REDEEMER'S CARNIVAL: THE URBAN DRAMA OF RECONSTRUCTION

IN NEW ORLEANS

by

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(Under the direction of James Cobb)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an urban study of New Orleans during Reconstruction. Using the technique of prosipography, it tells the tale of a diverse group of people, their struggle to adapt to the uncertain world of postbellum society, and how the volatile politics of the period changed their lives. The events of Reconstruction re-ordered New Orleans's political, social, and cultural institutions, leaving behind a legacy whose influences are still felt today in the areas of politics, race, and Mardi Gras.

The focus of this work is on the Redeemers and their quest to restore the Democratic Party to power in Louisiana. The Republican Party in Louisiana did not merely collapse under the weight of its own considerable contradictions; it was actively ejected from power. This dissertation looks at the difficulties encountered by the Redeemers as they worked toward their objective. It also reappraises the Redeemers themselves, revealing that Lost Cause mythology had purposefully distorted their crusade and greatly overstated the level of unity among conservative southern white men.

The rifts in the Redeemers' ranks were so profound that they frequently prevented these men from successfully capitalizing on an otherwise weak and divided Republican opponent.

Ultimately, discontent over the repeated failure of moderate political movements in New Orleans such as Fusionism and the Unification movement soured the more progressive of Redeemers on the idea of compromise and brought about a far more strident agent of Redemption – the White League. The paramilitary nature of the White League emerged from both the need to intimidate the Republican Party, but to also obviate white ambivalence about the political process.

The political drama of Reconstruction also brought about profound change for New Orleans's Afro-Creole population. As a political issue, race increasingly polarized the city's inhabitants. The White League campaign drove some fair-skinned Afro-Creoles to "pass" into white society – either in New Orleans, or by starting anew in another city.

Reconstruction also completely reshaped New Orleans's Carnival. The Krewe of Rex emerged not only out of the pressures of Republican rule, but also from the infighting between conservatives themselves. Carnival helped to reestablish the political legitimacy of the Redeemers in New Orleans by first firmly establishing their cultural authority.

INDEX WORDS: Reconstruction, Louisiana, New Orleans, Afro-Creole, Redeemers, Rex Mardi Gras, Carnival, Comus, White League, Unification Movement, Henry Clay Warmoth, E. John Ellis, P.B.S. Pinchback, Frederick Nash Ogden, Davidson Bradfute Penn, William Pitt Kellogg, Louise Drouet, Edmund Arthur Toledano, Michel Musson, Edgar Degas, Metropolitan Police, Algernon Sydney Badger

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When I arrived in Athens in the fall of 1998, I was almost completely ignorant of the ways of the historical profession, let alone what was expected of a graduate student in history. Nearly ten years in corporate America had proven utterly worthless to me in my new venture. In light of this fact, it remains a mystery to me why so many good people would have voluntarily become involved in my work. Despite of my penchant for ignoring sound advice, most of these same people managed to leave their mark, and in the process, helped me become a better scholar.

There is simply no telling what an incoherent jumble of text my manuscript would have been without the judicious editing of my dissertation director, Jim Cobb. When I returned from New Orleans after the summer of 2003, I could tell he had some doubts about my plans to completely re-write the dissertation, yet he patiently listened anyhow. In the end, he read, edited, and offered sage advice on not one, but two entirely different versions of my project. Of course, all of these remarks also apply to John Inscoe, who has worked with me from the time I first arrived in Athens.

The wisdom of my decision to attend graduate school was not universally appreciated among my friends and even a few relatives. After all, it was one-hundred eighty degrees opposite of almost anything I had ever done before. That my mother, herself a PhD in history and college professor, might be thoroughly supportive of me was not a surprise. Other than my desire for a motorcycle, she has been behind me my entire life. I was pleasantly surprised, however, that my father also supported this decision, despite the dubious prospects of remuneration from becoming an historian. This made a big difference throughout graduate school.

Several other historians have helped me immensely by reading a draft of my manuscript. Bill Stueck, Peter Hoffer, and Thomas Whigham at the University of Georgia and Judith Kelleher Schaffer at Tulane all offered useful comments and encouragement.

My fellow graduate students at the University of Georgia have also been a tremendous source of support and intellectual stimulation. In particular, Franklin Forts, Bruce Stewart, John Hayes, Eric Millen, and Steve Nash have patiently listened to me drone on about Reconstruction and the Redeemers more than once over a pint of beer.

Lastly, no research is possible without the help of archivists. At the top of this list are Greg Osborn, Wayne Everard, and Irene Wainwright at the New Orleans Public Library. It never ceases to amaze how they do so much with so few resources – yet they do. Additionally, John C. Kelly at the Earl K. Long library at the University of New Orleans and Leon Miller at Tulane University provided crucial assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY THE REDEEMERS?

Nearly twenty years after its appearance, Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* remains the most definitive single-volume scholarship on the subject. In 1995, Foner collaborated with the Valentine Museum in Richmond to develop a traveling exhibit based upon his monumental work. A greatly-condensed companion version of *Reconstruction* accompanied the new exhibit, bringing his "post-revisionist" interpretation to a wide museum-going audience. Frank Jewell, the museum's director, explained the moral imperative behind such an ambitious undertaking this way: "A distorted view of Reconstruction remains integral to an all-too-easy rationalization for gross injustice and new interpretations of what Foner calls an unfinished revolution that began during the Civil War."[1]

The subtitle of Foner's work, "Unfinished Revolution," speaks to his vision of Reconstruction's grander purpose. Employing a teleological perspective, he creates an unbroken continuum between Reconstruction and what he portrays as its ultimate fulfillment, the Civil Rights Movement. As a result, race, the politics of race, and the landmark constitutional changes of the era dominate Foner's study of the post-Civil War South. Like many of the revisionists before him, Foner establishes a morality play pitting true Radical Republicans – the "good guys," against self-interested Republicans and unenlightened Democratic Redeemers – the "bad guys." By providing an enormous body of evidence, Foner's *Reconstruction* offers a convincing

[1] Eric Foner, Reconstruction: *America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *America's Reconstruction: People and Politics after the Civil War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995) 9

justification for such a morality play. Unquestionably, race played a pivotal role, indeed, perhaps *the* key role in determining the final outcome of Reconstruction.

Yet the ease with which historians draw parallels between Reconstruction and the Civil Rights movement often obscures the fact that they were two fundamentally different periods in the American experience. Despite its many turbulent episodes, the Civil Rights Movement did not endanger the underlying stability of American institutions. Indeed, it only made them stronger. In contrast, the political, economic, and social turmoil of Reconstruction threatened to sever the fragile sutures with which the republic had been sewn back together. Any study of post-bellum America would be fundamentally flawed without addressing the issue of race, but it was not the only question without a concrete answer in 1865. The cataclysmic events of the Civil War thoroughly upset the life-patterns of a diverse population of people, both on the battlefield and at the home front. By the end of the war, many antebellum institutions had either been shattered completely or so dramatically rearranged as to no longer resemble the original, particularly in the South. Thus, if there is a more basic underlying theme to Reconstruction, it is the struggle by individuals to adapt to the uncertainty of post-bellum society.

To challenge Foner's teleological view is not to cheapen the monumental accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement nor is it to marginalize the pivotal role played by race in the outcome of Reconstruction. Furthermore, to question of Reconstruction's familiar scripting as a morality play in favor of a new interpretation is not, as Frank Jewell warned, to perpetrate a "gross injustice" upon the lexicon of American political thought. Rather, it is to suggest that such a teleological model distorts the intentions of Reconstruction's actors by projecting the concerns of modern society upon them. Without question, race played a central

role, but when Reconstruction is viewed on a more atomic scale, other factors emerge in the decision making process of a people coming to grips with a new society.

One can draw a parallel to America's ongoing nation building effort in present-day Iraq. Equitably recognizing the rights of minorities, both ethnic and religious, presents a profound challenge to those charged with stabilizing this society. Yet the most fundamental task in reconstructing Iraq is the creation of a legitimate civil government. The chief impediment to this process, in addition to a highly disruptive and active terrorist network, is the tremendous uncertainty felt by everyday citizens over their future. Nobody enjoys the luxury of knowing how events will ultimately pan out. As a result, the essential struggle between the West and Islamic Fundamentalism is for the hearts, minds, and political cooperation of undecided Iraqis who are themselves adjusting to profound change in their everyday lives. Perhaps this is how many Americans, particularly those in the South, felt during Reconstruction. Without question, race plays a more central role in American history than it does in the Middle-East, but the process of rebuilding a nation after a destructive war and amid smoldering political hatreds is a far more daunting task than establishing racial justice alone. The panoply of harrowing problems now facing Iraq resembles what the American nation confronted after Appomattox.

Another consistent trend in Reconstruction historiography has been to focus on the Republicans as the "good guys." Again, the teleological pull of the Civil Rights Movement has caused historians to look for revolutions unfinished rather than counterrevolutions achieved. From a historiographic standpoint, the Redeemers seemingly emerge whole with the dawning of the New South. Their actions between Appomattox and the Compromise of 1877 remain one of Reconstruction's least studied aspects. Michael Perman observed this tendency in a 1991 essay on the role of violence in southern Redemption. Although a few important works on the

Redeemers have enriched the scholarship of Reconstruction, historians continue to ask why Congressional Reconstruction failed. Perhaps the similar obsession with the Confederacy's demise betrays a human sympathy for the loser. As a friend once opined, "nobody roots for U.S. Steel."[2]

Nonetheless, the Redeemers did emerge victorious. The overwhelming mass of scholarship on Republicanism in the South seems to assume the inevitability of this result – that nationwide racism had stacked the deck against Radical success. Yet, as Perman observes, "Reconstruction did not simply collapse; it was overthrown, even eliminated, by the action of its adversaries." Indeed, as Congressional Reconstruction began, few Redeemers believed in the inevitability of white Democratic resurgence. Instead, through fits and starts, they eventually crafted a successful strategy toward that end.[3]

This work examines the dramatic events of Reconstruction in the South's largest city, New Orleans. The unique social dynamics of this fascinating town place inherent limitations on THE breadth of scholarly conclusions. Yet such an urban-based study provides the opportunity to examine Reconstruction on a more human scale. By constructing a group biography, or prosopography, this narrative follows the fortunes of a set of actors whose lives collided amidst the unfolding drama of war, Reconstruction, and Redemption in the Crescent City. Through the

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[2] Michael Perman, "Counter Reconstruction: The Role of Violence in Southern Redemption," in Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *The Facts of Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of John Hope Franklin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991) 100-121; Perhaps the first work to take seriously the Redeemers looked at Reconstruction violence. Allen W. Trelease, White Terror: *The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); For a more thorough look at the political aspects of Redemption, see William Gillette, *Retreat From Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Recent works on Reconstruction bear out the fact that the continuing tendency is to focus on Republicanism. See Ted Tunnell, *Edge of the Sword: The Ordeal of Carpetbagger Marshall H. Twitchell in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), James Alex Baggett, *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2003)

[3] Perman, "Counter Reconstruction," 139

eyes of these individuals, one discovers that although race loomed large in many of their decisions, other powerful forces influenced the choices that they made. Perhaps the greatest commonality among each of these actors was their desire to harness the uncertainty of the era in order to forge a world more amenable to their aspirations.

The dominant actors in this drama are the morality play's "bad guys" – the Redeemers. Although represented in this work by a small and wholly unscientific sample of men, this collection of conservatives reveals that those engaged in the Redeemer's struggle for political and social restoration exhibited a remarkable diversity of personality and ambitions. Their private burdens and unique pasts guided the actions of these men as much if not more than any abstract political ideology.

It is easy to underestimate how much Lost Cause rhetoric continues to shape our perception of the Redeemers. The generation of historians who followed them crafted a hagiography that glorified the Redeemers' most repugnant actions in order to legitimize their own generation's racist political objectives. Although this Dunning school perception of the Redemption crusade was not entirely without foundation, it also possessed an equally curious ability to erase from the South's collective memory just how deeply divided these men were before their temporary unity brought about an end to Reconstruction. In the fantasy world of Thomas Dixon's *Clansman*, the Redeemers were portrayed no more accurately than were the carpetbaggers and their black allies.[4]

Most scholarship on the Redeemers focuses upon the role of violence as a political tool. Perman, George Rable, and Allan Trelease all arrive at similar conclusions about the utility of

[4] "Dunning School" refers to the influential work of William Archibald Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* (New York: 1907); Vestiges of the Dunning interpretation of Reconstruction lasted well into the 1950s. For the last major work of this kind, see E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1947); Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An American Drama* (New York: American News Co., 1905)

physical intimidation upon *Republican* voters. Although Michael Perman argues that organized violence and intimidation were not "merely accessories or incidentals, they were [the Redeemers'] essence," he also acknowledges that even as late as Reconstruction's last election in 1876, conservative white violence did not significantly depress black voter turnout. Indeed, violent suppression of Republican support was only part of the strategy. Forging white unity was every bit as essential to the Redeemers, if not more. The pageantry and hoopla of Red Shirts and White Leaguers aimed at energizing the remarkably large numbers of otherwise disaffected or ambivalent southern white voters. Without question, well-documented episodes of remorseless Redeemer violence such as the 1874 massacre of Republican officeholders in Coushatta, Louisiana demonstrated the Redeemers' capacity for evil. At the same time, leaders of New Orleans's White League chapter also saw the movement as an opportunity to finally mitigate years of futile discord among conservatives.[5]

No study of the Redeemers would be complete without examining their interaction with Republicanism, and it is amazing just how tight that relationship was at times. Many of the men who ultimately became Redeemers flirted with or even had full-blown affairs with the Republican Party. The political strategy of "carpetbagger" governor Henry Clay Warmoth, a man Foner considers illustrative "of some of the less attractive features of Reconstruction politics," greatly undermined white conservative unity by providing a viable alternative to those harboring antipathy toward the Democracy at war's end. Indeed, this dissent within conservative ranks caused Louisiana to be among the last states redeemed. By the conventional definition, these

[5] Perman, "Counter Reconstruction," 121, 133-134

dissenting Redeemers might not have been true "scalawags," but they bore a striking resemblance to them.[6]

If the relationship between carpetbaggers and erstwhile Redeemers was at times warm, the bonds between the Redeemers and the Afro-Creole community were, quite literally, intimate. No single group of people felt the impact of Redemption more than this separate caste in nineteenth-century New Orleans. Reconstruction began with great promise for Afro-Creoles, yet its conclusion forced many to decide between their own mixed-race heritage and the desire to enjoy privileges accorded only to whites through the phenomenon of "passing." The forces of Redemption ruptured irreparably the bonds between Afro-Creoles and their white blood relations.

New Orleans's most defining cultural institution, Mardi Gras, also helped define the political dynamics of the city during Reconstruction. In turn, political institutions altered the function and purpose of Carnival. It was far more than an outlet for the pent-up anxieties of the city's elite white men or just another clever vehicle for political expression. Organized Carnival served as a metaphor for the ongoing struggle not only between Redeemers and Republicans, but ultimately, among the Redeemers themselves. At a much more fundamental level, the emergence of Rex, Carnival's king, gave a physical presence to the social primacy and political legitimacy sought by the New Orleans's white elite. In this regard, Carnival served as a dress rehearsal for Redemption.

Redemption was overwhelmingly a youth movement in New Orleans. The familiar Woodwardian dialogue of the persistence or lack thereof of the antebellum planter elite may not be the key sociological question following the war in the South's largest city. A more striking

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[6] Foner, *America's Reconstruction*, 116; For a definition of "scalawag," see Allan Trelease, "Who Were the Scalawags?" in Kenneth Stampp and Leon F. Litwack, eds., *Reconstruction: An Anthology of Revisionist Writings* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969) 299-322

phenomenon is the replacement of antebellum political figures with an emergent generation of youthful leadership. Paul Gaston has documented the youthfulness of New South leaders in his classic work, *The New South Creed*, but this generational change actually began early in the Redemption struggle. Although a few older leaders remained, the initiative passed to political figures under the age of forty. Moreover, the majority of those who followed this new generation of leaders, in fact the rank and file of the Redeemer movement, were not the Civil War veterans of Lost Cause lore, but those who had grown into their manhood under the rule of the Republicans. Redemption ushered in a major generational change in the city's political leadership.[7]

Lastly, it almost seems too obvious to state that the events of the war mattered, but they did, in fact, matter quite profoundly. For the generation of young men who left home in 1861, the conflict was the defining experience of their lives, and for some, it provided opportunities that simply would not have existed in peacetime. It also mattered for those who stayed home, particularly in the South, and in this case, New Orleans. From the very young to the very old, changes brought by early federal occupation left few residents unaffected, and in turn it shaped their outlook toward Reconstruction.

Historians have given carpetbaggers and scalawags considerable attention over the last forty years, rendering a much-needed reappraisal of those complex groups of individuals. It remains to be seen whether the Redeemers will ultimately receive similar attention for their actions during Reconstruction as opposed to their lives in the New South period that followed. In its own finite approach, this work is attempts to address that need.

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[7] The landmark "Woodwardian" argument against planter persistence stems from C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Myth-Making* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970)

CHAPTER I

"POOR NEW ORLEANS! WHAT HAS BECOME OF YOUR PROMISED GREATNESS?"

"It is the custom here to keep up a continual firing of guns, pistols, all night long on the demise of the old year. Long after we retired, shot after shot echoed thro' the still moonlight.……Long may we be unused to, ought save the mimicry of war, and its stern realities forever averted from this eminently peaceful soil."- Thomas K. Wharton, December 31, 1854 [1]

Antebellum New Orleans had come a long way from the days when the first French explorers carved out the wilderness the beginnings of a town. The city reflected the collective ambition of generations of new arrivals who had brought to the city their dreams, intelligence, and industry, and made it into something truly great, both materially and culturally. It was an exciting time of tremendous growth where little remained the same from year to year. To be certain, antebellum New Orleans was not without its dangers and detractors, but for many the benefits far outweighed the risks. Yet it was a world that would not last. The secession crisis and ensuing Civil War brought the curtain down on decades of prosperity, and in its place came a period of uncertainty and turmoil. Without a doubt, new opportunities emerged in post-bellum New Orleans, but the memory of the once vibrant, optimistic city before the war would return to haunt later generations.

The Crescent City had grown so fast in the fifty years following the Louisiana Purchase that it became unquestionably the economic capitol of the South and one of the nation's greatest

[1] Samuel Wilson Jr, and Patricia Brady, eds. *Queen of the South: New Orleans, 1853-1862: The Journal of Thomas K. Wharton*, (New Orleans: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1999) 60. Wharton was the chief draftsman for the United States Custom House on Canal Street.

cities. The city grew by a staggering 45 percent during the decade of the 1850s alone, outpacing both Boston and Cincinnati and nearly keeping up with immigrant-rich New York City. Louisiana's antebellum per-capita income was second in the nation and first in the South. Over 659,000 tons of imported goods arrived at the city's wharves in 1859, third in the nation behind only Boston and New York. On the eve of the Civil War, the city's 168,675 residents made it the fifth largest city in the nation and over three times the size of Charleston, South Carolina, the next largest metropolis in the region.[2]

The ethnic composition of antebellum New Orleans resembled a fabulously detailed tapestry. African, French, Spanish, German, English, and Irish were the dominant cultures before the war. Some came directly from the continents of Africa and Europe, while others emigrated by way of the United States or through the tumultuous colonial slave societies of the Caribbean. Some arrived against their will, while others purposely made the Crescent City their destination. A rigid Englishman visiting antebellum New Orleans derisively noted that in the French Quarter, the population "partook strongly of the character of the latitude it was in, a medley of Spaniards, Brazilians, West Indians, French Creoles, and breeds of all these mixed up with the negro stock. I think I never met one person without a cigar in his mouth, and taking it altogether, I never saw a more piratical-looking population before." Frederick Law Olmsted also noted a collision of cultures in the streets: "Three taverns, bearing the sign of 'The Pig and Whistle,' indicated the recent English, a cabaret to the Universal Republic, with a red flag, the French, and the Gasthaus zum Rheinplatz, the Teutonic contributions to the strength of our

[2] *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Vol. 1, 1878 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878); *7th Census, Vol.1, Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington: GPO, 1862)

nation. A policeman, with the richest Irish brogue, directed me back to the St. Charles [Hotel]." At mid-nineteenth century, the Queen City of the South was a very diverse place.[3]

Unique in the United States, indeed, unique in the Western Hemisphere, New Orleans developed a distinctive brand of Creole identity. The term "Creole" throughout the New World has had many meanings, and its proper definition depends highly upon both time and place. As noted Louisiana historian Joseph G. Tregle, Jr. points out, however, that to call a person a "Creole" in late antebellum New Orleans, one "meant that he was native to the state, whether white or black, free or slave, Gallic or Yankee." At the same time, "Creole" carried Gallic connotations. This implied that to truly be a Creole, one had to belong to the *ancienne population* – of Latin ancestry and born in New Orleans before the American period. Creoles could be white or black, free or slave.[4]

The Americans stood apart from the Creoles and immigrants in New Orleans. These Anglos increasingly dominated the city's economic sector following the Louisiana Purchase, and their arrival in large numbers after 1803 attracted almost immediate antagonism from the declining Creole power structure. They brought with immediate changes, not the least of which was an American style of republican democracy. English replaced French as the language of commerce, law, and increasingly, politics. Under pressure to maintain their cultural primacy amidst a flood of English-speaking Americans and a polyglot mass of immigrants, fueled in part

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[3] G.W. Featherstonhaugh. *Excursion Through the Slave States: From Washington on the Potomac to the Frontier of Mexico; With Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844)140; Frederick Law Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861) 295

[4] Joseph G. Tregle, Jr. "Creoles and Americans," in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, eds., *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) 140; For a discussion of the variant definitions of "Creole," particularly in Afro-Creole terms see Sybil Kein, ed. *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) xiii-xvii, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture," in *Creole New Orleans*, 60-61

by a sense of self-pity, some Creoles stubbornly clung to whatever source of power they could find, particularly in city politics.

To say that all Creoles and Americans held each other at arm's length would be a gross misrepresentation, for some Creoles actively engaged in the Yankee world of "acquisitiveness" and commerce. But at the relationship's worst, mortified Protestant Americans stood in brittle judgment of what they considered the immoral and indulgent Catholic Creoles, while Creoles wallowed gratuitously in the glorification of their supposedly elevated gentility, Gallic sophistication, and glorious past. Yet no social construction could mask the unmistakable reality that the old Creole elite had been largely supplanted by newcomers from the East.[5]

Ironically, it was the arrival of the Americans that gave the term "Creole" such currency in New Orleans. In order to distinguish themselves culturally from the Americans, Creoles redoubled their efforts to maintain their unique identity amidst challenges from a rising and pervasive Yankee culture. Irish and German immigrants added to the marginalization of Creoles, diluting their numbers and corresponding influence. Yet, at the same time, Creole society persisted through its merger with the Americans and to a lesser degree, the immigrants. Intermarriage, business association, and fraternal clubs increasingly bound these dissimilar cultures and eventually muted some of the antagonism.[6]

A massive influx of European immigrants during the nineteenth century made New Orleans strikingly different than the rest of the South. On the eve of the Civil War, nearly half of the city's free population came from somewhere other than America. Although the majority of Louisianans were enslaved blacks, New Orleans was 85 percent white, with the balance of the population closely divided between slaves and free blacks. Irish immigrants occupied the lowest

[5] Tregle, "Creoles and Americans," 156-159, 167
[6] Ibid, 133-134, 155-157

rung on the white social ladder, and at times found themselves working under more skilled free people of color. Observing a group of brick masons working on Canal Street, a recent arrival noted "a [N]egro carrying some mortar, when another [N]egro hailed him with a loud laugh: 'Hallo! You is turned Irishman, is 'ou?'"[7]

Socially, however, white New Orleanians of all origins occupied the highest tier of a three-caste racial system. Free blacks represented the middle tier, while slaves languished at the bottom. The city's free Afro-Creole elite had carved out a special status for themselves long before the arrival of the Americans. Spanish colonial law protected both the process of self-purchase and the rights of third parties to purchase and manumit slaves, and many of New Orleans's free people of color had taken advantage of such opportunity. The arrival of refugees fleeing slave rebellion in St. Domingue had augmented this growing population of free blacks, and included a significant number of free colored men who themselves owned slaves.[8]

Other members of New Orleans's free colored community were the product of plaçage unions. Predominantly within the Creole community, plaçage consisted of an arranged sexual relationship outside the bounds of marriage between white men and typically "quadroon" or "octoroon" women. Brokered between a female guardian of the young placée and the man to whom she would become a mistress, these agreements often involved significant financial support on the part of the man, including direct monetary support and living accommodations, typically a rented house. That the man would also financially support offspring of the union was also an expectation, even beyond the length of the relationship. Often, a placée came from a family where for several generations the women served as mistresses to white men. Observed

[7] Ibid, 163-165, Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans," in Ibid, 206; Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 297

[8] Kinberly S. Hangar, "Origins of New Orleans's Free Creoles of Color," in *Creoles of Color of the Gulf South*, ed. James H. Dormon (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996) 22-23; Lachance, "The Foreign French," 103-114

one traveler, "[s]uch woman being over-educated for the males of her own caste, is therefore destined from her birth to be a mistress, and great pains are lavished upon her education, not to enable her to aspire to be a wife, but give her those attractions which a keeper requires."[9]

Plaçage or "quadroon" balls became part of New Orleans's Creole lore. Nineteenth century travelers wrote tales of young, refined, Afro-Creole women, frequently so fair that they could pass for white, attending elaborately governed masquerade balls for the expressed purpose of forming liaisons with white men. But the level of decorum found at such events also depended upon the financial circumstances of both the white man and the family of the potential placée. In the 1830s, Benjamin Latrobe described a quadroon ball for which he had paid an admission fee of only one dollar. Despite the low cost of his ticket, he was favorably impressed with the beauty and rectitude of the ladies and their chaperones, though far less respectable balls were also part of this world.

At the elite end of the spectrum were the events staged under the auspices of the *Société Cordon Bleu*, whose members were wealthy free Afro-Creole families. By making the *Bal de Cordon Bleu* an invitation-only affair, these families established exacting standards for the type of white Creole man that might become their daughter's protector. Despite all of the pomp, formality, and perhaps even romance that could surround this social custom, it is also very easy to over-idealize. At their worst, such gatherings were little more than an elaborate form of prostitution. As historian Joan M. Martin points out, whether for upper or merely middle class Afro-Creole women, plaçage served primarily as a survival skill in a society where the presence of African blood circumscribed their marital options among free men.[10]

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[9] Featherstonhaugh, *Travels in America*, 141

[10] Violet Harrington Bryan, "Marcus Christian's Treatment of *Les Gens de Coleur Libre*," in ed. Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 50-53; Joan M. Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Coleur Libre*: How Race and Sex Defined the

Although some free people of color descended from Anglos, most were not only hereditarily Creole, but self-consciously, culturally Afro-Creole and European in outlook. Not only was French their mother tongue, they embraced French custom and culture every bit as assiduously as their white Creole counterparts. *Les Cenelles*, a volume of poetry published by Creole of color Armand Lanusse in 1845 served as a manifestation of the maturity of Afro-Creole arts and culture. Many prominent of the Creoles of color received education in Paris including Victor Séjour and Pierre Dalcour, both contributors to *Les Cenelles*.[11]

Despite the value they brought to the community of the community, free people of color remained second-class citizens with circumscribed legal rights and absolutely no political voice. The arrival of the Americans in 1803 signaled the beginning of a gradual tightening of manumission laws aimed at stemming the growth of this community. The free people of color not only represented a dangerous contradiction to the philosophical underpinnings of race-based slavery, but by mingling and at times cohabitating with slaves, they blurred the boundary separating the free and those not free. As in many other slave states, Nat Turner's slave rebellion spurred Louisiana's legislature to adopt increasingly restrictive laws governing the movement of the free people of color. Along with the city's reconsolidation in 1852 came repressive laws that required free blacks to constantly prove publicly their status as free. Some Afro-Creoles with sufficient financial means chose to leave such indignity behind forever, fleeing to France, Haiti,

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Lifestyles of Free Women of Color," in *Creole*, 65-68; It is important to take care in citing 19th century travelogues that utilize the plight of fair-skinned Afro-Creoles as an illustration of racial injustices experienced by black people. This literature, designed ostensibly to illuminate racial injustice in the South to a northern audience seemingly creates its own racialized value system. Unmistakably black African-Americans do not often emerge as worthy figures. In some respects, the glorification fair mixed-race free people of color reinforces the notion of supposedly "white" racial characteristics.

[11] Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Our People and Our History: Fifty Creole Portraits*, trans. Sister Dorothea Olga McCants, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973) 10-39; Victor Séjour would ultimately become a Parisian where he would gain some notoriety as a playwright.

Mexico, or other countries where their status as free men went unchallenged. By 1857, Louisiana outlawed manumission entirely.[12]

The urban geography of New Orleans at the middle of the nineteenth century reflected the evolution of the city's social and political institutions. The *Vieux Carré*, or French Quarter, was the oldest part of town, the heart of the city's French and Spanish colonial past. Bound by Canal Street on its upriver side, Esplanade, downriver, and separated from city's northward expansion by Rampart Street, the Quarter stood apart. Here Jackson Square proudly faced the Mississippi River, flanked by the majestic St. Louis Cathedral and Cabildo. Yet by the eve of the Civil War, the Quarter already looked dilapidated, and had reputation as a center for vice and violent crime.

Directly across Canal Street from the French Quarter was Faubourg St. Mary. Although it had been established during the Spanish reign, it was not until the arrival of the Americans that the "suburb" truly blossomed. As Charters, Royal, and Bourbon Streets crossed over Canal, they became Magazine, Camp, and St. Charles Streets respectively. Not surprisingly, in antebellum New Orleans, Faubourg St. Mary was known as the American sector. New residences, churches, businesses, banks, and fraternal halls sprang forth from what only decades earlier had been the lush plantation of Bertrand and Marie Gravier. By mid-century, one could peer down at the *Vieux Carré* from the Gothic spires of St Patrick's Catholic Church. [13]

On the opposite side of the French Quarter stood the Creole neighborhood of Faubourg Marigny. Unlike the American sector of St. Mary, the Marigny grew into a largely quiet

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[12] Ibid, 3-9, 111, 134-5; Logsdon and Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans," 207-211; Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003) xiv-xvi, 1

[13] *Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carré*, Bureau of Government Research, (New Orleans: 1968) 9-14; Samuel Wilson, Jr., "Early History of Faubourg St. Mary," in Mary Louise Christovich et al, eds. *New Orleans Architecture: Volume II: The American Sector (Faubourg St. Mary): Howard Avenue to Iberville Street, Mississippi River to Claiborne Avenue.* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co, 1972) 8, 22-75

residential area. Purchasers bought smaller, more modest parcels in the neighborhood for as little as three to four hundred dollars. This affordable price attracted many free people of color, and in particular women. According to one architectural historian, by 1860, three-fourths of all parcels in Faubourg Marigny had passed at some point through the hands of a person of color. North of Rampart Street, the predominantly Afro-Creole community of Trémé grew in a similar fashion.[14]

Canal Street quickly eclipsed the French Quarter as the center of commercial activity in New Orleans. By the 1830s, it had become the central artery of the city, the great dividing line between American and Creole worlds. It also boasted some of the most lavish residences in the city and an increasing number of commercial buildings that housed offices and retail businesses. And it was not only Americans who took part in this construction boom. Germain Musson, grandfather of the later-renown artist Edgar Degas, contracted in 1825 for the construction of commercial buildings on the corner of Canal and Royal Street. At that same intersection in 1860, the city dedicated a statue honoring the Great Compromiser, Henry Clay, just as both the Compromise of 1850 and Whig Party fell to pieces.[15]

Without question, the most impressive structure to rise on Canal Street was the United States Custom House. Work began on Alexander T. Wood's "Egyptianesque" design in 1845 on what would at the time be the largest government building anywhere in America. Occupying an entire city block on the French Quarter side of Canal Street, the Custom House proved an engineering feat of the first degree. Despite the building's imposing weight, by 1940 it had sunk

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[14] Samuel Wilson Jr., "Early History," in Roulhac Toledano et al, eds. *New Orleans Architecture: Volume IV: The Creole Faubourgs* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1974) 3-11; Sally Kittredge Evans, "Free People of Color," in Ibid. 26-27

[15] Wilson, Jr., "Early History of Faubourg St. Mary," 11-18. According to Wilson, these are probably the oldest surviving commercial buildings on Canal Street although they no longer feature their wrought iron galleries and have been covered up with an unbelievable hodge-podge of signs and other unsightly modifications.

a mere thirty inches – no small accomplishment considering the city's notoriously unstable subsoil. Workmen built great edifice's stern façade out of New England granite. Inside, the Greek-revival main "counting room" featured an exquisite design executed in white marble. [16]

If one wondered why the Federal Government would expend such a tremendous sum on a custom house for New Orleans, they would need to look no further than the riverfront for an answer. In the space between the bank of the Mississippi River and the first buildings on the river's edge spread the city's expansive earthen levee. Clustered around the wharves along the Crescent City's long waterfront stood vessels of all descriptions. Dozens of masts and smokestacks converged in this place where cotton and sugar grown upriver arrived on steamboats and departed on ocean-going vessels for ports in the North and in Europe. The muddy levee itself was piled high with cargoes of all description, stevedores and mules, carts, laborers black and white, captains and merchants, all scattered pell-mell in a never-ending orgy of commercial activity. [17]

The port, of course, is what made New Orleans's economy thrive, and the businesses that controlled this activity kept their offices in Faubourg St. Mary. Within the first few blocks of Canal Street, in the American Sector, were dozens of commodities merchants, importers, exporters, weighers, graders, and so forth. New Orleans was home to the region's most important and well-capitalized financial institutions. Carondelet Street became known as "Factor's Row" because of the many cotton and sugar factorage houses with that address. In the antebellum world of commercial agriculture, this was the nerve center for hundreds of thousands

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[16] Ibid., 11; Wilson, Jr. and Brady, *Queen of the South,* xvi-xviii; "United States Custom House," (Department of the Treasury:1989). Pamphlet in author's possession. The capitol in Washington D.C. expanded later, surpassing the Custom House in New Orleans as the largest (for a time, anyway) government building.

[17] Just about every panoramic painting or photograph of New Orleans in the 19th century depicts in some part this chaotic scene. For examples of this see the beautiful work of Marie Adrien Persac in Wilson Jr., and Brady, *Queen of the South,* 181

of acres of slave-run plantations. It was from here that planters annually bought their supplies and in turn, sent their harvest. And it was also here that factors made and lost great fortunes speculating in the commodities markets.

In the 1840s, the Crescent City witnessed a nascent club culture within the orbit of men who participated in the commodities and financial trades. Ostensibly social in nature, one of the most enduring of these clubs coalesced around the playing of a card game known as "boston." The aptly-named Boston Club began small, but quickly grew its exclusive membership as the antebellum years came to a close. Prominent businessmen associated within the confines of the Boston Club's headquarters, undoubtedly building ties of friendship and mutual interest. By 1853, the club had reached such a level of prominence that it hosted a dinner in honor of Senator-elect Judah P. Benjamin at the St. Charles Hotel. [18]

What came to truly define the essence of New Orleans society, however, was Mardi Gras. Traditionally celebrated on Shrove Tuesday -- the day before Ash Wednesday – Carnival has ancient origins. It possibly began with pagan rites of spring, eventually merging with the Roman holiday of Lupercalia. By the turn of the seventh century, Pope Gregory fixed the date of this now-Christianized celebration to the beginning of the Lenten season. Shaped by centuries of changing custom and various European folkways, Mardi Gras arrived in the New World through the French. Fittingly, one of the earliest French place names on the map of Louisiana was called Bayou Mardi Gras, so-named because it was where Iberville landed his weary exploration party on Shrove Tuesday, 1699.[19]

Early New Orleans celebrations of Carnival endeavored to replicate Parisian traditions, but inevitably new customs emerged. Observances of Mardi Gras ranged from ostentatious

[18] Stuart Omer Landry, *History of the Boston Club*, (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1938) 44, 47, 50-55
[19] Robert Tallant, *Mardi Gras* (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc, 1948) 83-96

masked balls held exclusively for the city's elite to street maskers reveling in the city's notoriously grubby thoroughfares. Although the Spanish and later American authorities tried to clamp down on the common celebrations taking place in the street, the spirit of the Mardi Gras season meant that many of these laws went un-enforced. It was not long before the holiday garnered a well-deserved reputation for vice, licentious behavior, and violence. The combination of alcohol, a mixture of hostile cultures, and masked identities periodically led to homicidal mayhem. Even the mischievously playful custom of pelting maskers with bags of flour could turn ugly when fiendish participants substituted lime or bricks for the standard projectile. As a port city, New Orleans boasted a conspicuously large population of prostitutes, many of whom donned masks and used Carnival as an opportunity to parade suggestively in more respectable parts of town. As the early twentieth-century New Orleans historian Robert Tallant noted, "Mardi Gras was a paradise for whores."[20]

Other Carnival celebrations took place behind closed doors. Throughout the nineteenth century, masked balls grew increasingly elaborate and numerous. Carnival season actually began on January 6th, or the "Twelfth Night" – the twelfth day after Christmas – and continued until the beginning of Lent at the stroke of midnight on Shrove Tuesday. Within this time, dozens of balls, large and small took place all over the city. Some were invitation-only affairs for the elite, while others sold tickets to anyone willing to pay the price of admission. Ostensibly, even the most affordable balls were segregated, but in an environment where people routinely wore masks, enforcing this stricture was not always possible. With a substantial population of fair-skinned people of color, the prospect of intimate social interaction by people of different races and social standing was a definite possibility – a situation not lost on some. Many balls

[20] Ibid. 106-109

instructed their doormen to look behind to the mask as to screen the attendees of the ball, but in New Orleans, quickly determining race required a keen eye.[21]

Perhaps the most notorious series of masked balls occurred on Basin Street at the old Globe Ballroom, a venue that also hosted low-class plaçage balls. A long-narrow building, patrons arrived, purchased a ticket, and ascended one of the twin curved staircases that led up to Gomorrah. Upon entering, all mayhem assaulted the senses – the "tumultuous sound of voices, suffocating fumes of heated liquor, and an atmosphere that dimmed the view from the dust which the rapid waltz raised from the floor." Rooms for gambling and sexual trysts flanked the main hall. One patrician described the crowd at the Globe:

> "This hall of revelry had always been the resort of the lowest class in bestial indulgence. The common antipathies to amalgamation with people of color, which, in broad day, would bring a blush of shame to the hardest cheek in this latitude, were, perhaps from that fact, more fiercely hugged here. It was the crowning pleasure to the day's infamy of the low gambler, the loafer, and the thief; and, if police reports speak truthfully, it was a trap to catch the villain, as well as a rendezvous to plot mischief and murder."

Particularly at the bottom, Carnival challenged the community standards of the elite.[22]

By the late 1830s, maskers had begun to stage raucous and disorganized parades in the streets of New Orleans. In anticipation of the spectacle to follow, the curious of all classes would line the banquettes as night fell, but this new tradition hardly lent more decorum to the celebration. If anything, these new parades only brought greater numbers of people with divergent values together in a confusing spectacle of street theater. Processions were open to anyone who chose to dress up or put on a mask, which meant that the entourage might include everything from men dressed as Arabian knights on horseback to a wagon load of Basin Street

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[21] Reid Mitchell, *All on Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 11-16

[22] William L. Robinson, *Diary of a Samaritan by a Member of the Howard Association of New Orleans* (New York: Harper Brothers Pub.: 1860) 160, 235-236

prostitutes. The parades did nothing to abate the violent problems associated with street masking and increasingly, critics of the public celebration of Mardi Gras encouraged its abolishment.[23]

The desire by some to bring order to the chaotic holiday would forever change Mardi Gras, and by extension, the very fabric of New Orleans's society. In late 1856, a group of young businessmen decided to wrest Shrove Tuesday from the clutches of the mob. The genesis of their plan originated in Mobile, where three of the conspirators had taken part in a unique Carnival tradition. There they belonged to a club known as the Cowbellions, a group that had brought the first organized New Year's Eve parade to the Alabama seaport. Resolving to elevate the celebration of Shrove Tuesday, the young New Orleanians formed the Pickwick Club, and set about rescuing New Orleans Carnival from its likely demise. The result of their planning was the creation of the Mistick Krewe of Comus, celebrating the pagan god of festive mirth. The "krewe" was essentially a club within a club, and the Pickwickians decided that unlike the parent organization, Comus would be a secret society. The clubmen established exclusivity to keep the horde at bay.

It was no small irony that the Pickwickians derived their name from the contemporary English author, Charles Dickens. The Anglos set about to co-opt what had until that point had been a Creole-dominated celebration, and the club reflected the larger takeover of New Orleans by the Americans. There was but one Gallic name among the founders, and he had been born in France, not Louisiana. Their average age was thirty-five, and most lived within a few blocks of one another in a new, prosperous neighborhood upriver from the Faubourg St. Mary known as the Garden District. [24]

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[23] Ibid., 12-20
[24] Augusto P. Miceli, *The Pickwick Club of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Pickwick Press, 1964) 10-19

At nine o'clock on the night of Shrove Tuesday, 1857, something appeared on the streets that nobody had ever seen before – the first parade of the Mistick Krewe of Comus. More than a hundred men emerged from the darkness, masked and dressed in elaborate costumes, depicting "the different characters with which religion and mythology have peopled the infernal regions, and which Milton has described in *Paradise Lost.*" Illuminated by flambeaux carried by slaves, the krewe paraded through the streets of the city, ending their procession at the fashionable Varieties Theater in the Faubourg St. Mary. Thus began the first Comus ball, a gala affair that would quickly emerge as the most prestigious and exclusive event of New Orleans society. Behind the locked doors of the Varieties, the krewe staged a series of tableaux, "Tartarus," followed by "The Expulsion, The Confessions of Satan and Beelzebub," and "Pandemonium." At the stroke of midnight, members of the Krewe silently departed, while the festive assembly of guests danced, ate, and drank until daybreak.[25]

The Creoles were not amused. Most of the French-language papers chose to ignore the fact that Comus had even appeared, while the *Bee* sarcastically concluded that the parade must have been meant for Washington's birthday. Although a few Creoles had been invited to the ball at the Varieties, they were in the minority and the fact that the krewe's parade route completely snubbed the Vieux Carré must not have sat well. Americans had long dominated the government and business activity of the city. That the ancient Catholic Creole custom of Mardi Gras had been appropriated by Protestant Americans was almost too much to bear.[26]

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[25] Ibid, 19-21; Tallant, 110-111; "Mardi Gras, New Orleans: Its Ancient and Modern Observance: History of The Mystick Krewe of Comus and Knights of Momus with Scenes, Sketches, and Incidents of the Reign of His Magesty, the King of Carnival." Presented to the patrons of "The Great Kennesaw Route," and Its Connections by B.W. Wrenn. (Atlanta, Georgia: 1874) 7-8; For a discussion of the significance of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the context of antebellum political though and southern culture see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*. Trans. Jefferson Chase, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003) 60-61

[26] Tallant, 112-113

Yet from the standpoint of cultural ownership, who owned Mardi Gras was not at all clear. In a sense, through their customs, the Creoles had "Creolized" the Americans. While the Creoles might not like the fact that they had once again been trumped by the Americans, in reality, the shared customs of Carnival brought Americans and Creoles closer together. Increasingly, Creoles sought to belong to the Mistick Krewe and receive invitations to the grand ball. Comus clearly represented a group on the ascendancy. In 1858, the organization spent an astounding $20,000 on its lavish second year parade and ball. An invitation to Comus had become so coveted in the two short years of its existence that in 1859 the *Picayune* noted "men go about, taking as much pains to secure an invitation to the great ball, as if they were electioneering for some fat office: supplications, introductions, recommendations, are all put into motion, and even bribery would be attempted if it could affect the thing."[27]

More importantly, the creation of Comus created the beginning of a regimented social hierarchy that would heretofore become part of New Orleans Carnival. Average people could not simply append themselves to the parade of the Mistick Krewe, one had to belong to the secret society – a society that not just anyone could join. Although the creation of a king for Carnival lay more than a decade in the future, it was clear that the trend was more toward monarchy than democracy. The beginnings of organized carnival grew partly out of the desire of the city's elite to bring order to the chaotic port city. And in full flower, the matured carnival system would ultimately come to reflect the true power structure that lay behind the city's mask of popular rule. [28]

For much of the first half of the nineteenth century, New Orleans had stood apart politically from the rest of Louisiana and the South. The city's commodities-based economy tied

[27] Mitchell, 18,27; quoted in Tallant, 119
[28] Mitchell, 24

it to the North, and many of the men involved in this trade became Whigs in the second party system. By the 1850s, many of these Whigs dissolved into the Know-Nothing party, swept away by a nativist tide of anti-Irish immigrant sentiment. Despite the anti-Catholicism of the Know-Nothings nationally, it developed an absurdly large following among even Catholic Creoles. While Comus set out to reign in the mob during Carnival, the party hoped to stamp out the pervasiveness of the mob in city politics. Even after the collapse of the national Know-Nothings following the 1856 presidential election, resentment toward the voting power of immigrants kept the party alive in the Crescent City. Yet, when the shadow of the growing sectional crisis stretched across the region in the last years of the 1850s, old Whigs and Know-Nothings drifted back to the state's Democratic Party to create a façade of unity. [29]

Their return created conflict within the Democratic Party, a conflict that revolved primarily around the divisive personality of Senator John Slidell. Slidell wielded tremendous clout in state antebellum politics and had assembled something of a "machine" in Louisiana. During the sectional crisis, he played a crucial role in denying the Democratic nomination to the "Little Giant," Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas. The opposition faction, led by one-time fire-eater Pierre Soulé, backed Douglas but lacked the political might to deny Slidell's wishes. In the election of 1860, New Orleans went heavily for Constitutional Union candidate John Bell, who had promised to both defend slavery and keep the Union intact. Louisiana's electoral votes, however, went to secession-leaning Kentuckian John C. Breckenridge, Slidell's favored candidate.[30]

Although New Orleans' vote had reflected a desire to preserve the Union, the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 changed that sentiment. The elevation of the so-called "Black

[29] John M. Sacher, A *Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana, 1824-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003) 232-240, 267
[30] Ibid, 279-288

Republican" strengthened overnight secessionist opinion within the city. Orleans Parish, which had given seventy-five percent of its votes to either Bell or Douglas, dramatically reversed itself in January 1861 and elected a pro-separatist delegation to the convention deciding the secession question. Months later, convulsing wildly from a confirmed case of *rage militaire,* the Pelican State cast its lot with the Confederacy.[31]

On Mardi Gras Night 1861, the Mistick Krewe of Comus took to the streets for its last antebellum parade. The procession represented "Scenes from Life" from childhood to old age. A series of characters representing vices accompanied the stage of "Manhood" and included hypocrisy, "a smiling giant, with two faces and a pair of extended hands on each side." "Cowardice" found a place in the procession, "creating no little amusement by his fear of everything he saw." On the heels of this series came "Old Age" attended to by virtues attributed to the wisdom gained by experience. Lastly came "Death – a skeleton in a shroud." By ten o'clock that night, the doors closed at the Varieties Theater, where the men and women ate, drank, and danced the night away. For some members of the Krewe, Carnival 1861 would be their last. In a matter of months, combat and hardship in the Confederacy would replace the mirth and wit of Comus.[32]

The fortunes of war did not smile upon New Orleans. The Mississippi River, the very reason for its commercial success, also made the city vulnerable to the Union navy. For protection, the Crescent City relied upon two inadequate downriver shore batteries called Fort Jackson and Fort St. Phillip as well as a handful of hastily commissioned Confederate gunboats. These defenses offered some resistance, but proved no match for the Union Navy under the

[31] Ibid, 287-297. Sacher points out, however, that pro or anti-Slidell voting was not an issue in the secession vote, or at least not to the large extent that it shaped the presidential ballot in New Orleans. New Orleans' business interests were generally within the anti-Slidell faction. Thus, the vast majority for anti-secession candidates during the presidential election is not a completely accurate portrayal of secession opinion within the city in November 1860.
[32] "Mardi Gras: New Orleans," 16-17; Miceli, *The Pickwick Club,* 29-30

innovative command of David Farragut. By the morning of April 26, 1862, federal forces arrived in New Orleans, greeted by the sight of cotton bales blazing on the levee and pandemonium in the streets.

