living. Thus, their participation in the economy would be very visible, but not the norm by any means. The fact remains that most women of the antebellum period continued to work invisibly.[23]

However, a visible job within the county involved being a teacher in one of the recently built schools. An estimated eighteen public schools formed between 1856 and 1860.

Teaching represented an opportunity for a single woman to make a living without being viewed as "disrespectable" or "unwomanly." From the census returns it is evident that seven women claimed "teacher" as their occupation. These women were all young, between the ages of 19 and 28. They also all came from Alabama, Mississippi, or Tennessee. One of the early schools was the female seminary. Ann Rowe oversaw the school in its first year of 1858, however she asked to be released from her contract. Then, John Collier purchased Rowe's interest in the institution and married Mary Ellen "Mollie" Fowler in 1858 who helped him with the school. Female teachers could not expect to make much more than a living wage, if they even received that. During the early 1850s, the county paid teachers approximately 7.5 cents per student taught per day.[24]

Women were present minimally in the market during the antebellum period, but how did society react to them? Most people in that period believed that women should only work as domestics, etc., and then only if necessity absolutely required it. They also generally thought that widows should try to remarry. Most widows probably did consider remarriage, and it would be very difficult to determine how many chose that path. But it can also be said that a handful of wealthy women chose to stay single and maintained a very prominent place in McLennan County society. When it came to participating in land trades, county residents did do business with women. However, society still had doubts as to the capabilities of women handling economic matters. A wealthy woman, Eliza Watson, was the focus of one volley of letters between two McLennan County residents, a brother and a sister, who could not believe their eyes. At first the brother, Henry Caufield, insinuated that Watson did not know what she was doing by buying "Martin Ellisons place at $7000" because it was "a good deal of money to invest in land in Texas in a poor section of the country." In a later letter,

Henry's sister Mary Jane informs him that Watson purchased Tom Lisle's place on Cedar Creek and moved in by herself. In addition, Mary commented sardonically, "I do not think she intends to have the estate administered or at all. I suppose she thinks herself capable enough to wind up the business without any assistance." Even other women in the county were unsure of these wealthy widows. The leaders of the county had not yet realized the value these women might hold in establishing Waco as a leader in Texas commerce.[25]

During the antebellum period, women remained active in household production. Those women who did venture into land trades, probate administration, or other interactions with the market did not view themselves as breaking down gender barriers for women. In contrast, even the wealthiest of women was simply trying to survive on the frontier. The majority of women's economic activities represented responses to specific situations. The very economically active women, mostly well-off widows, did seize on altered gender norms that came with the frontier mentality. They also utilized laws that allowed women greater flexibility in marriage and property dealings. These active women would be the first ones to embrace visibly their increased economic roles during the war period. Most importantly the structures to support women entering the workforce or engaging in capitalistic enterprises did not exist during the antebellum period. Waco was still a back water. McLennan County remained a rural county. To have women engaging in the workforce it is first necessary to have work available. To have women participating in commerce and industry there first needs to be a business presence in the county. The story of the Civil War is essentially the story of McLennan County developing an urban center, Waco, surrounded by a rural area. During the antebellum period, society was not ready yet for women to enter the public sphere. They were needed at home as productive units, only rarely making forays into the

market. As the goals of the county changed, women's productive capacities would be desired in the public realm, as much as in the private sphere.

[1]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 12-3; Patricia Ward Wallace, *Waco: Texas Crossroads: An Illustrated History* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1983), 18.

[2]Conger, *Highlights*, 22, 25, 38; Lavonia Jenkins Barnes, *Early Homes of Waco and the People Who Lived in Them* (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1970), 5-9; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 15-8.

[3]Sarah A. Garner, "The Culture of Bosqueville: Family, Community, and Rural Life in Central Texas, 1850-1915" (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 2002), 46-7; Handbook of Texas Online, "McLennan County," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/articles/MM/hcm8.html (accessed 27 October 2005).

[4]Enstam, *Women*, 3-8; Garner, "Bosqueville," 42; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 22-3; Sonya Salamon, *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 54.

[5]Harvey, "Going Up," 7; Carroll, *Homesteads*, xix, 77, 98.

[6]Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 12; Harvey, "Going Up," 2; The information from the tax rolls comes from a database compiled of all female tax claims from 1851-1880. The gender was determined by looking at the name. If the name was questionable then the data was not included in the database. The formal citation for the tax rolls is: Records of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, Ad Valorem Tax Division, McLennan County Real and Personal Property Tax Rolls, 1851-1880. Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas. Microfilm. From hereafter in the text the information from the database will be cited as "Tax Roll Database."

[7]Boswell, "Married Women's Property Acts," 92-3; Boswell, *Her Act and Deed*, 23; Carroll, *Homesteads*, 80, 88, 100, 129; Lazarou, *Concealed*, 10-1, 45-7, 54-6, 72-3.

[8]Carroll, *Homesteads*, 28; Lazarou, *Concealed*, 9.

[9]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 12-3.

[10]Ibid., 30, 32.

[11]Deed Records, County Clerk's Office, McLennan County Courthouse, Waco, Texas, McLennan County Deed Records, Vol. C, 1854, 268.

[12]Deed Records, Vol. A, 1851, 317-9, 415-6; Deed Records, Vol. C, 1854, 126; Garner, "Bosqueville," 7-8.

[13]Deed Records, Vol. A, 1850, 436-7; Deed Records, Vol. J, 1860, 11.

[14]Deed of Trust Records, County Clerk's Office, McLennan County Courthouse, Waco, Texas, McLennan County Deed of Trust Records, Vol. H., 1860, 65.

[15]Tax Roll Database; With regards to the dilemmas facing slaveholding widows, a solid examination of their situation can found within Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). For additional insight into Wood's work see also Kirsten E. Wood, ""The Strongest Ties That Bind Poor Mortals Together": Slaveholding Widows and Family in the Old Southeast" *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing With The Powers That Be*, ed. Janet Coryell, Thomas Appleton, Jr., Anastasia Sims, and Sandra Gioia Treadway (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000).

[16]Salamon, *Prairie*, 41; Probate Records, County Clerk's Office, McLennan County Courthouse, Waco, Texas, McLennan County Probate Records, Vol. B, April Term 1855, 112; Probate Records, Vol. B, June Term 1855, 112.

[17]District Court Records, District Clerk's Office, McLennan County Courthouse, Waco, Texas, Third Judicial District Court Minute Book, 14 April 1852, 30; District Court Records, Spring Term 1853, 105; District Court Records, 19 May 1854, 197.

[18]Deed Records, Vol. J, 1859, 18-9; Lebsock, *Free Women*, xix.

[19]Probate records, June Term 1857, no p. n.; Deed records, Vol. J, 1860, 38.

[20]Bill of Sale, 1852, Barnard (George) Papers 1836-1883, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Garner, "Bosqueville," 60; John Sleeper, Manuscript, Sleeper John Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[21]Carroll, *Homesteads*, 84; Richard Burleson to Mary Burleson, 18 January 1859, Burleson (Richard Byrd) Papers, 1856-1892, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[22]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 25; Historic Waco Foundation, *Waco Heritage and History* (Waco, TX: Davis Brothers Publishing Company, 1994), 34.

[23]The census numbers for 1860, 1870, and 1880 come from a database compiled by the author encompassing the information of all of the women fifteen years and older who were listed in the 1860, 1870, and 1880 census returns for McLennan County. This database provides detailed statistics regarding the numbers of women employed that are used in later sections. All numbers listed within the paper regarding women's employment as evident in the census come from this database. The cutoff age of fifteen was decided upon based on the fact that the 1870 census only included a person's occupation if they were over the age of 15. Hereafter, the database will be referred to as "Census Database 1860" "Census Database 1870" or "Census Database 1880."

[24]Harvey, "Going Up," 120; Census Database 1860; Garner, "Bosqueville," 105; Wallace, *Waco*, 26.

[25]Mary Jane Caufield to Henry Caufield, 5 October 1860, Caufield Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CIVIL WAR ERA, 1861-1865

"I, for the first time, wish I were a man. . . . If I were I could be by your side and share your fate. . . . I can work as much as almost anyone," Patience Crain Black mused in an 1862 letter to her husband James, stationed in Galveston. After their marriage in 1860, the Blacks barely had time to set up their household before James left to serve in the Confederate post at Galveston. From 1862 to 1865 the Blacks penned over 200 letters to each other. James felt giddy upon first leaving Waco; however, he soon grew jaded with the war effort. Meanwhile, Patience stayed at her parents' house and enjoyed the luxury of a stable household. Even with the constant environment, Patience still felt an intrinsic desire, as evident by her letters, to step out from her traditional female role and contribute more to society. She also began to realize her true abilities. Although she lived with her parents, Patience still experienced the changing environment of Waco. Women openly walked the streets and bargained with vendors. In numerous instances, Patience's letters turned from quoting romantic poetry to describing the exact price of a pound of indigo, twelve dollars at one point, and then describing how this seemed exorbitant. Patience may have known this information before; however, the war pulled her knowledge of the market out from the private sphere and into the public. Similarly, the war placed a limelight on women's private contributions. To keep the war effort alive, women used their skills learned at home increasingly in the public arena of Waco.[1]

When residents of Waco learned of the election of Abraham Lincoln they immediately replaced the American flag over the courthouse with the Lone Star flag of Texas. In February 1861 Texas citizens chose to split from the union by a vote of 26,143 to

14,747 with 62% of the electorate voting. Accordingly, McLennan County voted for secession 586 to 191. Thus, Texas joined the Confederate States of America. In the spring of 1861 the Texas Committee of Public Safety authorized the recruitment of volunteer troops. McLennan County responded overwhelmingly to the committee's request. The men of the county agreed with Confederate President Jefferson Davis that, "The troops of other states have their reputations to gain; the sons of the defenders of the Alamo have theirs to maintain!" Between 2,200 and 1,500 men from the county organized into 17 companies. The percentage of men who chose to serve remained high, especially considering that the 1860 census showed a county white population of 3,799. Waco had six generals serve in the Confederate Army, including: Jerome Bonaparte Robertson, Felix Huston Robertson, Lawrence Sullivan Ross, William H. Parsons, Allison Nelson, and Hiram Bronson Granbury.[2]

On the eve of war the atmosphere of the county was charged with the excitement of both men and women. The men of the county felt eager to defend their home and to prove their superiority to the Yankees. As the Lone Star Guards left the county, the citizens celebrated with a parade, followed by punch and cake at the home of Lucinda and William Trice. The parade marked the departure of the first company from Waco to the war. Sergeant Oscar J. Downs expressed the general sentiment by stating, "with 100 of my fellowmen, I now shoulder my musket and go to defend our Southern soil from the base impositions of Northern families." The urgency of the moment proved contagious. Women even purposefully shamed men who did not immediately volunteer. Through their actions, women often made men choose between going to fight hostile Yankees or staying to listen to vitriolic female Wacoans. It is important to note that the optimistic tone of the soldiers and women at

home changed greatly during the war period. When victory did not come easily both the home front and battlefront suffered from a general lack of morale.[3]

Early into the war it became quite clear that the household production of women would prove vital to the survival of the troops. The volunteer troops relied heavily upon goods from home. Women understood that they should act with urgency and efficiency in order to fill the vast need. Recognizing the importance of women's efforts, in September 1861 the governor of Texas asked women of every county to organize societies to supply the state's troops with clothing. This declaration asking women to organize publicly was a major move towards transitioning women's work in private to activities suitable in the public. The declaration also implicitly acknowledged that men now relied upon women for their welfare, a complete turnabout of traditional gender dependency. Even prior to the governor's request, the women of Waco met together to sew for the troops. They also organized a Calico Ball in early 1861 to gather supplies to send to the camps. These activities involved both poor and wealthy women, thus bringing them into contact in ways never before imagined. In addition, the financially active women of the earlier chapters saw in these enterprises the opportunities to hold public leadership roles. As historian LeeAnn Whites states, these pursuits allowed them to claim the status of "indendepent" southern women in much the same way that their men defined their independence.[4]

Women also worked by themselves, with their families, or with small groups of women to produce items for the soldiers. In numerous letters, Patience recounts to her husband the hours she has spent laboring for his well-being. In March of 1862 she used one of her two new spinning wheels to make him some cotton pants. Later that month she spent a day with a neighbor, Mrs. Wiley. Together they made a pair of shoes, although the recipient

is never identified. By July of 1862 the productive pace continued as Patience and her mother made a large batch of jeans and shirts. Despite her busy work schedule, Patience did find time to feel lonesome without her husband. In one such sad spell, a depressed Patience wrote from her "Lonesome Home" to James. She described how, "we have a barrel of whiskey here. I feel dizzy from the effects of it." Through their efforts to assist their male relatives, women in McLennan County connected themselves to women across the nation who were conducting themselves in the same manner. Henry Harrison, a county resident, while away in Virginia observed that the women there were "hard at work" making flannel shirts and uniforms.[5]

Outside of providing supplemental assistance to the soldiers, the majority of women of the county began the arduous task of financial management. Prior to the war, a handful of extremely wealthy women conducted their affairs without male control. These women usually were widows or married women with an acutely developed sense of independence. In contrast, during the war women of all lifestyles and property-levels were forced into market participation. The active women of the earlier period became even more aggressive in financial dealings. As more women changed the way they lived their lives, they also altered the economic system of the county. They turned small-scale home economies into urban businesses. They also took advantage of the growing urbanization of Waco. Numerous women on the outskirts of the county found themselves without male protection and moved into town where they sought work or financial assistance from the community. The war provided an enormous disruption of the economic system of the county. The war period also just happened to coincide with the changing market climate of Waco, thus creating the perfect environment for women's labors in the Reconstruction period. The Civil War period

represented the incubation phase of the female work and capitalist endeavors that emerged in the late 1860s and 1870s.

McLennan County possessed numerous plantations of varying sizes. Examples can be found of women managing all levels of plantations during the war period. G. N. Jacques left his wife their entire plantation to manage. Lawrence Sullivan Ross went to the war knowing that Elizabeth "Lizzie" Ross, his wife, maintained a strict hand over their sprawling plantation off the Brazos. Mary Coke, wife of Richard Coke, managed a substantial plantation despite the fact that she was an invalid. In addition, Mary Ann Harrison, the wife of James E. Harrison, took control over the Tehuacana Retreat at the war's inception. When she died James quickly remarried to Henrietta Hardin Carter. Henrietta also took over the reins of the massive cotton plantation when James left to fight again. Colonel William Fort married Miss Dionitia Wilson only to soon after leave for the war while she operated the plantation. Undoubtedly, countless other women who are lost to the historical record ran plantations during the war. McLennan County's economy did not completely fall into shambles during the war, so women of all ranks obviously made increased contributions in order to keep the county alive.[6]

Plantation management presented women with a variety of challenges. To begin with, they continued to perform their old tasks within the household. Even the wealthiest of women could not leave all domestic duties to their slaves. The labors of the household also increased due to the absence of men. This lack of male labor was especially felt in households that could not afford substantial numbers of slaves. So, any additional burdens of homestead management piled on top of an already lengthy to-do list. Also, women operated under certain market constraints stemming directly from the war situation. The demand for

certain products increased and shortages occurred resulting in prices skyrocketing. Women invented other items as substitutes when this was possible. It is important to remember, however, that deprivation was a relative state during the war. Not all women equally felt the sting of hunger. Some women still lived comfortably. Regardless, letters from the period demonstrate that women felt cheated and annoyed by the higher prices. "Times are hard," Patience complained, nothing that flour was valued at $250 a barrel, a horse at $2,000, a gallon of liquor at $150, and a turkey gobbler at $175. At these estimated prices even wealthier women such as Patience felt the price crunch.[7]

One of the major tasks associated with plantations involved the care and management of the workforce, the slaves. As McLennan County was a primarily agricultural county during the 1850s, a substantial number of slaves resided there at the outbreak of the war. Running a successful plantation required ensuring the maximum productivity from the slave population. In numerous instances women of the southern states felt overwhelmed in their dealings with the slaves. This was the case in a study of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta during the war period which demonstrated that the slaves in this region refused to work for female mistresses. Women operators also dealt with the constant runaways, especially as the Union army approached. The women of McLennan County experienced a different relationship with their slaves. There were few incidents of slave runaways. No invading army made it anywhere close to the county. Also, slaves had no where to run except the vast, dangerous, unsympathetic frontier. In addition, women of the county seemed to feel fairly reassured in their dealings with the slaves. No incidents of open rebellion or confrontation could be found. One county woman recorded, "If it had not been for the faithfulness of the negro the people could never have pulled through." In some cases, the plantation slaves were used to dealing

regularly with the mistress when the master of the plantation was off the land, as often happened during the antebellum period. Therefore, the slaves of the county provided the assistance which allowed white women to more successfully manage these large plantations.[8]

In an effort to guide their wives' financial dealings, men wrote letters home filled with advice of an economic nature. In fact, from the letters of McLennan County it could be argued that the second favorite topic in Civil War letters was monetary advice, with the first being recounting military exploits or griping about camp conditions. Through these letters the soldiers fighting for the Confederacy were forced to accept their wives' new powerful position in household management. These men also dealt daily with the fact that their wives, their dependents, were doing things typically associated with males. The letters between the soldiers and their mates demonstrate how these men were forced to recognize their dependence upon their wives' labors at home. One soldier wrote that out of everything he had learned from the war, "the capability of our Southern women to take care of themselves [is] by no means the least important."[9]

Some historians have argued that men felt as if the household was the only realm in which they could control dependents and remain true men. This statement might be true; however, the men of McLennan County did not degrade their women's labor. They praised their women's efforts consistently throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction period. For the men of the county, the economic good repeatedly outweighed traditional gender roles. After a long series of letters instructing his wife, Henrietta, on how to perform various commercial transactions in his stead, James admitted his hopes and fears. "I hope you fully understand" he wrote, "I am very much afraid you will now understand business affairs." Then, he proceeded to instruct her as to how to deal with their renters, Crane and Smith. She

should follow his instructions, collect the amount due, and confiscate their keys. Also, she needed to continue trying to rent property out, but only by the month and not the year. It is evident that despite his initial fears, James continued to trust Henrietta explicitly. He did not consult any male relatives for assistance.[10]

In the exchange of letters between soldiers and their wives, financial issues were discussed constantly. While Lawrence Sullivan Ross fought in the Civil War he sent stacks of letters home to his wife Elizabeth. He wrote mostly of the affairs of the war, but he also provided her with economic instructions. At one point, he instructed her to serve as an intermediary in a horse deal for him. Ross had lost two horses crossing rivers and needed a new mount for the remaining journeys. During these exchanges, Ross wrote candidly to his wife regarding the costs and quality of the horse that he expected. When he finally received the "excellent animal" from McLennan County he was so satisfied he mentioned it three letters. He also continually reminded Elizabeth of the satisfactory $300 purchasing price. The horse transaction spanned four letters, whereas Ross only mentioned the death of their child briefly in one letter, sandwiched in between military details. In another exchange Elizabeth asked him to send her money, only to be told, "I do not need the money and would have sent it long since had I found an opportunity." The Ross letters demonstrate the reliance of both partners upon the actions of the other.[11]

For some couples, the war required a continual exchange of information and goods. In numerous cases, women requested that their husbands send home items no longer available in the county. James Carter bought an entire wagonload of goods that he sent home to Henrietta. The shipment included one bundle of sugar and twenty gallons of molasses. However, Henrietta did not get to keep the molasses as she had to send it on to a local

merchant in payment for the balance from other purchases. James continually listed tasks that she needed to complete, despite the fact that James insisted that he did not want her "annoyed with any domestic affairs." He provided her with instructions on how to manage the plantation overseer Jeff, repair the fence, pay a local man for a wagon, collect a balance from the meat market owner, and sell two boxes of tobacco, for no less than $18 or $19 a piece. He hoped that she had "made up your mind my dear wife to manage . . . during the war for I do not know when I shall be able." Along those lines, he tried to help her keep track of the household accounts. Within one letter, he actually created a mathematical table representing her expenses and cash-on-hand. After selling a horse for $2,000 and selling wood for $200, that "leaves 1464 which you ought to have on hand and I don't see why you have to borrow from Speight to pay taxes; sale of 211 tobacco and 1899 and you ought to have after paying taxes 2402 cash; you know I told you I left enough to pay taxes buy pork and then incidental expenses for a year. . . . life is uncertain and all contracts are for cash; so you had better have the money in your hand." It appears as if Henrietta made some financial decisions on her own, such as approaching Mr. Speight for tax money. Henrietta confirmed this by responding to her husband stating, "I spent all the silver you left me for goods which I though[t] I needed." It is also of note that the flowery language of love gave way to direct financial talk without the gendered language usually used when writing to one's wife. At some points it is even obvious that James did not agree with the way that Henrietta chose to manage the finances. Accordingly, there is a sense of frustration as he tried to control a situation that was obviously beyond his direct interference.[12]

Women participated in epistolary exchanges by providing their men with information on local conditions and events, often of an economic nature. The theme of death pervaded

many of the letters. Wives would write describing widows mourning over their husband's deaths. Henrietta wrote that she could not imagine herself in such a "situation." She referred to not only the event of her husband's possible death, but the difficulty surrounding the state of widowhood. Less than a year after this letter Henrietta found herself in such a "situation" as James died in the war. Financial matters dominated the tone of a letter from soldier J. L. Healbreath describing the final state of James' account with the government and asking where to send the money.[13]

Women also informed their husbands as to the prices of goods within the county. Patience Black in a letter to her husband noted that her mother paid $4 per bale for thread. Couples almost made a habit of bantering back and forth in letters regarding the price of products. Within their letters, women also recounted any events of note. Patience wrote her husband to inform him that some "clever person" was stealing their wheat. In another letter, she mentions her father's newly acquired brick storehouse in Waco. Henrietta in one of her letters passed on her elation after receiving three pounds of butter and three dozen eggs from two caring neighbors. Through their epistolary efforts women tried to keep their husband's connected to their home.[14]

The evidence clearly shows, however, that women had a great deal of work while their men were gone. Although the men did offer advice via letters, the women typically made their own decisions. For example, the mail was brought sporadically so a woman could not wait to find out if she should slaughter certain animals. In fact, Patience Black even told her husband that James Carter, author of the copious financial instructions, did not write his wife Henrietta enough. In addition, women could not always inform their men of the immediate economic situation. Therefore, women became decision-makers in their own

right. Most plantation mistresses did not feel completely comfortable with their newfound role, but they rarely complained openly. Instead, it seems as if they were determined to do the best that they could. Their husbands also seemed surprisingly open to working with their wives in an effort to keep their financial lives intact. In fact, by providing such detailed information in their letters it is evident that men actually believed that women could understand such information and use it properly. Indeed, the women of McLennan County did keep the plantation economy functioning, albeit at a less productive capacity.[15]

Women in McLennan County also participated in the market via general property transactions. When women did receive property in this period they followed their own wishes as to its disposal and guarded their rights. In numerous cases, women received their property from a newly deceased husband's estate. The probate records of the period show a proclivity on the part of men to name their wives as the administratrix of their estates. Being appointed as administratrix of an estate signified a man's confidence in the abilities of his wife to manage complex property dealings. For example, Lott Strange named his wife administratrix of his estate, later valued at $2,290. Lucinda Harris, an already prominent property owner, also administered the estate of her husband J.F. Harris in 1864. If men had truly worried about the capabilities of their wives then they would have appointed males as administrators. As evident from the records, only a handful of men executed the estates of other men.[16]

Within the land and property transactions of the period, women also figure prominently. They sold and purchased land with more frequency than in the antebellum period. In fact, many more single women appear in the records. Some ladies, such as Sarah Martha Evans, purchased sizeable tracts of land with cash. She paid $3,000 in one transaction. Other women paired with their husbands to dispose of their separate property.

These transactions could range anywhere from $1 to thousands of dollars depending on the arrangement. On occasion a woman would act via her designated agent, although these transactions were quite rare for the county. The agent would possess all of her legal rights to make bargains and would get a small fee in return, if they chose to charge a fee at all. Male relatives or prominent citizens usually served as agents when needed.[17]

However, the Civil War period definitely demonstrated a proclivity among women to deal with their property personally. The numbers of single women who engaged in transactions noticeably grew during the war. Mary B. Armstead, Hannah Dennison, Mary Barret, Sallie McCraw, Lucretia McFadden, Mary A. Long, Isabella Nelson, Mary Herrington, and Mary Blocker all appeared independently in the 1862 deed records for the county. Armstead, Dennison, and Long purchased land from other parties, in some cases women. Barret and Blocker sold land. McCraw engaged in a slave sale. For $600 she sold three slaves ranging in age from four years to seventy-three years old. Along those lines, Isabella Nelson sold a three year old slave boy named Robert to Mary Herrington for $200. The emergence of female-to-female transactions was another product of the Civil War period. Lucretia McFadden appeared in the records because she was in the process of securing payments for land from J.H. Bunch. In three separate instances she received written promises from him to pay $540, $580, and $620, respectively.[18]

Within the records of the period, men heading off to war also provided their wives with documentation of their rights to the community property. James Hardwick, a private of the 6th Texas regiment of Company G, recorded his will in the deed records, just in case. He granted his wife the ownership of ten slaves. He also stated that she possessed "complete power" over the property "without interposition in the probate court." On the very next page

in the deed book, E.B. Fitzer appointed his wife "my lawful, true and only attorney" who had the power to sell or convey his lands and to "exercise her own discretion." Indeed, Fitzer added that he was leaving soon to fight for the Confederacy and would have no one take exception to his decree. Both of these men were trying to address the fact that, despite the obvious need, the laws of Texas regarding property remained unchanged. They were attempting to spare their wives a long and laborious fight in court. In general, the laws remained fairly malleable during the war period as women took on expanded roles not directly reflected in the legal code.[19]

Other economic arrangements involving women emerged during the Civil War period. In one instance, two women joined forces to buy a piece of land from a married couple. Mary Bright and Susan Perry pooled their resources to pay the $4,000 cash to the Vandiviers. Also, women appeared in the records buying animals. Eliza Church paid $1,787 to F.P. Maddin for, "one half of my interest in the stock of horses purchased of Graham and McLelland, the said half being forty head more or less of Spanish mare half and three quarter breeds American." The women of the McMillen family decided to enhance their animal holdings. Jane McMillen for $6 a head bought out her male partner's share of her stock cattle. Lucy McMillen paid $6,000 cash for 100 head of stock horses, which she then had counterbranded with her brand "AN."[20]

For women without property, the ability to labor proved as important to them as property management did to wealthier women. As the war began more women moved into Waco looking to escape rural isolation and hoping to find gainful employment. To a great extent these poorer women probably already engaged in home production prior to the war, however their movement into the growing city of Waco marked their entrance into the

historical record. Waco experienced a reasonable level of growth during the Civil War period. Urbanization that had already began during the late antebellum period picked up the pace with the influx of women and southern refugees into the town. Economic historians have long posited that economic advance usually correlates with increased gainful employment for women. In general, women worked in order to survive. For example, Miss Emma Bassett taught at the Waco Female College when the music and penmanship teacher, E.W. Krause, left to serve the Confederacy. After his return, her excellent record earned her a position at Waco University. The Civil War served to bring the labors of such women out of obscurity and provided an opportunity to actually engage in an occupation. The war period did witness an increase in women choosing outside work as a fitting alternative to marriage.[21]

If the extent of economic actions is any indication, the men of McLennan County felt few qualms about engaging in transactions with women. In fact, it appears as if women operated on a fairly level playing field during the war period. Even married women became involved more in the market either with their husband or in his absence. These findings mirror those of other historians studies of county-level economics for the war period. Even though the laws failed to reflect the changing social situation, citizens treated most transactions as legally valid. The war permanently altered informal property arrangements between husband and wife. In the end, the war left many women the permanent managers of property. As a few historians of the south have noted, with women's increased roles in aiding the army, clothing soldiers, running plantations, and supervising slaves came changed systems of thought. As historian Anne Firor Scott states, "Even these activities were partly an indirect protest against the limitations of women's role in the patriarchy. Suddenly, women

were able to do business in their own right, make decisions, write letters to newspaper editors, and in many other ways assert themselves as individual human beings."[22]

Another way that women entered the market was by assisting less fortunate people. When men headed from the county for the war they occasionally left their families without any means of support. Moreover, some women with financial security lost their husbands and then fell into destitution. Wealthier women in the county maintained an abiding interest in helping families in poverty. Prior to the war, these families would have been less visible because people did not live so close together and interact quite as much. Patience Black heard of one family comprised of a mother, daughter, and their combined eight children. They were "poor folks" and Patience believed that their husbands should be let out of the army. She also longed to see the "babies," undoubtedly to provide them with small gifts. In another case, a woman with boarders experienced a house fire that left all of the families staying with her homeless and destitute. The community passed around a subscription for the group. Patience gave one of the ladies a pair of shoes and stockings, a practical gift.[23]

Women also participated in government measures to aid the poor. In March of 1862 the McLennan County Commissioners' Court levied a tax of five cents for every one hundred dollars of taxable property for the assistance of absent soldier's families. The more prominent citizens of the county, including women, were supposed to form committees to visit the families and deliver the assistance. These Family Aid Committees would visit the families and fill out a Certificate of Need stating items required. Initially, this process involved cash being given directly to the families. On numerous occasions, wealthy women sold their own property to pay for taxes. Mary Elizabeth Davis, a resident of Texas since 1830, sold off tracts of her land during the war, until she eventually decided to liquidate all of her assets and

move west, without a male escort. However, by 1864 the number of indigent families rose to 254, with 919 persons, which strained the available cash. In response, the commissioners allowed residents to pay in agricultural products such as wool, corn, cotton, wheat, pork, or beef. In the merchandise records from George Barnard's store citizens would purchase items to be sent on to other families as a tax payment. In payment of his 1864 taxes B.F. Richey delivered 30 lbs. of bacon to Mrs. Francis Dutton and her three children. Mrs. Mary Lawson and Mrs. Lousinda Lillard, each with three children, received 46 lbs. of bacon. Finally, Mrs. Mary Lillard with five children got 50 lbs. of bacon. Facilitating the assistance to the poor put women into contact with the public sphere in a way that utilized their supposedly "natural" feminine qualities, as well as their increasing knowledge of monetary affairs.[24]

In addition, the war period changed the psychological climate of the county. Scott argues that it is vital that both social and political historians understand the psychological climate of the society being examined. In life, "Public decisions are rooted in private feelings." The personal musings of women in the county can provide some insight into the general mindset during the war. Patience Black wrote of wishing to be a man at one point. She also praised her own nature and the fact that she was, "very industrious. I rise by day light." In another letter she clearly lauded a female teacher in Waco by stating, "She is a soldier." Something obviously changed in Patience's mind to allow her to go from espousing romantic ideas on one page and comparing a woman to an overtly masculine symbol on the next. For Patience, and increasingly with other women, the masculine realm was no longer off limits. A woman could indeed be a soldier even if her weapon of choice was a satchel of books or a garden hoe. In addition, some women in the county even turned an envious eye to the situation of the women in the North. When Laura Harrison wanted to travel from the

Waco area, she considered traveling with an unmarried man. A frustrated Harrison mused, "If I were a Northern lady I could dispense with the services of a gentleman." Women's epistolary records show a general trend towards economic dialogue as well. For example, one woman praised her son as "worth a thousand dollars," therefore, essentially placing an economic value on her offspring, as opposed to strictly affectionate evaluation.[25]

In the late spring and early summer of 1865, Texan soldiers began making their way back home. The troops returned a different group of men from the one that had left. In particular, many of men did not make it home. Texas lost an estimated 28% of men who were killed, mortally wounded, or died from disease. Since McLennan County contributed a substantial percentage of the population to the conflict, the casualties struck the county fairly hard. For example, Captain Edward D. Ryan and eighty-three of his original 104 volunteers did not return from the war. These men left numerous widows behind. Due to the loss of their husbands, widows tried to use what they had learned from the war period in order to survive.[26]

The war period substantially altered society in McLennan County. For women, it had provided the opportunity to acquire new skills, interact with a broader base of women, and engage in the market in a variety of ways. For men, the war made them increasingly aware of their dependence upon women, created economic discussions with women, and allowed them to interact with women in the market. During the Civil War period, women definitely stepped up their participation in the economic realm with an overall positive outcome. Women's activities also gained assistance by the fact that the war period coincided with growing urban development in Waco. The city of Waco would continue to provide a suitable environment for women's endeavors throughout the Reconstruction period.

[1]Patience Black to James Black, 23 March 1863, 10 July 1862, Bertha Saunders, comp., *A Copy of the Letters of Patience and James Black (1862-1865) Their Correspondence While Separated By the Civil War* (Waco, TX: privately printed, 1972); Sarah Joyce Rutherford Starr, ""Yours Heart and Hand": An Analysis of the Correspondence of James and Patience Crain Black, 1861-1865" (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1990), 2.

[2]Handbook of Texas Online, "McLennan County," 3; Starr, "Yours," 2-6; Conger, *Highlights*, 46; Wallace, *A Spirit,* 35-7; Ralph A. Wooster, *Civil War Texas: A History and A Guide* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1999) 1-2, 5; Wallace, *Waco*, 29; For additional information on Texas troops in the Civil War see Harold B. Simpson, *Gaines' Mill to Appomattox: Waco and McLennan County in Hood's Texas Brigade* (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1963).

[3]Wallace, *Waco*, 36.

[4]Enstam, *Women,* 31; Wallace, *Waco*, 29; LeeAnn Whites, "The Civil War As A Crisis in Gender" *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15.