The ignominy New Orleans' fall was enormous. General Mansfield Lovell, the Confederate commander of the city's defenses, labored under unreasonable demands from military planners in Richmond. The national war effort had siphoned from New Orleans vast amounts of war material and the majority of the region's fighting men. From the vantage point of Richmond, Forts Jackson and St. Phillip seemed more formidable than they did from Lovell's headquarters in New Orleans. On the eve of invasion, powerless against the large force bearing down upon the city, Lovell ordered the evacuation of his small band of defenders. His actions spared the city the destruction of war, but few appreciated his wisdom. The Confederacy had relinquished its largest and wealthiest city and greatest port, putting up only a meager defense. [33]

The frustration of the city's white, pro-Confederate residents was profound. "Poor New Orleans," a woman recorded in her journal. "What has become of your promised greatness? ...The wretched generals, left here with our troops, ran away and left them. Lovell knew not what to do; some say he was intoxicated, some say frightened. Of course the greatest confusion prevailed, and every hour, indeed almost every moment, brought its dreadful rumor. After it was known that the gunboats had actually passed, the whole city, both camp and street was a scene of wild confusion. *The women only* did not seem afraid. They were all in favor of resistance, *no matter how hopeless* that resistance might be."[34]

As a result of the city's fall, military defeat and Reconstruction came to New Orleans far earlier than most places in the South, and this period would not end fully until 1877. The

[33] John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, Louisiana State University Press (Baton Rouge: 1963) 74-93
[34] Kate Mason Rowland and Mrs. Morris L. Croxall, ed., *The Journal of Julia LeGrand, New Orleans: 1862-1863*, Everett Waddey Co. (Richmond, 1911) 40-41. Emphasis in original.

mobilization for war had already changed the lives of many residents of the city. Occupation would further accelerate that change. Following the city's brief experience with Confederate nationhood, and on the eve of the coming Reconstruction struggle, uncertainty remained the only constant for the people of New Orleans, no matter what their racial, social, or economic background.

Great bitterness quickly developed between the recently arrived representatives of Union authority and white residents who saw their world turned upside down. This antipathy stemmed partly from the economic distress the war and occupation had brought to the city. Lost forever were the substantial resources that had gone into the Confederate military effort. The Union's blockade of New Orleans had caused a severe shortage of food, cash, and optimism. The fact that Confederate currency was now worthless only highlighted a simple fact; they were defeated *and* broke.[35]

The great villain, certainly of popular legend, during New Orleans' early months of occupation was unquestionably General Benjamin "Beast" Butler. A thoroughgoing Yankee and self-promoting politician, Butler commanded the military occupation of the city beginning in May of 1862. He also had a flair for outraging the city's "respectable" element. Apparently, the ladies of New Orleans failed to display proper deference for Union soldiers on the streets of the Crescent City. Indeed, they were quite rude-- spitting at, dumping chamber pots on, and soundly insulting Union troops. Butler sought to curb this behavior by issuing his infamous "woman order." This order proclaimed that, "When any female shall, by word, gesture, or movement,

[35] Joy J. Jackson, "Keeping Law and Order in New Orleans Under General Butler, 1862," in Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Arthur W. Bergeron, eds. *Louisianans in the Civil War*, University of Missouri Press (Columbia: 2002) 22-24; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 45-46. The Confederate embargo of cotton hit New Orleans particularly hard. By May 1861, all legal exports stopped, and the order went to plantation regions to stop sending cotton to New Orleans for trans-shipment. Some commercial interest then turned toward commerce raiding on the high seas as a new business venture.

insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be... held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her trade." Hardly a way to win the hearts and minds of the populace, but it did have the desired effect in reducing assaults on authority.[36]

This exchange grew partly out of the precarious situation in which some New Orleans' women now found themselves. The capture of the city had placed them on the opposite side of a largely impenetrable barrier represented by the battlefront. Separated from the men upon whom they depended financially, these women tried to adjust to an economic situation with which many were unfamiliar. One confided to her journal, "[i]f I could get outside these hateful lines, I could use my Confederate money, and Claude, poor fellow could send me some more, even if we could not get to Texas. Ah, well, some people are born for both small and large mishaps."[37]

Unconquered Confederate women were not Butler's only target. Other infamous stunts included rather heavy-handed methods for assuring respect for the Union itself. Fidel Keller, a bookseller from Switzerland, exhibited a skeleton in his shop window under a sign that read "Chickahominy." Keller boasted that his macabre tableau depicted a dead Union soldier killed in that battle, although in reality it was formerly the property of a medical student. The flamboyant exhibit earned Keller a two-year stay at the army prison on Ship Island off the coast of Mississippi. William Mumford was not so lucky. In a fit of belligerence, the professional gambler tore down and shredded the Stars and Stripes that flew from the flagstaff at the Orleans Mint on Esplanade Avenue. Convicted of treason, and sentenced to death at Butler's order, Mumford was hanged publicly in front of a shocked and mortified populace.[38]

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[36] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 4. For a demonstration of the persistence of Butler's nefarious reputation amidst certain circles, one must travel no further than the gift shop at the Confederate Museum located at 929 Camp Street in New Orleans. There you may purchase a chamber pot with an image of Benjamin Butler printed inside.
[37] Rowland, *The Journal of Julia LeGrand*, 159; Jackson, "Keeping Law and Order," 23-24
[38] Edward Larocque Tinker, *Creole City: Its Past and Its People*, Longmans (New York: 1953) 87, Taylor., 2-3; For a detailed history of the military occupation of New Orleans and sketches of Benjamin Butler and Nathanial Banks

Other citizens of New Orleans harbored cautious optimism over the arrival of the Union army. When Louisiana seceded from the Union, the city's Afro-Creole population raised their own regiment of militia for the purpose of home defense. Treated indifferently by Confederate authorities, and eventually abandoned when the rebel forces fled New Orleans, these "Native Guards" never truly coalesced as a force against invasion. With invasion now *fait accompli*, a committee representing the former Native Guards pledged to Butler their loyalty and tendered their services to the Union.

Butler did not immediately desire the use of colored troops and had even discouraged subordinates from enlisting such help in the field. Yet, faced with a threat from a Confederate force in the region and lacking sufficient manpower, the general authorized a provisional regiment of colored troops. An overwhelming response to Butler's call resulted ultimately in the raising of three regiments, with field grade officers who were also men of color. After weeks of drilling and inspection, these eager soldiers held a formal review parade on Canal Street. It was a hopeful moment for the city's people of color, and an anxious time for pro-Confederate whites. For everyone, the scene was emblematic of the dramatic changes taking place in their midst.[39]

Butler's zealous enforcement of the Confiscation Act passed by the United States Congress in early 1862 proved his downfall. When he entered foreign legations in New Orleans in search of hidden Confederate assets, the general precipitated a minor diplomatic crisis and engendered the wrath of Lincoln. Another scandal surrounding his subordinates' dealings in confiscated cotton caused Butler to exit New Orleans dogged by a reputation for corruption and

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see Joseph G. Dawson, III. *Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana, 1862-1877*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) 5-47

[39] James G. Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 14-22

thievery. While never convicted of wrongdoing, individuals around Butler, including his son Andrew, managed to amass considerable fortunes not commensurate with their army pay grade.[40]

General Nathaniel P. Banks, Butler's replacement, arrived before the end of 1862. He would take a less stern course during his tenure at the helm of New Orleans' Reconstruction experiment. Quickly rescinding many of Butler's less popular edicts, Banks hoped in vain that he might win the hearts of former Confederates. He was also far less enthusiastic about black soldiers, and especially black officers. Although Banks would commit one regiment of colored troops to combat during the siege of the Confederate stronghold at Port Hudson, he remained dubious of their military value and even less convinced of their equality. By New Year's Day, 1864, most black officers would either resign or be forced from service by Banks.[41]

Reconstruction electioneering began under the watch of General Banks. By mid-1864, several different factions of pro-Union New Orleanians jockeyed for control over both city administration as well as the reigns of the newly minted free state of Louisiana. A constitutional convention met with the purpose of drafting a new governing document for the state that, among other things, abolished slavery. Lincoln's "Ten Percent Plan" made possible the sending of representatives to Congress from Louisiana, though these men would never enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of either house. But during the war, despite new rudiments of civil government, the United States Army and General Nathanial Banks called the shots in occupied New Orleans.[42]

Union soldiers and speculating Yankee businessmen were not the only new arrivals to New Orleans during the war. As the Union Army forged into Louisiana and Mississippi's rich plantation country, it encountered increasing numbers of slaves without masters. Some of these followed the Union Army and were put to work as cooks, stewards, and laborers in return for

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[40] Dawson, *Army Generals*, 10-11
[41] Ibid, 12-14; Hollandsworth, *Louisiana Native Guards*, 44-75
[42] Dawson, *Army Generals*, 18-23

provisions. Many of the men eventually became soldiers, but others simply had no place to go. The only world that these freedmen had ever known descended into a state of constant turmoil, and although the war severed their shackles, it provided little else except for a large helping of uncertainty. Thus, many drifted into New Orleans or the large detainment center for Negro refugees above the city at Camp Parapet. Here the indigent could at least receive meals and the most very basic of shelter. [43]

The arrival of freedmen during the war from the plantation regions around New Orleans began a trend that resulted in a dramatic increase in the city's black population. During the decade of the 1860s, African-Americans went from roughly twelve to twenty-five percent of the Crescent City's population, profoundly reversing the antebellum trend. Not surprisingly, many whites in New Orleans were not happy to see this change – but they were not alone. Some of the city's free Afro-Creoles also expressed displeasure with these newcomers, noting that most came with no prospects and lived by the largesse of charitable operations. Furthermore, unlike the Afro-Creoles, they were Anglo, Protestant, and largely uneducated. Their presence stretched already thin resources and many attributed a conspicuous increase in property theft to the refugees. [44]

By the end of 1864, many white pro-Confederate New Orleanians felt as though they had been victimized at the hands of the Yankees. In reality, they had become victims of the Confederacy's poor planning, though probably few would openly admit it. The war had brought profound economic reverses to these people, and it had happened so quickly – quite literally, overnight – that the magnitude of the change took a while to sink in. For soldiers in the field, or even citizens of other southern cities like Atlanta or Richmond who had endured a prolonged

[43] Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 143-145
[44] John W. Blassingame. *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) 25-77

siege, defeat must have been far more comprehensible. But the anger of New Orleans's civilian Confederate sympathizers had not been tempered with similar understanding. Receiving little or no physical damage from the war, on the surface, the city would appear to returning soldiers much as it had in 1861. But the social changes were unmistakable, and so was the bitter hatred of some of its residents. The old order struggled to come to grips with impending defeat.[45]

In contrast, supporters of the Union in New Orleans could hope that the era of slavery and John Slidell Democracy were forever dead. For the city's free Afro-Creole population, war brought a new sense of optimism, but it remained unclear whether or not the peace would finally deliver on the dream of full citizenship that they had once been promised under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase. The freedmen had escaped bondage, but their status as Americans remained ambiguous. For Union men of both northern and southern persuasion, occupied New Orleans seemed like a place of tremendous political and economic opportunity. Indeed, it was a plum waiting for those with enough sense to pick it.

Yet the very diversity of the group of people who drooled over the demise of the Confederacy should have served as some sort of warning to the aspiring architects of the new order. The whole of the spoils did not equal the sum of their divergent ambitions, and once the pie had been divided, someone would have to leave the table hungry. The question of who might ultimately reap the benefits of the Union victory would create friction between both friends and enemies in Reconstruction-era New Orleans.

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[45] Schivelbusch, *Culture of Defeat*, 7. Schivelbusch argues that soldiers understood the process and totality of defeat much more completely than those left on the homefront. I contend that Atlanta and Richmond (or Vicksburg or any other southern city that endured a siege) were really more part of the battlefield than a homefront. These places experienced the pathos of war firsthand. New Orleans escaped the destruction, and thus the understanding of the battlefield experience.

CHAPTER II

1864: DISTANT SOUNDINGS

> *"But the cultivation of cotton, the liberty of the Negroes, will bring general destitution. Given the impossibility of planting to set his maison de commerce on its feet again, M. Watt says he will lose everything for good. Each of us must look after his and his family's well-being as best he can." – Auguste Degas, Paris, December 22, 1864* [1]

Americans have a seemingly insatiable hunger for poignant tales of Civil War soldiers. Military historians have answered this demand by churning out acres of monographic works ranging from the sublimely profound to the absurdly obscure. As a result, this generation of soldiers may be the most thoroughly researched subset of human beings to ever cast a shadow on God's green earth. The best of this scholarship brings far greater complexity to the War and the important issues for which men fought and died, but unfortunately, little of it carries forward the tales of ordinary men beyond the war's end. It seems as though once these soldiers' letters home stopped, our window onto their inner thoughts forever closed.[2]

In their place, caricatures of the carpetbagger, scalawag, freedmen, and unreconstructed rebels continue to haunt Reconstruction historiography like Banqo's ghost. Their respective merits have unquestionably shifted over time, but old stereotypes die hard. They all too often

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[1] Auguste Degas, Paris, to Michel Musson, 22 December 1864. Trans. M. Brown. D-M Papers. John Watt was Michel Musson's partner in their New Orleans cotton factorage firm.

[2] James McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. Oxford University Press (New York:1997) McPherson explains that the unfamiliar distance between men and their families is the reason for such a wealth of documentary evidence for Civil War soldiers. Once they arrived home, the letters were unnecessary. There are, of course, any number of scholarly works about individuals during the Reconstruction period, but they tend to focus on individuals remarkable in some arena. Others consider a subset of figures with similar viewpoints. Far fewer examine a diverse lot of individuals throughout Reconstruction in an effort to demonstrate an equally diverse panorama of viewpoint and opinion.; For a detailed look at life on the home front during the Civil War, see Drew Gilphin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South during the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1996)

remain uncomplicated and two-dimensional – more meaningful as members of a group than as individuals. The challenge, then, is to try to understand these people as living, breathing human beings with complex motivations.

The Civil War is the logical place to begin such an examination of Reconstruction's actors. Simply, the war experience *mattered*. By the start of 1864, the conflict had brought dramatic, life-altering change to countless individuals. The fortune of war was unkind to some, both publicly and personally. It provided others with new opportunities for advancement and adventure, particularly among the rising generation. Few civilians or soldiers escaped the upheaval that forever erased the antebellum nation. It was a crucible in which their world views formed, solidified, and at times, melted.

The war was also responsible for placing a diverse cast of strangers upon a collision course with one another. These individuals came from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Some were native Louisianans, while others came from the North. Nor had they shared political beliefs, even at the war's onset. More importantly, their lives defied, to varying degrees, the stereotypes that continue to cast a shadow over Reconstruction historiography. It is unlikely that in 1864 these actors could have possibly seen how their lives would one day intersect a decade in the future. The present challenge before them was to learn how to adapt to the uncertain world still taking shape in their midst, and to make the best of it.

For one such actor, even the simple goal of returning home seemed uncertain. And without question, Ezekiel John Ellis must have felt quite homesick that day in February, 1864. He was a long way from his father's plantation in St. Helena Parish, Louisiana. As he sat down to write a letter to his sister Mary back in Amite City, Ellis gazed out the window and observed sleighs crackling their way across the frozen expanse of Lake Erie's Sandusky Bay. Recently

turned twenty-four years of age, Captain E. John Ellis was now an inmate at Johnson's Island prison for Confederate officers. That such a cold and inhospitable place even existed might not have ever crossed his mind before the war. Now it would be his home until the fighting was over.[3]

The road to this remote prisoner-of-war camp had begun several years earlier in balmy New Orleans. It was in that city that E. John Ellis witnessed the Union's unraveling. Secession troubled Ellis deeply. Despite being only twenty years old at the time, and unable to vote, he had been a supporter of John Bell's Constitutional Unionists. He had believed that the Democrats under Breckinridge would divide the nation and feared equally the sectionalism of Lincoln's Republicans. Presciently observing that the nation had set a course for a "long bloody war," E. John wrote his father to express his hope "that those who have brought this calamity upon us, who have misrepresented & wronged the respective sections may have the brunt of the shock to bear & meet the fate they so richly deserve." [4]

Unfortunately for E. John Ellis, much of the calamity would fall upon his shoulders. Despite serious grievances with the nascent Confederacy, he had enlisted by August 1861 for the sake of defending home and hearth against invasion. Through periodic sickness, combat, and injury, Ellis, at times accompanied by his personal servant and slave, Stewart, rose to the rank of captain. His company of St. Helena Rebels spent most of the war fighting far from Louisiana. When Ellis had learned of New Orleans's fall, he bitterly wrote to his sister that he and many other men in his unit felt like seceding from the Confederacy in order to defend their native state. Ellis's days of combat ended at the battle of Chattanooga when Union troops surrounded the young officer and what was left of his unit. As he recounted the scene, "A Yankee captain

[3] E. John Ellis, Johnson's Island to Mary Ellis, 22 Feb 1864. Ellis Papers
[4] Robert Cinnamond Tucker. "The Life and Public Service of E. John Ellis," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, July 1946. p 686

demanded my surrender. I threw my sword down the ridge and with very bad grace, submitted." He would arrive at Johnson's Island by early December, right in time for a brutal Great Lakes winter.[5]

One can only speculate as to the dimensions of Ellis's captivity as a formative experience. One thing is certain -- prison changed his life dramatically while he was there. Although he had made time pass with books, letter writing, and the association of other captives from his home state, there could be no escape from the ever-present reminder of his condition. When a valise full of much needed clothing arrived at the prison in May 1864, E. John searched vainly for an accompanying letter. Surmising the identity of his benefactor, he wrote "the articles coinciding so perfectly with those that I asked for and marked so beautifully with a woman's care, by woman's hand need not the information of an accompanying letter to lead me to whose generosity I am indebted." The silence of the woman who sent the clothing fueled Ellis's palpable anguish. She had at turns aided and tortured the captive. Mustering an effort to maintain his manly honor in absentia, Ellis continued, "please accept the enclosed blank due bill, fill up the blank with the proper figures, and if you go to Amite my father will honor it." His days of combat may lie behind him, but for the young captive, the psychological trauma continued. [6]

Confinement left Ellis plenty of time for reflection. In one angry and candid letter he revealed doubts about the Confederate leadership, opining that if he could endure prison, Jeff Davis should also stand firm. Yet, by the time he had begun his second winter at Johnson's Island, he started thinking of the future. Writing to his mother, Ellis prophesized, "There will be

[5] Ibid. 687-706. The quotation comes from a war diary cited by Tucker. This diary is not part of the Ellis Papers at LSU, and in 1941, at the time of the writing, it was in private hands. The author made considerable effort to locate this diary, but as of yet, has not found it.
[6] E. John Ellis to "My Dear Friend," 31 May 1864. Ellis Papers

many changes in the Country in its people and its institutions. Slavery I think will be abolished and I for one won't care a particle – Indeed I think it will be advantageous in many respects – and I think also that the government will recommend such a course to the states before the close of the next year." Even from his position of remote isolation, he astutely recognized that the nation could never return to *status quo antebellum*.[7]

There were many other Louisianans imprisoned at Johnson's Island during the winter of 1863-64. One of them was Edmund Arthur Toledano, who had arrived at Johnson's Island two months earlier that E. John Ellis. Toledano came from a prominent New Orleans family with an ancestry traceable to the Spanish colonial era. His uncle Christoval had fought under Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans during the war of 1812. Toledano appeared every bit a Gallic-Spanish Creole, with a dark complexion and thick black hair. By the late 1850s, he had established himself as a cotton weigher, working in the bustling commodities activity of the city. E. A. Toledano was thirty-one years of age with the onset of the war and still a bachelor.[8]

By early 1862, this prosperous Creole businessman had enlisted in the Watson Battery, serving as a 1st lieutenant. Like the St. Helena Rebels, Toledano's unit strayed far from southern Louisiana, seeing action at Shiloh and Corinth. But it was at Port Hudson, a last Confederate stronghold guarding the Mississippi River just north of Baton Rouge, where the Watson Battery had faced its most difficult duty. Despite repeated Federal assaults on their position, and scant opportunities for receiving reinforcements or supplies, between March and early July 1863 the Confederates held firm. The July 4 fall of Vicksburg, however, had made further Confederate

[7] E. John Ellis to Mary Ellis, 16 Sep 1864; to "My Dear Mother," 27 Dec 1864. This letters seems to have been smuggled out by either an escapee of Johnson's Island, or somehow smuggled out via a visiting representative.
[8] Stanley Arthur, ed. *Old Families of Louisiana* 1931, p. 277; E.A. Toledano first appears in a city directory in this profession in 1857, when he was 27 years old. *Mygatt & Company's Directory* (L. Pessou & B. Simon 23 Royal St., New Orleans: 1857) Most of the prominent New Orleans Toledanos in the 19th and 20th centuries descend from Christoval Toledano, and his son (E.A. Toledano's 1st cousin) Benjamin Toledano.; E.A. Toledano put off marriage until 1866. Succession of E.A. Toledano, Orleans Parish 2nd District Succession Records, 1846-1880, #37465

resistance pointless. In negotiating the surrender, the Union generals paroled Confederate enlisted men, but had taken most enemy officers prisoner -- including E. A. Toledano.[9]

The surrender at Port Hudson had to be particularly humiliating for the Confederate officers from Louisiana. Toledano could ponder his bad luck on the day's boat ride downriver to New Orleans, the city of his birth. A familiar scene greeted him as he disembarked at the busy Canal Street wharf. During the short march up Canal Street to the United States Customhouse – now serving as a temporary prison for these men – Toledano may well have gazed upon familiar faces on the street. Perhaps he thought about how he was only a five minute walk from his uncle's home at Tchoupitoulas and Gaiènnie or how the horse-drawn omnibus on Canal Street could in less than twenty minute's time, have him in front of his own Camp Street residence. Whatever his wishes, he would fester through the sweltering summer within the confines of the Customhouses's thick granite walls. By October, he would be en route to spend the winter in an equally inhospitable clime.

Louis Fleurange Drouet was just past fifty years of age when his nephew returned from Port Hudson as a prisoner of war. The old Creole was a rich man with extensive holdings in real estate, and something of an eccentric recluse. He had never married, and other than his servants and tenants, had always lived alone. People living in the Faubourg St. Mary could see him riding in his buggy every evening by himself – never stopping and headed no place in particular. He normally received few visitors, but his nephew had been a remarkable exception. Before the war, Toledano had made daily visits to his uncle's home, handling all of his business and dining there on a nearly nightly basis. It had been this way since about 1852 until the war intervened.

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[9] Andrew B. Booth, ed. *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands*, Vol III, (New Orleans, 1920) p. 843; Arthur W. Bergeron *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units*, LSU Press (Baton Rouge: 1989) p. 36-37 Cunningham, Edward. *The Port Hudson Campaign*, 1862-1863, LSU Press (Baton Rouge: 1963)

During Toledano's wartime absence, another visitor had regularly called at his uncle's home. She was a quadroon woman in her fifties and had been making monthly visits to the home of Louis Drouet to pick up ten *piastres.* Receiving the money, she would then head to the old St. Augustine Convent near the corner of Bayou and St. Claude in the heart of New Orleans' old Afro-Creole community of Trémé. Here the Sisters of the Holy Family operated a boarding school for young women of color. It was also the temporary home to her great niece – E.A. Toledano's first cousin and his uncle's daughter, Louise Drouet.

Louise Drouet had entered the world in 1847, the product of a *plaçage* union between her mother and Toledano's uncle Louis. Louise's father had ended the intimate aspect of this relationship following her birth, but remained involved in her life far beyond the customary financial support. Louise's mother had often brought her to her father's residence, and to his feed store across the street. During these visits, Louis Drouet would never introduce Louise or her mother to others, but in time, those who lived around him – the tailor who lived downstairs, his servants, had all suspected that there was some familial relationship. Yet, the seeming equilibrium of these days did not last. In 1859, Louise's mother died, and by 1860, she had been placed in the St. Augustine Convent at the request of her father, where he did not visit her once during her stay.[10]

Further uptown from the Faubourg St. Mary, in a handsome Garden District mansion, another prominent white Creole pondered the effects of war upon his family's fortunes. Michel

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[10] *Louise Drouet vs. the Succession of L.F. Drouet*, No. 4800, 26 La. Ann. 323 (1874). E. A. Toledano would later testify that he denied ever seeing Louise Drouet at his Uncle's residence before the war. It is possible, but for someone to visit as frequently as he did, it is difficult to imagine this being the case.; M. Boniface Adams, "The Gift of Religious Leadership: Henriette Delille and the Foundation of the Holy Family Sisters," in Glen R. Conrad, ed., *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, Archdiocese of New Orleans (New Orleans: 1993) p. 370-373; For a discussion of the custom of *plaçage*, see Violet Harrington Bryan, "Marcus Christian's Treatment of *Les Gens de Coleur Libre*," in ed. Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 50-53; Joan M. Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Coleur Libre*: How Race and Sex Defined the Lifestyles of Free Women of Color," in *Creole*, 65-68

Musson was roughly the same age as Louis F. Drouet, but their personal and public lives were quite different. Born in 1812, Musson entered the world as the son of Germain Musson, a prosperous Creole businessman who had cast aside cultural barriers and embraced commercial association with the ascendant Americans. Michel followed in his father's footsteps, learning the cotton trade, serving as an officer of a bank, and even held the title of Postmaster of New Orleans in antebellum years. By 1860, Michel Musson also headed the American branch of a large extended family tree whose limbs stretched across the Atlantic to France. Like Drouet, Musson was a financial success with property holdings alone worth $70,000.[11]

The Civil War had begun with a guarded optimism in the Musson household. Correspondence between Michel and his Parisian cousin Auguste DeGas speculated about a possible political union between France and the Confederate States. At home, Michel's beloved nineteen year-old daughter Estelle made hasty arrangements to marry Joseph D. Balfour, a nephew of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Swept up in a feeling of southern patriotism, the Musson patriarch enlisted his personal services as a purchaser for the quartermaster corps.[12]

By the start of 1864, much, if not all of the optimism had faded from the world of the DeGas and Musson families. Joseph Balfour died at the battle of Corinth in late 1862, leaving Estelle Musson Balfour a young war widow. The couple's daughter, Joe, arrived three weeks later into a household of great sadness. New Orleans had fallen to Federal forces, marring though not by any means destroying Michel Musson's illusions (or delusions) of ultimate Confederate victory. Yet, for safety's sake, Michel had sent his daughters Estelle and Desirée

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[11] Marilyn Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art: A Cotton Office in New Orleans,* Pennsylvania University Press (University Park, PA: 1994) 28-29

[12] Ibid., Auguste DeGas, Paris to Michel Musson, 17 June 1861, DeGas-Musson Papers, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University. Art Historian Marilyn R. Brown produced and excellent annotated inventory of the DeGas-Musson Papers held by Tulane University in 1991. Within this inventory are many careful translations from French to English of oft difficult to read letters.

along with his wife Odile to France where they would spend the remainder of the war in the resort village of Bourg-en-Bresse. It would be here that their nephew and cousin Edgar Degas frequently visited and later rendered a portrait of the trio with saddened, plaintive expressions.[13]

Deprived now of company of the ones he loved the most, deprived of making a reliable living in the cotton factorage business, and deprived by age of taking up arms against the northern foe, Michel Musson dove headlong into a Quixotic, and ultimately financially ruinous course of trading in Confederate bonds. Driven by both patriotic fervor and financial self interest, the Mussons and DeGases on both sides of the Atlantic invested heavily in these bonds, banking quite literally upon Confederate victory. By mid-July of 1864, Musson's cousin, Auguste Degas, authorized the sale of a house belonging to his son Edgar (Musson's nephew.) Urging Musson, Auguste wrote, "[f]or my part I approve of your idea of seizing the moment of a panic in greenbacks to find a price of $28,000 to $29,000 for the *maison de passage* and a proportional price for Edgar's house. Then immediately convert the greenbacks into Conf. Bonds."[14]

Michel Musson's other, less artistically talented nephew, René Degas, dreamt of the Crescent City while waiting the war out in Europe. Fascinated by his uncle's remote and exotic world, René obsessed about making his fortune in the cotton business. Desirée Musson wrote her father from Bourg-en-Bresse in late 1863 of her cousin René's machinations: "René is a charming boy, full of intelligence, ambition, and heart. He has only one idea, and that is to leave his father's banking firm to work and live with us; he says if he stays in Paris, or if he goes to Naples, he will wait for *50 years*, earning *30* francs a month; this revolts him. He would rather

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[13] Chistopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable*, University of California Press (Berkley: 1992) 47-52 See Benfey's work for a thoughtful analysis of Degas' art as it related to his cousins among the Musson clan.

[14] Brown, 28-29, Auguste Degas, Paris, to Michel Musson, 1 July 1864, D-M Papers. Trans. By M. Brown. Bad investments made during the war would directly lead to the liquidation of the DeGas family bank in 1874.

arrive at 30 years, be his own master in all things; and to make a fortune from life." Musson had his doubts, but there would be no stopping this young Parisian dreamer.[15]

On the battlefield, Michel Musson would have found a kindred spirit in the person of Frederick Nash Ogden. Like the Creole businessman, Ogden was a True Believer in the Confederate cause, unwilling yield in his support for the rebellion despite the many signs pointing toward its ultimate demise. The war had begun in New Orleans during the spring of 1861 for the stocky, red-headed, twenty-four year old Ogden. It was there that he had enlisted as a private in a Louisiana regiment headed to Northern Virginia. By June, Ogden had risen to the rank of sergeant and was the color bearer of the regiment. Loyalty to his home state, however, proved stronger than his attachment to the larger Confederate strategy. Southern Louisiana lay poorly defended, and Ogden would not stay in Virginia to protect Richmond. By December of 1861, he was on his way home to New Orleans. [16]

Ogden was back in the Crescent City by the beginning of 1862 and took part in the hasty defensive preparations directed by General Mansfield Lovell. Accepting an appointment as a major in the newly mustered 8th Louisiana Infantry, Ogden and his men established a defensive position just below the city across the river from Chalmette, the scene of Andrew Jackson's stunning victory over the British in 1815. There would be no such glory for Ogden's soldiers, however. The 8th Louisiana ineffectively fired all of its ammunition at Farragut's fleet as it boldly steamed past them. Receiving withering fire in return from the gunboats, they fled in confusion through the swamp. Those who did not desert and skulk back to New Orleans made

[15] Desirée Musson, Bourg-en-Bresse to Michel Muson, 18 November 1863, D-M Papers. Trans. By M. Brown.
[16] Booth, ed., *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers* 19; Unidentified newspaper clippings in F.N. Ogden Papers, Tulane University

their way to Camp Moore where they received orders to reorganize as an artillery battalion. It had been an inauspicious beginning for Ogden's military career in the Western Theater.[17]

Converted to the 8th battalion of heavy artillery, Major Ogden's command arrived at Vicksburg on May 5, 1862. Here they joined the river defenses directly in front of the Mississippi River citadel. Perhaps the only solace enjoyed by the young major during the first two years of the war was the arrival of his wife and mother in February 1863. They had left New Orleans on a pass from General Banks in order to be with him, and in turn, shared in the privations as the city came under siege from Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee. It was a temporary reunion, however. Ogden joined thousands of other Confederates as a prisoner of war with the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. Parting again from his wife, he began a humiliating march to a parole camp in Enterprise, Mississippi. [18]

After being exchanged in early 1864, many of the men in the 8th Louisiana simply went home, for they had had enough – but not Frederick Nash Ogden. By March, he had made his way back through Confederate lines and took temporary command of what was left of the 9th Louisiana Partisan Rangers. At Clinton, Louisiana the following June, the twenty-seven year-old received a promotion to lieutenant colonel and command of a larger cavalry force under the ultimate direction of General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The troopers in his new command, the "First Louisiana," gave Ogden a chilly welcome. He was a stranger to them, and they believed that there were plenty of other officers in their ranks worthy of promotion. The unit came dangerously close to wholesale insubordination as they stared in sullen silence in reaction to the fiery soldier's order to charge a nearby contingent

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[17] Bergeron, *Guide to Louisiana Military Units*, 161

[18] ibid, 10; Rowland, *The Journal of Julia LeGrand*, 95; LeGrand makes a reference to Odgen's wife and mother heading to Vicksburg to be with their son, a Major in the Confederate Army. LeGrand frequently stayed with Ogden's older brother, Judge H. N. Ogden. Frederick Ogden would never see his first wife again. She died sometime before the end of 1863.

of Yankee soldiers. It was a rocky start, but Ogden eventually earned a reputation as a tough leader. In fighting near St. Francisville, a few troopers observed the First Louisiana charging madly toward camp in a cloud of dust, and feared the worst. Coolly observing the movements through his field glasses, the commanding officer reassured his men, "No, they are not retreating, Ogden comes in front."[19]

As Fred Ogden's rag-tag band of cavalry roved through Louisiana's Amite River region, another young cavalry officer sat in New Orleans's Charity Hospital recovering from a wound. While fighting in a skirmish near False River, a rifle shot had passed through the right side of Major Algernon Sidney Badger's horse and had shattered his left tibia. His doctors worried that the potential mingling of horseflesh and human tissue might lead to an infection and possibly amputation, but after several months of recuperation, Badger was ready to rejoin his unit. Not long after his return, two weeks before his twenty-fifth birthday, he received a promotion to lieutenant colonel.

Like Ogden, Badger had heeded his nation's call to service in April 1861, trading the ordinary life of a clerk in Milton, Massachusetts for the adventures known only to a soldier. Although he had enlisted as a private, it did not take long before superiors recognized his abilities and promoted the young, educated man to lieutenant. He first set foot in New Orleans in 1862, arriving with the 26th Massachusetts. It was here that Badger probably first got a true sense of the vast opportunities for bright, ambitious men created by the demands of war. By the end of the year, he had transferred into a newly-formed 1st Regiment of Union Louisiana Cavalry. He would not only lead men like himself, who had come from Union regiments from around the country, but loyal southern white men from New Orleans as well. Badger flourished

[19] ibid, 53,59,67; Howell Carter, *A Cavalryman's Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New Orleans: American Printing Co., 1900) 107-8, 187-188

in his new command, receiving two promotions over the next twelve months – first to captain, then major. And just as Fred Ogden had discovered his true calling as a leader of men, so too did his Yankee counterpart.[20]

As swashbuckling as the figures of colonels Ogden and Badger were, there was another man of their generation that by comparison would make them seem like underachievers. Not many could match Henry Clay Warmoth's blinding ambition and social aplomb, and even fewer could ever hope to as effectively employ such talents. His character combined the earnestness of a man like E. John Ellis with the personal drive of someone like Frederick Ogden. Becoming a lieutenant-colonel of a Unionist Missouri militia regiment at nineteen, Warmoth was far more precocious than either of those men. He never missed a party and never passed up opportunities to meet influential men or to flirt with their wives and daughters. And he had an uncanny knack for being at the right place at the right time. Like a real-life nineteenth-century Forrest Gump, he seemed to be everywhere important things happened, and in the process, met with everyone who mattered – only Warmoth was no simple-minded fool. [21]

Warmoth had been seriously wounded in May 1863 during a failed Union attack at Vicksburg. As a carriage bore him away to an army hospital, Warmoth glanced at the front lines, now under a temporary truce. Gazing at the enemy trenches through the morning heat, he observed scores of haggard Confederates standing in weary silence atop their works while orderlies of both sides collected the dead and dying. By nightfall, he was headed north aboard a

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[20] Service Record of Algernon S. Badger in Compiled service records of volunteer Union soldiers who served in organizations from the state of Louisiana; Glenn R. Conrad, ed. *A Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, Vol.1, Louisiana Historical Association, (New Orleans: 1988) 27-28; A geographic anomaly dominates the False River region of Louisiana. Located in the vicinity of Pointe Coupé Parish, the False River was once part of the Mississippi River, but when the New Madrid earthquake of the early 19th century altered the course of the Mississippi, it cordoned off this large section, creating a "false river" or a very long, narrow lake.

[21] For the most thorough and perhaps the most flattering treatment of Henry Clay Warmoth see Richard Nelson Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

steamboat full of wounded soldiers and a "jackass correspondent" from the *Cincinnati Commercial Bulletin*.[22]

Along the journey to St. Louis, and beyond to his home in Rolla, Missouri, Warmoth met with friends and made acquaintances with influential men and pretty women. He attended a benefit for the orphans of St. Louis, politicked for friends in Illinois and Missouri, and even took in a performance of Richard III starring John Wilkes Booth. As a wounded war hero fresh from the front, the young lieutenant colonel basked in his newfound notoriety. On July 24, having recuperated from his gunshot wound, Warmoth wrapped up his ceaseless parade of visiting and set out for his return to Vicksburg aboard the *Belle Memphis*.[23]

A week after his arrival, Warmoth was in for some surprising and disconcerting news. General Grant suspected the young Missourian of circulating unflattering reports in the press about his tactics at Vicksburg. Under the pretense of being absent without leave, the commander cashiered him from the service. This was a terrible blow to Warmoth's ego and put his promising future in jeopardy. But it would also serve as a useful experience in dealing with high level conflict, something Warmoth would learn while he set about to clear his name.[24]

After spending tireless days soliciting letters of support from any influential source available to him, Warmoth began a long trek to Washington to meet with President Lincoln. On August 30th, carrying his bundle of supporting evidence, the tall, handsome, rail-thin former farm-boy left the Willard Hotel and set out for the White House. He arrived at the appointed hour only to see a long line of petitioners in front of him, some of which were other officers seeking reinstatement. Warmoth fought back his inner dejection, but his heart sank when he

[22] Warmoth Diary, May 22, 26, 1863. Henry Clay Warmoth Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
[23] Warmoth Diary, June 2, 3,4,15,17,18, July 7, 24, 1863
[24] Warmoth Diary, August 4 – 19, 1863

overheard Lincoln deferring one soldier's hearing until after the war. His sense of alarm grew by the minute, as one by one, the callers filtered out until there was only Lincoln and himself. Warmoth's emotions boiled over from the excruciating wait. He burst out, "Mr. President, I cannot wait until the war is over for my vindication, I must have justice now." Lincoln listened earnestly to his case, and read over the multitude of letters presented by Warmoth. He sympathized with his fellow westerner, and although he made no concrete promises, endorsed his plea for reinstatement with the judge-advocate. It was enough. Two weeks later, on September 14, 1863, Henry Clay Warmoth left Washington with a clean record and renewed optimism.[25]

That October, he took command of a Missouri regiment at Corinth, Mississippi, leading his men through the rugged countryside of northern Alabama and middle Tennessee. By November, Warmoth's Missourians would fight at the battle Lookout Mountain. As E. John Ellis became a prisoner of war somewhere on the same battlefield, Warmoth reveled in the "brilliant performance" of his unit as it fought its way across Missionary Ridge. And within a week of Ellis's departure from Nashville for the misery of Sandusky Bay, Warmoth left the Tennessee capitol to spend the holidays at home with his family in Rolla.[26]

One night in February 1864, the young colonel stood on the hurricane deck of a steamboat with the wife of a Union naval officer. As the vessel churned through the darkness toward Memphis, Warmoth and his companion enjoyed conversation and took time to "trace constellations." If the Missourian found his future in the heavens that night, he would have

[25] Warmoth Diary, August 30,31, September 14, 1863; Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930) 20
[26] Warmoth Diary, October 13 – December 9, 1863; Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction,* 22-23

realized that his eventful past year was only the beginning. Thus far, the stars had been good to him. In a few days, he would see the Crescent City for the first time.[27]

Warmoth's first stop in New Orleans would be brief. He quickly left for the coast of South Texas, a remote outpost far from the scene of glory. Events on distant battlefields, however, rescued Warmoth from this backwater. Kirby Smith's Confederates had thoroughly drubbed General Nathaniel P. Banks at the battle of Mansfield, and Warmoth became part of a massive transfer of Union forces sent to shore up the wobbling Red River campaign. This move returned him to Louisiana and the scene of opportunity.[28]

Back in New Orleans, Warmoth made a favorable impression on many influential men. General Banks' wife particularly doted on the twenty-two year old soldier, saying she reminded him of her husband of twenty years ago. Some of this undoubtedly rubbed off on the general, because by June, he appointed Warmoth as a judge in the provost court. At first, Warmoth was unsure about wanting the job, but it did not take long for him to realize what a golden opportunity it represented. He soon began associating with influential Union men like the noted German-American jurist Christian Roselius, who had been one of E. John Ellis's law professors in 1860. J.Q.A. Fellows, one of the few Unionist members of the Pickwick Club, also became a friend. In the courtroom, Warmoth frequently dealt with cases involving large sums of confiscated cotton. He also punished disloyal New Orleanians like the two "respectable ladies" he sent to Ship Island for sixty days for "shouting for Jeff Davis." By the fall of 1864, Warmoth

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[27] Warmoth Diary, February 9, 1864

[28] Warmoth stayed in New Orleans long enough that February to attend a masquerade ball hosted by Mrs. N. P. Banks at the one of the opera houses in New Orleans. Almost immediately, newcomers attempted to emulate New Orleans high society balls. A week later, he witnessed the inauguration of provisional governor Michael Hahn. Warmoth Diary, February 15 – May 7, 1864. Warmoth received "news of disaster at Red River" on May 7; Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction*, 24-25

made a triumphant return to Washington to network with important people. He had big plans, and it never hurt to make friends in high places. [29]

Few individuals could match the wild ride of Henry Clay Warmoth. But collectively speaking, the free people of color in New Orleans went through dramatic changes of their own. The occupation of the Crescent City by the Union cultivated optimism within the Afro-Creole community. Perhaps the destruction of the antebellum order and its repressive racial codes meant that they would finally receive the citizenship promised to them under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase. However, the arrival of the Union was far from a panacea for the injustices so long endured. Progress *seemed* like an achievable goal, but instead, uncertainty reigned supreme.

Not long after the fall of Port Hudson in July 1863, Octave Rey, a young man of twenty-six, sat around a table with a group of close friends at his brother's home in Trémé. They were all members of a circle of a close-knit community of spiritualists who made up an important segment of New Orleans's Afro-Creole elite. They had gathered for a séance at the home of Henry Louis Rey for spiritual guidance in the wake of the death of one of their close friends, the "black patriot" Captain André Cailloux. Their friend's badly decomposed body had only recently been removed from the sun-baked battlefield at Port Hudson, where he had bravely led his troops toward the deadly fire of the bastion's Confederate defenders. Inspired by voices, and driven by an "invisible force," Henry Rey's hand wrote out a communiqué from the deceased Cailloux. The spirit of the martyred hero urged a forthright course toward freedom: "I will be with you, dear friends, in the battles, my spirit will be among you to inspire you with a manly courage and an indomitable spirit… I will be your torch bearer, I will be among those who

[29] Warmoth Diary, May 24 – October 31, 1864

receive you into our world if you should succumb in the struggle; fight, God demands liberty, our brothers will have it, equality will follow."[30]

New Orleans's Afro-Creole elite were in need of encouragement as the year 1864 began. Many had seen in the Union occupation and the fall of the old slaveholding regime the opportunity to make complete their standing as free men. Yet by the second year of occupation, it became clear that many white Yankees were not much different from the men that they had replaced. Nobody could be more plainly aware of this situation than Octave Rey.

Rey was part of the delegation of four Afro-Creole men who upon the heels of the Union occupation tendered to General Benjamin Butler the services of the formerly Confederate Louisiana Native Guards. Under the aegis of the rebel army, these colored Confederate troops were little more than a public relations stunt by a regime endeavoring to fabricate a mirage of racial harmony. In reality, few, if any, had been issued serviceable arms and none had been called upon to defend the Queen City of the South in her direst hour of need. Butler greeted the men with some skepticism, but despite such reservations, gave a tentative acceptance to their offer of service. Thus began the kernel of the first colored regiment raised in the South by the Union Army.[31]

Described by his contemporary and friend Rodolphe Desdunes, Octave Rey was "the youngest of the Rey brothers, was a tall man of Herculean proportions – energetic, powerful, and dynamic in his thinking." Desdunes continued, "everyone respected him for his tremendous courage and his strong determination." These were required characteristics for Afro-Creole men

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[30] Spiritualist Registers, July 17, 1863, in Grandjean Collection, University of New Orleans. Cited in Caryn Cossé Bell, Revolution, Romanticism and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868, Louisiana State University Press (Baton Rouge: 1997) 215-220, 241. Bell's well-researched book is a fascinating study of both Afro-Creole culture and the unfamiliar world of spiritualism that flourished in antebellum New Orleans. For a more detailed study of the life of André Cailloux see Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans*, Louisiana State University Press (Baton Rouge: 2000)

[31] Hollandsworth, *Native Guards*, 17-18

in wartime New Orleans if they had any hopes whatsoever of gaining status amidst the tumult of the occupied city. Octave Rey and his older brothers Hippolyte and Henry Louis received appointments as field-grade officers in the Union Army. It was their responsibility to raise new regiments of colored troops, a task that they and other members of the Afro-Creole elite, such as André Cailloux, embraced with tenacity and vigor.[32]

White soldiers of all ranks commonly took exception to the presence of black officers, and this fact above all else sealed the fate of men like Rey. Many could appreciate the fact that black enlisted men absorbed enemy bullets as well as any white soldier, but not the notion that black men were fit to lead. Worrying about the morale of his white soldiers, General Banks devised ways to rid the army of black officers, usually by assigning them to pointless and menial duty. Lieutenant Octave Rey tendered his resignation in the Union Army out of his disgust with the perfidious behavior of its generals.[33]

Other black officers reacted similarly to Banks' unreasonable orders. Like Rey, Captain Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback had also looked toward service in the Union Army as an opportunity for both his own personal advancement as well as that of his race. But unlike many of his black officer-corps comrades, Pinchback was African-American and not from New Orleans. His mother was once a slave, then later, the freed mistress of his father, a white Virginia planter. In 1837, the family was en route to the booming cotton frontier of Mississippi, when in early May, at Macon, Georgia, Elizabeth Stewart gave birth to her second son. Young P.B.S. Pinchback spent his childhood as a free black youth, the acknowledged son of a white man, living in the midst of an antebellum cotton plantation. Recognizing the bleak horizons that lay ahead for his son in the slaveholding South, Pinchback's father sent him away to a boarding

[32] Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, 114; Ibid., 14-18
[33] Hollandsworth, *Louisiana Native Guards*, 21-22, 71-74

school in Cincinnati before his tenth birthday. It was a move that had its parallels among the elite mixed-race children of New Orleans's Creole society.[34]

When Pinchback's father died unexpectedly in 1849, the small family fled Mississippi out of fear of re-enslavement by white relatives. For a time, Pinchback struggled to support his siblings and mother in Cincinnati, but he soon sought opportunities further a field, working in the unseemly world of steamboat commerce on the Ohio River. Here he fell in with the notorious card sharp George Devol, from whom he learned many survival skills, not the least of which was the ability to separate a vessel's crew from their wages. Thus he spent the remainder of the late antebellum years. [35]

Pinchback was young, smart, and ambitious, so it was no real surprise that when news of New Orleans's fall reached him, that the Crescent City would become his destination. The social and political ramifications of becoming an officer in the Union Army excited Pinchback. Bankrolled by money he had saved from his wages, and augmented by the money of that had come by way of a faro table, the adventurer opened a recruiting office at the corner of Bienville and Villere Streets. Soon he had enough men to fill out Company A of the 2nd Regiment of the Corps D'Afrique with himself at the helm as captain. This effort was destined to end in frustration, however. Instead of fighting for the Union flag, his troops spent interminable days on garrison duty on Ship Island building useless fortifications. By September, 1863, he had had enough of such futility, writing Banks, "I can foresee nothing but dissatisfaction and discontent which will make my position very disagreeable indeed." Like Rey had done before him, Pinchback resigned his post. [36]

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[34] James Haskins, *Pinkney Benton Stewart Pinchback*, Macmillan Publishing Co. (New York: 1973) 3-10
[35] Ibid., 12-18
[36] Ibid., 21-25; Hollandsworth, *Native Guards*, 28, 75

Returning to New Orleans, Pinchback engaged in politicking, gaining notice amongst Radical Republicans as well as the Afro-Creole community of social activists when he asserted that black troops ought to be given the rights of full citizenship, including the franchise. As late as November 1863, Pinchback once again tried to raise a new regiment with himself as an officer, and once again Banks frustrated his plans. By the start of 1864, the bold young man had left New Orleans to pursue his dreams of glory in the North, but surely in the back of his mind he knew that he would someday return to the Crescent City.[37]

In the closing months of the war, the actors in this drama of Reconstruction found themselves in situations that they had probably never envisioned only four years earlier. Feelings of both *uncertainty* and *opportunity* permeated their lives. For a new generation, the conflict arrived as they came of age, and the experience would play an important role in the forging their identity – both within their own mind and within the collective perception of the community. Without question, the war and its outcome also influenced the outlook of older generations, but it would be this new rising group of individuals whose pent-up ambitions and anxieties would exert a disproportionate amount of influence during the Reconstruction struggle in New Orleans.