[5]Patience Black to James Black, 1 March 1862, 30 March 1862, 2 June 1862, Saunders, comp., *A Copy*; James Henry Carter to "My beloved Hennie," 19 May 1861, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[6]G. N. Jacques to "my dear wife and mother," 5 November 1862, Graves-Earle Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; L. S. Ross to "My dear wife," 10 August 1862, Ross Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 44-5, 51-2; James Carter to "my beloved Hennie," 20 July 1861, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Barnes, *Early Homes*, 48, 54.

[7]Whites, *Civil War*, 22, 24; Enstam, *Women,* 30, 31; Edwards, *Scarlett*, 74; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 49.

[8]Nancy Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), 2, 53, 60; Wallace*, A Spirit,* 46.

[9]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 51.

[10]Whites, *Civil War*, 134; James Carter to "Hennie," 12 January 1864, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[11]L. S. Ross to "Lizzie," 10 August 1862, 25 August 1862, 27 August 1862, 29 August 1863, 12 January 1865, Ross Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[12]James Carter to "Hennie," 13 October 1863, 2 November 1863, 2 November 1863, 3 January 1864, "Hennie" to "Husband," 14 May 1864, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[13]"Hennie" to "Husband," 6 May 1864, J. L. Healberth to Mrs. Carter, 2 January 1865, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[14]Patience Black to James Black, 22 February 1862, Saunders, comp., *A Copy*; "Hennie" to "Husband," 6 May 1864, Carter-Harrison Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[15]Edwards, *Scarlett*, 77; Patience Black to James Black, 10 April 1862, Saunders, comp., *A* Copy; Peter Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 129; Carroll, *Homesteads*, 102.

[16]Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 116; Probate Records, Vol. E., 1864, no p. n.

[17]Deed Records, Vol. J, 6 October 1861, 513.

[18]Ibid., Vols. J-K, 1861-1865.

[19]Ibid., Vol. K, 1862, 142-4.

[20]Ibid., Vol. K, 1863-1864, 202, 215, 460.

[21]Debra Ann Reid, "Farmers in the New South: Race, Gender, and Class in a Rural Southeast Texas County, 1850-1900" (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1996), 129; Timothy Lockley, "Spheres of Influence: Working White and Black Women in Antebellum Savannah," *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 105; Barnes, *Early Homes*, 61; Censer, *Reconstruction*, 153.

[22]Boswell, *Her Act and Deed*, 95; Boswell, "Married," 103; Lazarou, *Concealed*, 81; Anne Firor Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s," *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past*, ed. Catherine Clinton (London: Duke University Press, 1994), 78.

[23]Patience Black to James Black, 4 July 1863, 16 August 1863, Saunders, comp., *A Copy*.

[24]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 50; Scribbled Note, n.d., Barnard (George) Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Dayton Kelley, ed. *The Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas* (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1972), 302.

[25]Scott, "Women's," 87; Patience Black to James Black, 23 March 1862, 14 September 1862, 15 November 1862, Saunders, comp., *A Copy*; "Sister" to "Dear Brother," 31 August 1862, Guy B Harrison Collection, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[26]Wooster, *Civil War*, 59; Ralph A. Wooster, *Texas and Texans in the Civil War* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995), 185; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 53.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN WORKING IN MCLENNAN COUNTY, 1865-1880

Immediately following the war, the people of East Waco began to build a school. When they finished the "large and commodious" building the only item they lacked was a teaching staff. The citizens chose a recent Waco arrival, Edward Rotan, as the head teacher. Because of the size of the school, Rotan placed an ad in *The Register* looking for an assistant teacher. Miss Kate McCall answered the ad. According to Rotan, Kate came armed with only her "sense and good looks." Together they taught the three R's at the East Waco School. Because of the growing number of pupils, Rotan then hired another assistant. She was Miss Maggie Tucker, a "typical old maid with a rather bitter tongue." Amidst the rush of teaching, Rotan and Kate decided to marry. They married in August of 1869 and boarded with Eliza Earle Harrison, a wealthy widow. However, after their marriage Kate did not drop her teaching load in the slightest. In fact, Rotan specifically recalled, "We both taught after we were married." Kate represented one of the many women in McLennan County who took advantage of the changing times and entered the workforce.[1]

When the surviving men returned from the war, they entered a McLennan County quite different from the one they had left. To begin with, the county suffered great losses in manpower. In the war one-fourth of Texas soldiers who saw action were killed or incapacitated. The war irrevocably altered the demographics of the county. Immediately afterwards, citizens of the county tried to adapt to the changing circumstances of the time. Former slave owners attempted to manipulate newly freed African Americans into various forms of debt peonage. Meanwhile, historical evidence shows that those women who entered the market before or during the war continued to participate economically, even if their

husbands returned. This chapter explores the ways that women became a visible presence in the workforce of the county during the Reconstruction period. In addition, men embraced the work efforts of women as essential to helping the south to recover and making Waco the commercial center of Texas. In that sense, the story of women's work in McLennan County also provides insight into the local, regional, state, and national stories of Reconstruction.[2]

Before analyzing the specific efforts of women in the county, it is important to remember that McLennan County underwent many changes from 1865 to 1880. Some of these changes were demographic. Because of the numerous deaths from the war, the county lost a great portion of a productive generation of men. These men were producers in the economic sense, as well as in the domestic sense. They married women and helped to produce children. Because of their losses young women outnumbered men in the county. Women could not automatically expect to find a gaggle of willing suitors, instead the marital pickings were quite slim during the late 1860s. In addition, the deaths of the soldiers left behind significant numbers of Civil War widows. Thus, widows and single women emerged as substantial groups in the population. The war also brought some refugees into the county and that number increased in the years following the war. In fact, by 1870 the census shows a white population of 8,861 in the county. These people came from a variety of locales and often infused the county with different ideas regarding gender roles. In addition, the influx of people created a need for businesses. It also provided the manpower required to build industry in Waco. By 1880 the population rose to 19,276, with a great portion of those people residing close to Waco.[3]

The county also experienced increasing commercialization, modernization, and industrialization. When the war began the town of Waco was just becoming an "important

trade center." The county's continual production of cotton helped this reputation because the county possessed trade ties all over Texas. The central location of the county also placed it strategically between towns on the coast and those in North Texas. For example, anyone in Galveston heading to Dallas would likely stop in Waco. In particular, during the late 1860s Waco was on the cattle trails up to Kansas and Nebraska. The men would gather the herd, stop outside of town, and head into Waco for a break. The citizens of Waco were determined to do everything possible to make their city a commercial success. They tried to improve the infrastructure of the county. In 1870 the suspension bridge across the Brazos was completed, giving citizens easy access to Waco. One year later the Tap Railroad reached the town. For cities trying to compete, one economic historian has stated, "railroads assumed the status of demigods when it came to urban economic prosperity." A railroad connected towns to the outside market. Waco's citizens purposefully used technological advances such as the suspension bridge and the railroad to self-consciously boost the image of Waco. The railroad did pay off when it allowed Waco to possess an economic surplus in the face of the devastating depression in 1873. While other counties in Texas suffered, McLennan continued to move toward its goal of being an economic superpower in Texas.[4]

The goals of Waco's leaders helped shape proper gender roles. As economic historians have stated, cities serve as the repositories for change. Women in Waco were encouraged by members of the male, white community to participate in the workforce. These women responded in a positive fashion for numerous reasons. They felt connected to a freer frontier heritage. They were empowered by the war. But, foremost, they were given the opportunity to work. One Waco booster stated, "Are you a laborer? We want the sweat of your brow to enrich our soil and surround you with plenty." For the women of McLennan

County, the economic advance of Waco resulted in a marked increase in gainful employment. In this sense, the women of this central Texas county followed a process that might give insight as to the situation all across the south during urbanization.[5]

As with Kate McCall, a substantial group of women found employment in the teaching profession. Women had been teaching in McLennan County since the first schools were created in the 1850s. However, the war made them even more visible. In addition, the need for teachers rose as the numbers of schools increased. Waco possessed so many schools during the 1870s that it earned a reputation as the "Athens of Texas." Without female teachers these schools could not have succeeded. The exact number of female teachers in the county at any given time is hard to determine. The numbers from the census are undoubtedly low as larger numbers of female teachers can be found in other sources for the same period. In 1870 the census listed eight teachers, including a Jane Neadlet from England. In 1880 the census enumerated forty-two teachers, much closer to a realistic assessment. Teachers taught at all types of institutions. At the university level, women were employed at Waco University and Waco Female College. In 1878 Waco University employed fourteen women. They taught English, music, art, and embroidery. In 1878 at Waco College four women teachers managed eighty pupils. Other schools employing women in the 1870s included: Leland Seminary, Lambdin Seminary, St. Paul's Parish School, Central Public School, Second Central Public School, South Waco Public School, and East Waco Public School. Women also appeared in the city directories. The 1876 city directory identified eight teachers.[6]

For many women teaching served as an attractive profession. If they cultivated a solid reputation as an educator, they could possess a measure of job security. Some women in the county can be traced through the records for numerous years. Miss Mary Davis appears in the

1876 directory as a teacher. She remains a constant presence in the directories and in 1882 served as an assistant in the Waco Central Public School that served 200 pupils. For some of the more prominent citizens of Waco, education took on particular importance. Women began commenting on their children's education within their personal letters and diaries. For example, in an 1870 entry in her diary Henrietta Hardin Carter Harrison commented that her daughter Mary was taught by Miss Mary Davis, who resided on South Fourth Street. In all probability, Henrietta writes of the same Davis who figures so prominently in the later city directories. Holding a position as an educator for at least ten years remained an admirable feat, even by today's standards. The income of female educators can be difficult to trace, although it appears as if most pupils would pay a few dollars a month in tuition, depending on the course load. Then, a teacher's income would depend on her position, the prerogatives of her employer, and the school attendance. Most women made enough to survive in the profession. In 1877 the Waco *Daily Examiner* published the salaries of a handful of local school teachers. They ranged from $60 a month for Miss Mary O. Beaty, the principal of the 4th street school, to $40 a month for Mrs. E.S. Edgar of the South Waco School. Teaching also paid enough so that women such as Kate McCall felt that staying employed even after marriage was a desirable option.[7]

McLennan County society supported female teaching throughout the 1870s. The job market remained fairly consistent with women being able to find employment throughout the Reconstruction period. Any woman needing employment as a teacher could simply look at the local newspapers to find possible job openings. A job could be advertised by a school or from a particular individual. The *Examiner and Patron* in 1875 printed an ad requesting that a young lady with prior teaching experience should contact the printer's office if she wanted a

position as a teacher in a school or family. Women requiring a teaching position could also place an ad themselves in the paper requesting such an opportunity. In 1878, a native lady of Virginia placed an ad asking for a position as a teacher in a school or as a governess in a private house. She could "teach all of the usual branches, together with the rudiments of Greek." She also was prepared to give excellent references, if requested. The trend of female teaching found in McLennan County was also present throughout the South. In her study on North Carolina and Virginia, historian Jane Turner Censer also found women entering the teaching field during the Reconstruction period. Some of these women would stay long-term, or use the profession to jump into women's organizations. Over the 1870s, teaching became a gendered profession, to a great extent. Women in the profession saw teaching as a natural extension of their powers to educate and care for the young. In numerous cases, women who chose the teaching profession arrived from other locales and possessed the benefits of a solid education. As women in the county became more educated, they wanted to do something with their knowledge, too. Through its academic institutions the county created its own workforce of teachers for the generation after Reconstruction. Women also considered teaching as a way to make a living. Across the South, the idea that women could work was supplanted by the idea that women should work. Thus, as women in the county absorbed these ideas, taking on a job became not only suitable, but expected in many situations.[8]

McLennan County society embraced the concept of women working as teachers. With an enthusiasm that matched the emerging boosterism, women's teaching efforts were lauded in the media of the period. All of the directories of the late 1870s listed women teachers. In addition, they also described the schools in detail, listing the faculty of women. These listings legitimized female teachers as workers in the public within the county. The

newspapers in the county also praised women's teaching achievements. A variety of newspapers commented on the positive outcomes of women teaching, thus showing the general direction of popular thought in the county. If these ideas had not been popular or accepted, the editors would have stopped printing them with such regularity. On October 8, 1877, the editor of *Street's Weekly* commented, "we deem it altogether appropriate to speak of the merits of Miss Mary O. Beaty, the principal of the Fourth Street School. Miss Beaty received her academic education . . . in South Alabama. . . . She is popular everywhere she has taught, and with the exception of one or two terms she has had the entire management of her schools." He concluded that she had "large experience and fine capacities for teaching." In 1876 the editor of the Waco *Daily Examiner* published a long statement entitled "A Noble Example." In this text he describes how two women "formerly of wealthy and distinguished position, orphans, educated in Europe" have been teaching in Waco for several years. From teaching they have "supported themselves and have bought a modest and comfortable little home. He concludes that, "They are self-sustaining, and like noble women they are, add to, instead of subtracting from, the sum of the world's happiness and advantage. Here is an example to our women. Here is a noble field, and one peculiarly fitted for the employment of female ability." The editor's evaluation is couched almost completely in the language of economics. From these statements, as well as others in public forums, it is clear that the men of the county were willing to support their women entering into teaching.[9]

Women also transferred their skills in the home into the occupation of domestic service. Prior to the war, in McLennan County most domestic help came from slaves. No record exists noting a white domestic servant, although there were probably a small number operating in the 1850s. During the war period, families moved into Waco. After they lost

their slaves, they often required a new domestic staff. Newly freed African Americans occasionally left their previous masters in order to pursue other opportunities. This movement created a need for a new workforce. White women, both new migrants to Waco and former citizens needing the income, moved into the labor void. What occurred in Waco happened all over Texas, as women found employment in the domestic fields. The McLennan County census of 1870 denoted twenty-one women as domestic servants. The 1880 census showed forty women in domestic service.[10]

Finding a job usually involved looking at the local newspaper or mining local citizens for possible opportunities. Employers often placed brief ads stating their desires in an employee. Sometimes they specified "a good servant, of steady habits." In other cases, race was an issue and they specifically desired "a good (white) cook", who would then receive, "a pleasant home and good wages." Other ads specified, "Wanted: A respectable white woman, a girl, to assist in the labors of a small household." Some advertisers were less than specific and simply desired "a girl to do general housework." As with women desiring teaching positions, potential domestic servants sometimes took it into their own hands to find a job. They would advertise stating their desired in a position, what their abilities were, if they had recommendations, and who to contact for more information. A typical job wanted ad read something like this one from the 1874 Waco *Daily Advance*, "Wanted-A situation as cook, washer, and ironer. Good recommendation given. Apply at this office." With the constant influx of newcomers to Waco, the job prospects of a white woman entering domestic service were good. The pay varied depending on the arrangement, however it often included a combination of room and board.[11]

Women interested in domestic service often worked for an individual, a family, or a business establishment. The tasks could include general cleaning, cooking, taking care of children, laundry, and whatever else the employer requested. White female domestics were employed by both men and women. In the 1878-1879 directory a Mrs. Eliza Campbell "works" for a Mrs. Mary F. Walker. Servant listings go back to the 1876 directory, the earliest directory listing for the county. Women working in the domestic field were bound by strict laws governing their actions. These laws originally were intended for freedwomen, but they also directly impacted wage-earning white women. The Act Regulating Contracts for Labor, passed in 1866, clearly stated that domestic laborers must be available "at all hours of the day or night." If they were not responsive, they would be deemed disobedient and fined $1 for each incident. In general, it was "the duty of this class of laborers to be especially civil and polite to their employer, his family and guests, and they shall receive gentle and kind treatment."[12]

Women also entered the domestic fields in order to assist in the burgeoning hotel and boarding house industry within Waco. The numbers of boarding houses and hotels skyrocketed throughout the 1870s as more people arrived requiring permanent or temporary lodging within the city limits. White women domestics could work as chambermaids, general servants, cooks, or laundresses within these establishments. The 1876 directory lists nine white women working as servants or chambermaids. Both Lizzie August and Mrs. G. Johnson served as chambermaids at the McClelland House, a popular female-owned boarding house. Perhaps because of their necessity to the economic enterprises of the county, the citizens generally did not disparage female domestics. Women domestic workers were obviously not elites, but they did gain a measure of respect for simply contributing to the

county's economy via working. Cities all over Texas dealt with the crisis associated with black women moving to other types of employment. In Galveston, one man wrote in to the newspaper to state that white women should move into the kitchens of the cities. He argued that they would receive monetary and health benefits by engaging in labor.[13]

McLennan County's female citizens also worked in the variety of businesses that sprang up in Waco during the 1870s. As women began opening up small clothing businesses, they would hire other women as seamstresses, if needed. Working for an individual might have been preferable to working in a factory where exploitation might have been more prevalent. In addition, work as a seamstress did not push too greatly on the already frail gender boundaries. Women had long since monopolized the labors of this profession, as Suzanne Lebsock argued in her study of early Petersburg, Virginia. For McLennan County, the directories show a steady increase in women entering the profession either as clerks or shop owners. Women with sewing skills were in great demand and could make a decent living from their work. Mrs. E. C. Trewitt sought such women for her business with her ad requesting immediately, "Two ladies of experience to work at dress making; also two young ladies to work as apprentices."[14]