The war created opportunities on both ends of the political spectrum. For the Afro-Creole elite in New Orleans, it seemed possible that the hour of reckoning had finally arrived. It was obvious to many that newcomers of both races seemed to benefit from the dissolution of the old order. Less obvious was the fact that the war also cleared the way for a new generation of white southerners. Secession would largely discredit or force into retirement many of their old political leaders, and although the antebellum politicians might not ever become the true scapegoats for defeat, at the same time, the era of John Slidell and Pierre Soulé was over. In the

[37] Ibid., 26-31; Hollandsworth, *Native Guards*, 82

future, the Redeemers might at times place an old Confederate leader at the head of the table, but it would be the new generation that dictated the seating arrangement. The war made this possible.[38]

For some, the uncertainties of war precipitated a personal crisis. Few could escape its ravages, and the effects were not always positive. The experience would inform the decisions they would make during the coming years of Reconstruction. Some would encounter difficulty in overcoming setbacks, both to their finances and their own psyches. Others would have a difficult time transitioning back into civilian life. But the challenges of war also revealed to some their hidden strengths and talents – attributes they would try to cultivate further with varying degrees of success in civilian life. Above all, some had learned the critical skill of *survival*.

By the end of 1864, the social web of New Orleans had been thoroughly disrupted, if not completely demolished. An entirely new cast of characters had joined the already chaotic and volatile mix of citizens in the Crescent City, and their presence fundamentally altered the dynamics of power. It would take some time for the individuals involved in this drama to understand what role they would play in dictating the shape of this web once repaired. Although they came from divergent backgrounds and had differing ambitions, these men and women, both

[38] Wolfgang Schivelbusch addresses this issue in his recent work on the psychology of defeat. [Wolfgang Shivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, Trans. Jefferson Chase, Metropolitan Books: (New York: 2003) 12-13.] Schivelbusch contends that one of the primary steps taken toward recovery by defeated regimes is the discrediting of the failed leadership. This thesis is only partly convincing in the American South. Schivelbusch compares the French in 1871 and the Germans in 1918 with the American South following the Civil War. He suggests that the white Confederate South did not punish its political leaders, choosing instead to select specific scapegoats such as Longstreet and a few other southern men who opted to side with the victorious Union. I contend that in the American South following the war there was a more "silent repudiation" of the old Confederate leaders. Following a brief resurgence in 1866, with a few notable exceptions such as Alexander Stephens, the old antebellum leadership faded from the scene. If old Confederate generals emerged as leaders of Redemption, they were much more likely to be of the rising generation. For instance, General John B. Gordon, who became a New South governor of Georgia, was only 33 years old at the end of the Civil War. Former General Francis T. Nicholls, the Redeemer governor of Louisiana in 1877 was only 31 in 1865. The elevated rank of these men masked their relative youth.

black and white, would all contribute to the “reconstruction” of the city’s society, whether they knew it at the time or not.

CHAPTER III

HOMECOMINGS

> *"I see today a chain of Plantations on both sides of the river. The finest houses & manors that I have ever seen. It is perfectly lordly to live down here with such improvements. But the war has rid these people of their property & labor, reduced prosperity & happiness to destruction & mourning." – Henry Clay Warmoth, Feb. 14, 1864*[1]

The Civil War simply left too many important questions unanswered. Lee's surrender at Appomattox signaled the final doom of southern nationhood, yet the finality of military defeat stood in stark contrast with the uncertainty of what Union victory fully meant. While the war raged, the question of the subdued South's role in postwar America retained a sense of the hypothetical. The armistice brought no greater consensus to the issue, and had already divided the nation's statesmen. Many had ideas, but few were truly prepared for the great unknown that lay before them.

But there was more to Reconstruction than the grand political strategies aimed at reuniting the divided nation. The war's end left thousands of men and women of both regions with the task of reconstructing their private lives. There was no doubt that the South shared more fully in this burden, and perhaps white pro-Confederate southerners faced the largest reversals of fortune. Even in the absence of a costly war, emancipation would have been a colossal shock to the region's economic and social underpinnings. The ignominy of Jefferson Davis's un-heroic flight and capture contrasted sharply with the martial valor displayed by

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[1] Warmoth Diary, February 14, 1864; Cited also (partially) in Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 9-10; Warmoth observed from a riverboat the great manor houses along the Mississippi River that at one time stretched from above Baton Rouge all the way past New Orleans.

southern armies on the battlefield. The shame of defeat, added to the destruction, dislocation, and the many chairs around the family dinner table that would remain forever vacant, must have made it a truly depressing time for many whites. For those who had believed in the Confederacy, the distant political theories of 1860 had yielded a very tangible and bitter fruit by 1865.

Another group of southerners may have recalled the old maxim, "be careful what you ask for lest you receive it." On the surface, it appeared that the emancipated gained the most out of the fortunes of war. But emancipation itself brought all southerners of color – even those who had always been free – little closer to citizenship than they had been before the war. Nor did the men who had bravely fought for the Union enjoy any such privilege. The fundamental question of what being black meant in postwar society, despite a deep and abiding national racism, retained some sense of fluidity and vagueness. Certainly, the abolition of slavery was no small victory, but freedom also had its price. The "Negro question" might have been a political abstraction for all but the most committed white Americans, but it remained an utterly *personal* struggle for black southerners.

The rapid demobilization of the Union army led to a sharp increase in unemployment, and the northern economy could not absorb all of its returning veterans. While many went to the West to start anew, others remained in the South. Some Union soldiers and northern civilians had already tried their hand at commerce and plantation agriculture in occupied territory during the war. While undoubtedly many earnestly supported the noble ideals sought in the Union's victory, such beliefs did not preclude an accompanying ambition that the war might also pay financial dividends. They arrived in the South at the twilight of an idealistic era, an era whose idealism had, among other things, plunged the nation into a bloody nightmare. Many veterans

who had served in front-line regiments had gotten their fill of hardship, and like their southern counterparts, knew grief. Combat had changed them in fundamental ways. The time had now come to be practical, to make the most of the situation, and if possible, to make a fortune.[2]

Lee's surrender had brought fewer immediate changes to New Orleans than to other southern communities, for the process of Reconstruction in the Crescent City had already entered its third year. Occupied by federal troops and teeming with northern men, many of the changes that would normally have taken place during the immediate postwar period had already transpired there. Whitelaw Reid, then a twenty-six year old war correspondent, described his immediate reaction when he arrived there in June 1865: "Crossing from Mobile to New Orleans was going from the past of the South to its present. Till within a few weeks, Mobile had been among the latest strongholds of the rebellion; for some years New Orleans had been held by the national authorities, and had been changing under the operation of Northern influences." Returning Confederates must have had a very similar reaction. Like Rip Van Winkle facing the world following a long slumber, the New Orleans that greeted them was not entirely the one that they had remembered. To some of them, the South's present did not look quite so promising.[3]

And many men were coming back to New Orleans to start their civilian lives over. Observing Carondelet Street late that June, Reid noted that "sometimes it was impossible to approach within a couple of squares of the Provost-Marshall's office, so great was the throng of returning rebel soldiers, applying for their paroles. It was a jolly, handshaking, noisy, chattering

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[2] For northerners who tried their hand at plantation agriculture in the occupied South see Lawrence Powell, *New Masters: Northern Planters During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Yale Univ. Press (New Haven, 1980) 10-23; On the change in attitudes among Civil War veterans and in northern intellectual currents, particularly the move away from civic idealism, see George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union*, Harper & Row (New York, 1965); For a more recent interpretation of similar themes, see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Farrar, Strous, and Giroux (New York, 2001)

[3] Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour: May 1, 1865 to May 1, 1866*. Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin (Cincinnati: 1866) 227

crowd. Pushing about among them could be seen women, sometimes evidently of wealth and position, seeking for their brothers or husbands."[4]

Parole was not such a jolly occasion for everyone. In 1865, as the spring turned into summer at Johnson's Island, E. John Ellis anguished over taking the "accursed and hated oath" to the Union. Although prison had hardened him in some important ways, Ellis's character retained a glimmer of idealism. As May became June, the barracks in which he stayed held fewer and fewer inmates. Writing to his father back in Louisiana, Ellis proclaimed: "There is no blood on my hands. Had the war terminated favorably to the South I would have always thought that we were right in opposing secession." Satisfied that he had maintained his honor to the end, he took the oath on June 13, 1865. Less than three weeks later, on the Fourth of July, he arrived home at Amite where he expected "to stay a white man."[5]

When Edmund Arthur Toledano finally returned home from Johnson's Island in October, 1865, he was in for a surprise. There was a new resident living with his Uncle Louis – it was his first cousin, Louise Drouet. The dramatic chain of events that had brought Louise to live with her father had begun a month earlier when Louis Drouet's personal servant discovered her employer lying unconscious in the yard. Frightened, she cried frantically for help. Henry Schwartz, a Bavarian-born tailor who for the last fifteen years had been a tenant on the ground floor of Drouet's house, heard the commotion outside his window and quickly came to the scene. With some difficulty, the pair managed to get the sickly old Creole up the stairs to his bedroom, where Schwartz kept a watch over him. By eleven o'clock that evening, Louis Drouet regained consciousness. Perhaps it was his ill health, or trauma of his day, but the normally reserved old gentleman began to speak freely. "I am going to tell you something I have never told you,"

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[4] Ibid., 239
[5] Tucker, "The Life of E. John Ellis," 712

Drouet said to his tenant. "I have a daughter, she is in a convent." Schwartz may have recalled then the little girl who frequently visited at the house with her quadroon mother years ago. Yet this uncharacteristic forthrightness on the part of his normally reticent landlord stunned him. "Why do you not take her with you?" quizzed Schwartz, to which Drouet wistfully opined, "Perhaps it would be better for her to remain in the convent." The tailor was incredulous. He urged Drouet to bring his daughter to the house to live. After all, Schwartz pointed out, he had been terribly ill and needed someone to take care of him. "I'm afraid people will talk about that," fretted the sickly old Creole. "Let people talk," Schwartz fired back. Two weeks later, eighteen year-old Louise Drouet came to live with her father.

Thus was the scene at the Drouet house in the Faubourg St. Mary following the war. Edmund Arthur Toledano resumed his daily trips to his uncle's home, sometimes staying for dinner where he sat at the table with his uncle and his first cousin, Louise. In the evenings, Louise now accompanied her father on his nightly rambles in his buggy through the streets of uptown New Orleans. They attended plays and circuses together, and the old Creole showered her with affection, which by all accounts she returned in full. When Louise went out visiting or on errands, neighbors could see her father anxiously waiting at the street corner for her return. It all seemed quite normal. After all, to those who did not know any better, Louise undoubtedly passed for white. [6]

Changes were afoot in the interracial Creole world. The old three-caste racial system that had dominated New Orleans society since its founding now faced collapse. The abolition of slavery diminished the uniqueness of the city's free people of color by reducing the distance, at

[6] *Louise Drouet vs. The Succession of Louis F. Drouet.* Much of this detail comes from the testimony of Mr. Schwartz, although some confirmation comes through the testimony of others including E.A. Toledano. Louise Drouet was at the very least 7/8 white, and perhaps more. Henry Schwartz lived with his wife and five children at the time Louise came to her father's home, United States Census, 1870. 2nd Ward New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, p. 71

least in the eyes of the law, between former slaves and the Afro-Creole elite. That the black leadership class enjoyed material and educational advantages over the freedmen paled in comparison with the reality that both were now simply black men in an increasingly polarized racial environment. It is a dubious assertion that emancipation put the bottom rail on top. The middle rail, however, was in much greater danger of falling.

Louise Drouet may well have been completely oblivious to all of the great political changes around her, but as girl on the threshold of her transformation into womanhood, she undoubtedly found the stability of her father's house a welcome change. The dramatic social upheaval taking place in her midst mirrored her personal life. She was born into a world where her future prospects might include becoming a placée, much like her mother, and her mother's mother had been. Living with her father exposed an entirely different path, the path toward becoming not just a woman, not just a mistress, but a lady. Perhaps over time, she might even become white, assuming the role of Louis Drouet's *legitimate* daughter. But if this was her plan, the stakes were higher than she probably knew, or could know. If she did not succeed at becoming white, she would become black, for the middle tier that she had left rapidly disappeared in a sea of freedmen. There was simply no going back to the way things were before the war.

The loss of the *status quo antebellum* changed more than racial dynamics in postwar New Orleans. This fact was not lost on Michel Musson, a point underscored by a disconcerting letter he received from his nephew René Degas. Young Degas rather glibly related a colossal blunder made while speculating in cotton for his new employer, the firm of John Watt & Company – a partnership in which Musson served as a principal. One can only imagine the swelling lump in Musson's throat as he read his nephew's words: "Final sum total & conclusion, the bill to pay

will come to about £1,100 Sterling or about $8,000 which I scarcely know how to pay on my return to New Orleans. It is not very lucky for a first start & a speculation that gives me a little too costly a lesson." Costly indeed. The war had been over for scarcely more than a year when in his zeal to make a fortune, the young adventurer had dug an enormous financial hole for the entire Degas-Musson clan. Believing in René's dreams, his siblings, including Edgar, furnished their brother with a financial stake. The Degas Bank in Paris had augmented the young man's pool of capital. Now they would have to live with the consequences.[7]

The letter was certainly unwelcome news for Michel Musson. The Degas-Musson speculation in Confederate bonds had already come to an unhappy financial conclusion. Now it appeared that bad business judgment ran in the family. Musson struggled mightily to get his financial house in order in an increasingly changing postwar commercial environment. At least his beloved wife and daughters had returned from France, lending him support through this trying time. Together they would face the uncertain world of Reconstruction New Orleans. Soon, René and his brother Achille Degas would also join the Musson clan in the Crescent City, buoyed by visions of commercial success under the guise of their new firm *Degas Frères*.

Financial prosperity was not necessarily an unrealistic goal in postwar New Orleans, even for ex-Confederate Creoles. Edmund Arthur Toledano had done a respectable job of picking up where he had left off when he had reluctantly become a soldier in 1862. Before the war, he had been a cotton weigher and buyer, working in the same industry as Musson. Less than a year after returning, he married, resumed his profession, and settled into private life. By 1867, Toledano had opened an office at 39 Carondelet Street and began taking advantage of the depressed prices in real estate, buying several substantial uptown parcels in the following years. Maybe he owed his success to his many family connections in the cotton business, or just the fact that he was

[7] Brown, *DeGas-Musson Papers*, 48; Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art*, 30-31

older and wiser than René Degas, yet not worn down by personal tragedy like Michel Musson. Whatever the case, amidst the wails and cries of the financial ruin brought by defeat and the carpetbaggers, Toledano prospered.[8]

Certainly, the return of good economic times loomed large on the minds of many who returned from the war. When the Mistick Krewe of Comus returned to the streets on the night of February 13, 1866, it reflected the aspirations of a generation of returning soldiers. The krewe emerged from its secret hiding place, a custom designed as much to conceal the participants' identities, but also to build excitement and an air of exclusivity. Anxious spectators first spotted the procession heading down Royal Street toward the Henry Clay statue at Canal. Passing below the Great Compromiser's impassive gaze, led by a "splendid brass band" and illuminated by a team of "freedmen" flambeaux bearers, Comus paraded onward to the Varieties Theater where he counseled observers on the lessons of past, present, and future. The tableau of "The Past," noted one witness, "was most appropriate, but most melancholy. Strife, Destruction, Want, Grief, Terror, were represented." "The Present" advocated "Peace, Industry, Commerce, Science, Agriculture, Mechanism, and the Arts." "The Future" attended to by representations of "Peace" and "Plenty" concluded the tableaux on an optimistic note.[9]

Indeed, the panoply of personal, social, and economic convulsions that beset postwar New Orleans give entirely new meaning to the shopworn term "paradigm shift." A radically altered political landscape compounded their effect. Prominent antebellum Louisiana politicians like Pierre Soulé, Judah Benjamin, John Slidell, and the secessionist governor, Henry Watkins Allen, now all skulked about in foreign exile like so many ringleaders of a toppled banana

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[8] *Succession of E.A. Toledano*, #37465. Orleans Parish 2nd District Succession Records, 1846-1880. Gardner's New Olreans Directory, 1867. Toledano's uncle Christoval and first cousin (Christoval's son) Benjamin Toledano operated a commission merchant firm that seemed to stay afloat all through the years of Reconstruction. It may simply have been that the Toledanos were good businessmen.

[9] "Mardi Gras in New Orleans" 18-19

republic. Losing the war meant that the levers of power fell into new hands, a disconcerting situation for many who returned home after the surrender.

On May 12, 1865, the clock had run out on Colonel Fred Ogden's band of cavalrymen. About fifty miles southwest of Tuscaloosa, at the small hamlet of Gainesville, Alabama, what was left of Ogden's Regiment turned over to Union authorities their military accouterments and pledged allegiance to the Constitution of the United States. The war, or at least the portion of it that he would fight in Confederate uniform, was now over for the colonel. It was time to return home. [10]

Once back in the Crescent City, it did not take long for Fred Ogden to again take up the cudgel. By the end of the year, the soldier was now the president of an organization called the Young Men's Democratic Association. On the night of October 14, 1865, Ogden called to order a meeting at the St. Charles Street Opera House. In a room tightly packed with former Confederates, the assembled plotted strategy for the coming November election. Before adjourning in the wee hours, the group set forth a series of resolutions. The Young Democrats accepted the "verdict of the sword," and pledged to uphold the federal government, but they also voiced some grievances. Paramount was the belief "that the regulation of the rights of suffrage rests exclusively with the States, and that the General Government possesses no constitutional right to abridge or modify that power." In a related resolution, the Democrats denounced the Louisiana constitution of 1864, urging its repudiation. And last, that "the confiscation of private property for alleged political offences is a barbarism of the past," and that Radical Republican's pursuit "for the blood of Jefferson Davis is unchristian and un-American." The Young

[10] Bergeron, *Guide to Louisiana Military Units*, 53

Democrats admitted that they had lost, but in their mind, it was time for the Yankees to go home. Michel Musson, in attendance that evening, must have looked on in approval.[11]

These diehard Confederates chafed at what had happened politically in Louisiana during their absence. The "Free State" constitutional convention of 1864 had produced a document that wrought significant alterations to the old antebellum code. Its foremost provision abolished slavery, but the constitution contained more socially pervasive clauses. The establishment of bi-racial public education and its inherent open-endedness on the issue of Negro suffrage gave conservatives pause. After several months of political jockeying, combined with the meddlesome hand of General N.P. Banks, the new government installed a new governor in the person of former slaveholder and planter, Madison J. Wells. The new legislature also replaced two antebellum titans of the United States Senate, John Slidell and Judah P. Benjamin, sending reliable Union men in their place. [12]

In retrospect, the stances taken by these returning Confederates that evening were not only unrealistic, but bordered on the irrational. They operated in a state of what George Schivelbusch terms "dreamland" – a powerful psychological elixir that transformed the depression felt by defeated homeward-bound soldiers into a self-deluding sense of normalcy. In this frame of mind, it was completely rational that they should return to their antebellum roles as leaders within the Crescent City's political community. President Andrew Johnson's lenient plan for Reconstruction fueled this delusion, allowing most of the formerly disloyal to quickly regain the rights of honest citizens. Perversely enough, returning Confederates increasingly fulfilled their fantasy of political resurgence through the good graces of Governor Wells, a

[11] *Daily Picayune*, 15 October 1865. Although he was hardly "young" and not exactly a combat veteran, Michel Musson attended and supported this mass meeting.
[12] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 50-53. These appointees never successfully took their seats in the United States Senate.

chameleon of significant estimation. Thus, by the time Fred Ogden's Young Democrats crowded into the St. Charles Street Opera House that October night, some of their number had already resumed positions within Louisiana's official civil government.[13]

Currying favor with these Democrats, Wells won the November, 1865 election handily and substantiated his claim to an office that he previously held only at the behest men like Banks. Yet the old planter had neither the sense to tenaciously grasp the wolf's ears, nor the courage to jump off its back, at least not as 1865 turned into 1866. In a vain effort to stem the authority of these former rebels, Wells vetoed several legislative efforts mounted by the statehouse, now dominated by ex-Confederates. Among the vetoes included some, but not all, of the newly crafted Black Codes. By February 1866, the legislature retaliated by successfully moving for new municipal elections that ultimately returned to power the antebellum mayor, John T. Monroe. For a supposedly defeated people, life in the post-homecoming "dreamland" flourished. [14]

The failure of Union men to firmly establish total victory in New Orleans proved a tragic mistake. Monroe's return symbolized the burgeoning power wielded by the old regime, and his office was not the only important post filled in such fashion. The antebellum chief of police, Thomas E. Adams, also resumed his old job. Although Adams personally did not subscribe to the excessive behavior of unrepentant rebels, many of those who served as officers under his command by 1866 did not hew to the same code. Some had been part of the violent gangs hired by the Know-Nothings in the 1850s, where they served as "political mercenaries who could be counted on to intimidate, beat, or even murder a man to keep him from voting." Others were

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[13] Ibid, 60-61; Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, 8-10. Schivelbusch uses a comparative framework, employing France in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and Germany following the First World War as examples of defeated societies, which like the South following the Civil War experienced this state of "dreamland."

[14] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 81; For a description of the Black Codes, which were essentially laws designed to force freedmen back into unfavorable labor situations approximating slavery, see Taylor.

Confederate veterans in desperate need of work. These developments paved the way for a bloody massacre known euphemistically as the "Riot of 1866."[15]

On a witheringly hot afternoon in late July, 1866, an episode of wanton and indiscriminate racial violence of such magnitude occurred in New Orleans that northern observers could no longer deny the fundamental lack of contrition on the part of the defeated white South. The clash came when Governor Wells finally moved to slay the monster he had done so much to create. Recognizing that Negro suffrage remained the only salvation for Union men in Louisiana, he reconvened the 1864 constitutional convention in order to extend the franchise to the freedmen. The Radical-dominated assembly met at the Mechanics' Institute on Dryades Street amidst an explosive atmosphere of racial tension. When Mayor Monroe ordered the city police force to break up the "illegal" convention, all hell broke loose. The police fired, clubbed, and stabbed a largely black crowd that had gathered outside the Institute in support of the convention's proceedings. Regrouping, and reloading their revolvers, they then stormed the building itself in an orgy of unmitigated violence. In the end, three white and thirty-four black supporters of the convention lay dead, and scores others wounded, some seriously. There was one fatality among the police. By the time federal troops arrived on the scene there was not much left to do but count bodies. [16]

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[15]. As James Hollandsworth documents extensively on his work on the Riot of 1866, Chief Adams may have committed an error of omission by not placing a firm handle on his subordinates' violent tendencies, but at the same time he had limited control and was not responsible for the acquisition of some of his most reprobate officers. In the riot itself, Adams acted in several instances to intervene and thereby save the lives of some convention delegates. James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of July 30, 1866* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 70-75; Dawson, *Army Generals*, 32-37

[16] The Mechanics Institute was home to the Louisiana Legislature during this period of Reconstruction. It is clear from the scholarship of Hollandsworth that some of the black fatalities were among bystanders who had nothing to do with the convention, but got caught up in the melee. Hollandsworth, *Absolute Massacre*; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 110; Dan Carter has argued that the reaction to the Black Codes in the North may have been somewhat hypocritical and out of proportion with their actual physical manifestations, but that the New Orleans massacre at the Mechanic's Institute was proof positive of the "failure of self-reconstruction." Dan Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985) 231, 248-253

Examined from any angle, the debacle at the Mechanics' Institute was a profoundly stupid act. Aside from obvious moral judgments, the resurgent antebellum leadership had effectively flushed whatever credibility they had down the drain. In turn, they engendered the well-deserved wrath of the Radicals and doomed their delusional state of "dreamland." For the freedmen, it was more like a nightmare. Although most of the scholarship regarding this turn of events suggests that Mayor Monroe and his coterie of supporters could not possibly have foreseen the deadly results of bringing hostile combatants together amidst racial tensions and ninety-degree heat, it does make objective observers wonder what they *did* think might happen. One student of the conflict suggests that the policemen had been conditioned to violence during the war and saw in the supporters of the constitutional convention the symbolic face of the Negro troops that had emerged victorious in 1865. Thus, the Riot of 1866 was a natural extension of events such as the notorious massacre of black prisoners of war at Fort Pillow. Perhaps this is true. Whatever the case, down the road, Redeemers could reflect upon the fruit this intemperance had borne in 1866. And although it would take some years for such lessons to sink in, it also underscored the fact that violence without discipline did not succeed, and that the mob could not be trusted with important political missions.[17]

In the words of Henry Clay Warmoth, July 30, 1866 was "A dark day for the City of New Orleans." Strangely enough, the blundering intemperance of the Monroe administration would ultimately pave the way for men like himself, the so-called "carpetbaggers." The outrage on Dryades Street, combined with other violent reprisals against Republicans and freedmen across the South, motivated northern voters to send a Radical super-majority to Washington in the fall elections of 1866. A new Congress would attempt in the following year to right the badly listing

[17] James Keith Hogue, "Bayonet Rule: Five Street Battles in New Orleans and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction," PhD. Diss: Princeton University, 1998. 93-97

Reconstruction effort in the South before it sank completely. The first of three Reconstruction Acts passed in March, 1867 served as an unambiguous clarion call of Radical ascendancy.

Warmoth had planned on being at the Mechanics Institute for the constitutional convention on that hot day in July. He had, in fact, been there earlier in the day but left when the assembly recessed, still lacking the quorum of delegates necessary to conduct the day's business. As he walked back to the Institute, Warmoth grew alarmed at the growing throng of hostile whites and armed policemen milling about in the vicinity of the convention. He stepped into a friend's residence on Canal Street to share his concerns when the sound of gunfire rang out in the humid summer air. Stepping out onto the balcony, the young lawyer saw the police kill two fleeing black men. Fearing for his safety, his friends persuaded Warmoth to return inside, lest any of the mob recognize him.[18]

Warmoth's companions had good reason to hustle him inside. Even before the war was over, his duties as a judge of the provost court had engendered hatred among certain Confederate elements within the city. On his way to New York City in February 1865, while eating breakfast at a hotel restaurant in Havana, angry blockade runners and Confederate agents had recognized "Judge Warmoth" and threatened his life. Since the end of the war, he had also engaged in the increasingly dangerous business of radical politics in New Orleans. It made sense to hide his well-known face that day.[19]

At the beginning of 1865, Warmoth had left the army and sought to parley his increasing network of connections into a successful law practice. He soon began making a handsome living representing clients who were similar to the ones who came before him as a judge pleading for the return of their precious cotton. But Warmoth had bigger aims than financial success. When

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[18] Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 22-23. The building that Warmoth entered at 150 Canal served also as one of his law offices for a period of time. Warmoth Diary, Feb 18, 1865

[19] Warmoth Diary, February 21, 1865

he traveled on business to Washington that spring, he ingratiated himself with powerful Republican politicians. As the historian Richard Nelson Current observed, the ambitious young man made himself "a kind of Radical pet." Upon his return to New Orleans, intoxicated by the excitement of politics, Warmoth became increasingly active in the formation of Louisiana's new state Republican Party. [20]

There was plenty of competition for the control of political office in New Orleans, but it was a task particularly suited to the young smooth-talking Missourian. Warmoth noted the process on display at a social gathering not long after he had set foot in the city. "A goodly number of sharp gentlemen were working their cards for certain specific objects." In stark contrast to the "innocence of the ladies," thought Warmoth, stood "the rascality and duplicity of the men." A year later, he found himself elbow-deep in such "rascality," jockeying for position among the state's Radical politicians.[21]

The Afro-Creole leadership in New Orleans trusted such "carpetbaggers" scarcely more than native rebel-sympathizing whites. To this group, Warmoth embodied many of the qualities they found most repellent. The acrimony stemmed from the fact that these white outsiders vied to become the spokesmen for the mass of newly-freed black Louisianans, a role to which New Orleans's Afro-Creole elite understandably believed they had a truer claim. The Union's victory had seemed to hold out the promise that their community might finally receive its long-delayed justice. As early as 1862, the Afro-Creole community through the French-language newspaper *L'Union* espoused its desire to lead all people of color toward freedom and political equality. This weekly also carried spiritualist communiqués from the Rey brothers and enjoyed widespread support of the closely-knit francophone community that lived in Faubourg Trémé.

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[20] Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 11-17
[21] Warmoth Diary, May 25, 1864

The Afro-Creole elite coalesced into a faction that frequently found itself at odds with white Union men, both from New Orleans and elsewhere. By the time the war ended, this tension showed its first serious signs of strain. In an effort to counter the increasingly reactionary edicts of Andrew Johnson and the complicity of Governor Wells, Republicans in Louisiana worked to rally supporters around the issue of universal male suffrage, a cause with broad support among Afro-Creole activists. At first the two factions had appeared to find common ground in their struggle, but both jealously guarded their power even as they worked in concert.

The Afro-Creoles had good reason for skepticism. In late 1865, knowing that the emboldened Democrats would continue to consolidate their power at the polls next November, the Republicans opted instead to hold an unofficial plebiscite for territorial delegate to Congress. Although the election held no real constitutional authority, it provided the first ever opportunity to vote for Louisiana's black population. Thomas J. Durant, a prominent white lawyer and Unionist who had lived in New Orleans for more than thirty years, was the favored leader of this movement. Yet, when Durant declined the nomination as delegate, an ambitious Henry Clay Warmoth insinuated himself as a suitable replacement. The Afro-Creole community was hardly thrilled.[22]

All of the shameless networking Warmoth had done in during previous trips to Washington paid dividends when he arrived in the nation's capitol as Louisiana's territorial delegate. Although the legislative chambers forbade all of the representatives elected by recalcitrant southern states from taking their seats, Warmoth, as territorial delegate, managed to secure a spot on the floor of the house. It was a perch from which he would learn much about the dynamics of the national political struggle between the president and congress. Thus, when

[22] Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism*, 270-274

he saw the violence in the streets of New Orleans that day in 1866, Warmoth must have understood that it would provide the necessary ammunition that the Radicals needed to make their move.[23]

News of the racial violence in New Orleans reached P.B.S. Pinchback in Montgomery, Alabama. He had been there some months since the end of the war, spending most of his time organizing for the Republican Party and rallying freedmen to support the cause of universal male suffrage. Alabama proved not to be as fertile ground for his political aspirations as he had hoped. Pinchback had left friends behind in New Orleans, and perhaps after the Radicals swept into Congress in November 1866 there might be an opportunity for him to make progress in the Crescent City. Alabama's blacks would have to find another savior.

In early 1867, Pinchback returned to New Orleans and bought a two-story frame house on Derbingy Street, not far off of Canal. To look at the man, most in the city might mistakenly take him for one of the mixed-race Afro-Creole community. His impeccable dress, unmistakably light skin and straight hair seemed to belie the presence of a French ancestor. But such observers could not have been more wrong. In fact, Pinchback grew increasingly disenchanted with the men he seemingly had most common cause.[24]

Writing his memoirs fifty years later, Henry Clay Warmoth characterized the Afro-Creole Roudanez brothers, the publishers of the *Tribune* (the bilingual successor to *L'Union*,) as men who wanted to "follow Hayti, San Domingo, and Liberia, and to make Louisiana an African State." An uncharitable slam, for sure, Warmoth's denunciation so many years later spoke to the venomous relationship that developed between him and the elite Creoles of color following his emergence as a Republican leader. For his part, Pinchback mostly agreed, observing that the

[23] Current, 14-20
[24] Haskins, *P.B.S. Pinchback*, 38-47

much more-radical Afro-Creoles made unrealistic demands of society. Always a pragmatist, Pinchback made a thinly veiled reference to the Afro-Creole radicals in a bold speech to the Republican convention in June, 1867:

> " Colored men of Louisiana, I caution you to be aware how you listen to this hissing of the serpent, lest in an unguarded moment you will have planted in your heart a damnable Jealousy and Prejudice that will cause you to turn and bite the hand that fed you."[25]

It is unclear when Warmoth and Pinchback first met, but it was probably not long after the latter had opened up a Republican Party office in New Orleans's Fourth Ward – if not earlier. One was an ambitious, dashing, yet strangely pious, tall, thin Midwesterner with expansive visions of political glory. The other, a handsome, mixed-race man of equally impressive height and bolder proportions who had often chafed at the notion that his mother's race kept him from attaining the heights to which he knew his keen intellect could take him. The historian, no matter the wealth of sources at his disposal, can never truly peer into the soul of his subjects, but at least on the surface, these two men appear to have been cut from the same cloth. Pinchback may not have been enamored with Warmoth, but time and time again, he sided with his fellow outsider. The two political adventurers needed each other. Warmoth commanded respect within the larger Republican world, and had made a mind-boggling amount of connections in a few short years. Pinchback brought credibility among the freedmen to the emergent Warmoth machine. It seemed like an ideal Louisiana political marriage.

The Afro-Creole radicals made one last effort to exert their power during the state constitutional convention of 1867 and the ensuing Republican convention that followed in the spring of 1868. A key provision desired by this faction was the "one-half guarantee;" in essence, a racial quota system for apportioning both convention delegates as well as political offices after

[25] cited in ibid. 52

a successful election. Ever the realist, Pinchback rejected this idea out of hand, suggesting that merit and commitment to Republican principles should be the only qualification for office. The former card sharp carried the day and the motion failed.[26]

When it came time for the Republicans to nominate a governor, the Afro-Creoles put forth one of their own, Francis E. Dumas – who despite being a man of color had once owned a significant amount of slave property. Like Pinchback, the Rey brothers, and many other black delegates to the convention, Dumas had served honorably as an officer in the Union Army. The Afro-Creole candidate took the lead during the first ballot, but lost out to Warmoth on the second and final tally by the narrowest of margins. The most dedicated Dumas supporters were furious, particularly Dr. Charles Roudanez, publisher of the *Tribune*.

But to say that every Afro-Creole rejected fellowship with Warmoth would simply be incorrect. Clearly a number of that community so bitterly hated the Warmoth regime that, down the road, they might actively work against it, but their solidarity was not impenetrable. The state treasurer on Warmoth's Republican ticket was Antoine Dubuclet, an intimate of the tight-knit circle of Afro-Creole spiritualists who were so very influential within their community. Dubuclet was one of many Afro-Creoles who would become part of Warmoth's coalition government. Even Jean-Charles Houzeau, the Belgian scientist and radical thinker who edited the *Tribune* during its heyday, had to concede in his memoirs that the spurned Creole faction bore a wrongheaded grudge against the party.

Warmoth did not help matters much when he sacked Roudanez's *Tribune* as the official printer of party documents. The contract was the paper's financial lifeblood, and without such patronage the Afro-Creole daily ceased publication, only to return in fits and starts whenever Roudanez or his political associates Rodolphe Desdunes and Aristide Mary pressed for some

[26] ibid, 59-60

specific political objective. It was not the last move of consolidation on the part of Warmoth, and not surprisingly the *Republican*, a paper in which he held a financial stake, received much of the redirected business. [27]

Three tumultuous years after the end of the Civil War, twenty-six year-old Henry Clay Warmoth stood upon the precipice of his first elected office – the governorship of Louisiana. An alchemist's recipe of luck, skill, ambition, and the unpredictability of the times had brought him to office. When the war began, he was an unknown, self-taught, self-proclaimed lawyer not yet out of his teens. How very far Warmoth had risen.

When it came to the reconstruction of personal lives, some in this urban drama navigated the obstacles of postbellum society better than others. Aside from the physical pain, defeat left returning Confederate veterans to deal with many personal demons. It was a world without grief counselors and there were no psychologists diagnosing and treating post-traumatic stress disorder. Victorian man was on his own, and the fact that some lashed out in an intemperate manner should shock no one. It was strangely ironic that having been brought up on *Ivanhoe* and *Waverly*, the literate officer class of the Confederacy should have not learned to stoically bear their fate. But of course, Sir Walter Scott's world was *fantasy* – and at that, a fantasy which the Old South never truly reflected. On the other hand, former slaves walking free in the streets of New Orleans and demanding political rights were very real. Despite all of this, however, time would prove that military defeat was not nearly so much the liability that some of these men had first believed.

The artlessly blundering riot at the Mechanics' Institute was a watershed event, nationally and locally. The most obvious product yielded by that bloodbath was the Radical ascendancy

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[27] Bell, 274; Jean-Charles Houzeau, *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune: A Memoir of the Civil War*, David C. Rankin, ed. Louisiana State University Press (Baton Rouge: 1984) 149-150

that paved the way for the political ambitions of men like Pinchback, Warmoth, and others. The riot also underscored the close relationship that politics and violence would share throughout much of Reconstruction. The Reconstruction Acts, which had come about directly in response to events like the New Orleans riot, proved a strangely ironic victory for the Redeemer generation. The Acts removed antebellum figureheads from power, creating new opportunities for aspiring reactionaries. And although they escaped excoriation in the press and the well-deserved blame for engendering sterner Reconstruction measures, the antebellum generation never again made important decisions. This left a rising generation to formulate its own strategy for success – one that would be both something old, and something very new. But for now, there remained a steep learning curve for both sides of the conflict, and a time of painful lessons lie ahead.

The uncertainty that permeated post-bellum society left few individuals unaffected. Changes in the commodities trades accompanied by wildly fluctuating prices for cotton challenged the most astute businessmen. The upheaval of the old and familiar racial patterns affected an even greater proportion of people on a much more personal scale. In spite of the optimistic mask borne by Mystick Krewe of Comus on Shrove Tuesday, 1866, both peace and plenty remained elusive for many.

Following the war, New Orleans society was much like a spider's web that had been torn by the wind. This calamity unleashed a furious struggle to repair the web – in some cases with the salvageable remains – in other places with entirely new silk. At first glance, the reconstructed version would look surprisingly like the old one it had replaced, but this was not entirely the case. And at the start of Henry Clay Warmoth's term as governor, much like political Reconstruction, societal reconstruction had really only begun.

CHAPTER IV

WARMOTH'S BIG GAMBLE

> *"It would be almost a disgrace to gain a triumph by such an alliance as that with Warmoth – the organizer and chief engineer of all the oppression and degradation to which our noble state has been subjected. He is the* beau ideal *of the carpet-bagger, the very embodiment of that spirit of insolent rapine which followed, vulture-like in the rear of the Union armies, and which has lingered in their track up to this time, emboldened by the still visible glitter of their distant bayonets."* [1]

Many lines have been written about the administration of Henry Clay Warmoth. Not surprisingly, few, if any, match the self-congratulatory tone of his autobiography. Dunning school historians had painted the young governor as the epitome of "Carpet-bag misrule;" a scheming and rapacious interloper who built a fortune on the backs of prostrate, defeated southerners and gullible freedmen. Instead of cleansing Warmoth's tarnished reputation, the "revisionists" of the late-twentieth century more often than not depicted him as the embodiment of the type of self-serving politician that had made the Reconstruction experiment fail. With a few notable exceptions, even recent works cast Warmoth as a swashbuckling but opportunistic minor tyrant who placed personal ambition over the common good.[2]

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[1] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger* (New Orleans,) 7 January 1872

[2] Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930); For early Dunningite school histories of Warmoth, see Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (New York: Goupil & Co., 1905), Ella Lonn, *Reconstruction in Louisiana After 1868* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1918). Perhaps the earliest "revisionist" interpretation of Louisiana's Reconstruction experience came in Rodolphe Desdunes' *Our People, Our History*, where he describes Warmoth's administration as an "era of knaves and adventurers." Twenty years later, W.E.B. Du Bois characterized Warmoth as a "buccaneer." Both men had enormous influence upon the thinking of revisionist historians writing on the topic. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965) Eric Foner's widely regarded work, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) does little to change this perception. For a more recent but equally scathing portrait of Warmoth, see Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana.* The most generous portrayal of Warmoth comes in Richard Nelson Current's *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers.*

Much of this scholarship fails to consider what Warmoth really had in mind for post-bellum Louisiana. Understanding that everything else came secondary to the creation of the long-term stability of the state's Republican Party – *his* Republican Party – explains much about the man and his actions. This vision was not much different than the one espoused by Lincoln himself. Without question, Warmoth would compromise his commitment (if he ever had any) to high-minded ideals such as racial equality, and equally undeniable was his adherence to a cloudy code of Gilded-Age political ethics. Distracted by Warmoth's character flaws, historians of Reconstruction-era Louisiana have largely missed his ambition of creating a pragmatic political coalition. Unlike Lincoln, however, Warmoth failed to comprehend the telling truth revealed in Honest Abe's maxim about fooling all of the people all of the time.

Warmoth's sought to fashion his coalition of support out of a spectrum of voters that ranged from just-left of to just-right of center. He understood that the far right embodied by Bourbon Democrats and the far left Radicalism characterized by the Roudanez brothers would always remain as polar opposites. In between these poles, however, lay a substantial mass of black and white voters who yearned for stability in an uncertain age. The "morality play" of Reconstruction historiography portrays a polarized society where, presumably, southerners of both races allied themselves with either the Republican or Democratic Parties, basing their decision largely upon self-interest, racial fear, or in the case of some Republicans, high-minded ideals. Yet political indecisiveness gripped many southerners in the early years of Congressional Reconstruction, and Warmoth understood this. Whether his plan to create a political party

around Louisiana's "vital center" during Reconstruction was sheer genius or sheer folly, it was well ahead of its time.[3]

Unfortunately for Warmoth, the uncanny luck that had accompanied him throughout the war and early post-bellum years had abandoned him as governor. The one thing that he never counted on was his inability to control or win-over other, equally ambitious white "carpetbaggers" within his own party. Nor did he comprehend that he lived in the midst of a social revolution where an oppressed class would reject the idea of pragmatic patience in their quest for long-denied rights. The resulting power struggle between Warmoth and his Republican competitors and the divisive issue of civil rights would show that the talented young politician was not invincible. It also provided the first real break for the resuscitation of the defeated, divided, but by no means moribund Democratic Party. In time, the Democrats would learn what Warmoth had known all along – the importance of selling one's message to the uncommitted.

During his years as an army officer, judge, and practicing lawyer, Warmoth had spent many evenings socializing with prominent southern men who had, for one reason or another, chosen the Union over the Confederacy. He understood that native white New Orleanians were not necessarily of a singular political mind. Thus, as governor, the young Missouri native embarked on a plan designed to knit together Union and Confederate veterans with bonds of mutual interest. He did this in many arenas – political appointments, government patronage, even within the judiciary. Perhaps nowhere was Warmoth's plan more in evidence, however, than in his creation of the Metropolitan Police and a new state militia.[4]

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[3] In some respects, this position revisits much earlier scholarship by T. Harry Williams, who also noticed within New Orleans a subtext of political ambiguity. T. Harry Williams, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 12, no. 4, (Nov. 1946) 469-486

[4] A recent work looks at pro-Union and "Scalawags" across the South. Unfortunately, little of it has been dedicated to Louisiana, although an included appendix of data paints a statistical portrait of the state's native Republicans. See James Alex Baggett, *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003)

The Riot of 1866 had been a defining moment in postwar New Orleans. Seeing his unarmed political constituency shot down like dogs on Canal Street had a profound impact upon Warmoth's immediate plans as governor. The twenty-six year-old chief executive moved quickly to establish a reliable armed force answerable to his beck and call. It was an astute move – both from the standpoint of political and physical survival. Federal troops retained a presence in Reconstruction New Orleans, but the slaughter at the Mechanics' Institute stood as a stark testimony to their unreliability. The Metropolitan Police emerged from this need.

The five-hundred-man Metropolitan Police Force was something truly unique in American law-enforcement. They were to fulfill the role of a civil police force for the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard. At the same time, they were essentially a state-sponsored paramilitary force designed to support the aims of the Republican Party. The Metropolitans blurred the line between military rule, politics, and a civilian police force, and took on distinct martial characteristics more closely resembling the *Federales* of modern Mexico than their ostensible model, the Metropolitan Police of New York City.

On the one hand, the Metropolitan Police were part of a nationwide trend toward the modernization of urban law enforcement agencies. In order to join the Metropolitans, potential officers underwent screening for both physical and mental fitness for the job. They were a uniformed force with badges, something relatively new in law enforcement. Some of the police served as sanitary officers whose primary responsibility was to ensure compliance with quality-of-life ordinances such as the proper disposal of trash. The Metropolitans provided public welfare to the city's burgeoning population of destitute, operating soup kitchens and shelters. They also acted as a first-line of defense against the panoply of vagrants, cheats, and roughs that

had always been a permanent fixture in New Orleans. An examination of their arrest record indicates that intoxicated Irish immigrants took up a great deal of their energy.[5]

On the other hand, the Metropolitans were armed to the teeth – well beyond what most nineteenth century police departments ever carried. Not only were the Metropolitans issued side arms, their arsenal also included a stand of .44 caliber model 1866 Winchester lever-action rifles with bayonets, a few small canon, two Gatling guns, and the *Ozark*, a small steam-powered gunboat. All of this hardware was clearly not required to subdue alcohol-inspired malefactors, but spoke to Metropolitan's other role as the paramilitary wing of the Republican Party.[6]

In the years following Reconstruction, writers wallowing in Lost-Cause mythology would heap derision upon the memory of the Metropolitan Police. One characterized the organization as being "mostly negroes," while another asserted that it "was composed of the scum of the earth and was officered by outcasts of all nationalities." Working-class men were the backbone of the Metropolitan Police force, and the census reveals that they lived among people who made their living through toil; draymen, laborers, washerwomen and seamstresses. Most rented rather than owned their homes. Unlike service in the militia, being an officer of the Metropolitan Police was a full-time job, and thus it was liable to attract someone looking for a career. At the very least, it provided (at least initially) a steady paycheck and a certain level of authority. More importantly, it welded these men economically to Warmoth's Republican Party.[7]

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[5] This was a reflection of the "modern" aspects of the Metropolitan Police. The last three decades of the 19th century witnessed dramatic changes in law enforcement. The Metropolitans were modeled on this more progressive standard. Rousey, p.132-133; New Orleans Metropolitan Police, Arrest Records, 1870-1873 (New Orleans City Archives, New Orleans, La.); For another analysis of the Metropolitan Police's arrests, see *Daily Picayune*, 9 Feb. 1872

[6] Rousey, *Policing the Southern City*, p. 130, Although Rousey contends that the Metropolitan Police were creating a tactical "parity" with their opponents.; A sample of the Winchester Rifles used by the Metropolitan Police can be seen in New Orleans' Confederate Museum, 929 Camp Street. This rifle represented a vast improvement over Civil War era small arms technology, capable of firing ten shots plus a complete reload in less than one minute.

[7] Frank L. Richardson, "My Recollections of the Battle of the Fourteenth of September, 1874, in New Orleans, Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 3 (October, 1920), 498-501. Richardson's at-times erroneous account

Many members of New Orleans's Afro-Creole community became officers in the Metropolitan Police. Octave Rey, who had resigned his commission in the Union Army in disgust during Banks' 1863 purge, joined not long after their formation in 1868. Despite the animosity some of his Afro-Creole associates harbored against the Warmoth administration, Rey was willing to give the Yankee invader another chance to prove his commitment to progress. Perhaps too, this was the opportunity he needed to demonstrate his valor. Being officer material, Rey soon rose to the rank of captain in the Fourth Precinct.

A little more than one-fourth of the force was of mixed race, a figure roughly equivalent to the overall population of New Orleans at the time. It included men like Peter Joseph, who like Octave Rey, had lived in the city all of his life, had always been free, and had volunteered to serve in the Union Army. Joseph also became a precinct captain in the Metropolitans. Indeed, the vast majority of the force's mixed-race officers were veterans of the United States Colored Troops.[8]

Immigrants, or the "outcasts of all nationalities," were the other dominant group in the Metropolitan Police. They were the people whom the men of Comus had worried about when the organization sought to impose order on Carnival. Like the Afro-Creoles on the force, many of these men had also worn blue during the war. William Brown was a Prussian-born Union veteran who had come to New Orleans in 1862 with his Massachusetts regiment. By 1870 he was living with a black woman and a member of the Metropolitans. Patrolman M.J. "Andrew"

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of the White League and the Metropolitan Police, recorded 50 years after the fact, has had a tremendous impact on the existing scholarship on this period.; Walter Prichard, ed., "The Origin and Activities of the 'White League' in New Orleans (Reminiscences of a Participant in the Movement,)" *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1940, p.530. This account has also had some influence on the corpus of scholarship on the White League.

[8] Rousey 126-158; Peter Joseph served as a private in Co. G of the 7th Louisiana Infantry (Colored.) *Civil War Compiled Military Service Records*, NARA

Barrett came to the Crescent City from Connecticut shortly after his honorable discharge in 1865. Like many members of the force, Brown and Barrett were both under the age of thirty.[9]

Of the nearly seventy percent of the Metropolitans who were foreign-born, the majority were Irish. Many of these men had also been long-time New Orleans residents. Leonard Malone had been a policeman in antebellum New Orleans, and resumed his profession after the war. James Gibney had served in the Confederate Army and joined the Metropolitans in 1868. Like their fellow Irishman Thomas Flannigan, they both became precinct captains.[10]

When the Louisiana legislature authorized the formation of the Metropolitans, Warmoth turned to Algernon S. Badger, another energetic, young Union veteran to serve as an officer, and later as the force's superintendent. Immediately after the war, Badger had served as a court clerk in the Fourth District, but this duty must have seemed interminably dull and much like his life had been before he had joined the army. The creation of the Metropolitan Police was an exciting new opportunity for not-so-old soldiers such as himself.

The Metropolitans emerged as the very cornerstone of the Republican Party in Louisiana, and without them, Reconstruction in the Pelican State might have been considerably shorter. Made up of a mixture of native Louisianans and outsiders, it was not an army of occupation, but one of the underclass. For this reason, it drew the ire of its adversaries with an intensity no federal bayonet could ever invoke.

At the same time, Warmoth needed to convert other potential enemies into friends before they could do both him and the Republican Party harm. Once the United States Congress reauthorized the southern states to raise militia companies, Governor Warmoth moved quickly to create a force modeled upon his vision of a new political coalition. In early 1870, the Louisiana

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[9] *Charity Hospital Admission Book*, 1874-1876. NOPL; *Civil War Compiled Military Service Records*, NARA
[10] Rousey, 144-145

legislature complied with this request and authorized a force of 5,000 men. Unlike the Metropolitan Police, however, this force would be segregated by race.[11]

Many years after Reconstruction, Warmoth would boast in his memoirs that he had raised "twenty-five hundred young Rebels into the State Militia." Even the annual Adjutant General's report for 1870 had to admit "about one half of our force is composed of officers and soldiers who were in the military service of the Southern States during the late civil conflict." At a time when the United States Congress debated the passage of the Enforcement Acts as a measure to counter Klan violence, Warmoth peaceably invited men to the table who might otherwise array against him. He knew that not every man possessed the same diehard fervor for the Democratic Party that burned so strongly in the breast of a man like Frederick Nash Ogden. Those lacking such ardor might see the benefits of joining a winning team. After all, the emergence of victorious Redeemers was simply not a forgone conclusion in 1870.[12]

An examination of the roster of former Confederates who enlisted in the Louisiana Militia dispels any notion that former rebels-turned "scalawag" had a common war experience or uniform opinions about their service in the "Lost Cause." Some, like William J. Behan, had truly heroic war records. In May 1861, at the tender age of nineteen, he had enlisted in New Orleans's elite Washington Artillery as a sergeant. By the time he surrendered at Appomattox, Behan had fought in most of the engagements in the eastern theater and had risen to the rank of brevet colonel. When he enlisted in the Republican militia in 1870, he was twenty-nine and had reestablished himself as a prosperous merchant. Behan's comrades, James B. Walton and

[11] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed,* 177
[12] Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930) p.165; *Report of the Adjutant General's Office,* Louisiana State Militia, Dec. 31, 1870. (Military Archives, Jackson Barracks, La.)

William B. Owen, both prominent merchants and Washington Artillery veterans, also joined Warmoth's army.[13]

Other officers of the new militia had a far less glorious experience with the Confederacy. Antoine Tissot entered the war as the captain of an infantry company, but resigned his commission in the midst of the Vicksburg siege. After his parole at Enterprise, Mississippi, he went home to New Orleans, leaving the war behind for good. By 1870, he had a successful law practice and would soon receive an appointment to be a judge of the Orleans Parish Second District Court. John Reinecke and Alfred Meilleur were enlisted men in Tissot's company. A sixteen year-old Reinecke managed to get captured in late 1862 in occupied New Orleans, perhaps while AWOL. A prisoner exchange reunited him with Meilleur and the rest of the company at the siege of Vicksburg. After their parole at Enterprise, Reinecke and Meilleur both spent the majority of the war's remaining years malingering in hospitals, Meilleur receiving three demotions in the process. When these friends received commissions in the militia in 1870, both were working as cotton clerks and lived under the same roof in the fifth ward.[14]

To look collectively at the white members of Louisiana's state militia in 1870, one might think that they had actually seen the roster of an army of Redemption. Yet that is a perception fueled by retrospection. These men did not join believing that they might someday become the vanguard of a revitalized Democratic Party – far from it. Perhaps some grasped at opportunity. Others may have believed that they could work with the carpetbaggers, although undoubtedly few endorsed the most "radical" propositions of the Republican Party. Some may simply have

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[13] Lost Cause mythology had a lot to do with the formation of an image of solidarity among Confederate veterans. This has more to do with the era of reunion than the reality of Reconstruction. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion*: *The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Booth, *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers*, vol. 1, p. 156; ibid, vol.3, p. 988; Hogue, "Bayonet Rule," 133-142; William Miller Owen, *In Camp and Battle with the Washington Artillery: A Narrative of Events During the Late Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox and Spanish Fort.* (Boston: Ticknor & Co. 1885); *United States Census*, Orleans Parish,1870

[14] Booth, *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers*, vol. 3, p. 839;ibid, vol. 3, p. 282; ibid, vol. 2, p. 939; *United States Census*, Orleans Parish, Fifth Ward, 1870

been resigned to Union victory and Republican domination and were trying to make the best of a bad situation. At the time of their enlistment, few could be called last-ditch Democrats. Louisiana's Democrats remained highly antagonistic to anything bearing the stamp of Warmoth, including his state militia. The divisions among New Orleans's former Confederates have been obscured by a mirage created by decades of post-Redemption Lost Cause rhetoric, but they were plainly visible in 1870. In some ways, the militia reflected the reemergence of the political factionalism that had been present in New Orleans on the eve of the secession crisis.

If the young governor meant to make friends out of potential enemies by recruiting old Confederates into the white militia regiments, the same could be said of the "black" units as well. The political wrangling with the Afro-Creoles from the *Tribune* warned of dangers on his left flank. Thus, Warmoth courted the Afro-Creole elite to form the officer corps of the remaining companies.

Many of the men who received commissions as officers in the militia units reserved for people of color had served in the Union army. While a few were from the laboring classes, the majority were prosperous merchants – much like their white counterparts. A number were also involved directly in politics and undoubtedly saw their militia service as another attempt to achieve the unfulfilled promise of their wartime careers. Some were also Metropolitan Policemen. Octave Rey served as a major in the militia, and Peter Joseph as a captain.

Others teetered on the edge of racial ambiguity. Joseph Raynal, a colonel and aide-de-camp in the 1st division, and a former officer in the USCT, was apparently so fair skinned that when his daughter Marie Ella was born in late 1867, she merited a "W" in the birth certificate's race column. He was not unique in this regard. Charles St. Albin Sauvinet had been one of the few mixed-race officers in the Union army to serve out the entire war, serving as the

quartermaster of a colored infantry company. Before the war, he had moved in white society, had traveled to Europe, and by his own reckoning encountered little discrimination except that he did not enjoy the franchise. After the war, he served as the president of the Freedmen's Bank, and shortly after joining the militia in 1870, had won the office of Orleans Parish Civil Sheriff. All three of his children, two of whom were born before the war, had been identified as white on their birth certificates.[15]

It was an unusual marriage, for sure. Noted historian of Reconstruction-era Louisiana, Joe Gray Taylor, suggested that Warmoth was loathe to raise and equip both black and white units because as he put it, "Louisiana troops half white and half black would almost surely be divided among themselves, and the white element would probably be unreliable for the defense of a Republican regime." Yet that was exactly what Warmoth did.[16]

To lead his army, Warmoth called upon General James Longstreet, Robert E. Lee's old "war horse." If the governor had a crystal ball in his possession, he might have made a different choice, but at the time the selection made perfect sense and fit in with his overall strategy of winning over old Confederates. Ulysses S. Grant, a longtime friend of Longstreet, had appointed the Georgian to the post of United States Surveyor of the Port of New Orleans in 1869. Many southerners saw this as *quid pro quo* for Longstreet's early support of the northern victors. Yet, it was not until the death of Robert E. Lee in October 1870 that the character assassination of Longstreet began in earnest.

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[15] AGO report, 1870; Marie Ella Raynal, b. 15 Dec 1867, *Orleans Parish Birth Records*, vol. 47, p. 91; *Sauvinet v. Walker*, No. 3513, 27 La. Ann. 14, (1875); Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 190; *United States Census*, 1870, Orleans Parish, Sixth Ward; James Nelson Sauvinet, b. 27 Jun 1859, OPBR, vol. 34, p. 442; Charles Silas Sauvinet, b. 20 Dec 1860, OPBR, vol. 34, p. 443; Marie Clothilde Sauvinet, b. 18 Feb 1863, OPBR, vol. 34, p. 443. Sauvinet had his children certified all at the same time which was during his service in the USCT.

[16] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, p.177

Although the general's Republicanism paved the way for his elevation as the Judas of the South, in reality, Longstreet's political ideology differed little from that of the white New Orleanians serving under him. He personally disdained the concept of social equality for blacks, but conceded that acceptance of freedmen's political rights was not only inevitable, but honorable. Longstreet felt the biggest obstacle to the redemption of the South was the Democratic Party. In his view, violent resistance to federal authority could only lead to prolonged northern occupation. [17]

As 1870 came to a close, Warmoth was at the height of his power, and had no notion that he had built his political coalition on a foundation of sand. The Metropolitan Police, to some degree, and the militia, to a much greater degree, reflected what the young governor was doing with many aspects of his power. Appointments to state offices went to both Republicans and supportive Democrats, particularly those who had Whiggish tendencies in the past. There was grumbling from within his own party, but at the moment, it was something Wamroth believed he could contain.[18]

Such grumbling was not confined within the Republican Party, and nobody was better informed of this fact than E. John Ellis. Since his return from Johnson's Island, Ellis had gotten married, started a family, and struggled to establish his law practice in Tangipahoa Parish.

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[17] For a more detailed discussion of Longstreet's career following the Civil War and the Gettysburg controversy see William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History*, (University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1987) 104-138. Longstreet's ties to the Republican Party and the administration of Henry Clay Warmoth grew in 1870 when the governor appointed him as Adjutant General of the state militia. For some of Longstreet's former colleagues, this was further proof of his treachery. By 1872, Longstreet's personal enemies, led by Jubal Early, claimed that Longstreet was to blame for Confederate defeat at the battle of Gettysburg. In spite of Early's shady evidence, Longstreet's unpopularity, combined with a widespread desire to vindicate the sainted Robert E. Lee, caused Early's largely baseless accusations to stick. Though Longstreet bitterly resented such slander, he was unable to effectively refute the claims of his accusers, and because of his postwar political associations, few former colleagues came to his defense. Ironically, Jubal Early turned up in New Orleans frequently during this time, his celebrity being used by the carpetbagger-run Louisiana Lottery Company to lend "credibility" to the drawing of lottery numbers. All this for an immodest annual salary of $30,000. See Arlin Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956) p. 48

[18] James Keith Hogue develops the idea of Warmoth's coalition building, but focuses solely on the former Confederate militia. Hogue, "Bayonet Rule," 133-139

Probably his most spectacular case during this period involved defending a wartime smuggler and fellow resident of the parish, Ashford Addison. He had also been involved in politics, making speeches for Seymour and Blair, the Democratic presidential ticket in 1868. By 1869, he decided to move his family to New Orleans and practice law with his brother Thomas. From their vantage point in uptown, the two brothers saw Warmoth's plan unfold.[19]

The Ellis brothers conducted a steady dialogue with Charles Kennon, a longtime friend back home in Tangipahoa Parish. Kennon was about the same age as E. John Ellis and shared his passion for political theory. The two had spent a year together at Johnson's Island prison, and when Kennon returned, he began a medical practice in Amite. He felt that the Democratic Party had handled things badly since the close of the war, and by 1870, Kennon was furious over the state of political affairs. He railed against the deep divisions among the white population, and he heaped much of the blame on men who had crossed over to the Republican Party. Equally to blame, thought Kennon, were the old "party hacks" like the antebellum politician Thomas Green Davidson who wanted to "divide the white men of the South on dead issues." In exasperation, Kennon suggested that as a last resort, white men should organize a Conservative Republican Party as to defeat the political enemy from within – something of a "Trojan horse" strategy. He mused that "if a large portion of the white people act with the Republican Party and show them that the necessity no longer exists for exalting the negro, then "Cuffy," his vote being

[19] Addison had been a quartermaster in the Confederate army and very active in smuggling goods through enemy lines. Addison also seems to have made a considerable sum for himself in these transactions. The suit involved a loan of $1000 in gold made by an associate of Addison in New Orleans for the purpose of bribing a Confederate general. Ellis, along with the legal team of McVea and Hunter, lost the case. Interestingly, Addison, for a while, became a supporter of the Republican Party. See *Edward Cooper v. Thompson, Adams & Thayer*, No. 1682, 20 La. Ann. 182 (1868); Tucker, "The Life of E. John Ellis," 713-4

no longer a matter of paramount importance will no longer be the sable hero of elections." Thomas Ellis noted at the top of this letter, "read & return to me."[20]

Following the elections in November 1870, Kennon fired off another impassioned letter to the Ellis brothers. "The money and patronage of the dominant party and our confidence in the whites who failed to do their duty conspired to disappoint us in the result," noted Kennon. He complained furhter that the acceptance of the fifteenth amendment broke "down the prejudice which stimulated many of the ignorant class to vote against Radicalism." Kennon saw little difference between the Democrats and Republicans now that the former had endorsed the black franchise. "We can never control the negro vote for the simple reason that it involves social equality which we can never accept." He included invective against fellow residents of Tangipahoa who had aligned with Warmoth for the sake of patronage appointments. Indeed, such patronage and the steady salary that went with it were quite invasive. "It is rumored here that Wm Perrin, the perjured wretch, supported Brady under promise of getting his support for District Judge at next election. Meaning, I presume, Radical support." Closing his political comments, Kennon declared, "The demoralization in our white ranks is incredible."[21]

Yet as demoralized as these Democrats were as 1870 passed into 1871, the seeds of Warmoth's downfall had already been sown. Growing disillusionment with the governor from within his own party would be largely to blame. In the coming year, the coalition he had crafted with such care would come apart at the seams. In part, it would be bad luck, but the union's inherent contradictions would also play a role.

Two great spectacles consumed the first few months of every calendar year in Reconstruction-era New Orleans. One was the regular annual legislative session, and the other

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[20] Booth, *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers*, vol. 2, p. 544; *United States Census*, 1870, Tangipahoa Parish; Charles E. Kennon to Thomas C.W. Ellis, 27 June 1870, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC

[21] Charles E. Kennon to "Friend Tom," 11 November 1870, Ellis Papers, LLMVC

was Carnival. Mardi Gras 1871 fell on the twenty-first of February. The weeks leading up to this event were a time of conviviality, dancing, and for taking stock of where one sat in the social spectrum. If the menus from such affairs are any indication, many attendees came prepared to marinade themselves in alcohol and feast from a sumptuous spread of French cuisine. It was public spectacle, a place to put one's self on parade, and perhaps even a venue where conspirators could hatch a plan or two.

Four separate episodes during the weeks of Carnival demonstrated the forces conspiring to draw and quarter Warmoth's coalition. The actions of old Confederates that Warmoth had successfully courted worried his black supporters. In turn, the growing activism of the governor's black supporters left some on his conservative flank second-guessing their support of Republicanism. Within the party itself, a conspiracy formed amongst jealous rivals. And of course, the Democrats hated his guts. It was a lot for one man to keep track of.

Two weeks before Shrove Tuesday, Henry Clay Warmoth attended a splendid party at the St. Charles Hotel hosted by Louisiana Lottery president John Howard. It was the reception for the governor's doomed political marriage. Special guests included prominent Democrats and Republicans, judges, generals, and other dignitaries from New Orleans and elsewhere. Warmoth occupied the place of honor, and to his right sat George Carter, Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives. Carter had been the colonel of a Confederate cavalry regiment from Texas and was also lawyer of some reputation. The two had gained acquaintance when Carter defended Warmoth against an embezzlement charge in a Texas courtroom. When the Louisiana legislature authorized the creation of Cameron Parish in the far southwest corner of the state, Warmoth rewarded Carter with an appointment as parish judge. From there, Carter solidified his position as the district's representative, and then strong-armed his way into the speakership. As

the assembled dined that night on *Salmis de Bocassines a la Richelieu* and drank *Punch Romaine*, one wonders if Warmoth had already known that he had created a monster.[22]

One week after Warmoth's *fête* at the St. Charles, a surreal scene descended upon the Odd Fellow's Hall on Lafayette Square. It was the night of the Military and Mask Ball, with Colonel Owen's Fifth Regiment of Louisiana State Militia. As the *Picayune* recounted the spectacle, "The uniforms of the regiment are made after the model of the French Chasseur uniforms. They are gray, trimmed with blue, look very neat, and bear a striking resemblance to the uniforms worn by the gallant boys who fought so well during the four years' conflict and many of whom are now enrolled in the militia service of our state." Striking resemblance indeed – to some, it looked like 1861 all over again.[23]

Yet it was not 1861, and no quantity of alcohol could make it truly appear that way. Who better to gently remind the educated public of this fact than the Mistick Krewe? Beginning with Carnival of 1871, subtle political commentary increasingly crept into the rolling tableaux of Comus. This year's festival would celebrate Edmund Spencer's *Faerie Queen*. On the surface, it was as playful as the clever *Feast of Epicurus*, which had so delighted audiences during Mardi Gras of 1867. Yet those with some degree of nineteenth-century classical education, as many of the city's social elite possessed, would have been aware of the witty sarcasm the Mistick Krewe found in Spencer's epic poem. Indeed, the *Faerie Queen*, ostensibly a work praising Queen Elizabeth, was full of political criticism, both in the abstract and of Elizabethan England itself. It did not take much imagination to draw parallels to contemporary Louisiana or the Warmoth administration. Spencer's allegory derided misrule of all kinds, but particularly that practiced by those with glaring character flaws. It was undoubtedly above the heads of the masses, but in

[22] *Times Picayune*, 8 February 1871; By all accounts, Carter emerges as an unsavory figure. For more information on George Carter see Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, p 213-14
[23] *Times Picayune*, 16 February 1871

metaphorical terms, the men of Comus expressed their growing resentment with the Republican order.[24]

The Democratic men of the Pickwick Club were not the only ones to express their discontent with the status quo. After taking control of the office of Orleans Parish Civil Sheriff at the start of 1871, Charles St. Albin Sauvinet quickly discovered the challenges faced by a black civil servant. Late that January, the sheriff and two white business associates left his French Quarter office in search of a noontime drink. When the Sauvinet suggested a frequent haunt, one of his companions, a native New Orleanian by the name of Finnegan, commented that it was "in the French part of town and you can't get good liquor there." Ignoring this thoughtless insult to his Gallic heritage, Sauvinet gamely continued with the others down Bienville Street to Royal. Here they passed over the famous Sazerac because of similar objections. When the trio stopped in front of number six Royal Street, home of "The Bank," Finnegan was finally satisfied. "Here is where a man can get a first class drink," he proclaimed. It was a place Sauvinet knew well.

Indeed, Sauvinet had taken a drink at the Bank Coffeehouse many times, even at the invitation of the proprietor, Joseph Walker. Yet something out of the ordinary had happened on his most recent visit to the bar. That trip had been to carry out his official duties as sheriff – to collect the Bank's rent from Walker because the landlord was in receivership. In the privacy of his upstairs office, Walker offered the sheriff a drink and proceeded to pay the rent. All was amicable, as the two sat drinking cognac, when the bar owner turned to serious conversation. "I have a favor to ask of you," he said. Walker explained that it had been recently called to his attention that Sauvinet was considered a colored man. He asked that Sauvinet stop visiting the

[24] For a description of Carnival 1871, see *Daily Picayune,* 22 February 1871; For a brief historical interpretation of Edmund Spencer's *Faerie Queen* see Elizabeth Heale, *The Faerie Queen: A Reader's Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1-11

Bank's barroom, because serving him in the house would injure his business. Taken aback, Sauvinet replied, "I have always drunk in all houses, and it is too late now for me to go back." The sheriff made no promises.

No doubt this exchange with Joseph Walker was fresh in Sauvinet's mind as the three men stepped into the barroom and sat at a table. Walker was nowhere around, but when the bartender on duty spotted the sheriff amidst the mid-day crowd, he began to turn pale and act panicky. After some minutes, the boisterous Finnegan grew restive and directly requested service, to which the bartender nervously shook his head and chattered the incoherent phrase, "never mind, it is all right." Finnegan grew combative, but Sauvinet grabbed him by the sleeve and ushered his two companions outside. On the banquette, Sauvinet uttered in a restrained fury, "I know the reason why we were refused."

Six days later, Sauvinet sent his attorney to Henry Dibble's Sixth District courtroom to serve a petition. The sheriff sought $5,000 in damages from the Bank Coffeehouse, a considerable sum. More importantly, Sauvinet threw down the gauntlet with the regards to the state's civil rights legislation. As a Republican, a militia officer, as civil sheriff, and as a man of color, C. S. Sauvinet had taken a stand that would threaten Warmoth's shaky coalition.

The district court received the case quickly, and by mid-March, lawyers for both sides were actively engaged in verbal combat. Walker's attorneys suggested that Sauvinet might actually be white after all, and that he had made a conscious decision to become black for the purpose of political gain. Sauvinet seemed to be both stunned and flustered by the defense counsel's cross-examination. Maybe in the back of his mind he wondered how much his years of racial ambiguity might come back to haunt him. After all, by his own admission and the testimony of others, he had never disabused those who thought he might be white. The defense's

attorney badgered him, "has it not been your custom to be generally understood a white man?" Frustrated, Sauvinet shot back, "it is a matter I do not know myself."

The jury which had taken so much time to seat could not reach a verdict. Dismissing them, Judge Henry Dibble ruled for Sauvinet, but reduced his reward to $1,000. In May, the Louisiana Supreme Court heard Walker's appeal, but came to the same conclusions as Dibble. The decision there was not unanimous, however, with Justice Wyly writing in dissent:

> I think the penalty wholly disproportionate to the offense. If, instead of refusing the plaintiff a drink merely, the defendant had seized a chair and beaten him half to death with it, the damages would probably not have exceeded $250. Yet, is the right to enjoy the entertainment of a drinking saloon of greater moment or more sacred than the right of personal security from violence?[25]

To those most hostile to the ruling, Sauvinet's victory meant that the state civil rights legislation was tantamount to social equality. The *Louisianaian*, a newspaper launched by P.B.S. Pinchback at the end of 1870, also commented on the case. "The absurdity of endeavoring to connect either one of these acts with "social equality" is so transparent that we regard it a waste of time to dwell on it here." These new laws were abstractions until Sauvinet became a flesh-and-blood example of the changes Reconstruction promised. [26]

Sauvinet vs. Walker also demonstrated that resistance to civil rights and social change needed to be enforced amongst whites. Many who might be opposed to integration in principle might let it slide when it came to daily human interaction. Certainly, Sauvinet was a man of means, cultured, and very fair-skinned, but it is doubtful that Walker discovered overnight that society considered the sheriff to be a colored man. Sensitive to his bottom line and those who might force the issue, Walker denied service to a man he had once invited to drink on equal terms. Perhaps the five men who posted his bond were behind it. At the same time, Sauvinet did

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[25] *Sauvinet v. Walker*
[26] *Weekly Louisianian*, 2 March 1871

not help matters by seeking an enormous and highly punitive award. Those who might otherwise support Sauvinet's rights, such as the two dissenting State Supreme Court justices, blanched at his aggressiveness. This case and others that would follow contributed to the racial polarization of society and drove those who had once stood by in ambivalence toward action.[27]

Warmoth could hardly have looked upon Sauvinet's activism with pleasure. The governor's periodic cooperation with P.B.S. Pinchback provided some political cover for his weak support of civil rights, but it was seldom enough. And even this had its limits. When a bill introduced by Pinchback making racial discrimination a criminal offense passed the legislature, Warmoth vetoed it. He knew that pushing the race issue too far would alienate the conservative whites he had spent so much time courting and whose support was essential to his plan. At the same time, he needed to retain a significant portion of the black vote. *Sauvinet* reminded him of how difficult it would be to have it both ways.

For his part, Pinchback had done much to cultivate his reputation as a champion of black people. He had been one of the key proponents behind article thirteen of Louisiana's state constitution of 1868, which had in theory outlawed segregation in all places of public resort. The following year, he championed a civil rights bill that put some enforcement behind article thirteen. In 1870, Pinchback again backed a measure that gave civil rights cases preference in court, and Warmoth signed this bill into law. Indeed, this new law was a primary reason why the *Sauvinet* case made it so quickly to the state supreme court. By 1871, his reputation with black voters and was substantial. This equated political power and Pinchback knew it.[28]

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[27] The five men who posted Walker's bond were Charles Cavaroc, William B. Schmidt, William Solomon, Hugh McCloskey, and John H. Rareshide. *Sauvinet v. Walker;* Cavaroc and Rareshide belonged to the Pickwick Club.
[28] Agnes Smith Grosz, "The Political Career of P.B.S. Pinchback," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXVII, (1944) 534-540

Like Warmoth, Pinchback found ways to prosper financially during these early years of Congressional Reconstruction. In 1869, he began a factorage business with Caesar Carpentier Antoine, a member of New Orleans's antebellum free Afro-Creole elite. At 114 Carondelet Street, Pinchback & Antoine Commission Merchants lie nestled amidst the factorage houses of the city's most established firms. Pinchback's founding of the *Louisianian* in late 1870 reflected the blurry lines between commerce, journalism, and politics drawn by many of his contemporaries in Louisiana. Indeed, Pinchback grew increasingly wealthy because of his political connections. Among other pies, he had a finger or two in the great City Park swindle and was a primary shareholder in an "official" state river packet company. [29]

Despite Pinchback's lukewarm feelings for the governor, he allied himself with Warmoth perhaps for no greater reason than to counterbalance the presence of his main political rival, lieutenant governor, Oscar J. Dunn. The son of a free black woman and a native of New Orleans, Dunn was one of the earliest and most prominent members of the black leadership class that emerged during Reconstruction. He was an able politician and enjoyed a reputation for honesty – something neither Warmoth nor Pinchback could never claim.

Alienating Dunn may have been the single most fatal political mistake made by Warmoth. Dunn grew increasingly disillusioned with the young governor's ambivalence toward the political and social rights of the freedmen. When serious opposition to Warmoth within the Republican Party surfaced amongst ambitious federal patronage employees in the United States Customhouse, Dunn broke openly with his boss and joined this opposing faction. Until O. J. Dunn had gone over to the Customhouse, they presented more of a nuisance than a threat to

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[29] ibid; For biographical data on Antoine see David C. Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, Iss. 3 (Aug., 1974) 436; Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art*, 21

Warmoth. The lieutenant governor carried immense prestige among black voters, and with his support, the Customhouse could now make a legitimate bid to unseat the governor.

This move dictated Pinchback's future. If Dunn, his rival, sided against Warmoth, then he would support the governor. There was only enough room for one black man at the highest levels of Louisiana's Republican Party, and the Missourian might just help to make him become that man. Yet as much as Pinchback needed Warmoth, the opposite was also true. Nothing could be plainer as the Customhouse ring moved in for the kill during the summer and fall of 1871.[30]

The Customhouse ring, as Warmoth's rivals came to be known in New Orleans, jealously eyed all of the power the young governor had accumulated. Some felt that they had been wronged by Warmoth. Others harbored grandiose dreams of themselves in the governor's chair. Such was the case with the brains of the operation, Stephen B. Packard. A Union veteran from Maine, Packard had served with little distinction during war. Like Warmoth, he had come to New Orleans in 1864 with the army and remained to practice law and promote the Republican Party. Packard's loyalty paid off when he received an appointment as the U.S. Marshall for Louisiana in 1869. From his office in the Customhouse, Packard successfully bid for the party's chairmanship in 1870.[31]

Packard owed little loyalty to Warmoth, but others openly betrayed the young governor when they joined the Customhouse ring. Speaker Carter, who owed his very political career to Warmoth, bolted to the Customhouse not long after the Carnival season of 1871. William Pitt Kellogg, a man for whom Warmoth had done much to make a United States Senator from

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[30] Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976) 33, 134-135; A.E. Perkins, "James Henri Burch and Oscar James Dunn in Louisiana," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 22, Iss. 3, July 1937, 326-327; David C. Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, Iss. 3, August 1974, 437

[31] Joseph G. Dawson, III. *Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana 1862-1877*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) , 227

Louisiana in 1868, now sided with Packard also. Indeed, Warmoth counted his fellow Midwesterner as a friend until recently, but Kellogg worried about the governor's growing coziness with former rebels. The defection with the most political consequences, however, was that of James F. Casey, the Collector of Customs and brother-in-law of President Grant. Most believed correctly that having Casey in their corner would bring the Customhouse ring the support of the President and the national party.[32]

There had been a series of minor clashes between Warmoth and his rivals as early as the beginning of 1870, but it was during the summer of 1871 when matters truly boiled over. At the time, Warmoth was in Pass Christian, Mississippi recuperating from a severe injury he had sustained when his foot got stuck in a steamboat's mechanism. When he received news that Packard had called a convention to reorganize the party and leave him out of it, Warmoth propped himself upon crutches and caught the next train to New Orleans.

On August 8, 1871, Warmoth, accompanied by Pinchback, arrived at the Customhouse on Canal Street. Packard had conveniently selected this federal property and bastion of power for the convention. He had also requested federal troops, complete with Gatling guns, to keep Warmoth-friendly delegates away. Rebuffed, Warmoth and Pinchback headed to Turners' Hall, where their supporters promptly voted to replace state party chairman Packard with Pinchback. Despite the pain in his foot, Warmoth began making an extemporaneous speech castigating his opponents in the Customhouse. About Grant's brother-in-law, Warmoth said, "My friend Jim Casey is a clever fellow. He hasn't enough sense to be a bad fellow. [Laughter.] A man to be a bad fellow must have some character – he hasn't any. [Much laughter.]" When these comments reached Washington, Grant was not as appreciative as the Turners' Hall audience.[33]

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[32] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed.*, 210-216; Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 124
[33] Current, 251-252

Stymied by Warmoth's return, the Customhouse ring, through the help of Carter, tried to engineer a quorum in the Louisiana legislature to impeach the governor and seat Dunn in his stead. Dunn's unexpected death that November foiled Packard's plans before the vote on impeachment could take place. Some Republicans, and not a few Democrats speculated that Dunn had met with foul play. Pinchback's *Weekly Louisianian* quickly rebuked such rumors. Officially, Dunn died of "congestion of the brain."[34]

Before the mortar on Dunn's burial vault had cured, the two Republican factions began warring over his replacement. The Customhouse ring had not given up of their fantasies of impeaching Warmoth, so it was critical to them to put one of their own into the position of heir-apparent. Nobody understood this more than Warmoth. Blending several parts old-fashioned deal-making, one part bribery, and a dash of treachery, the governor guaranteed that the post of lieutenant governor would go to his sometimes political ally, P.B.S. Pinchback.

As 1871 came to a close and the New Year began, the conflict between the Customhouse and Warmoth supporters grew to such bizarre proportions that one might confuse it for slapstick comedy had not the implications been so grave. A number of Democrats driven by a red-hot hatred for the governor had made an unlikely combination with Packard's Customhouse ring. This was partly out of a desire to replace Warmoth, but as with seemingly any political plan in Louisiana, also involved a fair amount of unscrupulous graft. A few of them even joined black Customhouse Republicans on a several-week odyssey aboard the revenue cutter *Wilderness* in order to prevent a senate quorum's formation to confirm Pinchback's election.

When the legislative session of 1872 began on the second day of January, Warmoth had strengthened his position enough to where it seemed likely he could remove Carter from the speakership. In turn, Carter set up a rump legislature made up of Customhouse supporters and

[34] *Weekly Louisianan*, 11 January 1872; Perkins, "James Henri Burch and Oscar James Dunn in Louisiana," 328-330

rogue Democrats in the meeting room above the Gem Saloon on Royal Street. Under Packard's direction, Federal marshals even went so far as to arrest Warmoth, Pinchback, and police superintendent Badger on trumped-up charges that they had violated, of all things, the Enforcement Acts! In a tragic blunder, one of Packard's deputy marshals ended up killing a pro-Warmoth house member while trying to make such a political arrest. After posting bond, the governor seized upon the public's outrage, called a special session of the legislature, and sacked Carter. Several days later, he sent Badger in charge of a contingent of Metropolitans to sack the Gem Saloon cabal.[35]

The Democrats who had allied with the Customhouse ring worried that they had blown their opportunity to remove Warmoth. To rally their troops, the Democratic Parish Committee held a mass meeting in Lafayette Square. Those in attendance were a bizarre menagerie of conservative white Democrats, carpetbaggers, and black Republicans. The *Picayune* printed a list of several hundred men who signed on as "vice-presidents" of the meeting. Among the rally's supporters was Aristide Mary, an Afro-Creole activist who would one day become intimately involved in the struggles of Homer Plessy. So was Collector Casey and P.B.S. Pinchback's erstwhile business partner, C.C. Antoine. A few officers from Warmoth's militia companies – both black and white – also appeared, including Antoine's younger brother, Felix. Speakers included a conservative Democrat from Caddo Parish by the name of J.C. Moncure and a black Carpetbagger from New York, J. Henri Burch. Under normal circumstances, Burch would have been the very embodiment of everything white conservatives were supposed to hate,

[35] The machinations of the Customhouse in their effort to unseat Warmoth have been chronicled in detail by many other scholars. For the best general account, see Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 218-225; From the perspective of the General Emory, the commanding officer of United States troops in New Orleans during the conflict see Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 116-129; As an example of Reconstruction-era street violence see Hogue, "Bayonet Rule," 156-166; *Daily Picayune* 4 January 1872

and Moncure, the symbol of Bourbonism's grossest evils, but these times were anything but normal. The lion walked with the lamb, but it was difficult to tell just who was which. [36]

The Customhouse gang also surveyed their dwindling options. With an eye toward provoking federal military intervention in Louisiana, Carter, Packard, and Casey approached key Democratic-leaning officers of the Louisiana State Militia. They hoped to convince them to betray Warmoth and attack his protective cordon of Metropolitan Policemen and loyal militiamen. In turn, the national Republican Party would support their actions and demonstrate its gratitude for the militia's deposing of Warmoth by sharing power. Of course, if President Grant saw the militia's actions as a repeat of the 1866 Mechanics' Institute riot, so much the better.

Packard and Casey had invited Colonel Eugene Waggaman to the Customhouse for a secret meeting to discuss their plans. Waggaman had been a distinguished Washington Artillery veteran and was now a disgruntled commander in Warmoth's militia. Before heading to the Customhouse, E. John Ellis had a heartfelt talk with his friend, Colonel Waggaman. Ellis had smelled a rat. Beyond the distinct chance that the Republicans might double-cross them, the idea of uniting with the Customhouse gang seemed deeply dishonorable to Ellis. Despite his deep personal disdain for Warmoth, Waggaman listened closely to what the idealistic young lawyer from Amite City had to say.

As Ellis recounted the scene to his brother Thomas, Waggaman lectured Packard and Casey when they refused to assure him of federal support. "What guarantee have we that while you are reaping the fruits of victory won by us over one enemy, you will not get rid of your remaining enemy by marching me and my co-laborers away under the Ku Klux law and saddling the responsibility of another riot upon a people who have already suffered so much for riots and

[36] *Daily Picayune*, 9 January 1872; Edmund Arthur Toledano also appeared on this list

disturbances real and fancied?" Packard stood mute, hands in his pockets, as Casey impishly promised that there was no such danger. Refusing the deal, Waggaman stomped out of the meeting and averted needless bloodshed. He would not collaborate with one enemy to get rid of another.

E. John Ellis expressed satisfaction that he had "worked fruitfully for what I regarded to be right." Reflecting on the events of the last several months, Ellis assessed it this way: "Thus far, Warmoth is the master of the situation. The corrupt men of our party… …and the equally corrupt men of the Carter faction couldn't withstand the influence of Warmoth money." As early as 1868, Ellis had allied himself with the Democratic Party, but he could not counsel the actions of some of his party's members when they worked in combination with Customhouse Republicans to overthrow Warmoth. Unanimity still eluded white Democrats. In closing his letter, Ellis noted, "I am glad my friends approve of my course."[37]

Ellis had good reason for such sentiments. The *Picayune*, in its denunciations of Warmoth, glossed over the fact that a number of white native Louisianans remained by his side including Washington Artillery veteran Colonel Charles W. Squires and his regiment of the Louisiana Volunteer Field Artillery. Had Packard persuaded Waggaman to attack the statehouse, it would have been partly a contest between two groups of Confederate veterans acting under the banners of competing Republican factions. And, of course, it would have been a complete disaster for conservatives in the state.

An odd event took place that served as a postscript to the political drama of January 1872. Accompanied by a group of supporters, former speaker Carter took a train to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi – just over the border from Louisiana. In another car on that same train rode Algernon S. Badger with his corresponding cadre of well-wishers. A carnival-like atmosphere

[37] E. John Ellis to Thomas C.W. Ellis, 12 January 1872, Ellis Papers LLMVC

took over the procession as the engine chugged toward the sleepy Gulf Coast town and the pending duel between the Louisiana Republicans. Outside the depot, two shots rang out over the murmur of voices and the sound of a hissing, stationary locomotive. Armed with rifles at sixty paces, neither man drew blood, much to the great disappointment of the *Picayune's* correspondent. Afterward, the entourage of legislators, police officials, and other spectators headed to Bordage's grocery for a "sumptuous lunch of crackers, cheese, and whiskey." It was a quintessential example of the uncertain and, at times, surreal lives led by people in Reconstruction-era Louisiana. Your mortal enemy one month might become your drinking buddy the next. And, of course, it paid to keep one's options open because there was just no telling how it would all turn out.[38]

Writing his memoirs in the late 1920s, Henry Clay Warmoth wrote of Pinchback, "He was a restless, ambitious man and had more than once arrayed himself against me and my policies. He was a free lance and dangerous, and had to be reckoned with at all times." It was an apt description of many of the people acting out the dramatic events of Reconstruction in New Orleans. The Customhouse faction and the Democratic legislators who had combined with them, not to mention Warmoth himself, were just as likely to exhibit these tendencies.[39]

There were others who seemed to be guided by principle through the tumultuous period. C. S. Sauvinet could have quietly ignored the insult that he had suffered and continued to enjoy the privileges that he enjoyed in any number of other establishments in the city. Instead, he took his case to court. With clarity of purpose, Sauvinet pursued the legal establishment of civil rights legislation. Working toward somewhat different aims, E. John Ellis revealed the uncomfortable truth that dishonor among allies is every bit as distasteful as dishonor amongst enemies. As

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[38] *Daily Picayune*, 20 February 1872
[39] Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 120

lonely as the notions of honor and principle could be in New Orleans during this period, they did nevertheless occasionally carry the day.

The elections in the fall of 1870 represented the high water mark of the Republican Party in Louisiana. The intense hatred of Warmoth – from both competing Republicans and from old-line Democrats – stood as testimony to the amount of success the young governor actually enjoyed. He was a threat to fellow Republicans because of his almost dictatorial control over the party. He was a threat to Democrats because many of his positions on substantive issues really were not that much different than their own. Indeed, when campaigning to white Louisianans, Warmoth would point out that "every drop" of his blood was southern. [40]

With the formation of the Metropolitans, Warmoth had established some muscle behind his administration. The state militia gave the governor a chance to demonstrate his willingness to incorporate white southern men into his circle of influence. Yet as ingenious a politician as Warmoth was, he could not successfully thread the needle. The intra-party struggle that began in the summer of 1871 and continued through the first weeks of 1872 irrevocably damaged his power. Furthermore, it forever alienated him from Grant and the good graces of the national Republican Party. Within months, he would lose control of his own party in Louisiana.

As the *Sauvinet* case demonstrated, the issue of civil rights threatened conservative white support for Warmoth's coalition. The men who made up the white militia units also belonged to the same clubs, such as the Pickwick and the Boston, as Warmoth's Democratic enemies. The line drawn between these supporters and their longtime colleagues, comrades, and friends who opposed the governor was very faint at times. As cracks in Warmoth's armor began to appear, his conservative supporters became convinced that the time had come to look elsewhere for allies.

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[40] ibid, 99

Yet it was really the Customhouse faction's lust for power that foolishly squandered any hope of the party's long term survival in the state. The events of 1871 were an embarrassment for Grant and helped fuel doubts nationally about the course of Reconstruction. The carpetbaggers Kellogg, Packard, and Casey would remain to haunt Warmoth in the coming year, and in the process, destroy whatever remaining hope the party once had at courting the white southern electorate.

The Republican intra-party feud also created an opportunity for the Democratic Party, but it was largely an opportunity squandered. To many white southerners, the Customhouse faction was more odious than Warmoth, and for prominent state Democrats to work in such close cooperation with the conspirators was short-sighted at best. Years later, Lost-Cause historians had to paint an exaggeratedly unflattering portrait of Warmoth to cover the tracks of the men whom E. John Ellis called "the corrupt men of our party." Siding with the Customhouse faction helped to maintain the resentment a number of white southerners harbored for the Democratic Party – a fact that would emerge in the chaotic political campaigns of 1872.

Warmoth was a political giant, the likes of which Louisiana would not see again until the emergence of Huey Long. Even in the midst of the state house imbroglio, the governor managed to retain the support of some of his white militia companies. Had he not faced so much opposition from within, he might have consolidated his power further. Warmoth's rivals relentlessly exploited any vulnerability available to them, and ultimately, no matter how brilliant the young governor might be, he could not withstand the pressure. Indeed, few would have lasted as long as he did. As 1872 wore on, Warmoth would lose control both over his party and the Metropolitan Police. Despite his ultimate downfall, however, he would remain the single

most defining political figure of Reconstruction-era Louisiana. That he had accomplished this feat before his thirtieth birthday was all the more amazing.

CHAPTER V

THE SHOTGUN WEDDING

> *"Political parties are becoming so inextricably mixed, - or so strangely unmixed that it is hard to tell which is which.… …The GREAT Republican party has split into two parties, - a large piece and a small one. The GREAT Democratic Party is splitting into two pieces, a small piece and a large one. And the perplexity among our patriots (all our political leaders are patriots) is how to splice the splitted pieces. – and what pieces ought to be spliced – or can any of the pieces be spliced at all. Some desire more splits, -- some do not want any splitting, -- and some do not know what they want."*[1]

A week before Carnival, Royal Edict No. 1 appeared in the *Picayune.* It commanded Colonel Charles W. Squires "to hold himself in readiness with a battery of artillery at the foot of Canal Street, on Mardi Gras, February 13th, 1872. Then and there to fire such salutes as may be deemed by his Royal Highness, the 'King of Carnival,' necessary to the proper maintenance of his state and dignity." This missive came from "Carnival Palace" under the hand and seal of Rex. Squires was in on the joke: A group of men closely associated with New Orleans's commercial sector had hatched a plan to create a new sovereign, if only for Mardi Gras Day. From the headquarters of the Louisiana Volunteer Field Artillery, Squires replied that he recognized Rex's "supreme power," and that he would "respectfully submit to its mandate."[2]

The coincidental arrival of not one, but two noted celebrities added excitement to the dawning of Rex. Alexis, the Grand Duke of Russia, arrived aboard the *John Howard* in time for Lundi Gras. Among the duke's entourage was none other than General George Armstrong Custer, replete with flowing golden locks. Following an artillery salute, the procession

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[1] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 23 June 1872

[2] *Daily Picayune*, 9 February 1872; Squires was in command of a militia regiment that remained loyal to Henry Clay Warmoth during the Republican Party's factional struggle for control of the state house the preceding month.

disembarked at the Gravier Street wharf and headed to the St. Charles Hotel for a dizzying round of receptions, balls, and theatrical performances. The highlight, however, would be the daytime procession of Rex and the nighttime tableaux and ball of Comus.

The Day God had used the media well. His "royal pronouncements" left few unaware of the plan to assemble at the Henry Clay Statue at the intersection of Royal-Canal-St. Charles. By three o'clock in the afternoon, throngs of spectators and aspiring maskers choked the thoroughfares of the Quarter and present-day Central Business District, some even clambering up to the Great Compromiser's shoulders for a better look. Mother Nature aided the strong turnout, for by all accounts it was a splendid, cloudless spring-like day.

Amidst this crush of humanity, the first Rex procession formed, led by Metropolitan Police superintendent Badger, flanked by his captains, which presumably included Octave Rey and Peter Joseph. Rex – a young Jewish businessman by the name of Lewis J. Salomon – followed immediately behind this escort, and a procession of maskers of varying degrees of splendor and content trailed the royal entourage. It included everything from Klansmen to the ubiquitous black-faced whites, Basin Street prostitutes, and a smattering of ad lib satirical effigies of political figures. They included "bitter representations of President Grant, Abraham Lincoln, even of the governor and the mayor." One wag dressed as Horace Greeley, carrying a placard emblazoned with the phrase "what I know about farming."[3]

The procession turned down St. Charles Street toward the dignitaries in front of City Hall and thousands of awaiting spectators in Lafayette Square. Rex pulled his mount's reins and gazed across the viewing platform decorated with garlands and bunting as well as Russian, American, and a few subversive Confederate flags. Atop the dais stood the Grand Duke, Custer, Warmoth, Longstreet, and Mayor Louis Wiltz. One can only speculate what went through their

[3] Robert Tallant, *Mardi Gras.* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1948) 137; *Daily Picayune* 14 February 1872

minds as they shared a champagne toast with this self-proclaimed sovereign and looked upon the raucous display in the street.