Other women took advantage of the business-boom in Waco and found positions as sales clerks in retail stores. The 1881-1882 directory showed women clerking at Sanger Bros., millinery stores, the Dollar Store, Lewine Bros., R. P. Sturgis, and Mrs. V. A. LeCand and Sisters. Clothing stores such as Sanger Bros. and Lewine Bros. hired seemly white women in an effort to connect with other women shoppers. Hiring a woman in some cases became a notable occasion, as when the newspaper announced that "Miss Katie Stout, of Cincinnati, has accepted a position in the sales department of Sanger Brothers." Women

shoppers became increasingly visible during the 1870s and businesspeople responded by trying to cater to their particular needs. In some cases, women simply knew the product more intimately than men. Such was the case when the Singer Sewing Machine office sought out a "young, respectable lady, who understands sewing on the Singer Machines." However, not all jobs in stores were glamorous. For example, when people responded to the ad in the newspaper stating "Ladies washing fine shoes for $1, call at the Dollar Store," it was the Dollar Store clerks who probably did the washing. Regardless, for female clerks it was true that the city was the repository of change because before Waco there were no sales jobs available to women because only a handful of businesses existed.[15]

Another type of occupation that coincided with urbanization and industrialization was factory labor. Waco industrialized during the late 1860s and factories sprang up all over town. New factories such as the Waco Soap Factory and the Old Cotton Factory offered poor white women the chance to make a regular income albeit in a harsh work environment. The census records of the period offer little evidence of women's participation in these endeavors; however the city directories provide substantial information. In one directory a substantial number of women held a variety of jobs at the Waco Cotton Mills: spooler, sweeper, helper, twister, reel tender, sack maker, speed tender, and spinner. Some women also found employment as sack darners at the Waco Oil Works. These labors often placed white women in direct contact with black women as they performed many of the same tasks. It cannot be determined how either group felt about this contact. Women often chose factory work because it was easily available. They could find out information on jobs through word of mouth or by going to the factory itself. The number of factory jobs was probably substantial considering that the Old Cotton Factory at the corner of Taylor and Cherry Streets, often

called the Waco Factory, had 1,000 spindles in 1866. Women in these positions were often working for sheer survival. Factories became havens for widows from the war who did not inherit substantial estates. The men of the county did not judge these women harshly, especially since their labors assisted in the growth of Waco's industry.[16]

Laundries also drew substantial numbers of female workers during the Reconstruction period. As Waco's population grew, the number of people sending their laundry out increased. Young men who came to the city without female relatives did not do their own laundry, instead they sent it to one of the many laundry establishments. Several Reconstruction period laundries existed in Waco, including some run by Chinese citizens. The first to continuously operate throughout the period, at the same location, was the Waco Steam Laundry. The establishment, located on South First Street near the corner of Bridge Street, was owned and operated by George A. Arnold and Edward Haydon. Local citizens often referred to the business as Arnold & Haydon's. At the laundries, white women worked alongside African-American women. Despite the difficult and dirty nature of the work, the records show that a handful of white women were consistently employed in this arena. In 1870, Mary Anderson a twenty-six year old from Ireland and Mary Burns a twenty-six year old from Georgia both worked as laundresses. They also both headed their own households.[17]

Women in McLennan County took advantage of these chances to work outside of the home and, surprisingly, often met with praise and encouragement by male, white, citizens. One male postwar observer noted, "The women, the courageous women, everywhere were busy reorganizing lives, building up new homes out of wrecks." For many women, rebuilding required finding a new way to survive and working in public. Through their work, women participated in the economic expansion and development that occurred throughout Texas

during Reconstruction. As Waco grew into a real city, women participated every step of the way. The appearance of women laborers in the city directories verifies their role in the transformation. Economic historians have long connected the appearance of directories to urban maturation. Therefore, the consistent presence of women in these directories show that they too had a stake in the development of towns. This important role in the development of Waco allowed women to branch out into positions traditionally viewed as unfeminine. Some women even accepted roles in the government, including Victoria Corbett, the postmistress of a small town in the county during 1870.[18]

The newspapers also showcased consistent support for women's work efforts. To begin with, as shown earlier the newspapers provided a networking place for employers and potential female employees. Local editors did not hesitate to print advertisements aimed at the female workforce. In addition, editors often commented on individual working women who they found praiseworthy, such as Miss Mary O. Beaty. The editors also printed local commentaries supporting the general idea of women working. In an 1874 column entitled, "The Impoverished South: The Way Out of It," the author admonishes women to, "exchange the ennui of the listless and objective lives, for the triumph and enjoyment of the noblest effort possible in life, that of earning by daily toil, the bread that nourishes the body." Basically, to save the South the traditional gender roles needed to be sacrificed to make way for modernization. One of the strongest arguments for women working emerged in an 1878 article entitled "What Can Women Do?" in the *Weekly Examiner and Patron*. The author begins by stating that women who have reached their "middle life" should know at least one thing that they are especially good at. If a woman has not discovered this, the author admonishes, then she has "led a useless life, and will hardly succeed in any effort she may

make for self-support." The author then begins to describe the various talents that women might possess. Some women are naturally good cooks. If they have this talent then they "can always turn her talent to account if thrown upon her own resources. In any city, town or even small village, she can find ready market for her cake, her pastry, her home-made bread." The author attests to knowing one such woman who supports her entire family through the "liberal consideration" earned by her cooking. In the next paragraph, the author chronicles the tale of a woman who excelled at canning and preserving. She turned this talent into "high wages" working for private families, where she also receives her board. Then, the author turns to those women who have a talent for making or repairing clothing. Such women can make a good livelihood at this task. The author then ponders, ""Unpleasant work" is it? It strikes one that starving is unpleasant work, too." If a woman "bravely" puts up a sign, the work is sure to follow. Finally, the author closes by comparing a woman mending a garment to a military officer planning a campaign. They "detect weak points" and "plan a siege." After the product is complete, the author asks, "What more could a military genius do?"[19]

The author of the newspaper article clearly understood the importance of women working. Women need to work in this new society in order to survive, hence the comment about starvation. However, it is also interesting that the author compares a woman's tasks with that of the ultimate man, the military man. They are of equal importance and beauty to the author. Whether male or female, the author's work did get published in a major Waco newspaper for all to read. In general, it is clear that women's roles shifted as the women of the county did. As one woman stated they did, "Anything and everything we could to make a living." The story of these women's "anything and everything" illuminates numerous aspects of local, regional, Texas, and southern history. Women were more closely intertwined with

the market and urbanization then previously envisioned by historians. Miss Kate McCall was not the only woman in the county to hold the positions of mother, woman, working-woman, wife, teacher, citizen, and consumer all at the same time, without feeling stigmatized by society.[20]

[1]Typescript, n. d., Rotan Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[2]Starr, "Yours," 3-4.

[3]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 63; United States Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 373.

[4]Starr, "Yours," 6; Conger, *Highlights*, 48-50; David Goldfield, "Pursuing the American Urban Dream: Cities in the Old South," *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*, ed. Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield. (London: National University Publications, 1977), 53; Harvey, "Going Up," 9.

[5]Lorin Thompson, "Urbanization, Occupational Shift, and Economic Progress," *The Urban South*, ed. Rupert B. Vance and Nicholas Demerath (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 46; John Sleeper and J.C. Hutchins, comp., *Waco and McLennan County: Containing a City Directory of Waco, Historical Sketches of the City and County, Biographical Sketches and Notices of a Few Prominent Citizens, Information with Regard to Various Institutions, Organizations* (Waco, TX: J. W. Golledge, 1876), 31.

[6]Conger, *Highlights*, 55; Also, in 1855-56 a private school was taught by Mrs. Ann Wilkes, wife of Reverend F. C. Wilkes. In 1857 John Collier and Mrs. D. R. Rowe had an excellent mixed school which ran for several years; Barnes, *Early Homes*, 89; 1870 Census Database; 1880 Census Database; C. D. Morrison, comp., *C. D. Morrison and Co.'s General Directory of the City of Waco for 1878-1879* (Waco, TX: C. D. Morrison and Company, 1877), 2-125; Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory*, 117-71.

[7]Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory*, 129; Henrietta Hardin Carter Harrison, Diary Entry, April 1870, Emma Harrison Carter Tate, comp., *Transcribed Diary of Henrietta Hardin Carter Harrison: Tehuacana Retreat Plantation near Waco, Texas 1869-1877* (Waco, TX: privately published, 1973); Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 26 September 1877, p. 4.

[8]Censer, *Reconstruction*, 7, 153; *Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 3 September 1875, p. 6; *Weekly Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 22 November 1878, p. 5; Ayers, *Promise,* 212; Weiner, *From*, 32.

[9]J. Curtis Waldo, comp., *Waldo's Waco City Directory 1881-1882* (Waco, TX: Southern Publishing Company, 1882), 29; *Street's Weekly* (Waco), 6 October 1877, p.8; Waco *Daily Examiner*, 7 January 1876, p. 3.

[10]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Robert Calvert, Arnoldo De Leon, and Gregg Cantrell, *The History of Texas* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 196.

[11]Waco *Daily Examiner*, 1 September 1877, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner,* 26 September 1877, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner*, 6 September 1876, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner*, 19 September 1876, p. 3; Waco *Daily Advance*, 13 October 1874, p. 3.

[12]Morrison, comp., *Directory 1878-1879*, 47; Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory*, 117-71; Gammell, H. P. N., comp., *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* (Austin: Gammel Book Company, 1898), 5: 996-7.

[13]Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., City *Directory*, 117-71; Galveston *Daily News,* 5 November 1867, p. 2.

[14]Lebsock, *Free Women*, 180; The Waco *Advance*, 8 June 1872, p. 3.

[15]Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 39-145; Waco *Daily Examiner*, 1 September 1877, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner*, 7 August 1874, p. 1; Goldfield, "Pursuing," 52; Waco *Examiner and Patron*, 14 June 1878, p. 5.

[16]Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 39-145; Barbara Howe, "Patient Laborers: Women at Work in the Formal Economy of West(ern) Virginia," *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, ed.

Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 128; William H. Curry, *A History of Early Waco With Allusions to Six Shooter Junction* (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1968), 144.

[17]Curry, *A History*, 20; Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880.

[18]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 54; Larry Earl Adams, "Economic Development in Texas During Reconstruction, 1865-1873" (Ph.D. diss., North Texas State University, 1980) 2; Goldfield, "Pursuing," 63; Kelley, *Handbook*, 1.

[19]Waco *Daily Examiner*, 4 January 1874, p. 2; *Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 8 November 1878, p. 3.

[20]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 54.

CHAPTER FIVE

FEMALE CAPITALISTS, 1865-1880

On February 14, 1870, Mary A. Blocker began to sell off pieces of an improved town block that she owned in Waco. However, this transaction was by no means unusual for her. Mary, the surviving widow of Richard A. Blocker, consistently traded lands in and around McLennan County. The sales surrounding this particular town block took up several pages in the deed record. Mary divided the space into thirteen separate lots, each available for the right price. The block was off of Fourth Street. In the months of February and March, Mary sold individual lots to Susan Winn, Cora Raines, Kittie Sinclair, Evaline Crain, and Lucy Soloman. She also sold a section to Samira Holder, an African-American woman. One man, Millon Welch, bought a single lot for $35. Blocker participated in the market in other ways too. The 1870 census listed her heading her own household at forty-two years old and working as a domestic servant. She appeared in the 1875 tax rolls as a property owner. She claimed $7,000 worth of acres and $50 worth of instruments, tools, or machinery. In the Reconstruction period, Blocker's life was not an anomaly. In fact, her activities closely mirror those of substantial numbers of women who actively participated in the market in McLennan County during the 1870s.[1]

This chapter explores the activities of female capitalists. In particular, the sources show that throughout Reconstruction women were heavily involved in property management and business ownership. Female property owners varied from the extremely wealthy to the poor, however women from all levels of wealth appeared in the county economic records of the 1870s in a variety of ways. Additionally, female entrepreneurs emerged as a public presence during the 1870s. Engaged in a variety of ventures, female business owners

invested in their shops and handled all of the tasks associated with running a commercial enterprise. The women discussed in this chapter performed vital functions in the growing town of Waco, including fostering competition, providing capital, and creating businesses. The white males of the county also recognized women's contributions and encouraged women engaging in commercial activities. For Waco to compete with cities such as Galveston and Dallas, it proved necessary to have a strong group of female investors and businesspeople active in the city economy. If these women did not cater to the needs of Waco's citizens, then other cities would reap the benefits. Men also appeared to interact with women in the market without hesitation. As for the women themselves, they consistently appeared to understand the actions that they were taking. Indeed, both general data and specific vignettes depict a female mindset in Waco determined to have some stake in society's resources.

Land became a particularly valuable commodity in McLennan County during the 1870s. The population of the county grew rapidly as more people moved from the South into central Texas. These new arrivals desired land and a comfortable market for land developed in the county. During the Civil War period many women experienced property management for the first time, however by the Reconstruction period it was commonplace to have women appear regularly, and prominently, throughout property records. Often as owners of large plantations, they took place in the phenomenon occurring across the county where substantial tracts of land were being sold in pieces or divided and leased to tenants. To begin with, it needs to be stated that the women in the county did make significant gains in general property ownership throughout the 1870s. For both 1875 and 1880, women owned 11.5% of the total acres of the town, a substantial increase from the 1.8% of ownership in 1852. The

percentage of the county's total property value owned by women also increased during the 1870s. In the antebellum the percentage was as low as 1.6%; however by 1880 it had climbed to 9.9%. In 1880 women owned property valued at $613, 504. The taxation rolls also show a trend towards inclusiveness, as more women of varying levels of wealth claimed property. Prior to the war, the taxation rolls remained the domain of the well-off. By the 1870s, the majority of women in the rolls were claiming property less than $1,000, but claiming it nonetheless. In 1875, women such as Mary Barron with $300 in town lots were listed next to women such as Catherine Davis who claimed $20,248 in assorted property. This demonstrates that more women achieved individual property ownership. It also shows that women were more willing to report their property holdings in official documentation. A substantial number of women clearly did own property; the questions then become how did they get this property and what did they do with it?[2]

Women could attain property ownership in a variety of ways. As in the antebellum period, women often received substantial holdings from their departed husbands. Upon their husband's death, they could be set for life financially. Wealthy citizen James Harrison willed that his wife Henrietta receive the homestead of 400 acres, the mill, the gin, $5,000 gold for the life insurance, all household furniture, a pair of mules, the carriage, and the two horse wagons. With such a dispensation, Henrietta could live out the rest of her life in relative comfort, even without remarrying. Other relatives also passed down property to women. In wills, fathers and mothers would both often deed certain property to their female offspring. Depending on the size of the estate, such a grant could provide a single woman with options as to marriage. When a daughter was married, women were less likely to equate security with passivity and therefore would give property to the daughters directly in wills as opposed to

the husband of the daughter. Mothers tried to gain some economic security for their female offspring. In general, within the probate records of the period women appear more frequently as administrixes than prior to the war. A trend occurred in which husbands felt more inclined to choose their wives to administer their estates, as opposed to a male relative. What did it matter that women received some gains in probate? Economic independence is a key prerequisite for genuine autonomy. Economic independence is no guarantee of freedom, but women could perhaps transfer this power into other areas of life.[3]

Probate cases were not always clear-cut. Increasingly during the Reconstruction period, women in the county engaged in very public petitions and lawsuits to gain or maintain control of probated property. The probate court witnessed more women deciding to petition the court for administration duties when a relative died intestate. By serving as an administrator, women could gain some control over a process otherwise completely out of their hands. When Amanda Josephine Smith petitioned the court on March 18, 1874 requesting to be the administrator for her mother's estate, she understood the importance of taking control of her mother's substantial property before anyone else could be appointed. Amanda's mother, Amanda Ann Smith, died intestate with real property, personal property, and a running hotel business. By acting quickly, Amanda was able to secure the property for her and her two younger brothers. Often in intestate probate cases, the court would appoint an administrator. Thomas Moore was initially appointed as the administrator of the Amanda Ann Smith estate, however with the petition by Amanda Josephine Smith, Moore dropped his claim to administer the property. Moore probably wanted control over the property, as well as the administrator's fee, usually around 5%. This case demonstrates a woman going directly against another man's interests in the public arena.[4]

Other women were not so lucky and dealt with lawsuits surrounding probated property. Very frequently close relatives would face-off in court to determine who got what property. The proceedings took a long time and could involve property out of state. Such was the case when Mattie Howe and Mary L. Blankinship sued Vic. A. Blankinship, A. A. Blankinship, and others, over an estate in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Mattie and Mary, both Waco residents, secured an attorney to pursue the case. He reported back regularly in letters to the women. On August 15, 1879 the case was settled with pieces of the estate being sold off. Mattie and Mary received cash settlements. In addition, Mattie was also embroiled in a land dispute in Kaufman County.[5]

Women in all stages of life appeared in the economic records of the county. Widowed women possessed their own property to manage. Married women held their own property and community possessions with their husbands. Wives therefore had to sign off on any deals regarding both types of property. Single women could be independently wealthy or could be a working-woman with few possessions. *Femme soles* do appear in the records regularly. The appearance of women of all life stages in the records is really a product of the Civil War period. In addition, women did not only own land.