As Rex continued down St. Charles Street, a group of prominent businessmen dressed as playing cards approached the stage. They called themselves "the pack," and handed each of the honored guests a deck of cards. Their costumes displayed a series of suggestive phrases: "Here is the Pack… … Our Carnival Game… …May the Best Hand Win… …This is Our Little Game… …Euchre us if you can." Few would have missed the veiled threat, and perhaps Warmoth laughed to himself when he saw this. Few appreciated a sporting and clever opponent more than him.[4]

Rex's debut during the afternoon of Mardi Gras 1872 overshadowed the spectacle staged by the Mistick Krewe of Comus later that night, but Rex was only half of the dialogue taking place in the streets of New Orleans that year. The Mistick Krewe chose the "Dreams of Homer" for their theme. Like the pageant of Spencer's *Faerie Queen* the previous year, this Homeric tale served as an allegory for contemporary politics. The reporter for the *Picayune* explained it this way: "We are ravished like Paris with the beauty of Helen." Continuing, he referred to the elusiveness of white unity: "We are familiar with each bloody turn in the tragic drama of the Trojan war. We understand the very motives of Achilles' wrath, the dire effects of dissention. We have experienced our own *Iliad* of disasters and woes."

The night parade of Comus began with the siege of Troy and, "more especially," the wrath of Achilles. From the *Iliad*, we know that the Greeks finally broke the siege of Troy through the ingenious use of the Trojan Horse. Perhaps this was a vague reference to the strategy that some had suggested conservative Louisianans pursue in order to defeat the

[4] *Daily Picayune*, 14 February 1872; Mitchell, *All on Mardi Gras Day*, 59-60

Republican Party from within. It was a plan not fully tested, nor entirely discarded as 1872 began. Of course, once inside the gates of Troy, the Greeks burned the city to the ground.

Comus's final tableaux depicted "The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice," a poem sometimes attributed to, but likely not written by Homer. This mock battle, reenacted in the streets of New Orleans, and again at the Grand Ball of Comus for the Grand Duke Alexis, clearly parodied the intra-party feud between Warmoth and the Custom House faction. Yet it remained unclear who would fulfill the role of the giant crabs – the peacemakers who, in the end, scattered the warring mice and frogs.[5]

There has been much speculation as to the true genesis of Rex, an institution that almost overnight redefined Carnival and challenged Comus for primacy. As popular legend suggests, the chamber-of-commerce types in New Orleans sought to commemorate visit of Alexis. Indeed, from its beginning, Rex adopted the green, purple, and gold color scheme that we associate with New Orleans Mardi Gras today, and these were the colors of the Russian court. More recent scholars have made a persuasive argument that the elite sought to impose order upon the raucous and extemporaneous masking of the streets during the daylight hours of Shrove Tuesday. This, similar to the order imposed by Comus on Mardi Gras night.[6]

Many could appreciate the utility of a benevolent monarch in the midst of Louisiana's political turmoil. Few were more aware of this than the men of substance in Rex who suffered financially from the uncertainty in the State House. New Orleans's commercial sector yearned

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[5] *Daily Picayune*, 13 February 1872

[6] Tallant, *Mardi Gras*, 137 Henri Schindler, *Mardi Gras, New Orleans*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1997) 48; Mitchell, *All On Mardi Gras Day*, 57-64. It should be noted that Mitchell seems to confuse the participation of the Louisiana State Militia in the procession of Rex with the participation of federal troops. I have seen no evidence to suggest that United States soldiers participated in Rex's debut. Federal troops endorsing Rex would definitely create new political dimensions.

for stability, and what the city's leading citizens could not yet muster in the political realm, they would act out in street theater.

The advent of Rex also revealed the frayed seams of conservative New Orleans. If the planners of Rex sought to merely impose order on street maskers during the day, they hardly needed an absolute monarch to accomplish that task. The Mistick Krewe of Comus, and by extension, the many conservative Democratic members of the Pickwick Club had been the true royalty of Carnival since 1857. In 1872, Rex assertively crowned himself "King of Carnival" and challenged Comus as the marquee event of Mardi Gras. From one perspective, the men of Reconstruction-era Rex and Comus seem nearly indistinguishable. They worked in the same industry, had a generally conservative outlook in terms of race, and were more or less antagonistic to the Republican Party. Indeed, in one fashion or another, they were all prototypical Redeemers. On the other hand, other differences between the two organizations were, quite literally, day and night. Despite their similar objectives, Rex asserted its independent voice – a move that mirrored the murky political waters of 1872. As the *Picayune* reporter had astutely observed, conservative elements remained divided over the proper course for Redemption and the future of the Democratic Party. Much like the rift between the Redeemers themselves, years later, the differences between Rex and Comus would diminish. This, however, was not the situation in New Orleans when Rex first arrived.

The stakes were very high in 1872. It was an election year on both state and federal levels. A number of southern states, including North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, had already been "redeemed" by the Democratic Party. In the presidential contest, Ulysses S. Grant remained widely popular with the vast northern electorate, but the increasing din of accusations of corruption against his administration made the hero of Appomattox appear vulnerable. Henry

Clay Warmoth was now irrevocably damaged within his own party and the Republicans who remained in control did not seem nearly so clever. Yet as promising as these events appeared to conservative elements within Louisiana, there were major obstacles to bringing Redemption to the Pelican State. The wide divisions among would-be Redeemers in the state prevented them from capitalizing on the recent feud between Warmoth and Packard, and as Carnival season ended, and the political season began, these divisions only seemed to be growing.

A few days after all of the Carnival festivities had subsided, reform-minded New Orleanians returned to the drawing board. The "Committee of Fifty-One" had grown out of the misguided alliance between Custom House Republicans, "Last-Ditch" Democrats, and other concerned citizens, but its following had contracted considerably in the wake of Warmoth's survival. Much like the men of Rex, those who remained were more worried about Louisiana's economic viability rather than the building of political careers.

The organization called for a mass meeting on the steps of City Hall. Thousands crowded into Lafayette Square to hear speeches decrying the corruption of the last three years. The list of the meeting's one-hundred sixty-two vice presidents included prominent New Orleanians such as General Richard Taylor, Leeds Foundry president Charles Leeds, noted attorneys such as Charles Conrad Jr. and Robert Hardin Marr, and the famous physicians Drs. Samuel Choppin and Warren Brickell. Many of the men worked along Factor's Row and represented the largest and most successful firms. They were overwhelmingly the men of Rex, and quite a few belonged to the prestigious Boston Club. There were a few Afro-Creole Republicans who signed on as well, including Custom House officer Richard Kenner and the

teacher Adolph Duhart. Michel Musson, ever interested in ejecting the carpetbaggers, signed his name to the list and Frederick Nash Ogden served as one of the organization's secretaries.[7]

The chair of the reform meeting was Isaac Newton Marks, a former Whig and a man held in high esteem by his peers. A native of Charleston, South Carolina, Marks came to New Orleans in 1836 at the age of 19, arriving just in time to take part in the city's tremendous antebellum financial boom. He ultimately became the president of the New Orleans, Florida, and Havana Steamship Company, and was active in various religious and benevolent societies including the prestigious New Orleans Fireman's Association. Like many men involved in the Reform movement, Marks had suffered from the war, losing one of his two sons to the Confederate cause. Yet despite the trials of the past, Marks looked toward the possibilities of the future.[8]

The resolutions that issued forth from this meeting were a far cry from Bourbonism. They called for the creation of a new political party – the Reform Party – and scheduled a convention for the selection of candidates for the coming election, open to men of "regardless of color and previous political associations" as long as they favored reform of the state's political institutions. By early March, the Reform Party distributed a more detailed platform from its headquarters at 27 Carondelet Street. It was an effort to appeal to a broad spectrum of Louisianans who remained wary of both the Republicans and Democrats, although their rhetoric definitely had a conservative flavor. It was also a telling sign that there were serious doubts about the viability of the Democratic Party in New Orleans.[9]

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[7] *Daily Picayune*, 18 February 1872. A list of vice presidents appears in this column. To determine the backgrounds of these men, I cross-referenced a sample of this list with the 1870 United States Census; Landry, *History of the Boston Club*, 106-107

[8] *Jewell's Crescent City Illustrated*, 1873

[9] *Daily Picayune*, 18 February 1872; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 228; "Address of the Provisional State Central Committee of the Reform Party to the People of Louisiana," New Orleans, March 12, 1872. Dr. D.W. Brickell Papers, LLMVC

Despite the moderate tone of the Reformer's rhetoric, many blacks, especially those with a stake in the Republican Party, spoke out forcefully against what they characterized as a siren's song. P.B.S. Pinchback's *Louisianian* pointed out what it saw as "Democratic hypocrisy" in the Reformers' overtures toward blacks and suggested the following test to determine their sincerity: "Let a colored man ask one of them to take a 'smile' in one of the fashionable bar rooms. If you don't see that Reformer wilt and say he 'don't feel like drinking' we are no prophet. Yes, the colored men are good to support a candidate, but not good enough to travel on the same steamboat, ride in the same train or sleep under the same roof as 'us Democrats.'" Indeed, there were limits to the Reformers' liberalism.[10]

Despite such obstacles, the formation of a reformist coalition was not an entirely new idea among southern Redeemers, nor unique to Louisiana. Across the unredeemed states of the South, "New Departure" Democrats emerged in response to the failure of the conservatives to restore home rule. These more moderate Redeemers advocated a solution incorporating a degree of compromise with the Radical social agenda. Almost universally, these splinter groups fought an uphill battle, opposed by both the Radicals and conservatives alike.[11]

The Republican Party had its own counterpart to the New Departure Democrats during the political season of 1872. It was a movement driven by disaffected northern Republicans who were unhappy both with Grant and the course of southern Reconstruction. A number of prominent GOP figures bolted the party and took the name "Liberal Republicans." Led by New York newspaperman Horace Greeley, the Liberal Republicans were exceedingly critical of carpetbaggers and the governments that they had created in the South.

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[10] *Weekly Louisianian*, 29 February 1872

[11] Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879,* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1984) 57-86; For this dynamic in South Carolina, see Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996) 75-77

Ironically, Henry Clay Warmoth would become the movement's leading disciple from the state of Louisiana. Partly this was because the governor had nowhere else to go. He had burned his political bridges with the Grant administration and the President's chosen people in the Custom House. It also made sense from the standpoint of Warmoth's true political ideology. The oddly-named Liberal Republicans were actually far more conservative than the regular party. Much as Warmoth had done through his administration, they preached the virtue of reconciliation with the white South and criticized the vices of what they considered excessive racial egalitarianism.[12]

It was no surprise, therefore, that when the Liberal Republican Party took shape in Louisiana it resembled the centrist coalition that Warmoth had always hoped to forge. Some of its adherents belonged to the white militia units created by the governor in 1870. Others were part of the wide-reaching network of supporters in rural parishes who owed the governor for one favor or another. In New Orleans, a core of progressive businessmen not unlike those who helped form the Reform Party also emerged as supporters. David Bradfute Penn, a man who belonged to this moneyed element, would ultimately emerge as the party's candidate for governor.

The D. B. Penn that everyone knew was a popular and respectable man. He was the son of Alfred Penn, one of the primary real-estate holders in the city. As a young man, he attended Virginia Military Institute and studied law at the University of Virginia. Coming home to New Orleans in 1858, he began a cotton press, and at twenty-five years of age, with the onset of war, recruited a regiment from the ranks of his employees. By all accounts, Penn fought valiantly throughout the war, at Gettysburg and in many other major encounters in the Eastern Theater. In

[12] For a good discussion of the national forces behind the Liberal Republican movement of 1872 and its intersection with H.C. Warmoth, see Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 261-281; Charles J.C. Puckette to Henry Clay Warmoth, 19 June 1872, H.C. Warmoth Papers, LLMVC

November of 1863, he was captured at Rappahannock, Virginia, ultimately ending up at Johnson's Island where he had probably first crossed paths with E. John Ellis. As part of his parole, a Union aide-de-camp recorded the young colonel's appearance as being about six feet tall, black hair, with dark eyes and a dark complexion.

After coming home from war, D.B. Penn resumed his business at the cotton press. His father had been an early member of the Boston Club, and the son carried on the tradition. Perhaps it was in this social setting that he became involved with the Reform movement, for his name appeared on the list of adherents to the "meeting of the people" in February, 1872. At some point, he had also met Warmoth and developed a friendship, for it would be the governor's support that would help Penn secure the Liberal Republican Party's nomination for governor.[13]

Probably far fewer of Penn's associates were aware that he also had a mixed-race child. In 1858, shortly after his return to New Orleans from law school, he had a liaison with a quadroon girl by the name of Josephine Keating. By January of the following year, Blanche Penn entered the world, just twelve days shy of her mother's sixteenth birthday. The young mother and child went off to live with Josephine's father, a brick mason living in the third ward. In 1868, Josephine Keating died at the age of twenty-five and Blanche then went to live at her Aunt Olivia's boarding house. When census workers visited the residence in 1870, Blanche Penn was just a girl yet old enough to know that there was some advantage to identify herself as white. There is no way of knowing if D.B. Penn supported his daughter financially, but it certainly would have been within the realm of possibility – both from the standpoint of societal expectations as well as his own personal code of ethics. Perhaps it was this personal experience

[13] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 198-200; *Daily Picayune*, 20 January 1871; Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction*, 195

that shaped his outlook on race and encouraged him to support the moderate aims of the Liberal Republicans.[14]

Despite the fact that Henry Clay Warmoth had completely lost control of the regular Republican Party in Louisiana, he had so thoroughly disrupted the state's political landscape that he remained an all-consuming obsession for many Democrats. When they met in late April, the divisions within their own ranks were enormous. Some arrived with no other plan than to express their "holy hatred" of the governor, while others who had worked with Warmoth throughout the young carpetbagger's term promoted an alliance of all anti-Grant factions. What transpired at the April Democratic convention was yet one more indication that Louisiana's Redeemers were a long way from unity, much less victory.

Almost immediately, the most ardently anti-Warmoth delegates proffered a motion condemning the governor. Many of these men had been among the Democrats who had collaborated with the Custom House faction a few months earlier. One even added some harsh words for the men of the Boston Club for their abandonment of the Democracy. The scene on the convention floor grew ugly, with both sides taking the podium and pointedly arguing their case. During one pro-Warmoth speech, a voice interrupted from the balcony, "I want to save Louisiana – I am willing to cohabit with the Devil – I am willing to cohabit with the Republican Party – I am willing to cohabit with the naygur, but I am d—d if I will cohabit with Governor Warmoth!" The assembly burst into cheers, laughter, and recriminations.

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[14] Ironically, in Landry's *Battle of Liberty Place*, the author goes through great gyrations to disabuse an error in Ella Lonn's *Reconstruction in Louisiana after 1868* that misidentified Penn as a mulatto. I have found no evidence to suggest that Penn was anything but white. Electronic genealogical tools, while far from perfect, were essential to establishing the paper trail that led to the discovery of Penn's illegitimate daughter. Emily Josephine Keating birth certificate, Orleans Parish Birth Records, Vol. 6, p. 383; Blanche Penn birth certificate, OPBR, Vol. 23, p. 309; Josephine Keating death certificate, Orleans Parish Death Records, Vol. 43, p. 18; *United States Census*, Orleans Parish 3rd Ward, 1860, 1870. Olivia Keating appears to be the aunt of Josephine Keating on Josephine's father's (James Keating's) side. James Keating had died sometime before 1870 as had Josephine Keating's mother, Sevilia Caldwell Keating. Blanche Penn is listed as white on the 1870 census. Her aunt and 1st cousin Edward Keating are listed as mulatto.

E. John Ellis looked on in dismay. He certainly harbored no love for Warmoth, but he was also too much of a political realist to suggest that such allies were not needed. Even worse was the bravado of one delegate who suggested that if "the old banner is to go down, let it sink like the flag of the *Alabama*, untarnished and leading the hosts in a fight we believe right." Ellis had no intention of letting the Democracy slip beneath the waves like the fabled Confederate raider, nor did he intend to make the author of such foolhardy bombast its captain. In response to the speeches condemning Warmoth, Ellis took the floor and pointed out that the problem was Grant: "Unless the stream is purified at the source, it is useless to purify it at the bottom."[15]

When the Ellis brothers' longtime friend Charles Kennon reported on events in Tangipahoa Parish in late May, he urged the Democratic Party to accept the Liberal Republican presidential ticket as its own: "Democratic nomination under present circumstances is defeat," he concluded. E. John expressed his agreement as he wrote his brother Thomas, "A compact or organization of all conservative or anti-Grant elements. –This is what I have labored for, what I am still laboring for. Now that the Radical Party has repudiated Warmoth, it is easy to control him and his money." In spite of the moderate appeals of the Liberal Republicans and the Reformers, Ellis predicted that politics in the state would eventually come down to racial divisions, and ultimately white voters would view the Democratic Party as their refuge. Until that time, Democrats needed to work with what was available to them. In closing, he noted, "It may well be that the long night is about ended. God grant it be so."

Other episodes that summer must have cast a shadow of doubt on Ellis's optimism. Bolivar Edwards, one of his closest companions during the dark days at Johnson's Island, was now planning to run against E. John's father for parish judge on the Radical ticket. As Charlie Kennon evaluated the situation, "these are uncertain times and office seekers may commit

[15] Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 166-175

themselves not thinking that they are departing from principle in the chaos that surrounds us." As Ellis soon discovered, his friend's lack of popular support in the parish ended the candidacy almost before it began. Yet, the whole experience had to be disheartening. "Forgive him yes I do, but I pity & commiserate the weakness of the man," wrote E. John to his brother Thomas. If someone as close to the family as Edwards could flirt with Radicalism for the sake of a small parish office, it did not bode well for the reliability of others.[16]

As August 1872 began, there were no fewer than three competing slates amongst the various conservative camps. The Liberal Republicans had chosen Penn and a host of other moderates for offices including the Afro-Creole Francis E. Dumas. A former slaveholder, Dumas had been the candidate put forth against Warmoth by the Roudanez brothers in 1868. The Reform Party selected an attorney by the name of George Williamson for the head of their ticket. When the Democrats met, they had nominated John McEnery of Ouachita Parish for governor and a host of other "last-ditch" Democrats for the remaining posts, many of whom had been in alliance with the Custom House ring in their effort to remove Warmoth the preceding winter. Several months of wrangling had yet to iron out the serious obstacles to their union, and time was running out.

Uniting Reformers and the Democrats proved the easiest hurdle to clear. By the second week in August, such a union was already in the works, although not without some significant grumbling. The Reformers simply had little influence outside of New Orleans and had failed to attract the black support upon which they had originally counted. The much more difficult task at hand would be to effect a shotgun wedding between the seemingly incompatible Democratic-

[16] Charlie Kennon to Thomas Ellis, 22 May 1872 and E. John Ellis to My Dear Brother, 22 June 1872 both in Ellis Papers, LLMVC

Reform and Liberal Republican factions. The most divisive, but by no means the only issue was Warmoth and what his expectations might be out of such a merger.

One can only imagine the heat building inside the grand theater of David Bidwell's Academy of Music as the Liberal Republicans convened there in the second week of August. At two in the afternoon on August 9th, the delegates returned to the chamber following a recess to hear a speech from their true leader, governor Warmoth. He had just turned thirty. Under normal circumstances, this was just a footnote, but those in attendance were fully aware that it finally made the young governor eligible to sit in the United States Senate. Many Democrats believed that the price of union with the Liberal Republicans would be a promise to send Warmoth to that most exclusive club. Thus, when Warmoth mounted the dais and announced that he would not accept any office stemming from such a merger, it surprised the opposition and paved the way for fusion.[17]

The Democrats gave up quite a lot in their combination with the Reformers and Liberal Republicans, but the one point on which they would not yield was the head of the ticket. John McEnery, their candidate, was a thirty-nine year old lawyer from Monroe. He had been involved in party politics since the antebellum period. During the war, he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel and was twice wounded in action. After his return to Louisiana, McEnery served in the state legislature until the Reconstruction Acts reorganized the state government and sent him packing. He was not the silver-tongued orator that Warmoth was, and had a reputation for making blunt statements in public debate. Even the sympathetic *Jewell's Crescent City*

[17] Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction,* 189-196; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed,* 232

Illustrated had to describe his style euphemistically as "equally marked with strength and terseness" without "fondness for rhetorical ornament."[18]

The resulting "Fusion" ticket placed McEnery at its head. All of the other Democratic nominees, however, were replaced by either Liberal Republicans or Reformers – testimony to the relative strength of each faction. Some of the Democrats punted by the realignment were so bitter that they would ultimately work against the Fusion ticket, which spoke volumes about power of personal political ambition in the supposed holy Democratic crusade of Redemption. Davidson B. Penn became the Fusion ticket's candidate for lieutenant governor. For his part, Warmoth saw this as a giant mistake. He speculated that it would have all but assured victory to place Penn at the ticket's head and entice P.B.S. Pinchback to run for the post of congressman-at-large. Yet, like most shotgun weddings, the Fusion ticket did not stem from the most auspicious of circumstances and Warmoth's suggestions went unheeded.[19]

Pinchback had actually considered becoming a Liberal Republican in the early weeks of the movement, but he was through-and-through a Grant man, and the nomination of Horace Greeley was a non-starter. The placement of McEnery at the head of the Fusion ticket ended almost all remaining speculation there might have been that Pinchback would throw his support behind the effort. Indeed, he was already well on his way to bringing his influence back to the regular Republican Party, now dominated by the Custom House. In his own words, he did not want to "swallow" the Custom House ticket, but given the alternative, he would "sugar coat it and swallow it whole."[20]

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[18] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 232; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 198; *Jewell's Crescent City Illustrated*, (Edwin Jewell, pub.; New Orleans, 1873)
[19] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 232-235
[20] Grosz, "The Political Career of P.B.S. Pinchback," 551-554; *New Orleans Republican*, 13 August 1872

The ticket resting on Pinchback's dinner plate included at its head William Pitt Kellogg, Warmoth's former "friend" and the sitting senator from Louisiana. Caesar C. Antoine, Pinchback's former business partner – for whom there was no love lost, was the nominee for lieutenant governor. It was bitter fare indeed. The rest of the Republican ticket demonstrated what a transformation had taken place in the wake of Warmoth's downfall. It contained two white carpetbaggers and five black politicians. For all practical purposes, it fulfilled the old Lost Cause prophecy of Yankees hell bent on "Africanizing" state politics.

When the Republican Party under the auspices of the Custom House ring repudiated Warmoth, they also repudiated his strategy of building a broadly-based party. The Republican ticket that emerged in 1872 represented the essential problem of Republicanism in the Reconstruction-era South – that the party was an untenable union between white carpetbaggers and southern blacks. By jettisoning Warmoth and retreating toward its African-American base, the Republicans had returned to the racial polarization that had dominated Louisiana's politics in 1866. Of course, it was in exactly this environment that E. John Ellis had predicted that the Democratic Party would once again thrive.[21]

Victory, however, would elude the Fusionists in 1872. According to historian Joe Gray Taylor, "The election of 1872 was so shot through with fraud that no one ever had any idea of who actually won." Abundant irregularities committed that November on both sides of the contest made it virtually impossible to arrive at an objective conclusion. Violence was almost non-existent, but certainly the old Louisiana traditions of ballot-box stuffing, ballot-box vanishing acts, secret polling places, and other trappings of corruption such as voter intimidation were widespread.

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[21] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 235

Warmoth, who had spent September and October campaigning for the Fusion ticket, believed that he would be able to use "all legal means" to ensure his side's victory. Several election laws that he either signed or held in reserve would allow him to control the returning board, and thus, the outcome – or so he had thought. Kellogg's Republicans also held some powerful cards, not the least of which was the support of Grant and the federal judiciary. When the Republicans cried foul over Warmoth's handling of voting returns, they filed an injunction against his returning board. In the end, a federal judge placed a Custom House-friendly returning board in charge of counting votes, and to no one's surprise, Kellogg's ticket claimed victory. The antagonism between Warmoth and Grant that had begun as far back as the siege of Vicksburg had finally come home to roost.

Eager for revenge against Warmoth, the Custom House now finally possessed the muscle necessary to impeach him. Although they failed to secure a conviction in the senate, he remained suspended for the remainder of his term. This twist of events brought P.B.S. Pinchback, the lame-duck lieutenant governor and one-time Warmoth ally, into the governor's chair. He became the first and only black governor of any state until Douglas Wilder won the 1988 gubernatorial contest in Virginia. [22]

Pinchback faced an immediate crisis. The white militia units that Warmoth had so carefully assembled during his term as governor remained loyal to the young Missourian and refused to recognize Pinchback's authority. Luckily for Pinchback, the regular Republican Party retained control of the Metropolitan Police. General Badger received orders to take a substantial force of Metropolitans to the Carondelet Street Armory in order to force the surrender of a regiment of militia under the command of Colonels James B. Walton and Eugene Waggaman.

[22] The complicated machinations and legal battle between the Fusion and Republican tickets has been well covered in a variety of other sources. The clearest presentation remains in Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 245-249

Arriving at the armory, Badger sent a messenger to the front door with a note. A few minutes later, the parley returned with a reply. Walton was not impressed. He told Badger that the order to surrender "will be considered when a force of authorized troops make, in force, the demand for such surrender." The young police superintendent had no desire for needless bloodshed and wisely held back. If Walton would only surrender to the United States Army, then so be it. Badger had saved lives that afternoon, but he had been humiliated in the process.[23]

The actions of these militiamen reflected the election's galvanizing effect on the conservative opposition. Rage replaced notions of cooperation and coalition. That the Republican-dominated national government could decide the election in favor of its own also undermined faith in the democratic process and validated in many minds the justifiability of resorting to other means. Whether or not this was a rational stance or had any basis in electoral reality is almost irrelevant. Although there were undoubtedly feelings of self-doubt among conservatives as to the unity and commitment of those engaged in their cause, the overwhelming sense was that the Grant administration had illegally handed control of Louisiana to Kellogg and had wronged the white natives of the state. Such indignation would make the selling of white unity and Redemption far easier for the Democratic Party in the future.

Racially-charged rhetoric also increased in New Orleans following the disputed election of 1872. For certain, racism and derogatory comments about African-American and Afro-Creole Republicans had been a staple of conservative white newspapers in the state for some time. At the same time, these same papers tempered their bigotry and occasionally ran evenhanded or even favorable pieces on black politicians. Indeed, some of the most savage attacks had been reserved for "disloyal" southern whites. Yet as black voters increasingly became the mainstay of

[23] James B. Walton to Brig. Genl. A.S. Badger, 13 Dec. 1872. James B. Walton Papers, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection. New Orleans, La.

Kellogg's support, this trend reversed itself. It was a fact made terribly plain by a new Carnival society on January 6, 1873, the "Twelfth Night."

Like Rex, the Twelfth Night Revelers were one of several new krewes that emerged out of New Orleans's tempestuous Reconstruction period. Their leader was called the Lord of Misrule, in of itself a subtle jab at what their organization considered misrule in their lives outside of fantasy. The Twelfth Night Revelers had made only their first appearance in 1871, but quickly grew in stature so that by 1873, many in the city began to view their parade as the official start of Carnival season. That year, the krewe selected "The World of Audubon" as their theme. On the surface it was a celebration of one of New Orleans's native sons, the famous naturalist and artist James Audubon. When the tableaux rolled that evening, however, there could be no mistake as to the Lord of Misrule's message.

One of the more pointed displays, car six, mocked miscegenation as it depicted "The Doves' Wedding," which showed the union between "White Dove and Ground Dove in matrimony, Cardinal Grosbeak officiating with soft satire." The boldest statement came on car fifteen, however, "The Crows in Council:"

> Over the float was an expansive arch, bearing the legend, "Union – Justice – Confidence." Inside, hung the scales of the blindfold goddess, and under these were spread the wings of the emblematic pelican. The interior revealed the assembly room of the Louisiana State Legislature, and at the rostrum stood a venerable Crow, who pounded his desk "with a most suggestive umbrella." Beside him a squat Raven in full canonicals unctuously was praying from a book. A Bat was seated in the role of secretary, and in the group were Crows, and Crows, of all varieties, including the Carrion Crow with carpet-bag in hand.[24]

In the meantime, Fusionists held out hope that between legal battles and congressional investigations, Grant's initial alliance with Kellogg might be reversed. Should this eventuality take place, they proceeded to establish the rudiments of a shadow government. On January 14,

[24] Perry Young, *The Mistik Krewe: Chronicles of Comus and His Kin*. (New Orleans, 1931) p. 107-110; *Daily Picayune*, 6 January 1872

as William Pitt Kellogg quietly took the oath of office inside the Louisiana State House, a competing inauguration ceremony took place a few blocks away in Lafayette Square. Thousands assembled to catch a glimpse of the Fusionist leaders standing atop a platform awash in flags and red, white, and blue bunting. Under the watchful eye of the Metropolitan Police, McEnery counseled his followers to present a dignified front and to avoid confrontation with their political opponents. Warmoth followed McEnery with a speech in which he defended his term and immodestly took credit for ameliorating the actions of a legislature he now characterized as ignorant and greedy. E. John Ellis found the ceremony particularly moving. He still entertained great hope that the United States Congress would move to reverse the election's outcome. Telegramming his brother Thomas back in Amite City, E. John declared, "we are Confident and Jubilant."

The McEnery legislature took up residence in the Odd Fellows Hall, almost directly across Lafayette Square from City Hall. As acting governor, McEnery began appointing parish officials and awarding contracts. The Fusionist legislature printed "official" documents and made laws. With Kellogg's assembly doing the same thing a few blocks away, it inevitably meant that rival claimants for office would emerge in almost every parish of the state. In time, it would also lead to bloodshed.[25]

As the rival legislatures conducted business, Rex and the Mistick Krewe made their preparations for Mardi Gras, which in 1873 fell on the 25th of February. When that day finally arrived, crowds gathered near the Clay Statue to see the second coming of Rex. Once again, Algernon Sidney Badger led the King of Carnival's procession as it surged down St. Charles Street for its now customary presentation in front of City Hall. Badger must have been mortified

[25] *Daily Picayune*, 6, 13, 25, January 1873; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 241; E. John Ellis to T.C.W. Ellis, 13 January 1873, Ellis Papers, LLMVC

by what happened next. Rex made a mock arrest of not only the mayor but of the former militia Colonel James B. Walton, the man whom Badger had been sent to subdue only two months earlier. The two "detainees" were then escorted to a carriage behind the Metropolitan's leader and rode in the procession with the rest of Carnival's royalty. In this insulting gesture, Rex made clear that he was capable of performing duties of the kind that Badger could not.[26]

The editors of the *Republican* undoubtedly had no idea what was coming later that evening when they urged their readers pull back the drapes so that their gaslights might help illuminate the nighttime production of Comus. The theme of the Mistick Krewe's parade that evening titled "Missing Links to Darwin's Origin of Species," picked up where the Lord of Misrule had left off. Most of the creatures in the "missing link" parade were bold satirical effigies of unpopular political figures. President Grant appeared as a tobacco grub clutching a tax-collection box. The hyena embodied Benjamin "Beast" or "Spoons" Butler as he shamelessly carried a large silver spoon over his shoulder and a carpetbag in the other hand. Despite the fact that the Metropolitan Police provided a security escort for the krewe, the Pickwickians heaped additional abuse upon Badger by lampooning him as a sleuthing bloodhound with a large protruding nose. Perhaps this is why at several junctures, the Metropolitans refused to clear pedestrian traffic for the procession. The Republicans' black political partners received the roughest treatment, however, "portrayed as the Missing Link himself, half-human, half gorilla, playing a banjo and wearing a pink collar, a 'simian Cupid' seeking a Psyche for his 'nobler mate.'" As Reid Mitchell points out in his history of Mardi Gras, "[t]he krewe held up the contemporary political and social order as unnatural."[27]

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[26] Mitchell, *All on Mardi Gras Day*, 71; Young, *Mistik Krewe*, 112; The *Republican* tried to put a positive spin on the episode by suggesting that it was merely a symbol of Rex's divine rule. *Republican*, 26 February 1873

[27] Young, *Mistik Krewe*, 118; Mitchell, *Mardi Gras Day*, 65-66; *Republican*, 25 Feb 1873; Augusto P. Miceli. *The Pickwick Club of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Pickwick Press, 1964) 66-67. Butler was portrayed carrying a spoon

Although Carnival season ended with the coming of Ash Wednesday, the McEnery Legislature remained in the Odd Fellows Hall. On February 26, the insurgent governor abandoned the ineffective path of passive dignity and called for the conservative citizens of New Orleans to come to the aid of the Fusionist legislature. McEnery used his presumed authority as commander-in-chief to authorize the raising of a militia. To lead this rebellion-in-the-making, he called on the most dashing soldier he could find – Frederick Nash Ogden.[28]

Since returning home from the war, Ogden had gone into business selling cotton bailing materials with another young veteran, Michel Musson's son-in-law, William Bell. His first wife had died during the Civil War, but by 1870 he had met and married Laura Bryson Jackson, a young woman from Mississippi ten years his junior. Ogden had been involved in various political movements since taking off the Confederate uniform including the 1868 campaign of Seymour and Blair. In the same year he founded the Crescent City Democratic Club, an organization that had evolved into something of a vigilance committee for the Fourth Ward. Sometime in this period, Ogden had joined the Pickwick Club, the parent organization of the Mistick Krewe of Comus, and by early 1872, he had dabbled with the Reform movement, perhaps influenced by the active participation of his older brother, Judge Henry N. Ogden. Yet, unlike like his brothers, Fred Ogden was no politician. The war years had to a large degree shaped who he was: In his heart, in his outlook, he was a soldier. McEnery's call was an opportunity to fulfill his destiny.[29]

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because of his reputation as a plunderer of silver flatware during the wartime occupation of New Orleans. It is possible that the "Missing Link" with pink collar was a representation of Ceasar C. Antoine, as he had a considerable reputation for dressing as a "dandy."

[28] *Republican*, 27 Feb. 1873; Dawson, *Army Generals*, 141-143; One unit called the "Alsacian Legion" numbered seventy-five men. V. Voigt, New Orleans to John McEnery, 19 March 1873, private collection of John McEnery Robertson

[29] Frederick Nash Ogden's life between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of 1873 is, at times, cloudy. For his relationship with William Bell, see Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 83; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 201-202; Daily Picayune 18 Feb 1872; The Crescent City Democratic Club is a shadowy organization about which there is

Unfortunately for Ogden, he had very little time to raise and equip much less train a militia capable of taking on A.S. Badger's Metropolitan Police. Only a week after McEnery had appointed him "General" of the Fusionist militia, the acting governor ordered Ogden into battle. Leading approximately 500 to 600 men and aided by Colonel Eugene Waggaman, Ogden focused his main attack on the central Metropolitan Police station, housed in the old Spanish Cabildo on Jackson Square. The attack went poorly almost from the start. By 9:30 P.M., Ogden's followers had already begun to show a worrisome lack of discipline by breaking into and plundering a gun shop on Chartres as well as a cigar shop and coffee store, emptying all establishments of their contents. Badger ordered a contingent of his Metropolitans to push back the attack when the mob started to fire on the Cabildo. Late into the night, the two groups continued to exchange shots, but generally without much effect. The Metropolitans employed a small howitzer, but wisely started by firing blanks in order to frighten rather than kill, a move that minimized bloodshed.[30]

With mayhem in the streets, Kellogg frantically requested help from General Emory, the commander of federal troops in the city. Although Emory was reluctant to engage in battle, he did send a detachment to negotiate with the mob. One of the officers of this group made his way to Ogden to persuade the Fusionist commander to call off the attack. A veteran soldier, Ogden undoubtedly realized the futility of continuing the fight with an unprepared and undisciplined horde, and began to withdraw. By 2:15 the next morning, the Metropolitans were in complete

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little information. It is possible that it had been involved in some of the street violence associated with the fall 1868 elections. For Ogden's link with this association see Walter Prichard, ed., "The Origin and Activites of the 'White League' in New Orleans (Reminiscences of a Participant in the Movement,)" *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1940, 528-529; For his involvement with the Pickwick Club see Miceli, *History of the Pickwick Club*, "Appendix J"; For personal information about Ogden see Family Tree in H.N. Ogden Papers, Special Collections, Tulane University; *Succession of Frederick Nash Ogden*, #18074, Orleans Parish 2nd District Court; *United States Census*, 1870, 1st Ward, Orleans Parish.

[30] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 143; *Republican* 6, 7 Mar. 1873; *Picayune* 6-7 Mar. 1873. The *Picayune* report claimed that the Metropolitans initially used blanks, but then switched to grape shot. Considering the low number of fatalities, it seems unlikely that canister had been used on large groups of men.

control of the Jackson Square police station and the surrounding streets. The collision downtown produced numerous injuries, about sixty-five arrests, but only one fatality-- an unlucky German immigrant bystander out on his wedding night. The scene proved uglier in the Carrolton precinct. The lightly-defended police station there had fallen easily to the McEnery militia, but when the Metropolitans retook their Jefferson Parish outpost the next day, they severely injured one insurgent and fatally shot another in the stomach. In the wake of this fiasco, Fusionism also appeared to be mortally wounded.[31]

The following day, Kellogg seized his opportunity to shut down McEnery's rival legislature and sent A.S. Badger and a strong column of Metropolitans to seize Odd Fellows' Hall. In a coincidence of beautiful symmetry, one of the few McEnery legislators present was Speaker Moncure. As the Metropolitans arrested and hauled the intemperate Democrat to the city lockup, it was probably not lost on some of his associates that Moncure himself had scarcely a year earlier goaded fellow conservatives to join the Custom House ring in their plan to storm and disperse Warmoth's legislature. Now, along with a handful of associates, Moncure would spend the next few days in jail. McEnery, for his part, had fled the city before any real street fighting had taken place.[32]

The Redeemers learned some hard lessons in the political season of 1872-73. Fusion had failed to bring about true unity, and those divisions would have to be patched over if Louisiana were to join the growing list of southern states that had rejected "carpetbag rule." Much of this was due to the disruptive influence of Henry Clay Warmoth and his now-abandoned political strategy for creating a Republican Party in the state. Warmoth's ejection by the Custom House

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[31] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 141-143; *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 9 March 1873

[32] *Republican*, 7 Mar. 1873; Another of those arrested at the Odd Fellows' Hall was Murphy Foster – who would later become governor during the period of disfranchisement in the 1890s. His grandson, Mike Foster, served as governor of Louisiana from 1996-2000.

ended forever the Republicans' chances at success in the state of Louisiana, and the young governor had now become a Redeemer if not a Democrat.

The election of 1872 also intensified feelings about a wide range of political issues in the state. The ambivalence of white voters had been a constant lament of would-be-Redeemers since the adoption of the Reconstruction Acts. Much of this had to do with the fact that while a few vocal Democrats felt red-hot hatred for the governor, many more conservatives believed that they could live with Warmoth. Kellogg elicited much stronger feelings across a broader spectrum of people. His survival in the election of 1872 lead a growing number of otherwise moderate politicians to believe that Redemption would require overwhelming force and perhaps even violence. Whatever the judgment we have today, many white southerners felt that they had been wronged by Kellogg and his allies in Washington. The failure of Fusionism also convinced most of the coalition's moderates of the folly of courting black support. This opened the door for sharpened racial rhetoric characterized by Comus's "Missing Links."

The Redeemers also learned from their failed raid in March of 1873: If they were going to use violence, it had to be well planned and must avoid federal troops at all costs. Leading an ill-conceived mob into battle was a mistake that Frederick Nash Ogden would not make twice.

There is no doubt that Reconstruction politics helped forge modern Carnival in New Orleans. More importantly, the flowering and expansion of Carnival culture proved essential in the restructuring of the city's social pyramid. The Redeemers used the popular medium of Carnival to not only spread their political message, but to reestablish their popular legitimacy within society at large. Few carpetbaggers understood or embraced the idea of Mardi Gras, and this always made them foreigners in a strange land, even amongst their Afro-Creole allies. Not taking part in this cultural battlefield was a costly mistake for the Republicans.

Some scholars have characterized Carnival as a "safety-valve" for New Orleans, and indeed even contemporary observers suggested that the festival had a restorative effect on the good will of the community. Observed from another perspective, however, Carnival could also intensify passions. The festival was both participatory *and* instructive. The Redeemers used Carnival to flaunt their indignation not only in their enemies' midst, but as Algernon Sidney Badger discovered, sometimes with their assistance. Soon, the city would come to understand that Carnival was only the dress rehearsal for a far more dangerous spectacle – a Carnival of Redemption.

As a postscript, one wonders how Louisiana's history would have been different had the Fusion ticket prevailed in the election of 1872. Such an outcome might have removed the momentum from the growing racial polarization within the state. It might have also precluded the violent years to come and the stridency that ultimately accompanied Redemption. Perhaps Warmoth's Republicans would have remained a stronger force in a state that had shown a surprising receptiveness toward his plans for a centrist coalition. It certainly would require little imagination to believe that a Fusionist administration would have completely altered the outcome of the election of 1877 and perhaps given the presidency to the Democratic candidate, Samuel Tilden. On the other hand, Fusionism's victory may have simply led to an earlier consolidation by conservative Democrats in Louisiana under the leadership of John McEnery. We will never know for sure.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEASON OF CREOLE DISCONTENT

"The day that a single mulatto believes
That we, the Negroes, are his equal,
That day you'll turn into a horse,
And I, I'll become white, I think.
You must be dumb not to understand that!

Against us the prejudice of the mulattoes
Will never end
They despise us; so rest assured,
Mulattoes will be our Pontius Pilate:
You're not too dumb to understand that!

Equality, unification
Will create a peculiar sort of race, I think,
Since the child of such a union
Will be neither white, nor yellow, nor black.
You're not too dumb to understand that!" [1]

The hostility that grew out of the failed Fusionism campaign of 1872 spilled out into many corners of New Orleans's society, and perhaps nobody felt its effects more acutely than the interracial Creole world. Personal relationships began to reflect the growing racial polarization of Reconstruction politics. Such antagonism would ultimately force a separation between black and white Creoles, and in the process, irrevocably alter the very fabric of the community. This separation, however, would not be without pain or misgivings. Indeed, some individuals would make a valiant attempt at forestalling the inevitable, but the increasing premium placed on whiteness would ultimately outweigh both cultural ties and bonds of kinship.

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[1] *Le Carillion*, 13 July 1873 translated in Virginia R. Domínguez, *White By Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986) 139-140, 292

This shift in New Orleans's political winds could not have been more ill-timed for Louise Drouet. In October 1872, her father, Louis Fleruange Drouet collapsed in his home at the corner of Tchoupitoulas and Gaiènnie Streets. A similar traumatic experience in 1865 had so profoundly shaken the old Creole that he had made the bold decision to bring his mixed-race daughter Louise to come live with him. Now, seven years later, she was one of the several people standing vigil over her unconscious father that night. When he succumbed, Louise ran from the room in distress crying, "My father is dead!" As she sat sobbing in the evening air on the gallery, her first cousin, Edmund Arthur Toledano tried to comfort her. "Louise, you must not think all the good men are dead," he pleaded, "as long as [you] shall conduct yourself as you have been, I shall stand by you because I know you are the dutiful daughter of my uncle."[2]

Louise had been "conducting herself" as someone with a mind toward "passing," and there were plenty of indications that Louise was well on her way to becoming white. Her sickly father's doctor, the grocer who lived across the street, and a young man who had lived in the house as a tenant for a little over a year in 1868 all believed she was a lawful daughter – and Louise made no effort to disabuse them of this notion. When a census worker came to their Faubourg St. Mary Home in the summer of 1870, he inscribed a "W" beside Louise's name in the column denoting race. After all, could an Afro-Creole possibly have a white Irishwoman working for her as a domestic servant?[3]

Louise continued living in her father's house after his death, but over time the relationship between her and E.A. Toledano began to sour. Perhaps the fact that Louise maintained relationships with Afro-Creole relatives worried her white family. Toledano grew

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[2] This direct quote comes from the testimony of Amelia Ferguson, who worked as a washerwoman for Louis Drouet. It was apparently striking evidence because the defense had no cross-examination ready. *Drouet vs. the Sucession of Drouet*, p. 76-78 (recorder's copy)

[3] *Drouet vs. the Succession of Drouet*; *United States Census*, 1870

particularly agitated about the influence the widow Pierre Laurent exercised over his cousin. This quadroon woman had known his Uncle Louis since before the time of Louise's birth and may have been part of the network of women who had once arranged for his *placée*. Eventually, Toledano forbade Ms. Laurent from entering his deceased uncle's home. The multitude of Toledano and Drouet heirs may have also worried about Louise's plans for her father's extensive property, for he died intestate. At least no will ever met the light of day, and as the relationship between Louise and her white relatives degenerated, it became plain that they meant to disinherit her. Thus, to protect her own financial security, Louise took the executor of her father's estate, Edmund Arthur Toledano, to court.

Incredibly, Louise Drouet secured the services Charles Magill Conrad & Son as her counsel. C.M. Conrad had been Secretary of War under Millard Fillmore, a signer of the Confederate constitution and a member the rebel legislature. Charles M. Conrad, Jr. was the brother-in-law of Davidson Bradfute Penn, the Fusionist candidate for lieutenant governor in the disputed election of 1872. Now they would represent a penniless mixed-race woman in her case against a Confederate veteran. Louise sought only a modest $50 per month alimony from her father's vast estate, so these attorneys were not doing it for the money. Some matter of principle was seemingly at stake.[4]

The defense argued its case based on several suppositions. The first asserted that no legally recognized document had established Louise's paternity. The next two argued rather spuriously that the laws in place at the time of Louise's birth (under the antebellum constitution)

[4] Glenn Conrad, ed., *Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, Vol. I. One of the great mysteries of this case is the manner in which Louise Drouet managed to receive the good offices of C.M. Conrad. The author can only surmise that there may have been some personal animosity between Conrad and the Drouet heirs, or Toledano specifically. Conrad Jr, may have had some knowledge of D.B. Penn's own mixed-race daughter and that the Conrads had a moral difference with Toledano's handling of his cousin's inheritance. Penn and Conrad Jr. lived under the same roof.

and not those in force at the time of the trial dictated her legal rights. The last and most sound argument suggested that in this instance, the law did not allow her to sue the executor of an estate for alimony payments.[5]

Toledano seemed particularly obsessed with proving the dubious assertion that Louise was not the child of Louis Drouet. All of his witnesses were nephews and heirs to the estate of Louis Drouet. They each lamely suggested that their uncle never said anything about having a daughter, but had to admit that they visited him infrequently, if ever. Toledano, who knew better, hinted that Louise was more of a servant than a member of a family and denied ever having dined with her. He suggested that if Louise had in fact been his uncle's daughter, Louis Drouet would have provided for her with a legal will. Toledano claimed that he had urged his uncle to do just that, pointing out that all of his heirs were well off, but that his uncle was so superstitious about death that he had refused to discuss the matter. In response to the assertion that Louise's upbringing as a lady and weak constitution prevented her from making a living, Toledano acidly replied, "she can work." Contradictory at several junctures, this testimony was not a credit to his character.