In actuality, an analysis of women's economic activities would not be complete without acknowledging the variety of possessions held by women. Land was by far the most expensive possession, but women also owned livestock. In 1880 women owned 2, 664 head of cattle and 627 horses. Upon death an inventory of a woman's estate would show some land, livestock, and personal possessions. For example, when Elizabeth Maness died in 1871 she left behind $250 in property including: a couple of mules, a clock, feather bed, sheets, side saddle, and quilt. Other women owned household furnishings such as bedsteads,

bureaus, chairs, tables, and desks. Women often received personal property after their husband's death. When her husband James died, Virginia Posey gained one wagon, various farming implements, one hundred and fifty pounds of bacon, two hundred pounds of flour, and ten bushels of corn. Sometimes women received specialty items via probate. In 1876 Mrs. Louisa Garber got from her deceased husband's estate "all tools in inventory belonging to the trade of shoemaking." It is evident that women were substantial owners of both real and personal property in McLennan County during the Reconstruction period.[6]

Management of property remained a primary concern of women in the county. The deed records show women of all levels of wealth and life stages completing property transactions. If they were married they would join with their husbands or act alone, depending on the situation. Single women conducted transactions freely and openly with both men and women. The laws regarding women and property did not change during the Reconstruction period. Single women possessed the same legal rights as men. Married women operated under the same specialized laws as during the antebellum period. Some land sales could net a profit for their female owner. In 1870 Julia Ann Clingman inherited an Austin Street Lot valued at $1,000 which she held on to and sold for $2,500 to the firm Slyons and Cohn who wanted the space for their business. On certain occasions, women would improve their property in order to increase the sale value. Mrs. Hallie Jenkins bought a plot of land valued at $350 and then built a cottage and stayed there until she sold it for $3,000 and moved elsewhere. It appears that women were not disadvantaged in their land trades and received the same general treatment and terms as men.[7]

Women also participated in the economy as debtors and creditors. Single women or widows were particularly active within the deed of trust records. The transactions involving

women being in debt or giving credit were balanced. The terms of the deed of trust varied depending on the parties involved. For example, when in 1874 John Scrap Jr. borrowed $600 gold dollars from Ellen S. Hardin they both entered a deed of trust. Scrap was required to pay back Hardin with 20 per cent interest. Hardin then would use this money to pay back a deed that she owed a Waco couple. When one party owed another they often used bank notes to pay back their debt; therefore these notes provide an indication of women's involvement in credit. Numerous notes exist within personal papers demonstrating women acting as creditors. In 1879 A. A. Beville bought a $65.00 note from the Waco National Bank made out to Mrs. J. A. Bogges. One man's transactions provide some indication as to the extent to which men could be involved in business dealings with women. Throughout the 1870s J. M. Killough, a local businessman, took out numerous bank notes for payments to women. In 1872 he promised to pay Mrs. S. E. Bedwell $2,200 gold with 11 per cent interest. For nine months straight in 1873 Killough took out promissory notes for $100 of interest he owed Mrs. M. L. Johnson on a $6,000 note. The same process continued for 1874 as Killough struggled to pay off the balance. Mrs. D. C. Luckey, Mrs. H. A. Johnson, and Mrs. Ellen Renfroe also acted as creditors to Killough. He borrowed these monies as capital for his business Killough and Morgan, therefore providing support of the theory that female capitalists played a vital role in city growth.[8]

When it came to managing property, McLennan County women protected their rights with particular determination. These dealings often put women into direct contact with men, sometimes in a confrontational way. This demonstrates that men had accepted that women were going to be a part of the market and therefore should not be given any special treatment in business dealings. For their part, numerous women were fiercely protective of their

property, even if it meant directly confronting male business contacts. Naomi Kirkpatrick, the intrepid entrepreneur introduced at the start of this work, continued her financial dealings in Waco. During the late 1870s she was particularly involved in recovering her share of the settlement from the death of her father. In a strange yet oddly revealing twist, her hired representative on the case loaned out the money he had won on her behalf, the knowledge of which led Naomi to pen a fierce scolding letter to him at which point he moved quickly to regain the sum and send it to her immediately. The odd twist was that he also included a physical description of himself and a likeness in his apology letter, obviously in an attempt to land himself a wealthy widow. Naomi was more interested in her money.[9]

Male relatives often proved the most resistant to their female relatives' activities in the market. Discussing money and property with their husbands could prove particularly uncomfortable for married women. However, women still tried to gain information on their financial state. Prominent citizen A. G. Earle questioned her husband in a letter. "Please answer me a few questions in regard to our home," she asked, "I know it is disagrebal to you; And so long as God spares you to our children all will be well; But if you are suddenly called to your long home, God pit[y] our children . . . Did you pay for this land our home? Or did Baylis pay for it? Whare are your papers for this land-our home. . . . And where are the papers for your other place. . . . I heared something the other day that made me very unhappy. Pleas write down the answers to the questions. I will try not to trouble you any more if you will pleas answer these questions-your wife A. G. Earle. This is just for our Children." Her discomfort with the letter is evident; however, she still asked the questions. It is unknown if her husband replied as requested or ignored her, but it is likely that such a curious women would not be contented without some information.[10]

Other male relatives felt intense jealously towards wealthy single women in their families. The years after the war were particularly difficult for many men who lost a great deal of their property. When they saw their female family members thriving they did not always appreciate the financial independence of these women. Widows especially could become annoying to male relatives who might even become their tenants. To avoid conflicts, widows tried to cultivate loyalty among relatives. They would promise certain goods to relatives or solicit support from female relatives. Historian Kirsten Wood discusses these coping strategies and describes a "matrix of familial exchange" which women tried to develop. However, the matrix sometimes fell when the widow's wealth was just too tempting. Laura Harrison's large fortune made two of her male relatives, Thomas and Jimmie, eager to control her money. Jimmie realized it was not in his "power to command her money," but schemed anyway. Unfortunately for them, Laura developed a plan and invested her money in construction in Waco so that she later was able to claim that she possessed no money to aid her male relatives. Laura cemented her control by penning a letter to Thomas stating that "I have at no time since my husband's death asked . . . any advice from you." These examples of jealousy demonstrate that while the men in the county generally supported women in the market there were still individual personalities involved and not everyone supported female property owners.[11]

During the Reconstruction period, women operated businesses in Waco. The town grew throughout the late 1860s. By the 1870s it possessed numerous commercial districts with businesses owned by both men and women. Female entrepreneurs represented the elite class in that they required capital to start their businesses. On the other hand, poor women often could not afford to work for themselves and instead would work for others. The white

men of the county supported the activities of female business owners. If Waco was to become a commercial center of Texas then it would require the labors of men and women alike. Men alone could not supply all of the consumer needs of the county, therefore women dominated certain types of businesses. In addition, men did not possess enough capital to keep the Waco economy in peak condition. They needed the investments of female capitalists. Waco was in a competition with other locales, therefore the city required comparable amenities. As one Waco booster stated, Waco "must become a place of importance as a centre of trade." He also described that as a city only Galveston or Houston could compare to Waco. Finally, when he asked, "Are you a capitalist? We want you; your money will net you a good per cent any way you wish to invest it," he did not specify a gender. By the time this 1876 booster-speech appeared, female merchants were quite commonplace and operated in a very public way.[12]

Women who wished to own businesses faced certain legal restrictions. As a *femme sole*, a woman could conduct business matters in whichever way that she pleased. No gender-specific restrictions limited her activities. Wealthy widows fell into this category which helped them to become a visible commercial presence in the county. On the other hand, married women operated under specific guidelines regarding business ownership. Legally, a married woman could only use her separate property for her commercial activities. She could contract without her husband as long as it only concerned her property. The community holdings of the marriage could only be used with the consent of her husband and through his name. In addition, the status of *femme covert* shielded married women from any legal responsibility stemming from contracts. Some businesspeople might have viewed this as a disadvantage, but generally they did not shy away from dealing with married female

entrepreneurs. The community in the 1870s remained closely-knit so that a poor businesswoman who defaulted on debts would soon be run out of business. Despite these legal restrictions, evidence of commercial involvement by women spans all life stages.[13]

Home production represented one of the oldest female business ventures that continued throughout the 1870s. Women used home production to supplement their household income. Producing products within the home counted as a business because women increasingly sold their products in a commercial manner with the intent of gaining a profit. Country produce showed the opportunity to turn household production into market exchange. These products were important enough to turn up in ads in local newspapers. In 1874 the Waco *Daily Examiner* ran one ad for fresh produce from someone "in the family grocery line." This fresh produce probably came from a woman's garden. Another ad from the same year ordered, "PATRONIZE-Home Manufacture, especially when it is cheaper and better." Women could also sell their produce at one of the many markets held on the streets of Waco. The public square, in particular, was used by farmers as a place to market their home-grown goods. In a similar fashion as the men, women vendors would arrive early and sell directly to the public.[14]

Written materials from women of this period show a consistent interest in gardening and produce. Gardening represented more than a hobby, it was a way to significantly contribute to the household economy. Adaline Graves lamented that she wanted to make butter, however her cows would not cooperate. Her husband did not understand her concern even though, as she stated, milking was an "every day business of course." Letters between women in McLennan County were filled with information on gardening prospects and produce sales. Even small girls were taught to ask their older female relatives the requisite

question, "Have you commenced gardening?" Outside of the household, home production provided needed produce for an increasingly commercial economy in Waco. Unlike the 1850s, people now lived in Waco who did not grow their own food. Grocery stores stocked with produce from the county catered to these Wacoans. The Waco *Daily Advance* ran an ad in 1872 from Stewart and Turner Family Grocery promising the "Highest market price paid for Country Produce." When Kate and Edward Rotan, mentioned earlier, decided to quit teaching they entered the grocery business. Edward entered into a partnership to run a wholesale grocery shop. Kate did a prodigious amount of gardening and provided items for the store. Edward recalled, "She raised sweet potatoes and watermelons, and took them to the store where they were sold." McLennan County women such as Kate took domestic production and turned it into a public activity within the economic market.[15]

Although numerous women found employment working in schools, other women actually decided to create and run their own private centers of education. Opening a school required some initial investment in property and materials; however it did not cost as much to operate as some other businesses did. A school could be as small or large as the operator wished, often depending upon the enrollment. The county of McLennan needed additional schools to accommodate the growing population. Men rarely entered the field of teaching so it fell to the women to supply the educational opportunities. Indeed, running a school provided women with control over their work and set their fate in their own hands. Luckily for historians, female school operators appear regularly throughout the records. For instance, Mrs. O. H. Leland established her academy in 1868. She was a highly experienced teacher who wore a thimble on her finger to thump students if they misbehaved. By 1878, the Leland Seminary taught 100 pupils and employed five teachers, two of them females. Two years

later the Seminary's faculty grew in size to eight teachers, six of them female. Like any good businessperson, throughout the 1870s Francis "Fannie" Leland advertised her school in the local newspapers in the hopes of attracting more students. Initially, Leland advertised that her school would provide an education in "drawing, penmanship, composition, elocution, and vocal music-all without extra charge." However, one year later she raised the monthly tuition rate to $2 to $4 and charged extra for language and music instruction. Her small school on Second Street grew into a familiar educational establishment that lasted throughout the 1870s. By 1880, Francis was forty-nine years old and could count herself a successful businesswoman.[16]

Leland's primary competition came from another female school proprietor, Miss Sue C. Lambdin. The Lambdin Seminary directly competed with the Leland Seminary throughout the 1870s. A veritable advertising war took place as each woman struggled to present the largest newspaper ad with the best rates. Each woman relied on their individual school for support. Leland was a widow from out of state. Lambdin was a single woman having never married. The Lambdin Seminary was located on Austin Avenue. Lambdin employed a handful of teachers to cater to her upper-class student clientele. The tuition was $3 to $5 a month and $16 for board and washing. In addition, as added security Lambdin required half of the payment in coin in advance and half in the middle of the session. The children of wealthy residents were Lambdin's usual pupils. The children of Henrietta and General James Edward Harrison attended Lambdin's school. They could afford $30 payments for their son's tuition.[17]

Numerous schools operated by women did not receive the same publicity as the Lambdin or Leland Seminaries, but they still represented women operating their own

enterprises, no matter how small. Miss M. M. Dunnovant opened a school in 1874. The Live Oak Seminary owned by Lucy B. Gurley began in 1868. Gurley expected "A liberal share of patronage." Moreover, some women operated a private tutoring business that involved teaching pupils in resident's homes on a weekly or daily schedule. While her husband Professor F. E. Simeon tried to sell pianos, Madame F. E. Simeon solicited patronage as a teacher of piano forte. She was willing to travel within the county. As she had traveled in Paris, London, and Hanover, some Waco residents were interested in hiring her to prove that they possessed culture equal to that of Europeans. Each of these women owned and operated a successful business based on the idea that superior education could be had for the right price.[18]

In general, the citizens of the county were supportive of female-owned schools. They provided patronage by sending their children to be educated by these women. They also allowed female educators to advertise publicly in the local newspapers. It is incalculable how important advertising was to young businesses in Waco. Without advertising a business would be lost among the various new stores and shops. Advertising reached a market and demonstrated to society that these women were conducting their business in a serious way. Newspapers rarely hesitated to praise female-owned schools. A Mrs. Edgar's school received the compliment, "We bespeak for her the patronage she so richly merits." Women also appeared in the directories from the 1870s. Economic historians have posited that the "appearance of directories seemed to relate directly to urban maturation." In addition, the directory served as an organizing principle and rationalization of urban growth. The directory served as a "businessman's guide to other businessmen." In the case of Waco's women, they infiltrated the masculine realm of the directory, therefore showing the general acceptance and

support of women's economic activities. Almost all of the types of female-owned businesses discussed in this chapter appeared in at least one of the four directories from 1876 to 1882.[19]

Female entrepreneurs also dominated the market in millinery and dressmaking. The success of women in these fields has been documented by historians such as Suzanne Lebsock in her study of Petersburg, Virginia. The start-up cost of these businesses could by fairly minimal, depending on the size of the operation. Therefore, women of a variety of financial states could become millinery, dressmaking, seamstresses, or mantua making businesspeople. Women owning clothing-related businesses have been traditionally some of the first women to advertise in local newspapers. The women clothiers of Waco began advertising almost immediately following the war. They would announce the opening of their store via a newspaper advertisement or article. The ad placed by Mrs. M. A. Harris, milliner, and Mrs. Chevalier, dressmaker, simply stated their address and a brief description of the products on hand. Such an announcement proved particularly important if the women moved in with their businesses from out-of-town, as Mrs. J. A. Lane did when she came from New York City with her dressmaking business. The women would then advertise if they moved to another location. This happened fairly regularly as the land market in the county fluctuated and women found it more profitable to set-up in certain areas. As many of the clothiers in the county came from out-of-state they probably learned elsewhere the advertising tricks of the trade. For example, to spark interest a milliner would advertise that she was going east or overseas to learn the latest fashions or to pick-up materials. Mrs. Ludecus did this in 1874 when she placed an ad stating her intent to leave for New York to "lay in her stock of spring goods. She proposes to bring on a nice stock of millinery." Other women appealed to their patron's frugality and said that they were closing out their stock at the lowest prices yet.[20]

The evidence shows that a handful of women were able to support themselves with dressmaking or millinery establishments. The directories throughout the Reconstruction period list female-owned clothier businesses. The 1881-1882 directory shows twenty-seven women engaged in the occupation. The 1880 census shows twenty-one women in clothing occupations. However, other sources such as newspapers demonstrate that the number of female clothier businesses was quite large throughout the 1870s. The sheer number and variety of advertisements clearly demonstrates the public nature of the business ownership of these women. But, female businesses, like all businesses, did not always survive. In McLennan County when a milliner or dressmaker went out of business, another woman would buy out the stock and continue the business under a new name. The newspapers would often announce such buy-outs. For example, when Mrs. Sallie Truitt sold her stock to Mrs. L. Rawland it made the page three local report in the newspaper. The editor also took the opportunity to praise Mrs. Rawland's expertise at pressing and bleaching hats. In general, women in McLennan County possessed an unchallenged monopoly of the millinery and dressmaking trades throughout the 1870s. These businesses satisfied a need in the county that male entrepreneurs were unable, or unwilling, to satisfy, therefore women took that opportunity to make a living and met with praise from those businesspeople who recognized the inherent necessity of such enterprises in a "modern" town.[21]

Another female operated business, the sex trade, grew in Waco during the 1870s. Most likely female prostitutes had worked in Waco since the 1850s, however their activities were not visible until the 1870s. The prostitutes grew increasingly brazen in their dealings as they catered to the male population in the county. Prostitution was a business because women sold an item, their bodies, for a certain price. A madam operated a business on an

even larger scale by controlling the labor of prostitutes under her protection and care. The madams operated brothels and provided shelter, food, and protection in exchange for a fee. During the Civil War period, the opportunities for women to work expanded and so did the ranks of the prostitutes. Women without any means of support turned to the sex trade in an attempt to survive. Others enjoyed the lucrative pay that some women received on a regular basis. Prostitution became an issue across the entire south as cities struggled to cope with these "working-women" who defied all social and moral boundaries.[22]

In its struggle against prostitutes, Waco was both similar to, and different from, other southern cities. To begin with, Waco possessed a fairly substantial population of prostitutes and madams. While the 1870 census only listed one practicing prostitute, twenty-five year old Hattie Williams, by 1880 the number had climbed to twenty-one. In addition, prostitutes and madams were listed in the city directories. Traditionally only businesspeople were listed in the directories, therefore listing the prostitutes was an implicit acknowledgement that prostitution was indeed a business within the city. Within the directories, the label "Madam" denoted brothel ownership. The euphemism "actress" denoted a prostitute. As evident by the 1876 directory, ten out of twenty prostitutes resided at 76 North Fourth Street. This residence was a brothel owned and operated by M.W. Davis "Madam." Another "actress," Mollie Temple, resided at Tin Cup Alley, while Minnie Rivers serviced the south side of town from her spot on Eighth Street.[23]

The activities of the madams most closely demonstrate the business-like behavior of these women. In 1865 operating a bawdy house in Waco was a misdemeanor with a fine as a penalty. As early as 1871 operators of houses of prostitution in Waco could register with the city for a payment and receive a license. The payment was two hundred dollars. In 1875

Madam Matilda Davis was granted the first bawdy house license in Waco. She was authorized to keep a bawdy house for three months. She continued to petition the city council throughout the 1870s to renew her license. Therefore, she operated a legal house of prostitution during the Reconstruction period. By 1878 she had moved her operation to the gravel beds off North Fourth Street and Jefferson Avenue. Throughout this entire time, Matilda had a rival. Cora McMahon, another madam, competed with her for business. McMahon appeared in the 1880 census as a twenty year old female, widow, Texas-native who listed operated a house of prostitutes as her occupation. By the time that McMahon died in 1890, Waco had a legalized red-light district known as The Reservation. Both McMahon and Davis competed because they, like any other business owners, wanted to make money. They were definitely entrepreneurs although society at the time did not really appreciate their contributions.[24]

The public perception of the prostitute was not a positive one. One editor lamented that there were over fifty bawdy houses in the county. He worried that, "If vigorous steps are not soon taken to suppress them, Waco will lose her good name for morality and good order." However, prostitutes most often appeared in the papers when they were in court and being fined for some action. The editors seemed particularly pleased to report when a prostitute would have to pay a monetary sum in retribution. They always listed the sum, even down to $1. On the other hand, the newspapers were not completely above praising one prostitute when she performed various acts of charity. This "courtesan" carried food, blankets, money, and clothing to the inmates of the county poor house. The editor noted with satisfaction that she has also performed other acts of charity. Perhaps her charity was why he labeled her a "courtesan" as opposed to a sister of sin, common woman, city woman, or

prostitute. Regardless of the moral question, it cannot be ignored that prostitution represented one of the more lucrative businesses available to women in Waco during the 1870s. Women took advantage of the opportunity and it made them interact with the market, albeit as societal outsiders.[25]

Throughout the 1870s, travelers from all over came to the McLennan County for the first time. These people often did not come intending to buy a property immediately, but they still needed a place to stay. The same influx of people occurred all over Texas and alternative living arrangements sprung up in response to the needs of these travelers. The men of the county alone did not have the wherewithal to completely satisfy the necessity of the travelers; therefore they looked to female capitalists to fill the void. The hotel served as one solution to the housing problem. Hotels in the late nineteenth-century would house people as long as required, for a fee. Hotel proprietorship required a hefty start-up sum followed by enough money to support typical expenses. Wealthy widows felt particularly comfortable venturing into the hotel business. In numerous cases, they understood how to manage property, they possessed money, and they wanted a challenge. In a sense, Waco experienced a phenomenon occurring all over the south as hotels emerged to cater to new clientele. These hotels would advertise all over for patrons. The Belton Hotel owned by Mrs. Martha McWhirter was a regular advertiser in Waco newspapers. McWhirter inherited $10,000 and used it to open the hotel. McWhirter also leased two hotels in Waco and ran them for a little while before concentrating more on Belton.[26]

McWhirter was not alone in the female-owned hotel business. The directories from the period show numerous women operating hotels. In 1876 Mrs. Laura Morrill ran the City Hotel in East Waco. Another directory showed a Mrs. Davis operating the Taylor House and

Mrs. Kirkpatrick as proprietress of the Kirkpatrick House. As the proprietress of a hotel, a woman had the power to hire other women for positions such as chambermaid, cook, etc. It is clear that many women in Waco owed their employment to capitalist women like female hotel operators. When a proprietress died her relatives often did not know what to do with the hotel. When Amanda Smith, a local hotel operator, died in 1873 it was unclear what would happen to her property. The hotel ended up being leased by a local man for a certain allowance each month to Smith's children. In addition, he had to keep the hotel in a good state of affairs. Therefore, in just a second fate took away the business that Smith had fought during her lifetime to keep afloat. But the hotel business was highly competitive and not all ventures ended positively, for a variety of reasons.[27]

Female hotel proprietors were a highly visible group of businesswomen. Their wealth made them regulars in the business records of the county. Additionally, proprietresses figured prominently in the local newspapers through advertisements. Aggressive advertising proved to be a trait of female hotel operators. These operators needed to compete with other local hotels, as well as out-of-town hotels who would still advertise in Waco papers. The newspaper would document when a hotel changed hands. For example, the McClelland House, owned by Mrs. Skinner, was bought by Mrs. Heatherly. Skinner wanted to return home to New Orleans. The editor commented that with Heatherly's reputation as a hostess she should be assured a "prosperous career." Female owners would try to lure potential clients with special perks. Mrs. Kirkpatrick, the owner of a variety of businesses, tried to lure patrons to her hotel Austin House by advertising her fresh groceries and good wagon yard. Other hotel owners directly challenged all hotels within Texas. When Mrs. Berry opened the Waco House she assured readers that she would provide service equal to any hotel in all of

Texas. Some women acknowledged the importance of the railroad and suspension bridge. Mrs. A. Hart built her hotel right next to the suspension bridge. Then she asked for the railroad traveling public to visit her hotel. Her rates were $1.50 per day, $4.50 per week, and $25 per month.[28]

Women also ran boarding houses to meet the growing needs of travelers and new residents to Waco. Boarding houses ranged from full-scale large buildings run by women to rooms rented in a small house. Some boarding houses required boarders to provide items such as blankets, pillows, linens, etc. Other houses only serviced "day boarders" and provided meals without daily lodging. In addition, the wives of business owners often boarded their husband's employees. Women usually did not report that activity to the census takers. Boarding houses allowed women the opportunity to shift their domestic skills into the public sphere of business. For McLennan County the 1870 census taker marked boarding houses. Two of the boarding houses were run by men, however it is likely that their wives participated heavily in the day-to-day operations of the business. One of the boarding houses was operated by Mary Ward, a thirty-eight year old woman from Alabama. According to the 1870 returns, sixteen people boarded with Mary at that time. They included a real estate agent, carpenters, a butcher, three physicians, a farm laborer, a stock raiser, a bar keeper, a cook, and a domestic servant. Interestingly enough, all but four of the boarders were young men. Because she was operating a business it was okay for Mary, a single woman, to be in a house with large numbers of unmarried men. For McLennan County at this time economic need overweighed gender ideals and proscriptions. Female boarding house owners also appear throughout every directory in Waco for the 1870s.[29]

For female boarding house operators, the local newspapers represented a vital communication tool. Potential clients often advertised that they were looking for board. When in 1874 a man placed an ad looking for board in a private family he possessed numerous options within Waco. In fact, only a few days earlier Mrs. Houston had advertised that she was willing to furnish board and lodging at reasonable rates. Larger boarding houses also used the newspaper as a tool to compete with other houses. Advertisers would change the size of their ads or would alter the terms of the boarding arrangement. They also began to incorporate rhetorical flourishes into the descriptions of their houses. Mrs. Laura Morrill, proprietress of the Calusa House, described her establishment as possessing "large, airy ROOMS FURNISHED." The newspapers also provided an opportunity for the local press to praise the efforts of their female entrepreneurs. During the growing period of towns, the urban press represents the cheerleader of urban growth. By praising women openly in the papers, the local editors both reflected county sentiment and set the tone as to how business women were to be treated. Once an editor decided a business was legitimate he/she could help an establishment survive. When the editor of the Waco *Daily Examiner* decided that he thought Mrs. Morrill was operating a serious business he began to praise her efforts in successive papers. He lauded her "admirable management" of her "legitimate business." According to him, the hotel could not be surpassed by any in the state and was crowded nightly with guests from all over the country.[30]

In addition to those already described, women owned and operated a variety of other businesses. Other occupations claimed in the 1880 census include: banker, horticulturalist, confectioner, authoress, and doctor. These businesses do not appear as often in the records, but they still indicate that the opportunities for women branched out in the Reconstruction

period. Women appear in the newspapers owning laundry businesses, hair jewelry stores, and portrait galleries. Mrs. Irene Hamil even operated Hamil's Dairy. Her butter was praised as being safe for consumers since she was a particular "dairyman." Some women even operated restaurants, coffee stands, and sandwich carts. Each of these women was taking advantage of the changing economy of Waco and the way that it impacted societal ideas of gender. They were in public and owned businesses and could not ignored by society at the time, therefore historians at present should not ignore their efforts.[31]

In general, men of the county were very supportive of women's capitalistic endeavors. They patronized female businesses. They assisted female relatives in understanding business ownership. They supported female enterprises via encouraging newspaper articles. The Waco Masonic Lodge acknowledged women's importance in a front page newspaper address stating, "We recognize the power of your influence on the success of any enterprise." They would also lavish praise on particular women's efforts to make a living. One editor believed that Mrs. E. Signor, who owned a hairwork business, was an excellent saleswoman who deserved "appreciation." One of the most adamant articles supporting women in business came in 1878 in the *Examiner and Patron*. In a long statement, the author argued that women needed to understand and enjoy the benefits of financial independence. Although their lack of education had kept them from learning the intricacies of most types of labor, there were opportunities out there. He called their state a "crying wrong" because they had been reared in a "false system" that did not stress the necessity of self-reliance. Taking the support of female work to a whole new level, the editor of the Waco *Daily Examiner* even devoted print space to praising the efforts of a local girl who sold poises in downtown Waco. The support of women in the market was buttressed consistently. In general, women during the

Reconstruction period were heavily involved in property management and business ownership. Their involvement in these activities stemmed directly from the changes that occurred during the Civil War and that continued to change Waco's economy and society.[32]

[1]Deed Records, Vol. N, 14 February 1870, 22 February 1870, 8 March 1870, 18 March 1870, 6, 28, 60-1, 88; Census Database 1870; Tax Roll Database.

[2]Handbook of Texas Online; Tax Roll Database.

[3]James E. Harrison, Last Will and Testament, 31 March 1875, Guy B. Harrison Collection, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Lebsock, *Free Women*, 78, 86; Probate Minutes, County Clerk's Office, McLennan County Courthouse, Waco, Texas, Vols. A-F, 1861-1871.

[4]Probate Minutes, Vols. A-F, 1861-1871.

[5]Land Deed, 14 February 1864, Hays Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[6]Tax Roll Database; Probate Records, Vol. G, 1873; Probate Minutes, Vol. E, 1870, 1876.

[7]Deed Records, Vols. A-22, 1850-1879; District Court Paper, 1876, Clingman-Stallings Family Collection, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; District Court Records, 1876; Barnes, *Early Homes*, 71.

[8]Deed of Trust Records, Vol. L, 1874; Bank Note, 3 April 1879, Alexander Beville Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Bank Drafts, Killough Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[9]W. A. Kirkpatrick to Mrs. N. H. Kirkpatrick, 28 January 1879, 9 April 1879, Kirkpatrick Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[10]A.G. Earle to "Husband," n.d, Graves-Earle Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[11]Censer, *Reconstruction*, 115; Salamon, *Prairie*, 41; Wood, "The Strongest Ties," 137, 149, 157; "Bro Jimmie" to "Thos Harrison," 10 November 1873, Genl. Thos. Harrison from E. L. Hardin, 14 February 1874, Guy B. Harrison Collection, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[12]Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., City *Directory,* 19, 20, 31.

[13]Enstam, *Women*, 39; Lazarou, *Concealed*, 47.

[14]Stephanie McCurry, "Producing Dependence: Women, Work, and Yeoman Households in Low-Country South Carolina," *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 59-60; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 1 January 1874, p. 2; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco) 3 January 1874, p. 3; Curry, *A History*, 11.

[15]Adaline Graves to "My Dear Ada," 20 November 1869, Eliza Earle to "Aunt Mary," 11 March 1877, Graves-Earle Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 8 June 1872, p. 2; Manuscript Notes, n. d., Rotan (Edward and Kate Sturm McCall Papers).

[16]Kelley, *Handbook*, 161; Morrison, comp*., Directory 1878-1879*, 25; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882 Directory*, 39; *Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 31 December 1875, p. 4; Waco *Register* (Waco), 16 December 1876, p. 4; Census Database 1880.

[17]Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 1 January 1874, p. 4; Diary Entry, 29 April 1875, Tate, comp., *Transcribed Diary*, 144.

[18]*Daily Advance* (Waco), 1 January 1874, p. 1; *Semi-Weekly Register* (Waco), 12 February 1868, p. 2; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 6 January 1874, p. 4.

[19]*Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 27 August 1875, p. 8; Goldfield, "Pursuing," 63.

[20]Lebsock, *Free Women*, 180; See also Lockley, "Spheres," 120 which states, "Dressmakers catered exclusively to female customers, seamstresses to either gender. Milliners made hats and mantua makers made coats."; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 20 July 1875, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 11 October 1876, p. 3; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 3 February 1874, p. 3; Howe, "Patient Laborers," 124-130.

[21]Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 4 December 1875, p. 3. Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 6-145; Morrison, comp., *Directory 1880-1881*, 25-151.

[22]E. Susan Barber, "Depraved and Abandoned Women: Prostitution in Richmond, Virginia, across the Civil War," *Neither Lady Nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, ed. Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 155-7, 159-60, 163-4, 167.

[23]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Wallace, *Waco*, 33; Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory*, 117-71.

[24]Aimee Harris Johnson, "Prostitution in Waco, 1889-1917," (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1990), 6-8, 14; Curry, *History*, 131; Census Database 1880.

[25]Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 5 November 1875, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 15 February 1876, p. 3.

[26]Evelyn Carrington, ed. *Women in Early Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1994), 189.

[27]Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory*, 153; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 65, 145; Probate Minutes, Vol. E, 1873, 304.

[28]*Daily Advance* (Waco), 19 October 1874, p. 4; Waco *Daily Reporter* (Waco), 8 December 1875, p. 2; *Semi-Weekly Register* (Waco), 4 January 1868, p. 3; *Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 27 August 1875, p. 9.

[29]Enstam, *Women*, 41-2; Census Database 1870; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 6-145; Morrison, comp., *Directory 1880-1881*, 25-151.

[30]*Daily Advance* (Waco), 18 February 1874, p. 4; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 13 March 1874, p. 4; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 6 February 1874, p. 2; Goldfield, "Pursuing," 60-61; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 8 March 1874, p. 3.

[31]Census Database 1880; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 14 March 1874, p. 4; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 27 April 1874, p. 4; *Daily Advance* (Waco), 8 July 1874, p. 4; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 9 May 1876, p. 3.

[32]Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 4 January 1874, p. 1; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 4 December 1875, p. 3; *Examiner and Patron* (Waco), 8 February 1878, p. 1; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 10 May 1874, p. 3.

CHAPTER SIX

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN, 1850-1880

Julia Collins was a slave on Richard Coke's sprawling Brazos plantation in McLennan County. During her years in slavery Julia developed certain skills that made her a particularly useful worker. Indeed, she knew the intricacies of natural remedies and doctoring. She probably used her medical skills regularly when nursing Richard Coke's invalid wife Mary. Julia also acted as a house servant. The 1870 census shows a Julia Page, her maiden name, listed in the Coke household along with two additional domestic servants. As a central Texas plantation slave, Julia most likely learned of her freedom a few months after the official June 19, 1865, emancipation of all Texas slaves. Following her emancipation, Julia decided to continue to work for the Cokes. She stayed with the Coke family until her death in 1910. Julia served as one example of how African-American women possessed an economic presence in the market of McLennan County from 1850 to 1880. During slavery African-American women were forced to participate in the market as laborers, however following emancipation they did not withdraw completely from the market. In McLennan County they contributed heavily to the rural and urban workforce throughout the Reconstruction period. During Reconstruction, African-American women performed agricultural work, household production, and traditional women's work.[1]

Both Anglo and African-American women participated in the market during the period analyzed. However, the experiences of these two groups of women varied in numerous ways. Exploring the economic lives of black women in a separate chapter allows for an analysis that addresses the singular experiences of African-American women, including slavery and the post-bellum racial caste system. This organization also highlights

the differences between the two groups, but still allows for comparisons between the experiences of Anglo and African-American women.