In contrast, the plaintiff's witnesses paraded to the stand one after another. White men such as Henry Schwartz, Louis Drouet's longtime tenant, described the affectionate familial bond between Louise and her father, and he was not alone. His fifteen year-old son William directly contradicted Toledano's assertion that he and Louise never dined together – as did three other witnesses. Under cross examination, Toledano's testimony began to reek of perjury. A steady stream of both black and white witnesses unmistakably established Louise's paternity and praised her conduct as a dutiful daughter.

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[5] In fact, Louise's attorneys did not know that her mother, Elizabeth Bresson, had her daughter's birth certified by Orleans Parish. Birth Certificate, Louise Marie Drouet, 13 Jul 1847, Vol. 60, P. 809, OPBR

Conrad's able counsel brought initial results. Judge Antoine Tissot of the Second District Court, a man who had once been a Confederate officer and a member of governor Warmoth's militia, awarded Louise the alimony she had prayed for. Yet, it was not to be. Toledano successfully appealed the case to the Louisiana Supreme Court, a body which had actually enjoyed a reputation during Reconstruction for favoring the legal rights of minorities. Unfortunately for Louise, a technicality voided the lower court's decision: In fact, Louise Drouet could not in this circumstance sue an estate for alimony. Seemingly, in seeking the wrong remedy, Conrad had failed her.

The trial and resulting judgment seemingly reaffirms the notion that white Creoles became increasingly self-conscious of their interracial relatives as Reconstruction wore on. Yet the fact that such an unusual collection of defenders came to aid of this Afro-Creole woman defies the conventions of a racist culture. Louise Drouet's defenders had been moved by her character, and the weight of their testimony demonstrated that she had made her father's final years happy, indeed, happier than he had ever been. When the seventeen nieces and nephews of Louis Drouet had moved to not only disinherit their uncle's only child, but to also deny her modest appeal for alimony, it had apparently struck the community as a grossly dishonorable act. Thus, Conrad & Son took her case, and a string of white men and women joined her Afro-Creole relatives in an effort to correct such an outrage. Toledano and his white cousins may have ultimately won the suit, but they had lost immeasurably in the eyes of their peers. Their tight-fisted disavowal of Louise Drouet seemed to confirm all of the rotten things Anglo New Orleanians muttered about white Creoles when behind closed doors. It also demonstrated that racism had its limits, even in racially-charged times.[6]

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[6] The author would like to thank Judith Kelleher Schafer for her advice in navigating the legalistic aspects of this case.

The courtroom drama of Louise Drouet and Edmund Arthur Toledano was but a small episode in a much larger ongoing crisis in the interracial Creole world during Reconstruction. This crisis was about both cultural and racial identity, and the tangled familial web of the Toledano-Drouet clan demonstrated the inexorable link between the two. For ostensibly white Creoles such as Edmund Arthur Toledano, the presence of a woman so intimately linked to both Afro-Creole society and his own bloodlines was a source of great anxiety – not so much for her mere existence, but for the fact that the relationship had become so very public. Disowning Afro-Creole relatives meant running the risk of censure within the larger community. Embracing them brought into question one's own racial "purity," particularly amidst the whispers uttered by some Anglo-Orleanians intimating that even self-identified white Creoles might not be the genuine article. As racial politics intensified, white Creoles grew increasingly sensitive about the subject of their heritage.

In a Creole household on the other side of town, October 1872 brought a rare episode of celebration. Michel Musson stood at the Pontchartrain railroad station with his three daughters and grandchildren, peering over his spectacles at a recently-arrived train. Soon, his nephew (and son-in-law) René emerged from a Pullman car and stepped onto the platform followed closely by Musson's more artistically inclined nephew, Edgar Degas. René had brought his brother Edgar for a long-anticipated several month visit to New Orleans. The young artist wanted to see the city where his mother had been born, to see the South. He would not return to Paris disappointed.[7]

Financial difficulties had caused Michel Musson to sell his fashionable Garden District residence several years earlier, but the stylish mansion that he had rented on Esplanade Avenue

[7] Edgar Degas to Desire Dihau, 11 November 1872, in Marcel Guerin ed., *Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas Letters*, (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1947) 15; Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 79-80

proved a worthy substitute. Here, the artistic genius would live amidst his extended family including Musson's three daughters, Estelle, Mathilde, and Desirée. It also served as a base of operations for Edgar's daily sojourns to Factor's Row, where his brothers and uncle kept their businesses.

Edgar's visit was but one bright spot in an increasingly gloomy landscape for recently-widowed Michel Musson. The Franco-Prussian war concluded in disaster for France, only to be followed by the bloody rise and fall of the Commune in 1871. Taken in combination with the political difficulties closer to home, Musson had grown increasingly agitated. The old Creole attributed many of his own financial misfortunes to Radical politics, both at home and abroad. It was a sentiment echoed by his brother Henri in Paris. Of Louisiana, Henri wrote to Michel, "The country you live in seems unsettled to me; I don't see in it any of the principles which uphold empires as well as individuals… …Barring a big redemption, America will have to submit to Radical cataclysms." [8]

Others in the extensive Musson-Degas clan in New Orleans harbored far more optimism. None more so than Musson's feckless son-in-law, René Degas. Over the last two years, René had left his wife Estelle and their children behind in New Orleans in order to crisscross Western Europe under the auspices of *Degas Frères*. He sought out wines, oils, and other more mundane merchandise to ship back to his brother Achille in New Orleans. He also managed to buy pianos, ponies, and visit with everyone imaginable between London and Zurich. That *Degas Frères* drew more money away from the Degas Bank in Paris than it returned did not seem to trouble René.[9]

[8] Brown, *DeGas-Musson Family Papers*, 51
[9] Ibid, 19-22, 49-5; René Degas married Estelle Musson Balfour, the war widow of Joseph Balfour.

Edgar Degas would be the most fruitful of his relatives during the time of his stay. Art historians have argued that the time spent in New Orleans by the great impressionist had a lasting influence on his long career. Initially, plagued by eye ailments and general hypochondria, Degas languished indoors and bided his time by painting family portraits. By January, however, he grew particularly fascinated by the commercial enterprises of his brothers, and more especially his uncle's cotton factorage business.

Edgar Degas's captivation with cotton resulted in *A Cotton Office in New Orleans,* painted during the dramatic weeks that had lead up to Carnival 1873. Set inside the offices of Musson, Prestidge, & Co., Degas had placed Michel Musson in the foreground, pensively tugging away at a cotton sample. Behind Musson sits René Degas, casually reading copy of the *Daily Picayune*. A sea of cotton spills over the edges of a table located in the center of the picture, with men, including Musson's son-in-law, William A. Bell, standing nearby. Perhaps most fascinating is the likelihood that the mysterious bearded man standing behind René Degas, with red hair and wearing a tan duster is none other than Bell's business partner, Frederick Nash Ogden. New Orleans could be a very small town indeed.[10]

A Cotton Office is also portrait of men in the midst in dramatic events. Even as Degas had picked up his brush, members of the Fusionist legislature plotted insurrection a few blocks away at the Odd Fellows Hall. Perhaps Musson's contemplative countenance spoke to the fact that his firm had failed, quite literally, mid-portrait. By March, he would no longer be in the cotton business. René, who through the good graces of his Uncle Michel joined the Pickwick

[10] Christopher Benfey was the first to posit that the man in the duster was Ogden. Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 282. A portrait of Ogden that had (at least at one time) been in the possession of the Louisiana State Museum seems to confirm this assertion. A copy of this portrait is in James J.A. Fortier, ed., *Carpet-Bag Misrule in Louisiana: The Tragedy of the Reconstruction Era following the War Between the States* (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1933); Edgar Degas, *A Cotton Office in New Orleans* (Municipal Museum, Pau, France); For other analyses of this painting, see Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art*, 1-14

Club, was about to take part in Comus's racially-charged presentation of "The Origins of the Species." And of course, as Fred Ogden posed for the great master, he could have contemplated the rebellion he would soon lead in the streets of New Orleans. There must have been palpable tension inside that room as Degas worked his canvas.[11]

An inveterate joiner, Michel Musson dabbled in numerous conservative political movements in New Orleans since the end of the Civil War. It is possible that he had crossed paths with Fred Ogden before the Civil War, but if not, they most certainly were aware of each other by the fall of 1865 when Ogden called to order the first meeting of the Young Democrats. More recently, both had toyed with the Reform Movement despite their definite Democratic leanings. By the spring of 1873, however, the two would temporarily part ways as Michel Musson experimented with a quixotic bi-racial scheme for Redemption – a plan that Ogden would violently denounce as a "Covenant with Hell."[12]

The unusual campaign that Musson became involved with aimed at creating political unity between black and white Louisianans. Shortly after the breakup of McEnery's legislature, the *New Orleans Times* began drumming up interest in this cooperative effort, arguing that true racial reconciliation was the only hope for ejecting the corrupt administration of William Pitt Kellogg. Such commentary would have undoubtedly attracted the attention of Musson, for he harbored a consuming hatred for the carpetbagger. Supportive editorials eventually spread to competing newspapers, including the strongly-Democratic *Picayune*. While the media trumpeted the virtues of this new organization, a committee of the movement's principals outlined a course of action behind closed doors.

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[11] Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art*, 29-31; Miceli, *Pickwick Club of New Orleans*, Appendix "H"
[12] Prichard, "The Origin and Activities of the 'White League,'" 532

By mid-July, the secret "Committee of One-Hundred" revealed its master plan: the Unification Movement. The ten resolutions put forth that day were remarkably radical propositions for an organization ostensibly championing redemption. They endorsed all of the civil rights provisions that had been part of the state constitution since 1868, including full accommodation in places of public resort and transportation. The Unificationists went much further, however, advocating integrated public schools as well as private restaurants, taverns, and hotels. They called on factories to hire and promote employees in a colorblind fashion, and implored financial institutions and insurance companies to provide services without regard to race. Their manifesto bore a remarkable resemblance to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The men behind the Unification Movement were every bit as extraordinary as the document that they had produced. Many had been involved in the Reform movement of the previous year, and like that earlier effort, Isaac Newton Marks again played a strong leadership role. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, the old Creole Confederate general, took time out from overseeing the Louisiana Lottery Company's official numbers racket to chair the resolutions committee. If the presence of Marks failed to surprise anyone, certainly the involvement of conservative men such as Harry T. Hays, of the famous "Hays Brigade" would have. And of course, there was the perennial champion of political causes aimed at ejecting the Republicans, Michel Musson.[13]

The black leadership that signed onto the Unification Movement was every bit as impressive as their white counterpart. Afro-Creoles dominated this half of the assembly, with Aristide Mary and the Roudanez brothers leading the way. The participation of the fair-skinned Edmund Rillieux must have been of particular interest to Michel Musson, for he was the old

[13] *Picayune*, 17 July 1873; T. Harry Williams, *Romance and Realism in Southern Politics*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961) 22-30; T. Harry Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3 (Aug. 1945) 349-369

Creole's first cousin. A number of these men had first entered the political arena during the Union occupation, but had lost out to Warmoth and his supporters. Unification offered them a second chance at success.[14]

T. Harry Williams, the movement's foremost scholar, chronicled the great journalistic hoopla that accompanied the announcement of the Unificationists' manifesto. Indeed, supportive editorials ran in most of the city's newspapers. The intense media campaign for Unification spoke to the degree at which a dedicated handful of men believed in the viability of such an organization. There were signs from almost the beginning, however, that the movement was in grave danger.

One of the most problematic features of the committee was the inclusion of Kellogg's lieutenant governor, Caesar C. Antoine and the African-American carpetbagger J. Henri Burch. Both had a significant stake in the future success of the Republican Party and had an even greater stake in the Customhouse faction that controlled it. Their presence undoubtedly aroused justifiable suspicion. More troubling was that much like the Reform movement a year earlier, support for Unification was almost non-existent outside of New Orleans. Even within the city, it was not quite as popular as the newspapers had claimed. Robert Hardin Marr, a conservative lawyer and acquaintance of E. John Ellis, sent a letter to the *Picayune* when the newspaper printed his name as a supporter of Unification. He was in favor of any organization making an effort to unite the citizens of Louisiana, and "heartily approved" of racial harmony. Yet Marr pointed out that Unification was "in some of its details and specifications, impracticable and objectionable, and an invasion of the rights of other citizens."[15]

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[14] Christopher Benfey revealed through genealogical research that Edmund Rillieux was the son of Musson's Uncle, Vincent Rillieux – Musson's mother's brother. This also makes Rillieux a cousin of Edgar Degas. See Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 26-29, 182

[15] *Daily Picayune*, 18 June 1873

By July 1st, Beauregard found it necessary to defend his position on Unification. The most unpopular provisions of the Unification platform involved integration of public transportation and city schools. Beauregard pragmatically argued that acceptance of integrated institutions was not tantamount to social equality. Offering this bizarre analogy, he explained, "It would not be denied that, in traveling, and at places of public resort, we often share these privileges in common with thieves, prostitutes, gamblers and others who have worse sins to answer for than the accident of color; but no one ever supposed that we thereby assented to the social equality of these people with ourselves."[16]

Father Abram J. Ryan, Lost Cause poet and editor of the predominantly-Irish New Orleans *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, was beside himself. His paper exclaimed, "That address is argumentative, explanatory, and apologetic. As an argument, it is very lame. As an explanation, it is more lame. As an apology, it is most lame." The editor went on to suggest that not only was Beauregard a suspect Catholic but a lousy specimen of southern honor. Ryan characterized the Unification Movement with an analogy of his own:

> The end of the movement is the moral, social, and political salvation of Louisiana. These gentlemen of the new movement have come to the conclusion that Louisiana is sick unto death morally, socially, materially, politically. They constitute themselves the physicians of the dying patient. They are sure of their own skill and power. They have a patent medicine, which if administered in huge doses will revive the dying state.[17]

When the Unification Movement first announced its resolutions in June, it called for a meeting in one month's time to officially launch their crusade. Those who gathered to celebrate the christening of Unification instead attended a funeral. Beauregard failed to show up, and if

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[16] Daily *Picayune*, 1 July 1873

[17] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 6 July 1873; for a figure as important to Lost Cause mythology as Father Ryan, there is an incredible paucity of material. See Louis Joseph Maloof, "Abram J. Ryan, The Editor," (M.A. Thesis, University of Georgia, 1950) and I. Dillard, "Father Ryan, Poet-Priest of the Confederacy," *Missouri Historical Review*, vol. XXXVI (October 1941). Microfilm copies of the *Morning Star* have been unavailable of circulation until recently.

the list of supporters printed in the newspaper was any indication, a number of other white conservatives had also abandoned the cause, including Michel Musson. Isaac Marks gamely presided over a largely black assembly, but even his optimism must have withered as J. Henri Burch took the podium to sarcastically congratulate whites for finally seeing the light.[18]

The fundamental reason for the failure of the Unification movement was that racial opinion in New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana had already started moving in a decidedly different direction, particularly after the rise of Kellogg. The grim reality may be that there was never a time during Reconstruction when Unification would have not crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions. By the end of July, Father Ryan crowed from the pages of the *Morning Star* that the movement was "Dead and Buried." Rodolphe Desdunes later observed of Unification, "If it did not succeed, it was because it was premature. The people were not prepared to renounce their way of thinking: we could not hope to see them ratify a policy destined to reverse long-established customs."[19]

The essential question of the Unification Movement, however, was not whether it could have ever succeeded, but why it took place at all. Both the Unification Movement and the much more private trials of Louise Drouet suggest that even amidst a growing climate of racism and racial antagonism, not every Redeemer was a race-baiting bigot. Perhaps some, though believing in the prevailing nineteenth century notion of white superiority, also felt that non-whites should receive a fair shake in society.[20]

One can also make a more cynical analysis of the Unification Movement. A significant number of its early white adherents may have simply viewed it as yet one more in a series of

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[18] *Daily Picayune*, 16 July 1873; Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873," 364-366
[19] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 27 July 1873; Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, 139
[20] T. Harry Williams came to many of these very conclusions in 1946. Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873."

bizarre and ultimately unpalatable combinations aimed at removing a political enemy. There had been a history of this in New Orleans dating back to the ill-conceived Custom House-"Last Ditch" Democrat alliance forged in the summer of 1871. Unification also had some unlikely supporters, including Charles Cavaroc, who had financially backed Bank Coffeehouse owner Joseph Walker in his lawsuit with Charles Sauvinet and, like René Degas, had been part of the overtly racist "missing links" parade. Viewed in this light, the Unification Movement was just another spasm of political desperation.

It is possible that both of these analyses are accurate, and barring the sudden onset of omniscience, we can never know for certain the racial attitudes of these men. Their contradictory behavior may have stemmed from the fact that they did not know themselves the limits and extent of their own racism. It is true that racial egalitarianism had concrete limits in New Orleans during Reconstruction, but these were also fluid and uncertain times. Unification itself underscored such uncertainty, for its very occurrence revealed that even as late as July of 1873, some community leaders could not foresee the ultimate resurgence of the Democratic Party.

The participation of New Orleans's Afro-Creole elite also begs analysis. That they sought a return to the political stage is a distinct possibility, and without question, Unification involved far more concessions on the behalf of their white partners. Yet there was another dynamic afoot in the city's interracial Creole world that may have motivated them to join more out of a sense of self-preservation. Indeed, this same force might have been the inspiration behind the Drouet heirs' perjury-laden disavowal of their cousin Louise. It was the ongoing campaign for white Creole racial purity spearheaded by the strident editor of *Le Carillon*.

Dr. J.W. Durel, a former Confederate surgeon, founded his newspaper in 1869 with a dual purpose – to establish the "purity" of white Creoles and to diminish the position of the Afro-Creole elite. Indeed, he wanted to strip the very name "Creole" from people of color, reserving it solely for "pure" whites. Miscegenation, integration, "passing," and black political power were a pantheon of evils to be vanquished. Such shrill rhetoric found a more receptive audience in the wake of the failed election of 1872. With the advent of the Unification Movement, *Le Carillon's* attacks increased in their vituperative spirit.[21]

Just days before the Unification's disastrous July meeting, *Le Carillon* espoused an entirely different course:

> The time has come to indicate what the sons of Louisiana want – that one must be either WHITE or BLACK, that each person must decide for himself. There are two races here: on superior, the other inferior… Their separation is absolutely necessary. So let us separate ourselves as of today into two distinct parties – the White Party and the Black Party.[22]

Le Carillon's cry for a White Party was an eerie foreshadowing of things to come.

Ever since Americans began arriving in large numbers in 1803, in their minds, self-declared white Creoles of New Orleans carried a hint of racial ambiguity. The passing of several generations only seemed to strengthen this conviction. The hypocrisy of Anglo-Orleanians engaging in their own interracial sexual relationships did not seem to matter. Proof-positive of Creole miscegenation was the endless number of Afro-Creoles who shared family names. As Reconstruction politics increasingly devolved along racially polarized lines, particularly after the rise of Kellogg, it raised the stakes of maintaining one's own whiteness. It also meant the abandonment and outright denial of some long-standing folkways, including the custom of *plaçage.* Afro-Creole relatives became a liability. Passing for white held a growing appeal for

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[21] Joseph G. Tregle, "Creoles and Americans," 170-174; Domínguez, *White by Definition*, 136-142
[22] Domínguez, *White by Definition*, 291

racially ambiguous people while at the same time it represented a danger to the reputation of white Creoles, particularly relatives. The racial bullying of *Le Carillon* took root in this fertile ground.[23]

When George Washington Cable's short story, "Belles Demoiselles Plantation" appeared in the pages of *Scribner's* in April 1874, it touched off a violent reaction among New Orleans's white Creoles and revealed how thoroughly they had sought to distance themselves from the suspicion of African blood. Less than a year after the death of Unification, Cable's tale scandalized white Creoles with its clear implications of racial impurity and lack of moral character. That the author's stories rang so true made it all the more horrifying. Indeed, had Cable chosen to apply his literary mastery to the personal story of Louise Drouet, the resulting work would have fit right into the *Grandissimes*. White Creole anger at Cable ran so rampant that by 1880, the poet Adrien Rouquette would produce an anonymous pamphlet calling the author the result of "unnatural Southern growth, a bastard sprout."[24]

Working as a clerk in a cotton office, and as a reporter for the *Picayune*, George Washington Cable enjoyed the perfect vantage point from which to observe the shifting patterns of New Orleans's society. Although it was still the South's largest city, it was still in many ways a small town. He probably had met Michel Musson and his nephews, and unquestionably knew Frederick Nash Ogden, for his exploits as a Confederate cavalryman served as inspiration for his

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[23] Tregle, "Creoles and Americans," 171; For a thoughtful look at the controversial topic of "passing" in nineteenth century New Orleans see Shirley Thompson, "Ah Toucoutou, ye conin vous: History and Memory in Creole New Orleans," *American Quarterly*, vol. 53, iss. 2, (June 2001) 232-267 and Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, "The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans," PhD. Diss, Harvard University, 2001

[24] Benfey, Degas in New Orleans, 118; George Washington Cable, "Belles Demoiselles Plantation," in *Creoles and Cajuns, Stories of Old Louisiana*. (New York: Doubleday Co.,1959) 62-79. In "Belles Demoiselles," the protagonist, "Injin Charlie," is the mixed race cousin of Colonel De Charleu, a white Creole planter. Despite the fact that De Charleu cheats Charlie in a land deal involving their inheritances, the benevolent mulatto forgives the Colonel.; Tregle, "Creoles and Americans," 175-180; Dominguez, *White by Definition*, 142. "Bastard sprout" was also undoubtedly a slam at Cable's diminutive size.

novel, *The Cavalier*. It is quite possible that Cable had even been aware of E.A. Toledano and Louise Drouet.[25]

Cable had been a supporter of the Unification Movement, as was his good friend and literary mentor, the physician J. Dickson Bruns. Like many of the white conservatives in the wake of the movement's failure, Bruns increasingly soured on the idea of racial cooperation as an avenue for retaking the state from the Republicans. Cable lamented his friend's hardening attitudes, but he was a rare exception. As his literature increasingly made him *persona non grata* in the city, Cable decided to leave New Orleans and live the rest of his life in the Northeast. The city of his birth was not the place he had known, for the politics of Reconstruction had changed its people so dramatically. They had also profoundly changed Cable.[26]

The failure of the Unification Movement was a transcendent moment in New Orleans's social history. It was the Indian summer of political moderation in the city, and its collapse forever disabused the men of Rex of the efficacy of forging a centrist coalition. The contested outcome of the election of 1872 had crippled the spirit of this movement before it had even begun.

The spring, summer, and fall of 1873 should also be remembered as a time when the white and Afro-Creole worlds made a less-than-amicable divorce. Again, political considerations had much to do with this rupture. The fortunes of Louise Drouet were emblematic of the changes that had taken place in New Orleans during her transition into adulthood. At the end of the Civil War, Louise had risen to a position that would have been a great surprise to her mother. Eight years later, the optimistic scene in the Drouet household had

[25] Turner, *George W. Cable*, 35-69; Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 185
[26] Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 197-199

been replaced by an acrimonious disavowal of her legacy. She would end 1873 as just another single Afro-Creole woman struggling to make a living.

CHAPTER VII

THE REDEEMER'S CARNIVAL

"You have I suppose heard of our short but decisive little fight on Monday evening last… ...Ask Ruff what he thinks of the blood thirsty braves now." [1]

William Pitt Kellogg's greatest political accomplishment may have been that he finally provided the Redeemers with an enemy that they almost universally despised. Outrage over his ascendancy spilled outside of Louisiana's borders, touching off congressional investigations and widespread editorial condemnation. President Grant's indecisive meddling on behalf of his brother-in-law's political cronies also undermined Kellogg's legitimacy and fanned the flames of discontent. Even as 1874 began, some conservatives looked toward these outside forces to reverse the election's outcome, however unlikely that might be.

A long series of failures had also convinced many of New Orleans's political moderates to abandon notions of independence from the Democratic Party. Nowhere was this more evident than among the men of Rex. "Xariffa," the poet-laureate of Rex, kept his majesty's subjects apprised of their sovereign's travels when not parading down St. Charles Avenue. She noted that he had pared down on luggage after observing that "a carpet-bag was enough to take to New Orleans." Through Xariffa, the men of Rex bitterly recounted the electoral struggle that had enveloped Mardi Gras of 1873:

> And others, whose united plans,
> Were laid the King to overthrow,
> Sieze the throne and scepter at one blow,

[1] J.C. Murphy, New Orleans, La. To Flora Murphy, Napoleonville, La, 17 Sept 1874, Murphy Family Papers, HNOC

Tear off the crown from Rex's head,
And plant it on Grant's brow instead.

"Well well," said Rex, "This thing is racy,"
"We see it all, Collector Casey,"
"Bribed these, my lords, last Mardi Gras,"
"To make a king of his brother-in-law."[2]

One piece of legislation that had passed under Kellogg's watch during the 1873 session sought to undermine the Unification Movement. It was another Civil Rights bill with stronger enforcement language than the earlier versions passed under Warmoth. Outside of the *Sauvinet* case, public accommodations laws had gone largely un-enforced in New Orleans. Thus, when this new legislation went into effect at the beginning of 1874, a number of blacks were determined to see if it actually had meaning.[3]

David Bidwell's Academy of Music was one of New Orleans's most popular places of amusement. It was where the Grand Duke Alexis had supposedly fallen in love with the burlesque actress Lydia Thompson during a production of *Bluebeard*. The proprietor claimed to operate his business in accordance with the civil rights law, but was quick to note that a "committee of colored citizens" had requested separate seating and that he had acceded to their wishes by furnishing a well-appointed booth in the "Family Circle" portion of the theater. It was no Jim Crow gallery, Bidwell attested – just outside the Dress Circle. And besides, he added, no policy required blacks to sit there.

One Saturday evening in early March, 1874, Captain Peter Joseph met his friend Frank Rierdon for a dinner at Fred's Restaurant on St. Charles Avenue. After a quick meal, they headed down to Bidwell's Academy of Music for a show. Rierdon, a white man, stepped up to the ticket booth and purchased two parquette tickets before Joseph could remove his wallet.

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[2] Young, *Mistik Krewe*, 130-131. The "others" with "united plans" were the Fusionists.
[3] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 259

Handing a ticket to Joseph, the two entered the theater's vestibule and walked over to the doorman, David Owens. Just as Rierdon entered the theater, he heard the doorman tell Joseph, "you can't go in!" Captain Joseph protested, but Owens repeated, "you can't go in! …Look at the ticket and you will see why!" Both men raised their voices in anger as Owens shoved Joseph out the door and on to St. Charles Avenue.

During the scuffle, Captain Joseph had demanded to speak with David Bidwell, but the proprietor was unavailable. In fact, he had been bedridden with an illness for several days and did not find out what his employee had done until he read about it in the paper the following Tuesday. The story contained disconcerting news indeed –Peter Joseph was suing him for $5,000 damages because he had been refused a seat at the Academy of Music.

It is difficult to tell from the legal proceedings exactly what motivated Owens to bar Joseph from the theater. A disclaimer on the ticket warned that the theater's management could refuse admission to anyone they chose, refunding the one dollar admission price. Joseph was certain it was because he was a black man, although it is quite possible it was also due to the fact that he was a conspicuous member of the much-despised Metropolitan Police. Delivering his opinion Judge Bartholomew L. Lynch, an Irish immigrant and long-time scalawag, launched into an extended philippic about the conduct of Bidwell's theater and charged that it had been the Academy of Music's policy to segregate blacks into the Family Circle. Since there had been no testimony to this effect during the trial, one might assume that the incident had been no accident at all and that Joseph, Rierdon, and Judge Lynch had set out to make an example of David Bidwell. Lynch ruled in favor of Captain Joseph and ordered David Bidwell to pay the policeman $1,000 in punitive damages for the behavior of his employee.[4]

[4] *Peter Joseph vs. David Bidwell*, No. 5419, 28 La. Ann. 382 (1876) Judge Lynch wrote an enormous brief explaining his ruling in the case. He also introduced a lot of assumptions that had not been any part of the trial's

As Peter Joseph's court case played out that May, other black New Orleanians tested the waters. Freedman William Smith walked into Peligrini's soda fountain and ordered a drink. In a tactic he had hoped would both thwart Smith and stay within the law, the proprietor informed Smith that the price of the drink had just jumped from a nickel to a dollar. When Smith cried foul, another patron ejected him from the premises. Smith did not get a soda that day, but he did not have to eat crow either. A judge ordered Peligrini to pay William Smith thirty dollars.[5]

What most enraged conservative Louisianans was that white Republicans seemed to be actively encouraging such bold behavior. In May, a white member of Kellogg's government accompanied a black man into Hugo Redwitz's beer saloon on Canal Street. They left after the bartender refused them service, but returned four days later to try again. An exasperated Redwitz decided to serve the black man, but not the "white agitator" accompanying him.[6]

Racial confrontation in the theaters and barrooms of New Orleans became a staple of the city's newspapers, but such activity was tame in comparison to what had been going on in Louisiana's hinterland. On Easter Sunday, 1873, the single-most deadly incident of Reconstruction had taken place in Grant Parish. Known as the "Colfax Massacre," it began as a conflict between rival claimants to local office – bitter fruit of the competing McEnery and Kellogg legislatures. It ended with a group of white men slaughtering a sizeable portion the

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testimony, primarily that Bidwell had created the "Family Circle" for the express purpose of segregating his theater. For the gravity of the case, there was really very little testimony at all. Neither Joseph nor Rierdon asserted that Owens had said anything to the effect of "because you are a black man." One might conclude one of several scenarios about this case. A) It had been a setup by Joseph, knowing all along that the Academy of Music had a reputation for segregating clients. B) Owens had a personal animosity for Joseph, or an animosity for the Metropolitan Police. C) The case had broader political overtones that had not only to do with race, but the plaintiff's status as a member of Kellogg's police force. Further, it could have been all of these things in combination. The state supreme court later upheld Lynch's ruling but not without significant dissenting opinion.

[5] For examples of integration attempts at saloons see *Daily Picayune*, 10, 17, 21 May 1874; *Republican*, 25 June 1874. The customer who forcibly removed Smith was E.L. Jewell, the publisher of the New Orleans *Bulletin* and *the Crescent City Illustrated.* Jewell was no stranger to violence, having challenged H.C. Warmoth to a duel prior to this incident.

[6] *Picayune*, 17, 21 May 1874.

district's black militia company. Colfax was the most dramatic of these incidents, but other parts of rural Louisiana were in a complete state of lawlessness as 1874 began.[7]

When the Colfax defendants came to trial in New Orleans in April, the event demonstrated how much racial attitudes had hardened in a year's time. R.H. Marr, the associate of E. John Ellis who had so vocally opposed Unification, was their lead defense attorney. Yet even men who had supported some of New Orleans' most adventurous political experiments stood behind the eight men on trial. When a group of leading citizens organized a theatrical benefit for the defendants, Unification's chief proponent, Isaac Marks, lent a hand in the performance.[8]

New Orleanians had another reason for paying close attention to the growing mayhem that had overtaken many of Louisiana's rural parishes in the spring of 1874. Such chaos had led to the flowering of a political movement with wide-reaching implications. During a late April 1874 meeting at the Opelousas courthouse in St. Landry Parish, those present drafted resolutions that led to the formation of the first White League. When the white men of St. Landry published their racially charged manifesto in the Opleousas *Courier,* it was clear that their goal was white supremacy in its most strident form.[9]

The League quickly spread across the state, moving from parish to parish. When the Committee White League of Opelousas brought the movement to neighboring St. Martin Parish, it requested a leading St. Martinville resident, Alexandre DeClouet, to come speak at the inaugural rally. There DeClouet described a sinister Republican plot to turn the black man against the white. In familiar rhetoric, he claimed, "the credulity and the ignorance of the

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[7] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction,* 189-193; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed,* 267-271
[8] Landry, *History of the Boston Club,* 115
[9] H. Oscar Lestage, Jr., "The White League in Louisiana and its Participation in Reconstruction Riots," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly,* XVIII, 1935. 640-642

colored man has been made an instrument of ambitious, intriguing men." Further, that "a trashy list of little tyrants," including Warmoth, Kellogg, Longstreet, and Badger actively helped blacks plot against white Louisianans. The militaristic White League would serve as a first line of defense against this imagined threat.[10]

What constituted a "White League" varied considerably from parish to parish. Some renamed their old conservative political clubs to the White League to rally ambivalent white voters, while others bore a strongly militaristic character. Although many of White League chapters railed against the black franchise, others took a paternalistic stance on race. The most common theme among various White Leagues, however, was the belief that conservative whites had for too long been their own worst enemy, and that the League, either through violence or its rhetoric, would bring about the unity that had for so long eluded them.

Armed resistance to Republican rule already had a strong tradition in rural Louisiana. During the early years of Congressional Reconstruction, the Klan-like Knights of the White Camellia roamed much of Acadiana. The Enforcement Acts of 1870-1871 diminished the activities of the KWC, but did not extinguish their deep-seated animosity toward Republican rule. The White League in rural Louisiana revived some of the earlier organization's tactics.[11]

Many expected that a chapter of the White League might soon form in New Orleans. This point was not lost on Frederick Nash Ogden, who had recently reinvigorated his old political association – the Crescent City Democratic Club. At Eagle Hall on Prytania Street, he called together old friends like William Bell and former Warmoth militia officers William J.

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[10] Committee White League, Opelousas, La. to Hon. Alexandre DeClouet, St. Martinville, June 19, 1874. Alexandre DeClouet Papers, LLMVC. Two of the signers of the Committee White League's letter were E.T. Lewis and L. Dupré, who founded the first White League at Opelousas.; Address to White League Rally, 20 June 1874, St. Martinville. Alexandre DeClouet Papers. DeClouet's efforts did not save his fortune, as he lost control of at least one of his plantations three years later.

[11] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 74-75, 106, 110.

Behan and James Walton. If the last three years had taught them anything, it was that a lack of cohesion among their associates in the business community had for too long been the bugbear of conservative politics. This time, they would leave nothing to chance. In late June, Ogden and his cohorts conspired with the *Picayune's* editors to unleash a fabricated scandal that would add great urgency to the formation of the Crescent City White League.[12]

The June 30th edition of the *Picayune* ominously warned the citizens of New Orleans of a pending outbreak of black violence. On the Fourth of July, the "Black Leagues" would descend upon the city to assert their civil rights. Not only would these lusty vandals demand service in the city's saloons and soda fountains, transportation on public conveyances and accommodation at all places of business, but they had evil designs against the white men and women of New Orleans. The *Picayune* continued, "If resisted, they were to at once fire and kill the proprietor and as many white men as possible, and then, supported by the other colored people who would rally to their support, and, as was expressed, take it for themselves, kill all the men and *keep all the women*."[13]

The following day, the *Republican* accused the *Picayune* of political "bushwhacking." The *Louisianian* was quick to condemn the White League as the successor of the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camellia. Despite the denials of Longstreet, Badger, and Kellogg, as well as doubts voiced by even competing conservative newspapers, the *Picayune* continued the assault for several more days, publishing more detailed information about the supposed Black League, including what it claimed to be an intercepted copy of the organization's by-laws and a list of theatrical hailing signs that read like the script from a badly-conceived minstrel show. As shameless as the *Picayune*'s stories had been, they successfully fed on existing perceptions by

[12] *Daily Picayune*, 24 June 1874; Prichard, "The Origin and Activities of the White League in New Orleans," 532
[13] *Daily Picayune*, 30 June 1874. emphasis in original

many of New Orleans's white citizens that black people had grown far too assertive in demanding their rights.[14]

Amidst this uproar, on July 1st, the *Picayune* announced the formation of the Crescent City White League with none other than Frederick Nash Ogden as president. Many of the group's foundational members were past Reformers, Liberal Republicans, and Unifiers who had been repeatedly burned by efforts toward political moderation. They had given up on the "third way." Although a few never supported the League or affiliated with the Redeemers, they remained in such small numbers to the point where they were no longer a political force. Unity was now within sight. [15]

Recruits to the Crescent City White League emerged in large numbers. Within weeks, over 1,500 men had formed into dozens of military-style companies. Those who joined the White League in New Orleans differed considerably from their rural counterparts. Tradesmen, such as carpenters, grocers and tinsmiths belonged, but more common were professional men from Factor's Row; clerks, accountants, sugar and cotton factors, weighers, and lawyers. Its members had strong social ties. Many belonged to urbane Carnival societies such as the Mistick Krewe of Comus or fraternal organizations like the Elks. That over one-hundred members of the exclusive Pickwick Club had joined also lent the organization a certain amount of cachet. Undoubtedly Fred Ogden's charismatic presence among the Pickwickians contributed to this strong enrollment. The elite Washington Artillery, a voluntary militia started in 1838, added both prestige and martial credibility to the League. Dozens of other military-style political

[14] *Republican*, 1 July 1874; *Weekly Louisianian*, 4 July 1874; *Daily Picayune*, 4 July 1874
[15] *Daily Picayune*, 1, 2 July 1874

parade clubs that had sprung up in every ward of the city during the election of 1872 also provided an existing framework for an army of redemption.[16]

The Crescent City White League was also overwhelmingly a youth movement. Evidence does not support the assertion that the League in New Orleans was a band of battle tested Confederate veterans. A full 36 percent of the League's enlisted men were twenty-four years old or younger in 1874. Over one-third were simply too young to have fought for the Confederacy. An additional 23 percent were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty in 1874. If this group had fought in the Civil War, they would have been among the Confederacy's youngest of soldiers. Nearly 60 percent of the Crescent City White League's enlisted men were thirty years of age or younger. The League offered these young men an opportunity to prove their worth to their fathers, older brothers, and themselves. Defeat and the humiliation of Reconstruction had clouded their youth. The accident of birth had denied them a role in the Civil War, the defining event of their generation. The White League looked like a fine substitute.[17]

The prospect of military glory also tapped into deeply felt notions of class and manly honor. Young men not wanting to miss out on the greatest adventure of their lives ached for a

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[16] By cross referencing a sample of White League participants in the battle on September 14, 1874 published in Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 234-240 with occupational data found in *Soard's New Orleans Directory*, Vol. 1, 1874, I discovered several trends in status and profession. Overwhelmingly, the White League drew from the professionals along Factor's Row. The sample includes 30 officers and 100 men from the rank and file for a total of 130 members.; In a similar sample in an unpublished thesis on the men of the Crescent City White League, Jennifer Lawrence concludes that only 7% of the CCWL were laborers whereas over 50% worked in the commodities-related businesses along Factor's Row. Jennifer Lawrence, "The Crescent City White League, 1874" (Honors Thesis: Tulane University, 1992) 23, Table 1.; Nathaniel Chearas Hughes, *The Pride of the Confederate Artillery: The Washington Artillery the Army of the Tennessee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) 1-3; *Daily Picayune*, 8,12,19,22 September 1872; The Swan Cadets' parade in September of 1872 was emblematic of the political street theater found in urban Reconstruction. This group of first-time voters donned their "neat white uniforms" with red collars and cuffs, and paraded through the streets of New Orleans escorted by their older mentors, the "Wide Awakes." Upon arrival at their patron's home, the "fair and lovely" young lady friends of the Swan Cadets presented their "protectors" with a silk banner and wreath. In a reenactment of the *rage militaire* of 1861, one of the young ladies mounted the home's balcony to exhort the cadets to *do their duty*. Societal expectations of masculinity were clear in this political Carnival.

[17] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 551; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 291; The age of the average CCWL participant was calculated by taking a sample of 100 enlisted men and 30 officers as listed in Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 234-240, and cross-referencing with the Obituary Index, New Orleans City Archives, New Orleans, La.

shot at the carpetbaggers. James Cross Murphy, a twenty-four year-old sugar broker certainly felt this way. Late that summer his Uncle offered these words of advice, "I hope there will be no bloodshed, but if Kellogg attempts any of his "shenanigans", give it to 'em hot and heavy." Twenty year-old Pickwickian Mortimer Norton Wisdom harbored deep resentment for the reversal of fortune that southern defeat had brought his family. When he was a boy, his mother had brought him to visit Confederate prisoners held in the Customhouse. Financial considerations now forced him to abandon lofty dreams of "fame and honor," forcing him instead to join "the common crowd of petty money-grubbing lawyers."[18]

The officers of the White League, particularly those of higher rank, clearly did have a wealth of combat experience with the Confederate Army, however. The average officer was thirty-four, and many had served with distinction. Few officers were men in their twenties, and conversely few were over forty. They were still young enough to have a long political future, yet old enough and with critical life experiences to be worthy of the respect of their employees, coworkers, and younger siblings. For these men, the League offered a last chance to not only Redeem the state, but to redeem their own manhood.

For others, a whole host of complicated personal reasons undoubtedly contributed to their membership in the White League. Edmund Arthur Toledano seemed to be doing well financially, but his recently-completed court battle may have left him grappling with questions of racial identity and community standing. If character patterns revealed anything, the incessantly

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[18] For a discussion of the link between military enlistment and Victorian-era notions of honor see James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.61, 168; Perhaps the most prominent work on southern honor is Bertram Wyatt-Brown. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) Although Wyatt-Brown deals with antebellum honor and its ties to slavery, the underlying concept of honor as the preservation of a good public image relates well with the average White League recruit.; Philip S. Armitage, Unity Plantation, to JCM, New Orleans, La., 4 Sept. 1874, Murphy Family Papers. HNOC; Mortimer Norton Wisdom to Mother 28 January 1873, Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin private papers. Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin to Justin Nystrom, 20 Sept 1999; Miceli, *Pickwick Club of New Orleans*, Appendix "J";

glad-handling René Degas took part in order to network with important members of the community. Perhaps he had also fallen under the influence of Michel Musson and Fred Ogden.

Nobody was more ready for a change of government than E. John Ellis. A shortage of clients had never been a problem for the Ellis brothers' New Orleans law firm, rather it was more a shortage of clients who actually paid their bills. The financial panic that occurred during the fall of 1873 only exacerbated the situation of tight money, and Ellis found himself increasingly robbing Peter to pay Paul. In November, he sold a home that he hoped would "lighten the ship enough to weather the storm." He clearly connected Redemption with the return to prosperity. Writing Thomas, he noted, "if we win politically, as I now firmly believe we shall, then the balance is easy."[19]

Ellis had also taken notice of the White Leagues cropping up all over the state. "The political pot is boiling," he told Thomas. Yet in the back of his mind, he worried that racial violence would give the Republicans an excuse to request federal troops and establish martial law. "Carpet-bag Gov'ts have fed on riots, slaughter, Ku Klux stories, &c, &c, and are now dying for want of such food." He warned that the White Leagues "should be quiet for a while. Later in the canvass events will so shape themselves as to render White Leagues a necessity." Until then, to be "organizing leagues on a color basis, the government will be against us; the will seem in the defensive, we in the aggressive. Acts of violence will be hereafter laid at our door." He offered one last piece of advice: "This should be kept quiet!"[20]

The political pot boiled over that August in Coushatta, the personal Red River Parish kingdom of carpetbagger Marshall Harvey Twichell. The Vermont native had flourished there after arriving with the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865. He married a local girl and had made a small

[19] E. John Ellis to T.C.W. Ellis, 12 November 1873, Ellis Papers, LLMVC
[20] E. John Ellis to T.C.W. Ellis, 24 June 1874, Ellis Papers, LLMVC

fortune in a variety of business enterprises. Twitchell tried to follow in Warmoth's footsteps by including some Democrats in a broad-based coalition, but had also made a lot of enemies along the way. Local White Leaguers descended upon Coushatta, ostensibly to defend against a supposed attack by armed blacks. Not surprisingly, they also used it as an opportunity to forcibly eject Twitchell and his cronies. The scene turned ugly as the White League escorted a handful of unarmed white Republicans outside the city and murdered them in cold blood. [21]

The wanton bloodshed at Coushatta and other less spectacular episodes of violence worried some people in New Orleans, including Father Ryan of the *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*. In an editorial titled "Let Well Enough Alone," Ryan had some pointed words for Fred Ogden and the men of the White League:

> There is a certain fire and tow element in this State, as well as in every other community, which is more distinguished for energy than wisdom. In other words, there is a kind of madness which occasionally seizes men and makes gamblers of them. Sometimes they gamble in cotton, sometimes in money, and sometimes in blood. That is, they take the chances blindly without any definite reason to presume on success more than failure. Now, it is well known that the Carondelet speculators generally die beggars; we know that the more undisguised gamblers of St. Charles Street are not endowed with much of the respect and confidence of their fellow citizens; and what are we to think of the other adventurers – those who gamble in revolution and blood?[22]

As the sun set on September 1, 1874, crowds converged on the Varieties Theater in New Orleans for a dramatic night political rally. The assembly numbered close to ten thousand people including several companies of the White League. Bands played and banners illuminated by torchlight gave a festive appearance, yet a look of solemn reserve characterized the crowd as they awaited their political leaders. The White League had spent the balance of the summer

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[21] Twitchell, Marshall Harvey, *Carpetbagger from Vermont: The Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell*, Ted Tunnell, ed., (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1989) p.140-148; Taylor, p.287-291; Tunnell, p.196-202; Ted Tunnell, *Edge of the Sword: The Ordeal of Carpetbagger Marshall H. Twitchell in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 145.

[22] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 16 August 1874. Ogden was a Catholic.

purchasing weapons, drilling, and planning for warfare. Now they awaited instructions for further action. In this increasingly explosive atmosphere, the speeches that night had to accomplish the delicate task of rallying support without inciting a riot.

John McEnery was the first speaker at this out-of-season Carnival. Though feeling quite ill, he was not about to miss an opportunity to address such a large crowd of supporters. Defending the Coushatta killers, McEnery rhetorically asked what other options the people had than to free themselves from "plundering officials." Although his remarks were considerably softer than they had been during a rural speech where he declared whites would "wade in blood knee deep" before submitting to Kellogg, McEnery's comments remained forceful. He closed that Louisiana must have an "honest" and "fair election – peaceably, if we can; forcibly if we must."[23]

E. John Ellis must have held his breath as he listened to McEnery's fiery oratory. He worried that any further encouragement from above might lead to uncontrolled chaos, not only in the rural parishes but in New Orleans as well. Once Ellis took the podium, he was quick to add some disclaimers: "We must not trouble the Negro; he is but the indirect cause of our troubles. Let him vote for his candidates, whoever they may be." Ellis also warned the crowd that "there are men who need watching, men who pretend to be with us." Ever willing to point out the hypocrisy within his own party, he continued, "Kellogg raised on Carondelet Street the money that fitted out the Metropolitans." E. John still felt the sting of Bolivar Edwards' betrayal two years earlier.[24]

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[23] David Rabb Cargill, "Reconstruction and the White League in Lincoln Parish, Louisiana." M.A. Thesis, Louisiana Tech University, 1993. 120. Mr. Cargill cites a letter from Allen Greene to Marshall Harvey Twitchell (both prominent Republicans in Northwest Louisiana) that describes a speech reportedly delivered by McEnery in Vienna, La. on August 17, 1874 from M.H. Twitchell Papers, Louisiana Tech.; The Varieties was where the Comus ball traditionally took place.

[24] *Daily Picayune*, 2 September 1874

In the minds of a lot of White Leaguers, the time was ripe for revolution, and there were a number of indications that they were correct. Nationally, scandal and a weak economy had made the American voter increasingly weary of Reconstruction and Ulysses S. Grant's Republican Party. The League also looked hopefully toward events that had taken place in Texas earlier in the year. Besieged by Democratic paramilitaries in Austin, the recently reelected Republican governor sent an urgent telegram to Grant for help, but the President left his pleas unanswered. Violence had redeemed Texas. In August, the "White's Man Party" in Vicksburg, Mississippi had carried a local election by similar means.[25]

The United States Army had always been the greatest impediment to political violence, but now even that was not an issue. Most of the soldiers normally garrisoned in New Orleans had been sent away for fear that they might contract yellow fever. Only nineteen personnel remained on duty in the region, and they could scarcely leave the barracks at Chalmette without completely abandoning their post. All signs pointed to revolution.[26]

The activities of the White League did not go unnoticed by Algernon Sydney Badger. He felt particularly heartened by the cooperation of Arthur Olivier, a gun dealer on Canal Street. Olivier had warned the Metropolitans' superintendent that a number of arms shipments destined for the White League were on there way, and the gun broker thoughtfully pointed out where these shipments might be best intercepted. Badger took the bait. Sure enough, the Metropolitans made a series of raids, netting a handful of old Civil War surplus percussion muskets.

The *Picayune* howled with mocking contempt at the seizure of private property made "by a squad of valiant Metropolitans on a light spring wagon." The conservatives had once again played Badger like a fiddle, and anti-Grant newspapers in the North picked up the story and used

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[25] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 111-112, 145-147
[26] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 161, 165

it to ridicule Kellogg's government. Badger undoubtedly grew suspicious when Olivier again returned to his office with an invoice for a "large shipment of arms" aboard the steamer *Mississippi*, which sat docked along the waterfront in front of Jackson Square. The White League, Olivier informed Badger, intended to receive the arms through force on the afternoon of Monday, September 14. [27]

With the stage set for confrontation, a group of conservative leaders and White League officers met on the 12th of September, a Saturday night. D.B. Penn felt that attacking the Metropolitans was unwise. Like E. John Ellis, who had become a confidant and friend since the campaign of 1872, he thought violence might serve as a pretense for federal intervention. Penn suggested that instead, a small group of veteran White Leaguers make a covert attack on the statehouse and abduct Kellogg and his lieutenants. The idea was an unpopular one, particularly with Ogden and McEnery. The failure of Ogden's dismal Cabildo raid probably danced through Penn's mind when he made another suggestion. He wanted the League to call a great meeting of the people. If the people came out *en masse* to support their cause, he would take responsibility for the removal of Kellogg.

Penn's satisfaction was important, as everyone present was aware that McEnery had once again planned to leave town before any fighting took place. E. John Ellis said of the conservative governor, "Brave and honest and true hearted he lacks the qualities of a leader. He shrinks from responsibility." Instead the burden of leadership would land on the shoulders of Penn and a group of men who were all under forty years of age. Penn would take overall

[27] H.R., 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 101, 198; *Daily Picayune*, 9,11,12 Sept. 1874; *New York Times*, 9 Sept 1874

command of the political leadership of the rebellion, and as to avoid any confusion, appointed Frederick Nash Ogden as the commanding general of the Redeemer's army.[28]

The League's leadership authorized George Washington Cable's old literary mentor, J. Dickson Bruns, to draft a proclamation for publication in Sunday morning's *Picayune*. The address brimmed with indignation for Kellogg's government and lamented the infringement of second amendment rights. In closing, Bruns emotionally proclaimed: "*Declare that you are, of right ought to be, and mean to be free*." For those who missed the paper, the League also blanketed downtown with handbills announcing a mass meeting at the Clay Statue scheduled for Monday at eleven o'clock in the morning. The declaration promised speeches from a list of the city's most prominent citizens, including Michel Musson.[29]

David Bradfute Penn had a lot on his mind that Monday morning as he waited for the St. Charles Avenue streetcar. Stepping aboard, he noticed a soldierly looking man wearing a blue Metropolitan Policeman's uniform. Algernon Sydney Badger and Penn exchanged greetings, then and sat in silence as the car lurched down St. Charles. It was a chance meeting between a man about to lead a rebellion, and another charged with defeating it. When they had reached the American side of Canal Street, Penn got out. The car continued on with Badger, and Penn walked down to the Boston Club to meet with the committee scheduled to speak at the mass meeting.[30]

As eleven o'clock approached, a great crowd of people gathered at the Henry Clay statue. The sweltering September heat had already risen by eleven-thirty when the doors of the Crescent City Billiard Hall's gallery opened above. Onto the balcony walked a group of distinguished

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[28] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 83, 89; Tucker, "The Life of E. John Ellis," 722; W.O. Hart, "History of the Events Leading Up to the Battle of Liberty Place," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 7, 1924. 578
[29] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 84-85; *Daily Picayune*, 13 Sept. 1874; Hart, "History of Battle," 579-580
[30] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 158

citizens including R. H. Marr, Michel Musson, and Dr. Cornelius Beard, a man who had in 1861 rallied Creoles to the Confederate cause by singing the *Marseillaise* on Canal Street. Marr harangued the crowd, and it shouted in reply, "Hang Kellogg!" As the meeting's leaders sent a messenger to request Kellogg's abdication, Penn quietly made his way through the raucous assembly. He was satisfied that the people of New Orleans were behind the White League.[31]

Leaving the meeting behind, Penn turned down Camp Street and walked several blocks to the hardware store of Kurscheedt & Bienvenu. Frederick Nash Ogden had been waiting there for him with other White League commanders. As they met, different companies of White Leagues had already fanned across much of the city upriver from Canal Street, using Poydras Avenue as a general line of defense. After going over some last minute strategy, Penn issued a written statement to the "People of Louisiana" outlining the White League's justification for action. He then followed it with a second notice to "the colored people of the State of Louisiana" that he concluded with, "The rights of the colored, as well as the white races, we are determined to uphold and defend." Penn knew that once the telegraph wires lit up with news of rebellion, the eyes of the nation would be on New Orleans.[32]

When the meeting adjourned, Penn headed further down Camp Street to a rally point in Tivoli Circle. There he met up with his adjutant general and right-hand man for the next few days, E. John Ellis. As the sun reached its hottest point, he dashed off a note to Ogden with a few reminders. Penn suggested to the general that he keep the men from getting bored or trigger happy by having them build additional barricades. He also queried as to whether the League had severed the telegraph wires between the train stations, ordering it be done at once.[33]

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[31] Ibid., 88-91

[32] Hart, "History of Battle," 580-581; A heinous fourteen story Best Western Hotel now stands on the site where this meeting took place.

[33] D.B. Penn to Fred Ogden, September 14, 1874, Ogden Papers, Tulane

Across town at the Jackson Square police station, Longstreet and Badger examined their options. The two exchanged knowing glances as Kellogg told them of his plans to await events in the sanctuary of the Federal Customhouse. Around two o'clock, a report came in of White Leaguers rallying on Poydras and heading toward the levee. The two veteran soldiers quickly sent their forces to hold the Customhouse and levee where it intersected Canal. At the foot of the Canal Street stood the "Iron building," an ornate structure made of cast iron built to house the city's waterworks. It would make a good anchor for the Metropolitan's line. By three-thirty in the afternoon, Badger had reached the levee with over a hundred Metropolitans, artillery, and a Gatling gun. Clutching their Winchesters, they awaited the enemy's advance.[34]

Edmund Arthur Toledano grabbed his rifle and left his Garden District home early that Monday morning. By nine, he was at Eagle Hall along with dozens of other White League volunteers. Much of the morning had been spent in anxious waiting, but finally, around one-thirty, the word came from Colonel Behan to head toward Poydras Street. As he and the rest of Company A moved down Poydras, they saw the makeshift barricades at each cross-street heading toward Canal. Street cars, iron plates, barrels, mattresses, and all other assorted debris had been thrown up in a defensive position. As it closed in on four o'clock, Toledano's company reached Delta Street. Next would be the levee and combat.

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[34] Unless otherwise footnoted, the narrative of the battle is a composite of the following sources, employing the most corroborative evidence: *Daily Picayune*, 15,16,17 Sept 1874; F.L. Richardson, "My Recollections," 498-501; Prichard, "Origin and Activites of the White League," 533-538; *Republican*, 15,16 Sept. 1874; Badger testimony, H.R., 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 261, part 2, 400-401; Ogden testimony, H.R., 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess, No. 101, 213-214; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 96-132; Hart, "History of Battle," 582-600; The total number of White League participants varies greatly depending on the source. The number 1,500 appears to agree the most with the evidence. Some sources cite 3,500 White League participants, but this number comes from a much later roster. By all accounts, the size of the League ballooned after the victory on September 14, 1874. Yet, other sources suggest the League totaled 8,500 men. This figure not only credits 3,500 White Leaguers, but also includes the estimated 5,000 people who attended the 11 a.m. rally on Canal Street. Since undoubtedly women and children also attended this rally, it is unlikely that this figure comes any where near approaching accuracy. There were also many spectators on the streets during the fray which may have confused observers as to the actual number of participants in the battle.

When Company A turned left onto the levee, they saw before them an imposing line of artillery and Metropolitan Policemen. Suddenly, stabs of flame and rising smoke erupted from the enemy's lines. As Toledano and his comrades took cover among the scattered cotton bales on the levee, they heard something that not even the veterans had before – the steady pop pop pop of a Gatling gun. With projectiles whizzed past their heads, Company A gathered their nerves and began returning a sporadic fire at the Metropolitan line. On their right flank, Captain Reuben Pleasant's Company E countered with a withering fire from their fine Remington rolling-block rifles.

Colonel Behan ordered his men forward. Already, members of Company A had advanced pell-mell through the freight scattered on the levee toward the Metropolitans. Now it became a wild disorganized charge. As Toledano ran forward he saw the popular young cotton factor Samuel Newman, Jr. cut down, but continued moving forward. Soon he passed Gravier Street, and then the corner of Canal. The Iron building had just come into view when a bullet slammed into Toledano's body and jerked him to the ground. Lying amidst the debris and dung of draft animals on the earthen levee, he quickly bled to death.

The situation had become quite hot for General Badger. From the rooftops and windows of surrounding buildings, White League snipers had picked off most of his artillerists, and his position grew horribly exposed. From the enemy's right came a blistering and accurate fire and now the rest of the League was in a haphazard charge towards his line. A bullet had already broken his left arm, and another soon passed through his right hand. Badger saw the alarm in his men's eyes and shouted at them to hold their position. Just as he did, another bullet shattered his right leg. He crumbled to the ground as a fourth round passed through his body. The

Metropolitans broke in panic with Leaguers in hot pursuit. They left their brave leader behind lying critically wounded in the street in front of the Iron building.

White League Captain Kilpatrick quickly came upon Badger's position. His young and inexperienced troops stood gaping at the Metropolitan commander as though they had seen a ghost. Kilpatrick had watched Badger's courageous stand with admiration and immediately ordered four of his men to fetch a mattress and to carry the badly wounded police superintendent to Charity Hospital. As the Leaguers carried Badger around the corner of Dauphine and Bourbon, a group of "loafers" shouted "kill him," "kill him," but his escort pushed them back. Badger's valor had finally won the respect of his adversaries. He did not know yet if he would live to enjoy such recognition.

As Frederick Ogden surveyed the action from the intersection of Common and Tchoupitoulas, a bullet struck and killed his horse. His aide quickly turned over his own mount, and the commanding general again moved coolly through the lines. René Degas found his commander's boldness in battle almost intoxicating as he watched him ride past his position at the corner of Camp and Canal. Soon Ogden commanded his unit of Washington White League forward to assault the enemy's position. After a mad dash across the enormous width of Canal, René's unit turned down Charters on the far side of the Customhouse. Here they collided with a reserve force of Metropolitans.

Octave Rey and Peter Joseph had been sent to guard a post far from the main fight, but soon found themselves in the midst of a smart clash guarding the distant flank of the Customhouse. They held the line for a brief while, but soon it became clear that the fight was going badly for their comrades elsewhere. A stream of Metropolitans without their weapons,

some hatless, others without even their uniform coat tore past their rear in a mad panic for Jackson Square. Twenty minutes into the battle, it had turned into a White League rout.

Some brutal minutes followed as defeated Metropolitans surrendered or ran for whatever cover they could find. Some made it to the Customhouse where federal jurisdiction protected them. Others got as far as the Cabildo or arsenal where they briefly rallied. The rest who did not make their way home holed up in the State House, which had recently been moved to the old St. Louis Hotel in the French Quarter. Here they joined some three hundred members of the black state militia units who had yet to receive orders to fight. They had good reason to run.

It was a grisly scene at the Charity Hospital – heat, blood, flies, and the smell of death. Surgeons busily worked on Algernon Badger's leg, but found that they could not save it. Around four-thirty, other wounded and dying men began trickling in. Twenty-four year-old laborer William Omand had only been a bystander, but had been shot mortally in the chest while trying to cross Tchoupitoulas Street. Charles Kitt, a homeless Chinese man sought treatment for a gunshot wound to his arm. Fidel Keller, the old bookseller who Benjamin Butler had once sent to Ship Island for mocking Union authority, arrived with a bullet in his leg. He would never recover. A number of Metropolitans also made it safely, including William Brown, who like his commander, would endure an amputation.[35]

Although it had been a brief fight, there was plenty of carnage in the streets of New Orleans. In addition to Toledano, another fifteen White Leaguers were either dead or dying. Thirteen policemen had also been killed or mortally wounded as were six bystanders. One of them, a black man by the name of John May, had been operating a street car on Magazine Street when he was shot in the head by unknown assailants. The bullet carried away the top of his skull and scattered his brains about the vehicle. J. M. West, a reporter for the New Orleans *Times* was

[35] *Charity Hospital Admissions Book*, 1874-1876, NOPL

unarmed and observing the battle from Canal Street when someone from the Customhouse cut him down with a rifle. Bodies of Metropolitans lay dead about the Iron building, including James McManus, Michael O'Keefe, Edward Simmons, and Rudolph Zipple, all of whom had been finished off with a pistol shot in the forehead.[36]

Frederick Ogden spent the night of the 14th at his headquarters on Camp Street at the store of Kursheedt & Bienvenu. Throughout the overnight hours, he received dispatches from the various companies of White League who by now had established martial law in the city. Ogden also received telegrams from well wishers in neighboring states. Former Confederate General Braxton Bragg cabled from Galveston, wishing the League a "speedy delivery." Another message from San Antonio inquired if the White League needed any assistance. Louisville, Kentucky's chief of police offered the service of five hundred additional volunteers. Outside of the League's casualties, it had been a pretty successful day.[37]

Early the next morning, the few remaining Metropolitans and militia surrendered Jackson Square police station and the Arsenal. The Arsenal represented quite a windfall for the League, and the insurgents generously distributed the state militia's property. League volunteers who owned obsolete Civil War muzzle-loading rifles now walked off with shiny new Winchesters,

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[36] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 204-220; The White League counted J.M. West as one of their own and he is included in the figure of sixteen League fatalities. Armstead Hill, a black man, was found with a fatal gunshot wound to the chest, but it took place nearly in Carrollton, past the Garden District. In addition to these four officers, J.F. Clermont, and William Thornton also received head wounds. Thornton's injury completely shattered his skull. The angle and amount of damage created by the projectile in the other cases suggests a smaller caliber weapon such as a pistol. Patrolman Fred Keohler had been shot in the back. *Record of Inquests and Views*, Orleans Parish Coroner's Office, Vol. 23 (1872-1874) Medical dist. 2,3, Vol. 24 (1872-1874) Medical dist. 1,4,5,6. NOPL

[37] *Daily Picayune*, 15 Sept 1874; Braxton Bragg, Galveston to Fred Ogden, New Orleans, 14 September 1874, J.R. Bayler, San Antonio to Fred Ogden, 15 September 1874; T.A. Baylor, Louisville, to Fred Ogden, 15 September 1874, Ogden Papers

Spencer carbines, and breech-loading "Trapdoor" Springfield rifles, the current arm of the United States Army.[38]

The victors were drunk with enthusiasm. One combatant who helped seize Kellogg's office dashed off a note to his wife waiting at home with their infant child: "I write this sitting at the desk of Mr. H.C. Clark, ex-private sec. Of the Ex Gov Kellogg." Composing his note just before sunrise on the fifteenth, the Leaguer continued: " I never have seen so complete an uprising of the people and their faces indicated the reaction a change of government must produce. The citizen troops were received with a complete ovation."[39]

At two o'clock in the afternoon, large groups of White League members descended upon D. B. Penn's home on St. Charles Avenue. Since McEnery was still away "visiting friends" in Vicksburg, the assembly thought it appropriate to install Penn as the governor of Louisiana. Penn, Marr, and E. John Ellis entered a carriage outside the residence and made a triumphant ride to the captured State House.

The scene must have resembled a successful *coup d'etàt* in a banana republic. Thousands crowded around the State House's open galleries for a look at their victorious leadership. White League companies, now dressed in captured state uniforms, formed an honor guard. Penn stepped forward to speak. He asked the people to head to church at one in the morning to give

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[38] *Daily Picayune*., 16 Sept 1874; Governor Kellogg gave an accounting of the equipment spirited out of the State Arsenal. Included in the tally were 124 breech loading Springfield rifles, 301 Winchester rifles, 664 Enfield rifles and 93 Spencer carbines. In addition, accouterments of all varieties, including belts, hats, coats, etc., also disappeared. In a later statement listing the weaponry returned by the League after the restoration of Kellogg's government, most items are described as "rusty and dirty." Apparently, the League kept the "good stuff" and magnanimously returned the worthless junk. The only significant items of value returned were the two Gatling guns and some artillery pieces. H.R., 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 101, 199-200

[39] Anon. W.L. member to "My darling wife," 15 Sept 1874, RG 262, #6760, Archives, Louisiana State Museum Historical Center, New Orleans, La.

thanks to God and to request continued protection. E. John Ellis, mindful of the crowd's high spirits, reminded them not to "let an act of oppression or intolerance dim the luster of victory."[40]

What E. John Ellis and Davidson Penn knew that many in the crowd did not was that federal troops were already on their way to New Orleans. General Emory and a group of army officers charged with negotiating the League's surrender arrived the night of the sixteenth. When their train pulled into the station, they noticed a brass band waiting on the platform. Disembarking, they soon discovered that John McEnery had also just arrived in New Orleans – on the same train.[41]

Later that night, Emory held a conference with Penn and McEnery, informing them that the federal government intended to use force to restore Kellogg. Seeing no positive result coming from defiance, the rebel leaders assented to peaceably surrender the city, which for the last forty-eight hours had been under their control. At four in the afternoon on the seventeenth, McEnery yielded office to Emory's subordinate, General Brooke. Two days later, Brooke restored Kellogg. E. John Ellis described the scene to his brother Thomas:

> I was present at our surrender – It was a very sad scene. As the Adjutant General I rec'd Gen. Brooke of the USA. McEnery & his officers clustered about him all in civilian garb; Gen. Brooke and Staff brilliantly uniformed; they came with formal demand in the name of the US Govt: McEnery with husky broken voice all trembling with emotion read his reply... The Soldier was then seated in the Governor's chair and we all quietly withdrew and proceeded up Royal Street to Canal. Men stood by with stern sad faces & women wept.[42]

Four days after the White League had violently taken the Crescent City, William Pitt Kellogg returned to the governor's chair. From this standpoint, the battle had failed. Yet this was about the only aspect in which the Redeemers did not benefit. When federal authorities took

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[40] Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 143-144
[41] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 175-176
[42] Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 177; E. John Ellis, New Orleans, to Thomas C.W. Ellis, 21 Sept 1874, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC

over New Olreans, United States Troops cheered the victorious White Leagues. It was but one indication of the nation's growing distaste for Reconstruction and black Civil Rights. Not a single political leader, officer, or soldier of the White League ever faced criminal prosecution for their role.

Months later, pugnacious US Army General Phil Sheridan suggested rounding them up as "banditti," and that "he was not afraid" of the White League. Sheridan's comments mostly drew impatient sighs from northern politicians and muffled guffaws from New Orleans' elite. Although the situation in New Orleans was still too hot for organized Carnival the following February, one waggish masker costumed himself in stolen militia garb, complete with contraband rifle and cartridge box, and marched through the streets with a placard emblazoned with "I am not afraid!"[43]

The clash, which New Orleanians would quickly dub "The Battle of Liberty Place," had finally brought almost complete political unanimity to the Redeemers in Louisiana. Even doubting voices such as Father Ryan's *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger* applauded the action on Canal Street. "In fact," wrote Ryan, "the contest was carried on by the citizen soldiery with all the etiquette of the duello. We are opposed to that institution, but there is a great deal of wise precaution and genuine humanity coupled with the wrong of its murderous intent."[44]

Frederick Nash Ogden would soon emerge as the great hero of the "Battle of Liberty Place," and certainly his military leadership had a lot to do with the White League's victory that day. Yet from a political standpoint, the Redeemers owed much greater debt of gratitude to Davidson Penn and E. John Ellis. They both understood that the intemperate race baiting

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[43] Taylor, Louisiana Reconstructed, 306; *Daily Picayune*, 4 January 1875; Gilette, *Retreat from Reconstruction*, 44-55; Reid, *All on Mardi Gras Day*, 72-73

[44] *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, 20 September 1874

conducted by some of their colleagues might lead to another Mechanics' Institute-style riot. The brief conflict on September 14, 1874 was furious, deadly, and at times, vicious, but there were no retribution killings in the wake of the Metropolitans' surrender. If the Crescent City White League had conducted itself like its rural counterpart in Coushatta, northerners would have taken Phil Sheridan's comments more seriously.

The battle had been a defining moment for the city of New Orleans. Just as Rex and Comus had legitimized the elite's place atop the city's social ladder, the White League's Carnival of Redemption announced their return to primacy in the political arena. After the ultimate ejection of the carpetbaggers in 1877, these new Carnival Kings would rule Louisiana with near absolute authority until the advent of Huey Long.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REDEEMERS' LEGACY

"Huzza, boys, huzza, boys,
For the Fourteenth of September.
Our rights we bought, by the way we fought,
On the day we shall long remember." [1]

The White League's victory on September 14, 1874 had demonstrated unambiguously that the Republicans in Louisiana were living on borrowed time, and it was a story repeated across the rest of the unredeemed South. Support of Reconstruction and freedmen's rights evaporated in the glow of sectional reconciliation. Grant's use of troops in propping up Kellogg's regime drew extensive criticism, and in a nationwide repudiation of Republican policy, voters handed Democrats control of the United States House of Representatives in the mid-term elections of 1874. Although Reconstruction would continue in Louisiana for another year and a half, the territory outside of New Orleans had essentially been redeemed. Within the city, the Metropolitan Police were but a mere shadow of their former selves, and Kellogg retained power only because of federal bayonets.

The battle on Canal Street had also been a defining moment for the actors in this drama, if for no other reason than the fact that it had profoundly altered the social and political dynamic in New Orleans. Ironically, some of those who had given the most to the White League and their great victory would reap the fewest rewards of Redemption. Nor would all Yankees and Republicans find themselves forced from the city with a lynch mob hot on their heels. Fate, in

[1] Gresham, Jas. A. (printer) "The Fourteenth of September," A ballad, by E.S. Air-Jacobite March. Louisiana Collection, Tulane University

smiling on some and being unkind to others, showed that it lacked political affiliation. Of course, Redemption also brought the collapse of black political power and civil rights in the South. For the most part, the Afro-Creoles in this drama awaited an inglorious future.

Over time, the memory of September 14 would change profoundly. Largely forgotten was the fact that the League had emerged in New Orleans as much out of the pressing need to unite the Redeemers as it had to defeat Republicanism. Paralleling the rise of the Lost Cause gospel, white New Orleanians cleansed the pasts of prominent citizens who had at one point combined with Customhouse Republicans like William Pitt Kellogg and Stephen B. Packard, or who had at times supported the administration of Henry Clay Warmoth.

Reconstruction finally collapsed in Louisiana during the first three months of 1877. The state's gubernatorial election had pitted the Redeemer's candidate, former Confederate general Francis Tillou Nicholls, against the Customhouse's aspiring Machiavelli, United States Marshall Stephen B. Packard. Once again, widespread irregularities prevented an accurate tally of votes. The initial count proclaimed Nicholls the victor on the state level and Democratic presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden in the national contest. Just as in 1872, however, a Republican returning board nullified the first tally and gave the election to Packard and the Republican presidential candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes. Contested elections had grown all too familiar in Louisiana.[2]

As the picture of the national electoral landscape came into focus, it became obvious that the Presidency hinged upon the results from the three un-Redeemed states of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. With all of the "firm" state totals counted, Tilden needed only one

[2] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 482-493; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 569; Perman, *The Road to Redemption*, 160.; Ironically, Nicholls had never been involved in politics until his nomination in the summer of 1875, and had never been involved with the White League.

additional electoral vote to win. On the other hand, Hayes needed all 20 of the votes from the states in dispute for a Republican victory.

In the nation's capitol, three Louisianans, Randall Gibson, E. John Ellis, and Edward A. Burke played a conspicuous role in creating the "Compromise of 1877." Burke, the former White League associate, future Bourbon plunderer, and dealmaker *par excellence*, headed the delegation. By the middle of February 1877, negotiations were well underway toward a bargain in which Louisiana's electoral votes would go for Hayes while at the same time, and rather incongruently, the state election would go to Nicholls. As part of the compromise, Hayes promised to withdraw federal forces from the remaining unredeemed states in the South, thereby ending effectively Reconstruction where it remained in effect. These negotiations, greatly simplified here, spelled the end of Republican rule in Louisiana.[3]

In New Orleans, The White League and the Democratic Party increasingly consolidated their power. The Metropolitan Police had shrunk to such insignificance by the start of 1877 that they were only capable of preventing, or perhaps more accurately, slowing, a direct assault on the State House. Nor did the federal government give any indication that it had any plans to intervene on Packard's behalf. It was time for the Republican gubernatorial hopeful to start working on his résumé.

Frederick Nash Ogden would lead the White League for one last moment of glory during Reconstruction's final weeks. Nicholls had ordered the general to oust Packard's men from the

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[3] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 495-496; C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction.* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1951) 192-195. Woodward's book skillfully details the complex negotiations undertaken by both parties in the creation of the Compromise of 1877. For a different perspective on the Compromise of 1877 see Michael Les Benedict, "Southern Democrats in the Crisis of 1876-1877: A Reconsideration of *Reunion and Reaction*," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 46, Iss. 4, November 1980, 489-524; E. A. Burke went on to swindle Louisiana taxpayers of hundreds of thousands of dollars, eventually fleeing to Honduras to avoid prosecution. He became the poster-child for Bourbon political abuses. Edward F. Haas, *Political Leadership in a Southern City: New Orleans in the Progressive Era, 1896-1902*, (Ruston, La.: McGinty Publications, 1988) 17

state supreme court, then housed in the old Spanish Cabildo. On an unusually cold and rainy day in January, 1877, a messenger walked up to the court building and delivered the ultimatum to its skeleton crew of defenders. The Metropolitans inside looked out on Jackson Square, crowded with roughly 3,500 armed men standing in the rain. In the vanguard, a company of stout Leeds Foundry employees wielding heavy sledgehammers eagerly awaited Ogden's order to smash the doors to pieces. There was simply no use in further resistance.[4]

Now in possession of the state's judicial system, Nicholls repaid his debt to the White League by appointing two of their number to the state Supreme Court: R.H. Marr, and the former head of the Knights of the White Camellia and rural White League firebrand, Alcibiade De Blanc. In a gross understatement, a centenary history of the court noted, "[t]hey were without exception leaders of the Democracy, and had taken an active part in all the stirring events of Reconstruction."[5]

Redemption restored the uptown elite of New Orleans to a level of political power not enjoyed since antebellum days, and many of its beneficiaries had taken part in the White League victory on September 14, 1874. Edward Douglas White, an aspiring 29 year-old lawyer when he joined the League, went on to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1910. Mortimer Norton Wisdom rose far above the "common crowd of petty money-grubbing lawyers." His son, John Minor Wisdom, became a federal district judge with a strong record on Civil Rights. The League's second-in-command, William J. Behan, traded on his fame to become a Gilded Age mayor of New Orleans. Only 24 at the time of the battle, James Cross Murphy eventually became the president of the New Orleans Sugar Exchange, and was only one of many former

[4] Prichard, "White League in New Orleans," 539-541; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 496-540
[5] *Centenary of Louisiana Supreme Court*, 31

White Leaguers to hold places of prominence in both the city's boardrooms and exclusive clubrooms for years to come.[6]

Ironically, a number of the men who were the most active Redeemers in this tale of Reconstruction-era New Orleans had a far less glorious career after 1877. Fred Ogden, for all of his dedication to the cause of Redemption, did not reap its rewards. He spent many of his remaining years as the president of the Howard Association, a benevolent society that combated the perennial yellow fever epidemics in the city. Ogden failed twice to win the gubernatorial nomination of the Democratic Party. Tragedy marked the last years of his life. Ogden endured a parent's heartbreak of watching both his sons die in their teens. By the time of his own premature death from liver cancer in 1886, he was in so much debt to northern creditors that his widow renounced any claim to the estate.

When Judge Antoine Tissot ordered an inventory of Ogden's business, a clerk found a giant pile of handwritten I.O.U.'s in the old soldier's desk drawer. A couple represented large unpaid bills of customers, but the vast proportion were for small amounts of money – from ten to as much as a couple hundred dollars each – all to individuals within the community. As they laid Fred Ogden to rest amidst the ornate Victorian marble burial vaults in Metairie Cemetery, his friends selected a more appropriate marker for their fallen leader – a rough, obstinate, massive red granite boulder coarsely engraved only with "GEN. FRED N. OGDEN."[7]

Despite his predictions, E. John Ellis's own economic salvation did not follow the state's redemption. Much of this was due to his incessant involvement in politics. In the fall election of

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[6] Robert B. Highsaw. *Edward Douglas White; Defender of the Conservative Faith* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) 19-26; Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin to Justin Nystrom, 20 Sept 1999; Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 30-31, 77-80; *Times-Picayune*, 13 January 1928

[7] Conrad, *Dictionary of Louisaina Biography*, Vol. 2, 614-615; The two sons from his first marriage that appear on the 1870 census must have died before his Ogden's own demise, for his will listed no other forced heirs other than his widow. *Succession of Frederick Nash Ogden*, Orleans Parish Succession Records, #18074, NOPL

1874, Ellis had won a seat to the United States House of Representatives from Louisiana's second district – a political jurisdiction dominated by Orleans Parish. From this vantage point, he was able to work for Democratic interests in Louisiana during the disputed Presidential election two years later. Unimpressed with the moral fiber of Samuel Tilden, Ellis focused his energies entirely on securing Louisiana's governorship for Nicholls, a man he admired. Throughout it all, he remained suspicious that Rutherford B. Hayes would somehow pull the rug out from under him.[8]

Ellis suffered frequent feelings of self-doubt regarding his political career. John wrote to his brother, "I often think myself the greatest ass and fool in the world, to let a little pride of place, a little ambitious dream, separate me this way from my heaven on earth." Unlike many of his Gilded Age colleagues, Ellis either never sought or never learned how to make a profit from public office. "I step from this public arena naked, without a business, a book or a dollar and heavily in debt. The prospect is not a cheerful one for me," he wrote during one intense episode of financial woe.[9]

During the White League campaigns of 1874, Charles Kennon had warned the Ellis brothers that once the Democratic Party retook the state, it would probably become just as corrupt as the government it sought to replace. This statement proved prophetic, and by 1880, E. John Ellis began wishing for the overthrow of the Bourbons as nearly as much as he had for the removal of Kellogg. In retaliation for some of his negative public remarks, the state machine worked unsuccessfully against his re-nomination in 1882. This experience left him greatly disillusioned with the Democracy – a cause that had taken his best years. It also prompted Ellis finally to retire from the House in 1884. Reflecting on the state of one-party rule in Louisiana,

[8] Tucker, "Life of E. John Ellis," 730-737
[9] Ibid, 739, 741

Ellis opined less than ten years after Redemption that what Louisiana needed as a "safeguard of popular government" was a strong Republican Party. Just a few years after leaving office, he died of a heart attack at age 49, still mired in debt.[10]

Despite his central role in the White League's victory on Canal Street, elected office forever eluded Ellis's friend Davidson Penn. He had sought the governor's chair in 1876, but was the first man out in a four-way nomination contest won by Nicholls. He again unsuccessfully ran for the 1880 Democratic gubernatorial nomination that ultimately went to former New Orleans mayor, Louis Wiltz. Friends had encouraged him to accept the convention's offer of the lieutenant governorship, but he refused. Instead, Samuel McEnery, John McEnery's younger brother took the spot and became governor when Wiltz died the following year. Penn remained in New Orleans until his death in 1902.[11]

The ironically-named Blanche Penn, the offspring of Davidson Penn and the young Afro-Creole girl, Josephine Keating, gave birth to a son in 1878 at the age of eighteen. The father was a young white laboring man whom she did not marry. She bestowed upon the child the name Alfred, after the infant's grandfather on the Penn side. Years later, Alfred Wright served in the Spanish-American War and raised his family in the Mississippi Gulf Coast town of Long Beach. Having forever passed into white society, he may well have never even known that he was of partial African ancestry.[12]

During Reconstruction, Michel Musson had joined almost every conceivable effort aimed at removing the carpetbaggers. Redemption of the state, however, could not save the Musson-Degas world from heartbreak and utter collapse. In January of 1877, just as Ogden led his band

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[10] Charles Kennon to Thomas Ellis, 12 June 1874, Ellis Papers, LLMVC; Tucker, 745-751
[11] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 482-483; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 198-199
[12] Birth Certificate, Alfred Hugh Wright, Vol. 72, P. 410, *OPBR*; *United States Census*, 1880, 1920, 1930; Blanche Penn disappears from public records after the birth of her son.

of White Leaguers to the Cabildo, Michel's brother Henri sent a letter from Paris explaining the details of the Degas bank's liquidation. Henri informed Michel that he owed 7,500 francs to the institution's creditors and inquired as to whether Michel could pay in a lump sum. He added that René had not sent anything and warned, "He thinks he's safe, he's wrong. If he lets things get worse, he will be a victim in his own turn." Turning to Michel's situation, Henri inquired, "How will you get out of it? From here it seems quite dark."[13]

Michel had grown quite irascible from all of his misfortunes, and at times, exhibited an irrational paranoia. It was understandable in light of the events that took place from 1877 onward. René had abandoned Estelle and her three children in 1878, running off with another woman. Michel vowed to shoot René on sight if he ever returned to New Orleans, which he never did. In the same year, his eldest daughter Mathilde died at age thirty-seven, followed quickly by the death one of René and Estelle's children from yellow fever. To spite René, a man who had taken so much from him, Michel adopted Estelle's living children so that they would not carry forward the Degas name in America. "Weighted by family cares and afflictions," Musson died in 1885.[14]

After Edmund Arthur Toledano's death at the battle on Canal Street, the remaining sixteen heirs of Louis Drouet continued to squabble over the division of his estate. In the end, lawyers and the Orleans Parish tax office received most of it. His cousin, Louise Drouet, became the second wife of an Afro-Creole man in 1878. Publicly contesting the succession of her father forever shattered her chance to pass into white society, a desire born out of a culture that placed such a premium on the value of skin color. Louise Drouet died in New Orleans in 1914.[15]

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[13] Brown, *DeGas-Musson Papers*, 53
[14] Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans*, 257-259
[15] Marriage Certificate, vol 6, p. 590, Orleans Parish Marriage Records.Louise Drouet Ducloslange death certificate, p. 188, vol. 161, Louisiana Death Records Index.

The Metropolitan Police became superfluous with the ascendancy of Nicholls in 1877. As a consequence, Octave Rey and Peter Joseph, the two Afro-Creole Captains who had fought during the battle on Canal Street, lost their jobs. Although he had been a property holder and widely respected in his community, Joseph and his wife relocated to Denver, Colorado after Redemption. Octave Rey spent the rest of his career as an inspector with the U.S. Customs Service, working there until his death in 1908. His circle of friends included Aristide Mary, Homer Plessy, and fellow Customhouse employee and historian of Afro-Creoles in New Orleans, R. L. Desdunes.[16]

The fair-skinned Afro-Creole Charles St. Albin Sauvinet had retreated from public life after his term as Orleans Parish Civil Sheriff expired in 1872. Taking the Bank Coffeehouse's proprietor to court forever ended his days of racial ambiguity. Of the three children that Sauvinet had registered as white during the Civil War, two died as "colored" in New Orleans – a son at age 17 in 1878, and a daughter at age 57 in 1920. His eldest son James, however, moved to Memphis, and by 1910 had passed into white society. His father's ordeal had undoubtedly been instructive as to the value of concealing one's own heritage. For fair-skinned Afro-Creoles coming to grips with the loss of their special caste, it was an attractive option.[17]

Despite what we know about Reconstruction and Redemption, the irony remains that most of the actors in this drama who ended up the best off were the carpetbaggers. As an extension of the disputed election of 1872, P.B.S. Pinchback laid claim to the Kellogg ticket's seat of congressman-at-large. At the same time, Kellogg's legislature named him to the United

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[16] *United States Census*, 1910, 8th Ward, Denver Colorado; Picayune, 5 October 1908. In a bizarre twist, upon discovering her brother's body, the shock caused Octave Rey's sister to pass out and die a few minutes later.; Rey had been involved in a shooting incident on the levee with former black state senator Emile Detiege. Detiege had at some point prior insulted Rey's son, and as a result Octave Rey wounded his fellow Afro-Creole with a revolver. The *Picayune* respectfully described Rey as "a tall, fine looking man." As far as Detiege was concerned, the reporter mentioned that "he has a reputation as a desperate man." *Picayune*, 21 April 1886

[17] Death Certificate, Charles S. Sauvinet, Jr., p. 573, vol. 71, OPDR; Clothilda Cecile Sauvinet, p. 75, vol. 179, OPDR; *United States Census*, 1910, 12th Ward, Memphis, Tennessee.

States Senate seat in 1873. The endless wrangling over the outcome of the election would ultimately serve as the foundation for both the United States Senate and House to reject his claim to either seat. Racism undoubtedly played a large role as well.

Despite this defeat in Washington, Pinchback proved a remarkable survivor of the political wars. He quickly patched up his relationship with Warmoth, and even supported him for the gubernatorial nomination in 1876 over Packard. When it appeared that Nicholls would prevail in that election, Pinchback shrewdly worked out a deal with the Democratic governor-elect, extracting pledges of support for black education in return for Pinchback's endorsement. By 1880, this deal had led to the creation of Southern University. He held a variety of federal patronage posts and ultimately lived out a fashionable retirement in Washington, D.C. For a while, his grandson and future literary light, Jean Pinchback Toomer, lived with him. When he died at the ripe old age of 84, Pinchback's family interred him in an elegant burial crypt in Metairie Cemetery, not a hundred yards from the grave of Fred Ogden.[18]

Despite losing his right leg below the knee, Algernon Sydney Badger did, in fact, survive the injuries he sustained at the foot of Canal Street while leading the Metropolitan Police on September 14, 1874. His valor during the battle earned him the respect of those who had once heaped so much abuse on him. A widower with three children in 1880, Badger remarried to a New Orleans Creole girl twenty years his junior in 1882. By 1890, he lived at a prestigious address in the Garden District and had become quite popular despite the fact that he remained active in Republican politics. He died in 1905 at the age of 65.[19]

William Pitt Kellogg had remarkable luck. Before the Compromise of 1877 had sent Stephen Packard packing, his Republican legislature met under the guard of the Metropolitan

[18] Grosz, "The Political Career of P.B.S. Pinchback," 580-607
[19] Conrad, *Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, Vol. 1, 27-28; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 157

Police and elected Kellogg to fill Louisiana's vacant seat in the United States Senate. A Democratic challenger to this post did not emerge until the Presidential and gubernatorial races had been resolved two months later. The United States Senate ultimately decided in favor of seating Kellogg over the candidate supplied by the Nicholls legislature. Thus, an ostensibly redeemed state had a Republican Senator for an additional six years. Even more remarkable was that Kellogg had enough support in Louisiana's third district that he won a House seat there when his Senate term expired in 1883. He lived to be 88 years of age, and spent his retirement living comfortably in Washington, D.C.[20]

Henry Clay Warmoth was only thirty-five years old when Francis T. Nicholls came to power in 1877, and in that same year, the ladies' man finally married. In a move symbolic of his desire to find acceptance among Louisana's conservative whites, Warmoth invested a portion of his considerable nest egg in Magnolia Plantation and became a sugar planter. He ran unsuccessfully for governor against Nicholls in 1888, trying to take advantage of a split between Democratic factions. In a twist of irony, in 1890, President Benjamin Harrison appointed him to the post of Collector of Customs in New Orleans, a position that was once the bastion of power for his political enemies. Of all the actors in Reconstruction-era New Orleans, perhaps Warmoth had the last laugh. He certainly got the last word, dying at age 89 in New Orleans, shortly after completing his memoirs.[21]

When the Macmillan Company published Warmoth's autobiography in 1930, two generations of politicians had come and gone since the end of Reconstruction. The former governor had undoubtedly written them in one last attempt to convince the world to which he desperately wanted to belong that he was not the villain they had all thought. Unfortunately for

[20] John Edmond Gonzales, "William Pitt Kellogg, Reconstruction Governor of Louisiana, 1873-1877." Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXIX, (1946) 394-495
[21] Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, 249-262; Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers*, 416-21

Warmoth, the memory of Reconstruction among New Orleans's elite society had already moved in a direction more likely to magnify his sins rather than forgive them.

Warmoth had also shared his unfinished manuscript with the Dunning school historian Claude Bowers. Although he had engaged in significant revisionism in the production of his memoirs, it paled in comparison to the work of Bowers. When *The Tragic Era* appeared in 1929, it was clear that the historian had largely disregarded Warmoth's version of events in favor of Lost Cause histrionics. Bowers characterized the maverick carpetbagger as "the concentrated essence of radicalism," a tyrant and dictator elevated at the expense of honest Louisianans.[22]

The memory of the White League's victory at "Liberty Place" had also undergone something of a transformation through the passage of time. The hagiography of the battle's victors began almost immediately after the gunsmoke had cleared. Frederick Nash Ogden quickly became the beloved Cincinnatus of the White League. In February, 1875, Ogden's staff presented their leader with a pair of cased pistols. Commenting on the occasion, J. Dickson Bruns melodramatically compared Ogden with Moses and George Washington. At the Carnival Balls that season, guests danced to "Gen'l. Fred Ogden's People's Rights Quick Step," and "March of those Louisiana Banditti of whom Sheridan is 'Not Afraid.'"[23]

Shortly after the battle on Canal Street, the city had the old Iron building at the foot of Canal Street demolished. It had been the site of the heaviest fighting, and it did not take long after Redemption for some to suggest that New Orleans should set aside the vacant lot as sacred space. In 1882, the city council finally dedicated the parcel as "Liberty Place" in an ordinance

[22] Bowers, *The Tragic Era*, 364-365
[23] Remarks of Dr. J. Dickson Bruns on presenting a pair of Pistols to General F. N. Ogden as a Testimonial from his Staff, 27 February 1875, Bruns Family Papers, NOPL; Landry, *Battle of Liberty Place*, 182

that also called for the placement of a monument to the White Leaguers who had fallen on September 14, 1874.[24]

Construction of the White League's monument languished for several years until the death of Frederick Nash Ogden in 1886. It had been a cause "near to the heart" of Ogden, and his many friends probably felt a tinge of guilt that it had not been brought to fruition within his lifetime. Ten days after their commander's death, his surviving comrades started a subscription for the procurement of a fitting memorial. Despite enjoying a strong start to the fundraiser, these veterans quickly found that the road to hell had indeed been paved with good intentions. It would take another five years for the kitty to finally reach a sufficient level, and even then, they had to buy a monument second-hand.[25]

On September 14, 1891, under a sweltering late summer sun, crowds gathered for a ceremony commemorating the laying of the new monument's cornerstone. Surviving White League veterans, scarcely resembled the youthful group that battled the Metropolitan Police seventeen years earlier, assembled for one last time to march with their companies in the dedication ceremony. Hoping to get a peek at their heroes, spectators crowded Canal Street from the wharves by the river, to many blocks in either direction and from the galleries and balconies of adjacent buildings.[26]

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[24] Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, 75; Copy of New Orleans City Ordinance 8151, November 15, 1882, in Dorothy Mae Taylor Papers, NOPL. Ordinance 8151 actually superceded Ordinance 8137, passed on November 9. This previous ordinance designated the area that became "Liberty Place" as "Whitney Park." The action of the city council brought cries from veterans of the White League that the city ignored their contributions to "liberty and home rule." One scholar has characterized this war of words as evidence for uneven support, or even downright dissent against the memory of the White League. (Powell, "Reinventing Tradition," 133-134) Yet, both ordinances passed without dissenting votes. Furthermore, three of the seven unanimous votes for "Whitney Park" came from White League veterans (Fagan, Guillotte, and Huger). The flap may have been more about personal ambitions between men not on the city council and the council itself rather than some sort of referendum on the efficacy of the White League.

[25] *Daily Picayune*, 5 June 1886; *Daily States*, 15 Sept 1891. The monument's supporters apparently got a deal on an obelisk that had been part of an exposition in Audubon Park

[26] *Daily States*, 15 Sept 1891; Second and third story balconies on Canal Street disappeared long ago, but at the time of the 1891 dedication of the Liberty Monument, most commercial buildings along the street featured them.

As a pulley lowered the monument's cornerstone in place, a band struck up a stirring rendition of "America," an audible link between commemoration and sectional reconciliation. Unlike the dedication of Lost Cause monuments to Confederate heroes, the League's memorial celebrated a victory, albeit an incomplete one. After all, the White League movement was hardly a lost cause. Instead, the festivities carried a theme of American instead of just southern patriotism. The assembled paid tribute to the men who "fell in defense of God-given rights, solemnly recognized in the wisest laws and constitutions, the right to self-government and the right to bear arms for the protection of those rights."[27]

Commemorating the sacrifice made by the fallen members of the White League made perfect sense to the vast preponderance of New Orleans' business and political leaders. The ultimate banishment of the Republicans did more than restore abstract "God-given rights," it made possible the return of the city's native-born elite to their supposed God-given right to rule New Orleans. Indeed, these men had much to be thankful for.

Despite such sincere jubilation, defiant themes also rang out that day – themes that would continue to echo throughout the South for the next seventy-five years. An editorial in the *Daily States*, the city's most outspoken organ of white supremacy, could have been defending massive resistance in the 1950s when it warned of the lessons of Liberty Place: "Let all men whether they be of Louisiana or any other State, and who love liberty watch with firm and jealous eyes the slightest interference of the Federal government in State affairs and with State governments." In another editorial, the *Daily States* went on to congratulate the White League for promoting peace by destroying "the alarming growth of the military spirit among the (N)egroes."[28]

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[27] Ibid.; For a discussion of the link between sectional reconciliation and commemoration, see Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 65-97

[28] *Daily States*, 14 September 1891

By November 1891, a generation after Redemption, the Liberty Monument stood complete -- a thirty-foot high granite obelisk sitting atop a stout rectangular block of stone flanked by four decorative columns. Sturdy, though somewhat generic in style, this new addition to the landscape stood prominently at the foot of New Orleans expansive "neutral ground," Canal Street. It was but one monument of many placed during a spasm of commemorative mania. In same year New Orleans's veterans dedicated Memorial Hall, a $40,000 neo-Gothic and vaguely ecclesiastical looking museum honoring the heroic exploits of the city's sons who served the Lost Cause.[29]

Despite the grand pageantry on display at the 1891 dedication of the Liberty Monument, subsequent ceremonies quickly dwindled in attendance and length. By 1896, the ceremony had diminished to the point where it consisted only of a brief wreath laying by the Ladies Memorial Association. In 1904, the thirtieth anniversary of the battle, the *Picayune* printed a large recounting of the Liberty Place fray, but the ceremony at the monument was no larger than the one eight years earlier. Amid the journalistic turmoil surrounding the outbreak of the First World War, the *Times-Picayune* in 1914 even managed to leave it out of the "This Day in History" column. The memory of Liberty Place had grown dim, despite occasional partisan rhetoric exhorting the virtues of the men of '74.[30]

It took a new threat to the Carnival Kings of New Orleans to rekindle interest in the "spirit of September 14." This time the invader was not a carpetbagger from the North, but instead a fiery political insurgent from dirt-poor Winn Parish. Huey Long railed against the "interests" and moneyed men of New Orleans, blaming their greed for the poverty gripping so

[29] Memorial Hall is still operated as a Confederate Museum today, boasting that it is the "oldest museum in Louisiana." The museum's collection houses an enormous collection of Civil War artifacts, making it seem like one has stumbled upon the collective attic of the Garden District. The museum is located at 929 Camp Street. An ongoing legal battle with the adjacent Ogden Museum of Southern Art has, at times, jeopardized its future.
[30] *Times-Picayune*, 14,15 September 1896, 14,15 September 1904; 14 September, 1914

many Louisianans. In a state where a man could ride into office by promising free textbooks to public school children, Long's stinging attacks rang all too true. Even more dangerous was the fact that African-Americans found him appealing. Although Long did not win the 1924 governor's race, his growing popularity and populist rhetoric worried New Orleans' ruling elite. Two men in particular, Governor John Parker and New Orleans mayor T. Semmes Walmsley, would make sure that unlike recent ceremonies, the fiftieth anniversary of the White League victory would be a memorable one.