The initial way that African-American women contributed economically was through their forced participation in the antebellum slave system in McLennan County. An estimate of the numbers of slaves in the county during the 1850s does not exist, as the first federal census for the county took place in 1860. The 1860 census shows a total of 2, 395 slaves as opposed to the Texas total of 182, 566. McLennan County by 1860 possessed a large number of plantations both grand and miniature in scale and manpower. In addition, masters owned a total of slaves valued roughly at $1,301,070. McLennan County's thriving economy relied upon slave labor. All of the major societal figures owned at least one slave. The purchasing and selling of slaves consistently appeared in the early records. For example, in 1852 George Barnard, one of the earliest Waco settlers sold "a negro girl by the name of Amy Y and child Margaret" to Nicholas and Mary Ann Battle for sum of nine hundred dollars. One year later Barnard bought two slaves, a twenty-seven year-old male and "Sally a woman twenty years old and coffee complexion," for twenty-five-hundred dollars from T. M. Harris. African Americans represented the labor force for the county, therefore plantation owners hoped to secure profitable workers via slave trades.[2]

Most slaves spent the majority of their time laboring on the county's numerous cotton plantations, mainly located along the Brazos and Bosque river bottoms. James Edward Harrison owned a 6,000 acre Tehuacana Retreat, the largest plantation with over fifty slaves. William Woods Downs, Waco lawyer Richard Coke, and Shapley Ross also possessed sprawling lands and multiple slaves. The profitability of these plantations allowed McLennan County to survive and grow. These plantations relied on the labors of slaves who usually

began working early in the day and continued until after the setting of the sun. Each slave typically worked within the house or the field or a combination of both locations as needed. In numerous cases female slaves would labor in the fields during the day and work at spinning and weaving during the night. Former slave Caroline Vaughn Wright recalled her parents laboring in the fields while Caroline and her younger sister worked in Dr. Warren Wortham's household. Additionally, a female slave laborer in the cotton fields could be as productive as a male slave. During the busiest seasons, every available plantation hand labored in the fields, usually regardless of other skills. In Texas the average cotton picking season lasted from sixty to seventy days. James Boyd, a slave on a 1, 600 acre plantation in the Waco area, recalled, "Us work all week and sometime Sunday, iffen de crops in a rush."[3]

When not working in the fields, female slaves often performed tasks seen by white society as women's tasks. Women appeared to represent the majority of house slaves. Their work involved cooking, cleaning, washing, and taking care of children. For example, as a slave of the Scott family, Charlotte's duties included "churning, drawing water, making soap, and washing and ironing clothes. She also spent a great deal of time cooking. The family owned a stove, but Charlotte cooked meat in an open pot over the fire in the fireplace." Female slaves also took care of the children of their owners, usually from an extremely young age. Sarah Walker, one of the earliest settlers of McLennan County, owned numerous slaves. One female slave in particular, named Josie, took care of Walker's children. The children remembered Josie whom they called "Mammy" acting as a strict disciplinarian who could administer a severe whipping. However, Josie also served as a nurturing agent, albeit a forced one, to the children. She would chew the food for the youngest children and then feed it to them. Other female slaves that Walker owned acted as midwives to her during her

numerous childbirths. It is evident that slave labor kept households such as Walkers operational. In McLennan County both large plantations and small households relied on the efforts of slaves.[4]

In *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas 1821-1865*, historian Randolph B. Campbell claims that some slaves took the opportunity to determine their work and others even made a little bit of money. Slaves did try to influence their work environment by gaining certain skill sets. However, masters usually assigned tasks with attention paid to needs at hand, as opposed to skills available. But, in certain circumstances slaves could negotiate a switch from field labor to housework. Also, female slaves could take advantage of the practice of hiring out used by plantation owners. On occasion an owner would have a crop or task that required additional labor. If a female slave developed certain talents they might be able to be hired out to another owner for a predetermined time for a certain amount of money. The money did not go the slave, but the advantage of a different work environment could have been a strong incentive to learn a marketable set of skills. In 1864 one McLennan County farmer, Asa H. Rhodes, hired a female slave of a neighbor "to spin at $12.00 per month." The female slave never received any monetary compensation, but her sewing skills did impact what labor she was forced to perform under the slave system.[5]

Additionally, countless slaves wanted to possess money. To female slaves, money represented the opportunity to gain a measure of independence. Money might be spent towards alleviating some of the wretched conditions of slavery. But, their status as slaves severely limited the chances of gaining any monetary foothold. When slaves did manage to get a hold of some money the law interpreted the funds as a gift, not earnings. If fact, state law made it plain that slaves possessed no legal right to money gained in any way or crops

produced in their gardens. In fact, bondspeople were required to secure their owner's permission in writing to sell any goods or produce. Despite these deterrents, slaves continued to try to better their lives and on occasion they succeeded. For example, a slave woman owned by Benjamin Dechard received ten dollars from him to take care of two orphan children. Dechard probably viewed the money not a payment of services, but rather a monetary gift for "extra effort." However, the slave woman did receive the money.[6]

As African-American women labored under the slave system in antebellum McLennan County they fundamentally aided the economy, but received no recognition or compensation for their efforts. The work of female slaves on the Brazos plantations allowed the county to prosper monetarily, therefore these women contributed substantially, albeit against their own wills, to the growth of the county. In numerous ways the slave system in McLennan County mirrored the situation across Texas for the antebellum period.

In 1861 McLennan County voted to enter the conflict which led to the abolishment of slavery. The Civil War represented a period of uncertainty for African Americans. As described earlier, the white men of the county left white women to run the plantations and households. Plantation slaves began to receive their instructions from their plantation mistresses. As white women took control over their plantations they often received letters from their husbands instructing them in slave management. On November 2, 1862, Adaline Graves received a letter from her son stating, "Now as soon as the Negroes can plow you may but then at it let them brake up about half of the old cotton ground. . . . I trust I may get home in time . . . you need not plant every cotton . . . take care of the hogs." Most likely Adaline followed these orders and, through the labors of her slaves, brought in a successful, although smaller than usual, cotton crop. In other cases, absent owners worried that their

overseers would overwork the slaves, thus leading to deaths and/or runaways. An overseer, Jeff, was the focus of one such letter from James Edward Harrison, owner of the massive Tehuacana Retreat, to his wife "Hennie." In the letter, James instructs Hennie to deal firmly with Jeff and if he makes her "the least trouble...you had better not keep him any longer." James then includes a specific warning to Jeff, "tell him not to work John any more. . . . tell him I say so and will look to him to for Johns good condition." James's letter demonstrated a desire to keep the Tehuacana plantation running as before, as well as a desire to keep his labor force in working condition. James had good reason to worry as his economic prosperity rested greatly upon the shoulders of his slaves.[7]

Although some citizens would comment on the disappearance of large numbers of slaves from certain plantations, in general the system in McLennan County continued to function at a level of lower productivity. In fact, some county residents even bragged about the loyalty of their slaves. John Sleeper recalled in his memoirs that his father's slave Harriet Anderson stayed with the family throughout the Civil War. According to Sleeper, Harriet was good and faithful to his entire family. She had a husband, William Anderson, who lived not far away. She attended church regularly. In an interesting sentence, Sleeper wrote, "She was proud, she was black"; however, those comments were later crossed out and replaced by, "She was faithful to her church." During the war, life for Harriet Anderson and other female slaves in McLennan County generally continued unabated. The reliance upon the labors of African-American women increased as masters pressured slaves to work harder to keep the county afloat economically.[8]

On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger arrived at Galveston with occupation troops and announced the enforcement of Emancipation Proclamation within Texas. News of

emancipation spread slowly, due to the plantation owner's interests in keeping the issue as quiet as possible. When the information did reach a certain area it is probable that particular owners still held out and waited for occupation troops to personally establish the freedom of the slaves. In McLennan County the news fostered joy and uncertainty within the newly freed population, as well as anger and aggressiveness from the former owners. One story serves to illustrate the double-edge sword of emancipation. James Brown, a McLennan County freedman, recalls his master, "standin' on de gallery, holdin' a paper in hims han' and readin'. Dere was tears in hims eyes. . . . I'se have tears in my eyes, too; mos' of 'em have. When hims done readin', hims says: 'You darkies is as free as I'se is. You can go or you can stay." This was then followed by an offer to pay each former slave $5.00 a month to stay and a statement of continued ownership of the people less than twenty-one years of age, according to his determination of their age. Most of the freedpeople stayed with their former masters, Brown states, but over time they gradually went elsewhere. Other groups of freedmen reacted to slavery by throwing their hats in the air, only to hear a master's quick retort asking how they would get food, clothes, and survive?[9]

After they gained their freedom, black women continued to contribute in the economic sphere. However, the law now required that African-American women receive some sort of compensation for their labors. Both the 1870 and 1880 census show black women engaged in various work situations. In 1870, out of a total 1, 263 black and mulatto women fifteen years and older, 168 claimed an occupation, roughly 13.3% of the group. In 1880, out of a total of 2,075 black and mulatto women fifteen years and older, 758 claimed an occupation, roughly 36.5% of the group. These numbers remain rough estimates of the total black female working population, however they represent large enough numbers to

warrant study. For example, numerous women most likely replied "keeping house," by far the largest response for both years, for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they referred to their own house, or maybe someone else's, in most cases historians will never know either way.[10]

At the conclusion of the war, a heated political debate emerged focusing on African Americans and labor. It was evident that southern society still wanted the labor of African Americans to keep the economy running; therefore whites created strategies to coerce former slaves into labor arrangements. As it occurred across the south, different labor arrangements emerged during the period of 1850 to 1880. The situation in McLennan County regarding African-American workers closely resembled the way that events unfolded across Texas. Immediately after emancipation, in the period of the provisional government from 1865 to 1866, African Americans were primarily contract wage workers. During the period of Presidential Reconstruction from 1866 to 1867, African Americans were required to sign contracts either as wage laborers or sharecroppers. A few African Americans also became tenants, but they too signed contracts. By Congressional Reconstruction from 1867 to 1870, the tenant and sharecropping systems grew in numbers. More African Americans liked the benefits of tenant arrangements. By this time agricultural wage labor had almost disappeared. Also, African Americans avoided signing contracts and the number of overall contracts arranged fell from previous years. When Radical Reconstruction began in 1870, African Americans continued to live as tenants and sharecroppers, however they also made progress in land ownership. When Governor Richard Coke took power in 1874, Reconstruction ended in Texas. But, African-American women continued to work agriculturally as sharecroppers and tenants, but often without contracts. They also moved into other employment fields available with the growth of cities.[11]

Looking at the transition of labor systems in McLennan County for the 1865 to 1880 period provides some insight as to the situation that African-American women faced across Texas. When General Gordon Granger announced that African Americans were free he made sure to include a statement expressing how the newly freed men and women should continue to labor. He stated that the relationship between masters and former slaves needed to become one between employers and hired laborers. Throughout the provisional government period of 1865 to 1866, white Texas residents wondered if the economy would survive. One thing was certain-white plantation owners felt that African Americans needed to work. Along those lines, officials in McLennan County and across Texas stressed that not working was not an option. The federal army in the Texas district would make sure that African Americans entered into labor arrangements. General C. C. Andrews suggested that blacks continue to work for former owners. He also thought that contracts should be created to govern working relationships.[12]

In 1865, following the urging of the military, plantation owners began to enter into contracts with African-American men and women. The primary system of labor during this period was the contract wage laborer. Employers would create a contract specifying a wage rate for a specific period of time. They tried to get African Americans to agree to small amounts of compensation. In McLennan County, when an employer paid wages they averaged $139 per year. The monthly wages were usually between $10 and $15 per month. To get the most out of their workers, plantation owners would sometimes schedule African Americans to work ten hours days for five days out of the week. Employers would also debit wages for food, lodging, etc. Because a law had not been created yet requiring African

Americans to sign contracts, some refused to contract for wages and instead wanted to do sharecropping.[13]

On September 5, 1865, the director of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands arrived in Galveston. He urged African Americans to contract, but also specified that employers must provide humane treatment and fair compensation to workers. When Presidential Reconstruction began in 1866 the concept of contracts underwent a radical change. New Texas Governor J.W. Throckmorton was intent on securing the African American workforce. The Texas legislature complied and in 1866 passed a series of "black codes" intended to regulate African-American workers. African-American women in McLennan County were affected by these laws because they now were required by law to enter into contracts. These contracts had to be written agreements that lasted at least a month. In addition, employers were allowed to establish codes of behavior and could punish or fine a worker for various offenses, such as rudeness. Also, the law required that all minors were to be apprenticed with a master who could determine the work load and punishments independently. Vagrancy statutes ordered that anyone could be arrested who did not have their own financial support or labor contract. Officials could then place these individuals in work situations until they paid their fine or established a contract. So, during the period of Presidential Reconstruction African-American women remained an economic presence in the county because they were forced to do so. They could not legally withdraw from the workforce.[14]

Presidential Reconstruction also coincided with the arrival of the first Bureau official to Waco in January 1866. One of the goals of the Bureau was to convince African Americans to sign contracts. The Bureau also tried to enforce contracts despite an increasingly violent

atmosphere in the county. One official stated, "White people are very hostile to the colored people. In every settlement that I have made the white men have seemed determined to get all that is raised." During 1866 African Americans across Texas expressed an interest in leaving behind contract wage work and moving into the three variations of the tenant system: the share tenant, the cash tenant, and the sharecropper. Each of these variations involved a contract in Presidential Reconstruction, but the use of contracts was mostly eliminated in the following years.[15]

In fact, the sharecropping system came into general use in McLennan County by 1867. This was the same year that Presidential Reconstruction was overturned and Congressional Reconstruction was implemented. By this time the contract wage system widely used from 1865 to 1866 was no longer in practice. Additionally, sharecropping became the most common type of tenant arrangement followed by share tenancy and cash tenancy. These work situations owed a great deal to the changing political situation. When Presidential Reconstruction ended, the rules regarding the enforcement of contracts were no longer in operation. African Americans did not have to necessarily enter into contracts. Additionally, in 1868 the Bureau left McLennan County and no longer pressured or protected African-American contract workers. In general, white employers began to feel that they could equally exploit their workers with or without contracts.[16]

Under the sharecropping system a person worked a specific amount of land and, in return for his/her labors received a percentage of the crop. The sharecropper, living on the plantation lands, was more of a laborer than a tenant. With this system, the sharecropper received teams, tools, and supplies from the landlord. On the Tehuacana Retreat, the Harrisons made various improvements to better accommodate their sharecroppers. With the

assistance of their sharecroppers, usually former Tehuacana plantation slaves, the Harrisons built a smokehouse, school, church, and a log cabin for each sharecropper's family. In reality, most landlords did not treat their laborers in such an open and inviting way. The landlords often made a conscious effort to burden the laborer with debt, thus turning the sharecropping system into a version of debt peonage, a status not far removed from slavery. Landlords would sell goods to laborers at astronomical prices. As one report stated, "Many are now owing $500 each and some as much as $1,000," as the landlords would charge, "100% above merchandise prices." Sharecroppers lived according to the whim of the landlords, often being taken away from the crops to perform various menial chores. Feelings of anxiety permeated the thoughts of female sharecroppers as demonstrated by African-American songs from the time period. The theme of these songs frequently turned to money and survival. For example, one woman taught her son the song, "De top bolls ain' open, De bottom bolls am rotten. I can't get my number here, I has to quit and go 'way. When de sun go down and de moon come up, Iffen I can't get my number, I can't git my pay." These Reconstruction-era songs reflected the inability of African Americans, especially women, to climb out of sharecropping and the poverty associated with it.[17]

As an alternative to sharecropping the possibility of landownership remained an ever-present dream for African Americans throughout Texas. When Governor Edmund J. Davis took office in 1870, he ushered in a period known as Radical Reconstruction. Historians of Reconstruction in Texas consider Davis' reign as governor as one of the more productive, and positive, periods for African Americans in Texas during the 1870s. The use of contracts had faded away. Sharecropping remained in full force and would continue to ensnare African Americans throughout the 1870s. Additionally, during Davis's term the other two types of

tenancy gained force: the share tenant and the cash tenant. These forms of labor represented an attempt by African Americans to gain some sense of independent land ownership. These systems also sprang from a desire to control their own labor. Share tenant farmers, "were responsible for a determined number of acres, worked under [their] his own direction, owned the crop, and paid a portion of the produce as rent." Cash tenants would pay the rent with money. As tenant farmers, black women gained a certain level of autonomy because they owned the actual crop. However, one McLennan County observer pointed out the problem with the tenant system when he stated, "Many planters rent land, and when they see a prospect of a good crop ready to harvest, or partly harvested, threaten the lives of the F.M.C. and cause them to leave." When the system did work, a tenant usually paid a third to one-half of the corn and a fourth to one-half of the cotton. The tenant farmer took responsibility for his or her tools and did not have a direct obligation to purchase necessary materials from their employer. A major benefit of share and cash tenancy was that African Americans received a financial reward closely tied to their personal efforts with the crops. The share and cash tenant system continued, along with sharecropping, to last until past the parameters of this study. In McLennan County African-American women remained active in various forms of agricultural labors. According to the census, by 1880 exactly 200 women in the county cited agricultural labor as their occupation.[18]

The Davis administration also witnessed the movement of African-American women into fields newly created by the postwar economic boom in Texas. White women had dabbled in the realm of home production since the 1850s, but black women first had the opportunity to sell goods in 1865. Because during Presidential Reconstruction black women were required to have contracts, they often did home production in addition to their contract

job in order to produce extra income. African-American women, like white women, often failed to report their work within the home on census schedules.[19]

One of the main ways that women engaged in home production was through the cultivation of a small garden and the subsequent selling, or exchanging, of the produce. During slavery, women would grow gardens to supplement the family diet and/or to trade produce for items of need. After 1865, black women continued the tradition of gardening. They would plant the garden from various seeds that they gathered. Then, they gradually went through a process of picking and preserving the produce. Some of the produce was used the home, but most women reserved certain products for the outside market, including their former owners. Or, another option for African-American women was to take their produce to the public square which was used by farmers to market their various crops. Even more likely than a woman selling her produce herself was a process by which she sold her produce to her former owner or current landlord who then resold the produce, or consumed it.[20]

Women could also perform home production by creating other products, or providing raw materials to businesses in town. Black women, like other pioneers, often made their own soap, candles, and medicines. Excess candles could be sold or traded. Numerous women possessed an intimate knowledge of folk medicines passed down from generation to generation. They would gather the necessary ingredients and then mix these together within the home. If a neighbor needed a remedy for an ailment they would often seek out these women who produced medicines within the home. Another way for women to gain extra income was by providing raw products for newly formed businesses in Waco. The Waco Soap Factory, for example, advertised in local newspapers requesting, "Tallow, Soap, Grease, Spoiled Hog Meat, etc. for which we will pay Cash or Soap." Undoubtedly,

numerous women took advantage of this opportunity for supplemental income and began stashing the items requested. For African-American women home production provided an opportunity to gain additional income without breaking their backs in hard labor, as they often did during the day. The system of home production remained fairly consistent throughout the 1870s with the only exception being the growing competition from businesses in Waco who sold and produced similar products.[21]

Waco started to urbanize during the period of Radical Reconstruction. Due in part to urbanization and natural societal growth, African-American women found increased employment opportunities in fields that involved traditional women's work. The category of traditional women's work encompasses tasks that southern society viewed as appropriate for the female gender. Traditional work includes the service industries as well as professional craftsmanship. Black women remained an integral labor force for most of these fields until well after 1880.

A handful of African-American women worked as seamstresses. The 1880 census enumerates three seamstresses and one spooler. The directory for 1881-1882, compiled in 1880, lists one "Trice Fannie col dress-making" and numerous sack darners for the Waco Oil Works, a newly established business. Neither of these professions appeared in earlier directories. Unfortunately for historians, these numbers do not accurately reflect the actual employment situation. Many women most likely sewed outside of the home on a part-time basis, thus not including this work in the census returns. Willis Easter recalled that his mother was, "a master hand at spinnin' and weavin'. She made her own dye. Walnut and elm makes red dye and walnut brown color, and shumake makes black color. When you wants yellow color, git cedar moss out de brake." These intricate skills did not disappear following

emancipation, on the contrary women simply failed to separate their tasks as seamstress or dye-expert from the variety of other tasks performed within the domestic service industry. Overall, seamstresses worked for small businesses, did piecework, or labored in a factory. The amount of money that seamstresses actually made remains extremely difficult to trace. The employers left no extant records and the workers did not note how much they made. A good estimate would be that they received subsistence-level earnings.[22]

Black women also taught in the newly opening schools for African Americans. Waco established itself an academic center in the 1870s, with multiple schools focusing on both black and white students. A handful of female African-American teachers can be consistently identified from the city directories from 1878 through 1882. In 1878-79, Mrs. Nannie T. and Miss Mary W. Jones taught fifty African-American students at the South First Street Public School. During the same period, Miss Eleanora Owens taught 145 pupils as the second assistant at Howard Institute. In the following four years, both of the Jones women continued to work as teachers in the African American public school system and saw their enrollment double. From 1880-1882 at Howard Institute, Mrs. Mary Moore and Miss Cora L. Moore served as first assistant and assistant, respectively. Additionally, the census for 1880 lists five black female schoolteachers. These women often worked long hours with little recognition from the community. They were rarities because of their education and ability to teach others. The salaries of these women most likely ranged from $15 up to around $40. These estimates come from looking at the incomes of white female teachers in 1877, taking the lowest number of $40, and then going down to $15, the wages of an unskilled freedwoman laborer. An African-American teacher remained relatively safe as long as they taught only African-American students. It is important to note that tolerance for these women did not

equal respect. For example, a Waco sub-assistant commissioner for the Bureau reported that the schools were closed because the plantation owners needed the students as cotton pickers on the plantations, therefore depriving these teachers of both income and employment, unless of course they wanted to join their students.[23]

African-American women also served as midwives and wet nurses in McLennan County. They previously fulfilled both of these duties within the slave system so many of them already understood the skills associated with these jobs. One midwife was listed in the 1870 census and then four in 1880. The 1881-1882 Waco city directory listed three wet nurses. Midwives and wet nurses often worked where they were needed both in the black and white communities. They built a customer base and, with a reputation of competence and capability, might work consistently. No data exists regarding the amount of compensation these women received, but it depended greatly on the individual situation. Society did not want elite white women exhausted with the daily maintenance of the children.[24]

Numerous African-American women engaged in the traditional women's work of cooking. The 1870 census lists twenty-seven black female cooks which rose to 124 by 1880. The directories listed one in 1876 and six for 1881-1882. They worked for single individuals, families, or a variety of businesses. Cooking represented yet another task that women performed in slavery which then transferred into freedom. Just as in slavery a few women were particularly praised for their cooking skills. J. W. Downs, the white, elite editor of the Waco *Daily Examiner* wrote a note in the newspaper in November 1875 praising and "thanking local colored cook Martha Downs for a nice dinner." Martha lived in the alley between South First and Second, and Bridge and Franklin streets and earned quite a reputation in the town for her culinary skills. Household cooks either lived within their

employer's home or in a nearby house, cabin, or shack. Catherine Harrison, a former slave, stayed with the Harrison family after freedom and continued to cook for them. She lived in a house with other servants who also worked for the Harrisons. A group of women worked as cooks for the hotels, boarding houses, and restaurants within the city. The Sturgis House, McClelland Hotel, Central City Hotel, and Taylor House all employed female African-American cooks during the late 1870s. They made roughly the same salary as that of domestic servants, usually a couple of dollars a month, plus room and board, depending on the individual arrangement. Women barely survived on these funds, as so aptly illustrated by the case of local cook Bettie Mullens, around thirty years old, who suddenly died in 1876 and who was buried at "county expense."[25]

Society encouraged African-American women to take on another extension of former slave tasks as they became laundresses and washerwomen. Both individuals and businesses employed African-American women for these particularly grueling tasks. In 1870 a total of thirteen women listed "washerwoman" or "laundress" as their profession. By 1880 those numbers climbed to 148. These women led hard lives as laundry still involved, "boiling clothes in a pot over an open fire, rubbing them on a rub board, and wringing them before hanging them to dry and then ironing them with flat irons. It was hot, heavy work, which women uniformly dreaded." The company Waco Steam Laundry, also known as Arnold and Hayden, hired the largest numbers of female African-American workers. As with most of the jobs discussed in this paper, the pay for women working at laundries stayed at subsistence level.[26]

Substantial numbers of black women worked in the domestic service and housekeeping fields. Both individuals and businesses employed women for these positions.

The census of 1880 counted 146 women engaged in various arenas of domestic service. Women in these domestic fields faced the difficult task of often living in close quarters with the families for whom they worked. Domestic servants often cooked, cleaned, washed, sewed, and a large variety of other tasks. They often worked arduous hours, essentially at the beck and call of masters anytime of the day or night. Domestic servants typically earned an average salary of five dollars per month, although some women faced the obstacle of no pay, or payment in goods such as food or rundown items. Planter society expected black women to take jobs as domestic laborers. Although some people preferred to hire white servants, the numbers of black female servants remained high throughout the 1870s. [27]

Those women who came out of slavery with few skills had little to offer the burgeoning urban area of Waco, except for their bodies. The sex trade, a traditional woman's work, grew with an influx of African-American women after emancipation. According to the census, seven black female prostitutes roamed the city in 1880, as opposed to one in 1870. The women often worked on their own on the streets, boarded in a house with other prostitutes, or gave themselves over to the guidance of a madam brothel owner. A local newspaper editor lamented, "there are over fifty bawdy houses, white and black, in Waco. . . . If vigorous steps are not soon taken to suppress them, Waco will lose her good name for morality and order." The scarlet women of Waco continually found themselves on the wrong side of the law. A few women continually showed up at the court for various offenses, often against one another. In 1876, a particularly large arrest of prostitutes led to five white and ten black women being charged with vagrancy and fined $1apiece. One of the interesting aspects when studying these women is that many of them did make enough money to survive upon, for a little while at least. In part, their income can be gauged by the fact that many of the

prostitutes arrested in Waco paid their fines, were released, and got re-arrested in a fairly regular cycle. Obviously, this profession took its toll on both the mental and physical aspects of these women.[28]

African-American women participated heavily in the economic market from 1850 to 1880. During slavery they did not receive compensation, but their labors helped to build McLennan County. Additionally, throughout the Reconstruction period black female agricultural laborers served as a much needed labor force following the end of slavery. When the opportunity to work in an urban setting arrived, African-American women took up this opportunity in the hopes of bettering their financial situation.

[1]George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* vol. 5, pt. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 242-5; Census Database 1870.

[2]United States Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D. C., 1864), 475, 480; Tax Roll Database; Bill of Sale, McLennan County, 12 January 1852, Barnard(George) Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Bill of Sale, McLennan County, 22 August 1853, Barnard (George) Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[3]Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 123; Rawick, *American Slave*, v. 5, pt. 1, 117-20; Abigail Curlee, "A Study of Texas Slave Plantations 1822 to 1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1932), 160; Garner, "Bosqueville," 42.

[4]Rawick, *American Slave*, v. 10, 4282-3; Wallace, *A Spirit*, 30-1.

[5]Campbell, *An Empire*, 131-3; Garner, "Bosquevile," 48.

[6]Campbell, *An Empire*, 131-3.

[7]G. N. Jacques to Adaline Graves, 2 November 1862, Graves-Earle Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; "Henry" to "Hennie," 2 November 1863, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[8]"Edward" to Mrs. James E. Carter, 29 July 1863, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; John Sleeper, *John Sleeper: A Life Story*, TMs, Sleeper (John) Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[9]Rawick, *American Slave*, v. 5, pt. 1, 160-2.

[10]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880.

[11]Calvert, De Leon, and Cantrell, *History*, 148-68; Moneyhon, *Texas*, 23, 24, 56-69, 166.

[12]Moneyhon, *Texas*, 7, 19, 22.

[13]Moneyhon, *Texas*, 23-4, 58; Keith Krawczynski, "The Agricultural Labor of Black Texans as Slaves and as Freedmen" (Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1989), 68.

[14]Calvert, De Leon, and Cantrell, *History*, 151, 154; Moneyhon, *Texas*, 33, 56-60; Krawczynski, "Agricultural Labor," 68.

[15]Campbell, *Grass-Roots*, 168; Moneyhon, *Texas*, 65; Report of Operations and Conditions, April 1868, U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

[16]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 54-5; Moneyon, *Texas*, 67, 69, 166.

[17]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 54-5; Report of Operations and Conditions, April 1868, U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands; Rawick, *American Slave*, v. 5, pt. 4, 182-6.

[18]Moneyhon, *Texas*, 166, 168; Kelley, "Plantation Frontiers," 333; Report of Operations and Conditions, March 1868, April 1868, U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands; Census Database 1880. The census enumerators used various terms which, for purposes of clarity, all fall within the

realm of agricultural labor, such as "farm laborer," "farmer," "laborer," "works," "field hand," "farm hand," "f laborer," "emp on farm," and "labors."

[19]Moneyhon, *Texas*, 166, 168.

[20]Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 3 January 1874, p. 3; Sharpless, *African American Women*, 9-10; Campbell, *An Empire*, 130-1; Curry, *A History,* 11.

[21]Wallace, *A Spirit*, 23; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 26 July 1876, p. 2.

[22]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 124; Rawick, *American Slave*, v. 5, pt. 2, 1-4; Curry, *A History*, 144.

[23]Morrison, comp., *Directory 1878-1879*, 26; Morrison, comp., *Directory 1880-1881*, 11; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 29; United States Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1866), 512; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 7 January 1876, p. 3; Report of Operations and Conditions, October 1868, United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Texas. National Archives, Washington, D.C., Record Group 105, Microfilm.

[24]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 71, 132.

[25]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Sleeper and Hutchins, comp., *City Directory,* 117; Waldo, comp., *Directory 1881-1882*, 47-134; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 7 November 1875, p. 3; Diary of Henrietta Hardin Carter Harrison, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, Archives, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[26]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Sharpless, *African American Women*, 12-13.

[27]Sharpless, *African American Women*, 11-12; Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook: Documents, Biographies, Timeline* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 279. I chose to separate the discussion of domestic service and housekeeping because, although cooking and wash work represents a part of the labors, not all cooks were domestic servants. Some cooks worked in hotels and washerwomen often worked in businesses, thus not falling under the categorization of domestic labor.

[28]Census Database 1870; Census Database 1880; Johnson, "Prostitution," 7, 14; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 5 November 1875, p. 3; Waco *Daily Examiner* (Waco), 14 March 1876, p. 3.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION, 1850-1880

In the antebellum period, single women in McLennan County survived by working, managing inherited estates, or relying on male relatives. In contrast, married women rarely worked outside of the home, hence they occupied a hidden place in the economic market of McLennan County. Southern society in the 1850s did not encourage open economic participation by women, especially those who were married. During the war, married women, now left alone without their husbands, joined their single counterparts by participating in the market in a variety of ways. They managed plantations, opened businesses, worked in Waco, initiated land trades, and advertised publicly. Throughout the war years, women's activities in the economic sphere reached a degree never witnessed before in the county. McLennan County residents understood the need for women to step-up their participation in the economy in order to help Waco compete with other cities commercially, therefore women's activities were partially sanctioned.

I argue in this thesis that the Civil War and the coinciding urbanization of Waco provided the opportunity for large numbers of women to engage in the market. In addition, these women continued to actively work, trade, and negotiate within the market during the 1870s. Society encouraged this participation through praising editorials, patronage of women-owned businesses, partnership in female-initiated land trades, and a constant supply of work opportunities for women. To begin to understand the choices and actions of women in McLennan County during this period it proves necessary to trace their activities in the market from 1850 to 1880.

McLennan County represents only one piece of a large puzzle encompassing the South during Reconstruction and beyond. By learning how the Civil War impacted this community perhaps it can tell us something about how other growing cities changed during the war. In addition, the story of the New South in many ways is the story of competing cities. Without understanding the role of women's work within these growing cities, the arguments surrounding the New South, boosterism, and urbanization remain incomplete. The activities of women in McLennan County also illuminate certain aspects of life in Texas during the frontier, antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods. Women were not merely passive observers in the development of Texas, but active participants involved in shaping the landscape around them. In addition, their involvement was not a source of contention, but representative of cooperation forged out of economic necessity. The role that economics plays in impacting gender roles can also tell us a great deal about how gender ideals are shaped and how they alter to fit certain circumstances. Perhaps the public and private spheres need to be further examined in areas with developing frontier economies. In general, I hope that this thesis complicates the way that historians view the relationship between women and economics in Texas during the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

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ABSTRACT

THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN IN MCLENNAN COUNTY, TEXAS, 1850-1880

by Robin Christine Tippett, M.A., 2006.
Department of History
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In the antebellum period, single women in McLennan County survived by working, managing inherited estates, or relying on male relatives. In contrast, married women rarely worked outside of the home, hence they occupied a hidden place in the county's economy. During the war, married women, now left alone without their husbands, joined their single counterparts by participating in the market in a variety of ways. They managed plantations, opened businesses, worked in Waco, initiated land trades, and advertised publicly.

I argue in this paper that the Civil War and the coinciding urbanization of Waco provided the opportunity for large numbers of women to engage in the market. In addition, these women continued to actively work, trade, and negotiate within the market during the 1870s. Society encouraged this participation through praising editorials, patronage of women-owned businesses, partnership in female-initiated land trades, and a constant supply of work opportunities for women.