John Parker had been the president of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange and presided over Comus in 1917. He became governor in 1920 and was a progressive on most issues except race. In this regard, he demonstrated the staunch conservatism typical of the Democratic Party since Redemption. One of Parker's acts as governor was to preside over the state constitutional convention of 1921 that had tried in vain to curb Long by circumscribing the franchise of poor whites. Another bill that passed under Parker's administration allowed cities to enact ordinances for segregated residential zones. Although the United States Supreme Court would eventually strike down this law, New Orleans City Attorney, and soon-to-be mayor, T. Semmes Walmsley greeted the legislation with enthusiasm. In 1923, Walmsley began the task of segregating a town where blacks and whites had always lived in the closest of proximity.[31]

Like Governor Parker, T. Semmes Walmsley came from New Orleans' upper class. He was a member of the Boston Club, and both Walmsley and his father had served as Rex, King of Carnival. Raphael Semmes, the famous Confederate skipper of the *Alabama*, was his cousin.

[31] James Gill, *Lords of Misrule: Mardi Gras and the Politics of Race in New Orleans*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997) 177-181

Throughout the 1920s, Walmsley grew increasingly involved in the city's dominant political faction, the "Old Regulars," who held court at the Choctaw Club.[32]

Despite rainy weather, the 1924 golden anniversary of the White League's victory over the "Black and Tan Metropolitan Police" proved to be a gala affair. An editorial in the *Times-Picayune* exuberantly reminded its readers of the anniversary celebration but followed with an admonition to apathetic voters:

> Thirty-four thousand of us, men and women qualified to vote, neglected to go to the polls six days ago, when judges were to be selected to administer our laws and a senator was to be named to speak for us in Washington. Poor heirs are those nonvoters, these shirkers of citizenship, these avoiders of the simplest and first business of government – poor heirs are they, to those who fought, were wounded or died, at the foot of Canal Street, on 'The Fourteenth of September '74!'"

Former Governor John Parker, less than one year out of office, was the featured speaker that day. As he regaled the crowd with tales of Reconstruction, undoubtedly Parker evoked a shocked gasp or two when he described "how white women were knocked down by policemen and then dragged away to jail in a wheelbarrow." He followed it up with his own reminder about the civic duties of the "heirs of Liberty Place." He hoped that "their example will prove an inspiration to all our people to perform their full duty as citizens, never bow to the dictation of any man or set of men, but fearlessly vote their honest convictions for the welfare of city, state, and nation." Coincidentally, the welfare of the state and the political welfare of Parker and his political cronies were one in the same.[33]

Kellogg and his white Customhouse cohorts had always been the primary target of the White League in New Orleans, but when their descendants rewrote the history of Reconstruction fifty years later, the villain that they remembered most vividly was the black man. Their

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[32] Garry Boulard, *Huey Long Invades New Orleans: The Siege of a City,* 1934-36. (Gretna (La.): Pelican Publishing Co., 1998) 34-39.
[33] *Times-Picayune,* 14,15 Sept 1924

wholesale reinvention of the Metropolitan Police reflected this trend. The *Picayune* seemingly forgot that Algernon Badger, the man embraced by New Orleans's society, had been their commander on September 14. Instead, the paper claimed that the black militia commander, General Barber, "as black as the ace of spades," had led the Metropolitan Police, "an ugly, diabolical group." During the 1920s and 30s, these hazy recollections promulgated an entirely new version of Reconstruction.[34]

In 1928, Huey Long became the governor of Louisiana. The following year, T. Semmes Walmsley rose to the office of mayor in New Orleans. The two men, extreme social and political opposites, were now set on a collision course. The Old Regulars had already used the Liberty Monument as a rallying point, but despite their best efforts, Long's power grew unabated. The grandfathers of the Choctaws had defeated the carpetbagger at Liberty Place. Their fathers controlled Louisiana from the Gilded Age until the 1920s with unquestioned power. Their generation, however, now fought a rear guard action against the rising tide of Huey Long. It would not be long before the barbarian was at the gate.

In 1932, foundering upon the ruins of their own political demise, a newly resurrected Liberty Place Commission seized upon the opportunity to engrave in stone further commentary about the White League. Added to one side of the monument were the words, "United States troops took over the state government and reinstated the usurpers but the national election in November 1876 *recognized white supremacy and gave us our state*." On the opposite side now read, "McEnery and Penn, having been elected governor and lieutenant governor *by the white people*, were duly installed by overthrowing the carpetbag government, ousting the usurpers Gov. Kellogg (white) and Lt. Gov. Antoine (colored)." With these added inscriptions, the Liberty

[34] ibid.

Place Commission shifted the focus of commemoration away from the men who had died on Canal Street to the threat of a rising underclass.[35]

S. A. Trufant, an aged veteran of the fray and member of an old New Orleans family had spearheaded these additions. As a guest speaker, Trufant's words reflected the growing obsession with the supposed blackness of the Metropolitan Police. By his estimate, they were at least 90 percent Negro. Endorsing Trufant's account, the *Picayune* noted that "the horrors of Reconstruction... have been graphically described many times, but never with more stirring accuracy than by those men and women who lived through the carpetbag era." His comments paralleled those of Claude Bowers whose *Tragic Era* anguished over the supposed ignorance, insolence, and depravity of blacks, the corruption and venality of carpetbaggers, and the heroism and virtue of Democrats. Indeed, in Bowers' telling of "Liberty Place," lieutenant governor C.C. Antoine, "[f]lamboyant, and abysmally ignorant, diminutive, with 'a head like a cocoanut … pure type of the Congo,'" emerged as the dominant villain of the day. Bowers omitted or perhaps could not believe that Antoine had, in fact, not even been in the state on September 14, 1874.[36]

In focusing their attacks on black Louisianans, even the old men who had once been part of the "Reconstruction struggle" had seemingly forgotten that the most vexing problem facing the Redeemers was not black domination, but the deep divisions within their own ranks. Their perception of the White League was almost as contorted as their version of the Metropolitan Police. Most certainly, many in the League railed against "social equality" and were foursquare behind white supremacy, but these were more objects of political utility than the consuming

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[35] For a political analysis of the rise of Huey Long, see V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949) 156-182; Gill, *Lords of Misrule*, 181; 1929 Fourteenth of September program, Rare Vertical File, NOPL.; *Times-Picayune*, 14,15 September 1932. Emphasis added.

[36] *Times-Picayune*, 14 Sept 1932; Bowers *The Tragic Era*, 438-440

obsessions they had become by the twentieth century. Also forgotten were the actions of Redeemers who had at one time perpetuated the rule of the Republican Party. By the 1930s, the men of September 14 represented some sort of imaginary white supremacist ideal. The Liberty Place Commission had not only "invented tradition," but had invented a whole new history to accompany it.

In part, the remembrances of the White League that came out of the '20s and '30s reflected the spasms of a society in crisis. Instead of proactively confronting the threat of Huey Long, the New Orleans bluebloods turned inward, cloaking themselves in white supremacy and Lost Cause rhetoric in the vain hope that the masses might miraculously acknowledge their fitness to lead. The uptown elite of their day had been poor custodians of the Redeemer's legacy, for unlike the White League, they were unable to vanquish their foe. In the end, Long forced the political abdication of Carnival's Kings, ending a period of rule that had its genesis in the battle on Canal Street.[37]

[37] Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980). Wilson makes a link between Lost Cause ideology and white supremacy as working hand-in-hand to reinforce social hierarchy.

CHAPTER IX

LIBERTY PLACE REVISITED

> *"In another fifty years, those who are not yet born will be exultant in the knowledge of how their forefathers took up arms, and with a mighty shout crushed despotism beneath the standard of freedom."* [1]

Although it has been 130 years since the White League's disbandment at the end of Reconstruction, the organization's memory lives on. The Crescent City White League had always meant the most to New Orleans' elite families, and for the greater part of the twentieth century, this group kept the legend alive. The "Battle of Liberty Place" remained a mythic episode in the city's past when New Orleans' best and brightest had reportedly thrown off the yoke of a vindictive and tyrannical government made up of corrupt carpet-bag scoundrels. It had become a heroic, honor-bound model of the past, useful for teaching both political and moral lessons in the present.

By the late 1960s, however, many changes had come to New Orleans, most notably a dramatic political and demographic shift. A rising African-American majority supplanted the old Garden District bluebloods as the city's dominant political force. It was inevitable that a reappraisal of the White League's legacy would accompany this changing of the guard.

At the fiftieth anniversary commemoration at Liberty Place in 1924, the *Picayune* had opined that "in another fifty years, those who are not yet born will be exultant in the knowledge of how their forefathers took up arms, and with a mighty shout crushed despotism beneath the standard of freedom." Their prediction of public reaction during the centenary of the White

[1] *Times-Picayune*, 14 September, 1924

League's victory could not have been more inaccurate. In February 1974, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People met in New Orleans at the recently completed Rivergate convention center, located adjacent to the Liberty Monument. The white supremacist rhetoric inscribed on its base appalled the visiting delegates, and from that point, the movement to rid Canal Street of its monument to the White League had begun. When Mayor Moon Landrieu failed to accede quickly to the wishes of the NAACP Youth Council, its members elected to picket the edifice in order to draw attention to the fact that extolling the virtues of white supremacy was unacceptable in a city like New Orleans.[2]

By June 1974, the Landrieu administration realized that it had to do something in response to the bad publicity created by the NAACP's protests. Just as the Liberty Place Commission had done in 1932, the city chose to add further commentary to the increasingly verbose Liberty Monument. In front of the edifice, they placed a plaque with the banal disclaimer, "the sentiments expressed are contrary to the philosophy and beliefs of present-day New Orleans." This statement struck the monument's detractors as a ridiculous attempt at addressing a very serious issue. As one law professor later questioned, could New Orleans truly have a collective "'philosophy and beliefs,' and, if so, how precisely does one identify what they are, or who is authorized to speak performatively as to their content?"[3]

In 1981, New Orleans' first black mayor, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, attempted to have the monument removed. In the process, not only did he manage to anger many whites in the city, but he also butted heads with a more conservative city council. In retaliation, the council passed legislation requiring its approval in matters regarding the removal of public statuary in the city.

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[2] *Times-Picayune*, 14 Sept 1924

[3] Background on Liberty Monument, Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL; Sanford Levinson, "Silencing the Past: Public Monuments and the Tutelary State," *Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 and 4, Summer/Fall 1996. http://www.puaf.umd.edu/IPPP/levinson.htm

They did pave the way, however, for more modifications by the mayor when it amended the legislation to include language that gave Morial a free hand in removing "any wording that is demeaning or derogatory to any racial or ethnic group" from a public monument. Seizing this opportunity, the mayor ordered the city's public works department to cover over the 1932 white supremacy additions to the monument's base with smooth granite slabs.[4]

Despite Morial's attempt to cover up the monument's most offensive language and shroud the obelisk with "overgrown ligustrum bushes," the controversy refused to go away. The attention drawn to the monument by the NAACP stirred up a hornet's nest of animosity between whites and blacks which attracted the extremes of both groups. Blacks opposed to the monument demonstrated their antipathy through vandalism, and in return made Liberty Place the *cause celebré* of fringe groups such as the Klan and Neo-Nazis. New Orleans' old families, many who still occupied positions of civic responsibility, cringed as they began to lose control over the legacy of September 14 to these crude rabble-rousers. Events such as the April 1985 "Hitler Fest" at the Liberty Monument – complete with sidewalk march and pot luck picnic – gave the monument an entirely new set of political baggage.[5]

The debate came to another crossroads in 1989 when street improvements at the Rivergate convention center and the addition of the new Aquarium of the Americas necessitated the removal and storage of the Liberty Monument. The waterfront renovation benefited from federal funding, and as such, the city agreed to a stipulation of the monument's removal that mandated that the obelisk, considered a landmark in the eyes of the law, return to public view following completion of the project. Mayor Sidney Barthelemy signed off on the agreement and

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[4] Background on Liberty Monument, Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL; Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 49; *New York Times*, 18 January 1981
[5] Lawrence Powell, "A Concrete Symbol," *Southern Exposure*, Spring 1990, 43; Mayor's Advisory Committee on Human Relations, July 1, 1993 Report, Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL

on November 15, 1989, the Liberty Monument disappeared from the foot of Canal Street with the promise from the city that it would return in two years.[6]

From the standpoint of urban development, the monument clearly stood in an inconvenient place. As early as 1929, some felt that moving the edifice to a more out-of-the-way location would free up the critical real estate upon which it rested. Between 1963 and 1970, it sat in storage while the original Rivergate convention center was under construction. Of course, nobody in the 1960s questioned the monument's eventual return. A generation later, matters were significantly different.[7]

In 1991, when the city missed two deadlines to return the monument to public display, it confirmed the fears of the Liberty Monument's proponents. The city hedged as to whether or not the monument should return to its prominent former location at the foot of Canal Street, at the center of all the recent improvements. Disgusted with what he considered duplicitous behavior on the part of the city, an uptown pharmacist and descendant of a Liberty Place veteran, Francis Shubert, filed suit in order to make the Barthelemy administration live up to its legal obligations. Joined by the Louisiana Landmarks Society, Shubert succeeded in getting federal judge A. J. McNamara to order the return of the Liberty Monument on the grounds of its historical significance. As an added insult, the court ordered the city to reimburse Shubert for the $27,000 in legal expenses that he had incurred in the effort.[8]

The city continued to balk at the notion that the Liberty Monument should return to the foot of Canal Street, however, offering excuses from traffic safety, to the more plausible reason that a large number of the city's black residents found it offensive. Historic preservationists

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[6] Background on Liberty Monument; Al Stokes to New Orleans City Council Members, 18 March 1993, Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL

[7] Public Property Correspondence Files; DeLesseps Morrison Subject Files 1946-61, both in NOPL

[8] *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 30 Nov 1991; *New York Times*, 29 Nov 1992; *Times Picayune*, 20 Jan 1993, 11 Feb 1993, 15 April 1993

countered that the monument should return to a location in close proximity to the scene of the battle – "where bullets flew" – in order to keep intact whatever historical integrity the edifice possessed. Despite suggestions by the city that the Jackson Barracks at Chalmette, or the site of the old U.S. Mint might provide more appropriate, and less conspicuous settings, Shubert and the preservationists prevailed, eventually winning yet another partial victory. Ultimately, after several more missed deadlines, on February 10, 1993, the Liberty Monument returned to downtown New Orleans, but not at the foot of Canal Street. Instead, both parties settled on a small patch of ground on nearby Iberville Street, an unattractive parcel a half block away from its original location, sandwiched between an electrical transformer, the Public Belt railroad tracks, a parking deck, and the back wall of the Aquarium of the Americas.[9]

While in storage, and without either party's objection, the city council had the white supremacy remarks that had been added in 1932 permanently obliterated from the monument's base. In their place, however, the council felt compelled to add more commentary. Now included were the words, "IN HONOR OF THOSE AMERICANS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT WHO DIED IN THE BATTLE OF LIBERTY PLACE... A CONFLICT OF THE PAST THAT SHOULD TEACH US LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE." The city, perhaps not knowing itself, deigned to elucidate exactly what lessons it had in mind.

Additionally, the city added to the monument the names of the Metropolitan Police who had fallen on September 14. Such revision did not sit well with Shubert or his new associates, Hope Lubrano, Kenny Knight, Scott Lindley, and former Klan wizard, David Duke. This collection of mostly suburban dwellers called themselves "The Friends of Liberty Monument,"

[9] Ibid.

and with the assistance of their attorney, Cary Deaton, and council for the Louisiana Landmark Society, filed suit against the city to have the new inscriptions removed.[10]

David Duke had been an outspoken critic of the city's handling of the monument controversy, but could not have been a worse spokesman for monument backers who tried to downplay the role of white supremacy in the White League. Duke had literally made a career out of white supremacy. In his college days at LSU, young Duke became an avid follower of the teachings of Adolf Hitler, often frequenting the university's "free speech alley" to preach the Nazi gospel. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he expanded upon his youthful aspirations, founding organizations such as the National Association of White People and a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. He had always been attracted to attention-getting enterprises, an example being his 1977 "Klan Border Watch" outside of San Diego, on the Mexican Border. In addition to blacks and Jews, Duke had a profound dislike for illegal aliens. The media that attended his publicity stunt far outnumbered Duke's followers, who consisted of "seven Klansman in three old sedans that featured hand-painted 'Klan Border Watch' signs taped on the doors."[11]

By late 1987, David Duke had refined his message sufficiently to win a seat in the Louisiana State House in the predominantly white New Orleans suburb of Metairie. Duke, of course, had higher political ambitions and became involved in the rhetoric of the Liberty Monument during his failed gubernatorial campaign against Democratic Governor Edwin Edwards in 1991. Although the former Klan leader's appeals had some currency with disaffected white voters, many descendants of the Liberty Place battle from New Orleans' better families held their noses and voted for Edwards, a politician widely regarded as corrupt. Furthermore, Duke's presence in the runoff election with Edwards sent African-Americans,

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[10] ibid.; copy of *State of Louisiana v Friends of Liberty Monument, Inc*. in Wilson Papers, NOPL
[11] Tyler Bridges, *The Rise of David Duke* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994) 66-68

always strong for Edwards, to the polls in unprecedented numbers. A popular bumper sticker summarized anti-Duke sentiment: "Vote for the crook, it's important!"[12]

That Duke hoped to use the Liberty Monument as a publicity tool seemed evident when the Friends of the Liberty Monument scheduled a rededication ceremony for Sunday, March 7, 1993. It became patently obvious that the monument, in addition to such "friends," had quite a large number of enemies, some of whom also had a long-standing animosity for Duke. The approximately fifty attendees at Duke's event, some waving Confederate as well as Louisiana and American flags, were joined by a nearly equal number of mostly African-American protesters led by the aging civil-rights activist, Rev. Avery Alexander. As the protesters shouted "down with white supremacy," Duke, protected by a cordon of police officers, exclaimed, "...we may be a minority in this city, but I tell you, we still have rights." For a while, the mostly white police successfully kept the two groups separated, but the protesters remained undeterred in their goal of putting the end to the ceremony. In the ensuing scuffle, police arrested four protesters and one monument supporter. A full compliment of broadcast and print media were on hand to record a white police officer restraining the eighty-two year old Alexander with a chokehold, an image that angered many blacks.[13]

The boisterous confrontation at the Liberty Monument that Sunday morning typified the condition to which the debate over its future had degenerated. The initiative had passed from those who sought some sort of compromise on the issue to the most extreme exponents on both sides who engaged in an all-or-nothing struggle. Following the melee at the rededication ceremony, the Louisiana Historical Society made plain its desire to disassociate itself with Duke. Its president, Richard Bell, wrote a letter to the City Council stating that his organization "and

[12] Ibid., 216-238; Edwards is, in fact, presently serving a sentence in a federal penitentiary.
[13] *Times-Picayune*, 8 March 1993; *The Houston Chronicle*, 8 March 1993.

other groups decided NOT to participate in the unofficial 'Rededication' of the Liberty Monument." Bell continued, "it was organized by Jefferson Parish individuals who are insensitive to racial harmony." Many of the city's respected families were also disgusted with Duke's appropriation of the Liberty Monument and viewed his antics as a cheap publicity stunt.[14]

Lest Duke monopolize the use of extreme tactics, the opposition to the monument also used inflammatory rhetoric to argue its case. One group that identified itself as "The African American Justice Committee" distributed fliers that proclaimed that "[t]he White League efforts were financed by former slave owners and slave traders from the Boston Club and the Pickwick Club. The White League was responsible for lynching, mutilation, bull whipping and raping African American women." For the opponents of the monument, there was really no room for compromise.[15]

The growing racial animosity over the replacement of the Liberty Monument spurred the New Orleans City Council into action. Dorothy Mae Taylor was an African-American council member, who like David Duke, had spent much of her political career trading on racially explosive issues. Eleven days after the rededication fracas, Taylor introduced a resolution that would allow the city to remove the monument on grounds that it served as a public nuisance and threatened the peace of New Orleans. The proposed ordinance ensured that the racial acrimony over the White League and the monument to their victory would continue for many more months.[16]

The debate over the monument's future, of course, did not take place in a vacuum. By 1993, the entire nation seemed to grow increasingly polarized upon racial lines, and nowhere was

[14] Richard C. Bell to New Orleans City Council, 10 March 1993 in Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL
[15] Flier in Peggy Wilson Papers.
[16] Gill, *Lords of Misrule*, 266

this feeling stronger than in New Orleans. Almost exactly two years before Taylor called the city council to session, under the watchful eye of the ubiquitous camcorder, Los Angeles Police pulled over and then violently subdued Rodney King. The portions of the videotape seen by most Americans showed the LAPD officers repeatedly beating King with their PR-24 batons. When it aired on television news broadcasts across the nation, this footage brought widespread anger and accusations of police brutality, particularly against blacks. After a state court later acquitted these officers of wrongdoing, the streets of the predominantly minority neighborhoods of East Los Angeles erupted into several days of destructive riots. In turn, coverage of the street violence fed existing white perceptions of inherent black criminality.[17]

Locally, New Orleans remained mired in litigation concerning an acrimonious fight over the desegregation of its most defining institution, Mardi Gras. As she had done in the clash over the Liberty Monument, councilwoman Dorothy Mae Taylor spearheaded the effort, in the process shaking the longstanding tradition of New Orleans' oldest families at its very foundation. At issue was whether or not the exclusive Carnival clubs, and in particular, the old line such as Comus and Rex, could continue to operate as strictly the domain of white men.

Yet, Carnival culture, by its very nature, was rife with segregation – and not just among the most exclusive krewes. Although less common among the modern "superkrewes," older organizations had often formed around the race, class, and gender of its members. Zulu, one of Mardi Gras' most popular parades today, had formed in 1913 as an working-class African-American krewe. Unlike the old-line white krewes, however, Zulu had extended membership to a small number of whites beginning in the 1980s. Yet, others remain quite exclusive including the non-parading Illinois Club, which supposedly still adheres to the so-called "brown paper

[17] By the time of the Liberty Monument controversy, there had been a history of acrimonious debates over Confederate symbols, particularly the Confederate battle emblem displayed in state government and school settings.

bag" test – its members must be lighter in complexion than a brown paper bag. To some degree, the racial, economic, and gendered composition of a krewe – either mixed or uniform – give identity to that krewe.

In order to ensure compliance with integration, and as such remain eligible to parade on the city's public streets, the exclusive krewes would have to provide membership rosters to the city. This demand ran counter to the most fundamental aspect of a secret organization such as a masked carnival krewe. Ultimately, Comus, Momus, and Proteus decided to discontinue their parading tradition, withdrawing to their clubrooms where the federal courts had upheld their right to remain secretive and, presumably, segregated. Rex, on the other hand, ceded to the city council's demands and integrated, ensuring that the king would not disappear from Carnival.

Taylor's crusade against the exclusive clubs left many of the city's influential white citizens feeling as though their values and traditions were under siege from people bent on "get-evenism." With the coming of the Liberty Monument fray, they encountered an even more disconcerting situation. Without question, the dominant legacy of the Crescent City White League belonged to the members of the Pickwick and Boston Clubs and old-line Carnival krewes. Yet, the presence of the monument's self-appointed spokesman, David Duke, combined with their own ongoing struggle over Mardi Gras, prevented this group from taking an active role in trying to save the monument, despite their angst over the matter.[18]

One did not have to be a member of an exclusive Carnival society to feel the growing malaise in New Orleans. The more tangible issues of crime and economy cast a long shadow

[18] For information on the desegregation of Carnival see Gill, *Lords of Misrule*, 221-257; Rick Bragg, "Changing City, Changing Carnival," *The New York Times*, 21 Feb 1996; Susan Finch, "Men's Clubs Win in Ruling," *Times-Picayune*, 11 March 1994. Proteus and Momus have since integrated and returned to parading. The Pickwick Club and Comus of today are two separate organizations. Attending Carnival in 2003, the author witnessed many white faces darkened with shoe polish among the floats of Zulu – an image bound to incite a negative reaction elsewhere, this is a widely accepted portion of Zulu's presentation and serves as a good example of Carnival's tendency to dispense with prevailing societal mores.; An example of a modern "superkrewe" would be the Krewe of Endymion, led by the entertainer, Harry Connick, Jr. See www.endymion.org

over the city, and inevitably, with a majority-black city government, these issues took on racial overtones. A reporter for *Time* magazine described New Orleans as the "Big Queasy" in an article that highlighted the manifold problems the city faced in 1993.[19]

In fact, crime may have been the most dominant issue on the minds of New Orleans' residents that year. The city's homicide rate hit an all time record of 369, a shocking 36 percent increase in twelve months. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this crime wave was that some of its biggest participants seemed to be members of law enforcement. By the time Councilwoman Taylor had called for the removal of the Liberty Monument, the NOPD already had a rather notorious reputation, with its officers arrested with some regularity for crimes ranging from drugs and robbery all the way to murder. Such scandals came to a breaking point in 1994 when the FBI broke up a large-scale police-run drug trafficking ring. The sting operation received national media attention when it became clear that three of the involved officers had carried out the murder of Kim Groves, a 32 year old African-American single mother living in one of New Orleans many crime-ridden projects, after she had dared to file a complaint of police brutality. Tapes of the murderous officers joking with one another about the "hit" on their police radios shortly after the crime was hardly desirable publicity for a city whose economy had grown increasingly dependent on tourism. Furthermore, that the city council had paid scant effort to such a problem in favor of pursuing largely symbolic change, struck many whites and some blacks as akin to Nero's playing the fiddle while Rome burned.[20]

Increasing white flight was one manifestation of the problems facing the city. Certainly the "Jefferson Parish individuals" who made up the Friends of the Liberty Monument felt that, in essence, the black leadership of New Orleans was slowly destroying the city. Both the Morial

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[19] Richard Woodbury, "Down in the Big Queasy," *Time*, 28 Feb 1994, Vol. 143, #9, 43.
[20] Ibid; Michael Perlstein, "Special Probe of NOPD Urged by Watchdog Group," *Times-Picayune*, 30 April 1993; Michael Perlstein and Walt Philbin, "Cop, 2 Others Charged in Death," *Times-Picayune*, 6 Dec 1994

and Barthelemy administrations, and in particular, Dorothy Mae Taylor, were analogous with the carpetbaggers thrown out by the White League. For this group, the Liberty Monument stood as a defiant bulwark against what they perceived as a hostile takeover of New Orleans by blacks hell-bent on domination.

In an editorial to the *Times-Picayune,* Yale historian Robin Winks offered his opinion on the Liberty Monument controversy. Winks noted, "Two concepts of history are at war. One holds that society should never forget any part of its past, both on the simple ground that the past is real and happened and cannot be changed and ought not to be forgotten or buried, and because any part of the past that is lost is a lesson for the future forgotten." He contrasted this notion with the opposite concept which argues that society should de-legitimize the past's objectionable episodes by removing from display all reminders of their occurrence. Yet, by the time of Winks' editorial, the controversy over the Liberty Monument had long since spilled over the borders of its historical message and abstract notions of the lessons that it should or should not teach future generations. While the Liberty Monument indeed pitted two views of history against one another, as Winks suggested, it was more about competing interpretations of the present and the projection of political power.[21]

Tulane history professor and outspoken critic of the Liberty Monument, Lawrence Powell, also offered up some commentary in the pages of the *Picayune*. Powell stated that, "the monument has but a single purpose, to array one part of the community against the other." Drawing parallels to the Russians' toppling of monuments to Stalin following the fall of the Soviet Union, Powell argued that the time had come to remove the Liberty Monument, perhaps

[21] Robin M. Winks, "A Place for Liberty Monument," *Times-Picayune*, 17 August 1992

placing it in a museum, entrusting it "to museum curators, who know how to use these historical relics as teaching tools."[22]

Certainly, Powell would have gotten little argument from the monument opponents who showed up for the city council's public hearing on the landmark's future. The confrontation at Duke's rededication ceremony remained fresh in the minds of the roughly 100 attendees, and for a while, it appeared as though the meeting would become round two in this racially charged shoving match. During this public forum, members of the audience were allowed time at the microphone to state their case for or against the monument. Walter Ross, a black radio personality stepped up to the podium and exclaimed that the monument praised "people who murdered us, who raped our women and kept our children illiterate." Pointing out David Duke in the crowded room, Ross continued, "he is a racist pig and does not live here in New Orleans." Heated words between Ross and Duke supporter Kenny Knight ensued, ultimately resulting in Ross's ejection by police. For his part, Duke insisted that "the monument may be politically incorrect, but it is not a racist monument."[23]

Another African-American who sat in extreme opposition to Duke was Carl Galmon, the self-styled champion of the black underclass and head of an organization called the Louisiana Committee Against Apartheid. Referring to the monument, Galmon suggested at the meeting that the city should "take that sucker out in the Atlantic Ocean and dump it." The presence of the implacable Galmon probably had as much positive influence on any potential calm discourse as that of David Duke. Galmon drew the ire of many conservative whites because of his recent crusade to strip the names of former slaveholders from Orleans Parish public schools. He claimed to have been inspired in 1991 by a group of Mardi Gras "tourists drinking hurricanes"

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[22] Lawrence N. Powell, "Put Liberty Monument in Proper Setting: A Museum," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Mar 1993
[23] John E. DeSantis, "Monumental Division in New Orleans," *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1993

who began to chuckle at the sight of "an all-black band named after one of the largest slave owners in North America." Already successful in defrocking P.G.T. Beauregard and Jefferson Davis, Galmon had set his sights on George Washington. In 1997, he successfully banished the name of the nation's first president from an elementary school, drawing national attention and provoking a heated national debate as to whether or not such actions were the fruit of political-correctness run-amok.[24]

Scarcely audible over the noisy clash between David Duke and his political opposites were a group of individuals with a much more modest approach. Perhaps the greatest mistake made by the "Committee to Preserve the Liberty Monument" was to shun political theater. One member lamented in a letter to conservative city councilman Joe Giarusso that it was "not the David Duke monument," and that the press had ignored them completely. The combatants in this battle found no virtue in moderation.[25]

The city council convened to vote on Taylor's nuisance ordinance on April 16, 1993. Passage of the ordinance would authorize the city's Human Relations Commission to meet and study the viability of any public monument that had fallen into popular disfavor. The original intent of the resolution was to address the Liberty Monument, but in New Orleans, with its numerous monuments to old Confederates like Robert E. Lee and Jeff Davis, the vote on the ordinance had, at least in theory, sweeping implications. Certainly, Carl Galmon's school renaming crusade gave conservatives some pause as to where it might lead.[26]

Nevertheless, the council passed the ordinance with only two dissenting votes, and sent the Human Relations Commission upon its task of investigating the Liberty Monument. Republican councilwoman Peggy Wilson, who had initially voiced opposition to the ordinance,

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[24] Gill, *Lords of Misrule*, 259; *The Arizona Republic*, 5 January 1993; *Times-Picayune*, 3 Apr 1994, 28 Dec 1997
[25] Lynda Beaugez to Joe Giarusso, 20 July 1993. Joe Giarusso Papers, NOPL
[26] Ibid., 267-268

but in the end voted in favor of it, learned first hand just how upset she had made some of her constituents. One angry letter charged her with joining "forces with that [N]egro woman on the council, that wears that [K]ing [T]ut hat, that is well educated and [a] champion for the [N]egro cause." Dislike of Dorothy Mae Taylor had clearly become as much of an issue for some whites as the monument itself. Another accused Wilson of "giving in to the insane ramblings of Dorothy Mae Taylor." The letter, from "a Southron," saw the ordinance as the proverbial camel's nose entering the tent, predicting the future "destruction of such monuments as those of General Lee, General Beauregard, and President Jefferson Davis, and the other symbols and statues of greatness of the former glory of our state and city, because they are offensive to certain members of society."[27]

The Human Relations Committee, made up mostly of professional historians and chaired by Rabbi Edward Cohn of the Reform Temple Sinai Synagogue, now wrestled with the fate of the Liberty Monument. In this vein, they were given some help by the city council in the form of some questions that the politicians undoubtedly believed would provide political cover on what was bound to be a controversial decision. That the council expected any surprise answers, especially given the nature of some of these questions, is another matter.

The answers to four of the six questions were not in doubt. The second asked if the monument gave "honor or praise to those who participated in the killing of public employees of the City of New Orleans or the State of Louisiana?" Since the White League did inflict casualties on the state's official militia, the answer seemingly could only be "yes." Perhaps the only real sticking point was whether "honor and praise" was for the actual killing of these employees, but despite the question's obtuse wording, it left little to debate. Similarly, other questions asking

[27] K. Williams to Peggy Wilson, 19 Apr 1993, "A Southron" to Peggy Wilson, 19 Apr 1993, Peggy Wilson Papers, NOPL

whether the monument served as a potential flashpoint for civil unrest, past and present, or if the cost of security would outweigh the monument's historical significance offered little room for interpretation. With the tiff at the rededication ceremony only six weeks old, and with the embers from the Rodney King riots still warm, one wonders why the council even asked such questions of historians.

The most meaningful of the city's questions were undoubtedly the first and the fourth. The first inquired, "Does the Liberty Monument honor, praise or foster ideologies which are in conflict with the requirements of equal protection for citizens as permitted by the Federal and State Constitutions?" In the same vein, the fourth asked, "Does the Monument give honor or praise to any violent actions taken wrongfully against citizens of the City to promote ethnic, religious or racial supremacy of any group over another?" On the panel of seven historians, answers to these questions followed a consistent pattern. Five of the seven academics answered "yes" to questions one and four with only one historian answering "no." The seventh, suggesting that perhaps the truth might be more complicated than a simple "yes" or "no" simply replied, "yes/no."

The report issued on June 15, 1993, by the Human Relations Committee reflected the dominance of the more activist-minded historians. Dr. Raphael Cassimere from the University of New Orleans and the Southwest Regional Chairman for the NAACP was perhaps the most outspoken of the committee's members. Cassimere sharply castigated the White League. "It organized," he noted, "not to assure or restore, honest local government, but to terrorize black and white Republican officials." Cassimere added that the 1932 inscriptions "simply etched in stone what the participants, always knew was their real purpose of action, to restore the rule of white supremacy." In closing, like Lawrence Powell, he drew parallels to the recent fall of

Soviet Communism, noting that the "Russian people turned into gravel" the statues of Lenin and Stalin once those leaders had been discredited. Cassimere unambiguously urged the complete removal of the Liberty Monument. [28]

In response to the HRC's report, the more conservative Louisiana Landmarks Society presented the committee with a different viewpoint. This group suggested that the monument remain in place, but that the site also tell "the whole story." In this regard, the Landmarks Society applauded the city's decision to relocate the monument to a less prominent site as well as the placement of the additional text honoring the Metropolitan Police.

Lest the idea of turning the monument into a history lesson of sorts be lost on the city council, the Society also drew on a few of its own analogies. In Mississippi, reminded the Society, the state capitol once featured a statue of segregationist governor Theodore Bilbo in a prominent place in the rotunda. It was later relocated to a meeting room, "but not removed from open, public display." Similarly, the Landmark Society's report pointed out that an 1861 obelisk in Santa Fe, New Mexico, heralding "Indian fighters" remained intact despite a concerted effort for its removal. The addition of "an interpretative marker," and other "contextual treatment," to the Santa Fe monument, seemed like a reasonable alternative to the preservationists as well as a blueprint for action in New Orleans.[29]

Of course, the Louisiana Landmarks Society was not the only voice advocating that the monument remain on Iberville Street. David Duke and the Friends of the Liberty Monument also decried the HRC's June 15 moral verdict. As *Times-Picayune* columnist James Gill recounted the scene, "David Duke got up and denounced the campaign to remove it as a 'Nazi-like act.' A startled Rabbi Edward Cohn, who was chairing the meeting, had the wary air of a

[28] "Report of the Mayor's Human Relation's Commission on the Liberty Monument," 15 June 1993, NOPL
[29] "Statement Presented by Louisiana Landmarks Society to the Human Relations Advisory Committee Concerning the Liberty Monument," 29 June 1993, Peggy Wilson Papers.

man who was not quite sure whether he was the victim of a practical joke or whether he had misheard. 'Were you,' he asked after a few seconds' silence, 'condemning acts of Nazism?'" Duke followed with his own definition of "Nazism" – "I freely condemn Nazism... Nazis are the ones that try to change history."[30]

Unintentional humor aside, the arguments of the Friends of the Liberty Monument and the more polished approach of the Louisiana Landmarks Society failed to persuade the city council to keep the granite obelisk. On Thursday, July 15, 1993, the city declared the Liberty Monument a nuisance and ordered its removal. Of course, this hardly meant the instantaneous disappearance of the monument or the controversy.[31]

Only hours after the city council's decision, the Friends of the Liberty Monument as well as Hope Lubrano, individually, filed suit in the Civil District Court in order to prevent any action on the monument's removal. With a painfully slow legal process and several different routes of appeal, the ultimate fate of the Liberty Monument a decade after the original controversy remains in question. The Friends of the Liberty Monument hold an annual wreath laying on the anniversary of the September 14 battle, but the controversy in the intervening years has tended to die down. Perhaps the residents of New Orleans had simply grown tired of the issue and its attendant divisiveness, or that in some way, the public perceived the problem as resolved with the city council's order. Another theory posits that with the election of Marc Morial as mayor in 1994, the monument's detractors decided it was better to let the issue quietly drop rather than to perpetuate the controversy into the term of a mayor that, for the most part, they had backed.[32]

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[30] Gill, *Lords of Misrule*, 268; Susan Finch, "Duke Condemns 'Nazi-like' Moves over Monument," *Times-Picayune*, 16 June 1993
[31] Susan Finch, "City Council Orders Monument Removed," *Times-Picayune*, 16 July 1993
[32] Telephone conversation with Bruce E. Naccari, city attorney, 11 Oct 00

The debate over the Liberty Monument's future poses larger questions about the role of public commemoration. A variety of scholarly and op-ed pieces have taken notice of this fact. Some authors have argued the pros and cons of the Liberty Monument specifically, while others place it in the larger context of commemoration. Such controversial monuments present society with a host of difficult questions to which there are no clear answers: What events are worthy of commemoration and who is responsible for identifying these events? Can an historical monument itself ever become an historical landmark, and is it ever appropriate to remove an historical landmark? What purpose do monuments serve? Must every public monument reflect a consensus based upon shared values? Or, perhaps most troubling, is there any basis for a expecting such a consensus at all? Can a monument to a once-powerful and repressive regime also be a monument to the accomplishments of those who succeeded in overthrowing it?[33]

Scholars of historical memory have been most successful at elucidating their ideas about the purpose of commemoration. This literature almost uniformly argues that governments and those aspiring to govern create monuments in their pursuit of legitimacy. As David Blight points out, they are part of "the human quest to own the past and thereby achieve control over the present." If they are truly successful, such monuments help forge full-blown civil religion out of mere community consensus. Charles Wilson Reagan argues that the Lost Cause and monuments

[33] A number of Op-Ed pieces deal directly with the Liberty Monument directly. For examples see Powell, "Put Liberty Monument in Proper Setting: A Museum," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Mar 1993, Robin W. Winks, "A Place for Liberty Monument," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Aug 1992, Powell, "A Concrete Symbol," *Southern Exposure*, Spring 1990, Adolph Reed Jr., "The Battle of Liberty Monument," *The Progressive*, June 1993, Vol 57, No. 6, 32-33. Several scholarly works contemplate the meaning and future of the Liberty Monument either directly or in concert with other monuments in an overarching theme of commemoration: Levinson, *Written in Stone*, James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), Levinson, "Silencing the Past," David Wasserman, "Commemoration and Disavowal," *Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3 and 4, Summer/Fall 1996, Powell, "Reinventing Tradition." For works on the broader themes of public commemoration, particularly of war and politics see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identitiy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Hobsbawn and Ranger, *Inventing Tradition*,

to its martyrs took on such sacred dimensions, that to take exception with their message was tantamount to apostasy. [34]

In a culture that worshiped at the altar of the Lost Cause, the Liberty Monument had once proved a powerful talisman against dissent. The granite obelisk celebrated the uptown elite's restoration to power, and made martyrs of those who had paid for that restoration in blood. This bloodshed had also legitimized those who survived the battle, reminding the community of their own dedication to the League's "noble cause." This risk of death had validated both the actions of the White League veterans and the political dynasty that they had brought to power.

Yet as the Lost Cause era entered its third generation, New Orleans's elite struggled to adapt the Liberty Monument to new purposes. The consensus that had been forged by the Redeemer generation now faced a mortal threat in form of Huey Long. Eventually crushed by his populist onslaught, the Liberty Place Commission engraved a defiant epitaph upon a monument that had once represented the political dominance of Carnival's Kings. These inscriptions failed to restore legitimacy to their declining regime.

By 1974, the city's growing African-American population had finally mustered enough political clout to forcibly question the Liberty Monument's white supremacist message. Grappling with the meltdown of community consensus, Mayor Landrieu and the city council had hoped that through modification, the monument might serve many masters. Instead, their attempt only highlighted the fact that the Liberty Monument had become a symbol of division rather than unity, and that its purpose had shifted from forging community consensus to serving as a barometer of factional political power.

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[34] Hobsbawn, *Inventing Tradition*, 12; Levinson, *Written in Stone*, 84; Savage, *Standing Soldiers*, 4; Catherine Bisher, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885-1915," in Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow*, 141; David W. Blight, "Southerners Don't Lie, They Just Remember Big," in ibid., 349; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*

At the same time, perceptions of the Liberty Monument had always stemmed more from the political present than the historical past. When the obelisk first appeared in 1891, as well as at the time of its 1932 and 1974 modifications, its content spoke to the needs of the contemporary city. It had been no different in 1993. The monument relocation fracas reflected the deteriorating race relations within the New Orleans. The issues of racism, crime, white flight, the desegregation of Mardi Gras, politics, as well as the presence of controversial individuals such as David Duke and Carl Galmon, polarized the community, giving consensus over the issue a snowball's chance in hell – or at least in a September in New Orleans. This monument, like many others, was and has always been about the present, as much, if not more, than the past.

New Orleans was not the first place to contemplate removing contentious monuments. The Russians, once out from under the heel of Communist oppression, set about destroying the iconography of the Soviet Union in a spontaneous expression of liberation. As Sanford Levinson astutely observes, "Those who overthrow regimes often take as one of their first tasks the physical destruction of symbols -- and the latent power possessed by these markers – of those whom they have displaced."[35]

In contrast, the Louisiana Landmarks Society unsuccessfully attempted to draw its own parallels to monuments under fire, suggesting that modification, not destruction, was the wiser course. Thus, one forms a comparative framework for analyzing the most compelling question surrounding the Liberty Monument: Should it go? In this framework, there are two distinct models. In one, offending monuments face removal, relocation, or consignment, quite literally, "to the dustbin of history." In the other, the commemoration of controversial events or figures receive modification, explanation, or at least in one case, amputation!

[35] Levinson, *Written in Stone*, 12

In order to find the best examples of sweeping change in the careers of public monuments, we might cast our gaze towards Europe. Perhaps the finest example of public sculpture radically modified by the winds of change is the Millennium Monument in Budapest, Hungary. This edifice resembles a series of chess pieces, with each piece, or statue, representing a supposedly important figure in Hungary's "collective" history. First conceived in 1881, the monument reached completion on the eve of World War I, at the beginning of what would be for Hungarians, an exceedingly tumultuous century. The characters honored in the Millennium Monument ranged from the eleventh century King Stephen, to the then-contemporary and "distinctly non-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph."

The First World War brought about the initial round of changes to the Millennium Monument. The war was a disaster for the Hungarian people, and the emergent leaders of the newly independent nation of 1919 set about to strip the leaders of the Habsburg dynasty from their places of honor. A conservative monarchy soon replaced this radical faction, however, and newly fashioned likenesses of the Habsburgs returned to the Millennium Monument. Yet, like a short-running Broadway play, Franz Joseph's limited engagement in Budapest came to an end with the Soviet takeover of Hungary following World War II. The Communists replaced the monarch with a statue of Lajos Kossuth, a nineteenth century insurrectionist against Habsburg power. In Budapest, the state had tried to forge a "consensus" among its people, with mixed results. In the end, their efforts may well have done more to undermine consensus. As a result, the Millennium monument stands as a testament to the challenges of radical change and the state's attempt to enforce consensus in an effort to legitimize the regime. [36]

Less studied, yet no less illustrative of the radical shifts some nations experience in their "civil religion" is the fate of erstwhile national hero Gavrilo Princip of Sarajevo. In 1999,

[36] Levinson, *Written in Stone*, 6-10

journalist David DeVoss went in search of Princip, the anarchist assassin of Austria's Franz Ferdinand and symbolic instigator of the First World War. DeVoss soon "realized that Gavrilo Princip, a national hero prior to Yugoslavia's early 1990s disintegration into warring factions, was now considered a criminal terrorist by Bosnia. Not only was the Princip museum closed, but all traces of its name had been sandblasted from the exterior. Gone, too, were the concrete-embedded footprints marking the spot where Princip stood when he fired the fatal bullets."[37]

DeVoss' odyssey revealed a nation in flux, deeply divided and uncertain of its next turn in political fortune less public commemoration – though the two share an inextricable link. The Communists under Tito had made a hero of Princip, but by 1992, with a mounting death toll in the streets of Sarajevo, "citizens frustrated by their helplessness began attacking symbols of the former Yugoslavia. First on their list was the Princip museum." Further investigation uncovered a skittish unease among national historians and preservationists. Despite rumor that Sarajevo will someday witness the return of statues to Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie -- initially removed in 1919 -- officials remain wary of the power of public statuary and the trouble that it may cause. "Politicians believe these works are controversial, so we keep them hidden away," one National Gallery official noted. Until then, Princip, Franz Ferdinand, and Sophie will remain locked away in dark and musty basements scattered across Sarajevo. In Bosnia, the uncertainty of the nation's future has led to the ultimate crisis of consensus. It is a prime example of a society that has sought to banish all forms of commemoration lest their presence re-ignite old, deep-seated hatreds.[38]

Europe, however, does not have a monopoly over challenges to political consensus. In the American Southwest, particularly in areas of strong Latino political power, a new regional

[37] David DeVoss, "Searching for Gavrilo Princip," *Smithsonian*, August 2000, Vol 31, No. 5, 45
[38] Ibid., 50-51

hero has emerged: Don Juan de Oñate. Although Oñate was not the first conquistador to pass through the region, in 1598, he became the first to establish permanent Spanish settlement in what is today New Mexico. For many Latinos, he is "nothing less than New Mexico's George Washington." Oñate provides for Americans of Spanish ancestry a figure comparable to the founding fathers, something symbolically powerful in America's Anglo-dominated culture that for so many years has celebrated only English-speaking heroes such as Washington, Jefferson, or the Roosevelts, and events like Plymouth Rock or the American Revolution.[39]

Yet, there is a rub when it comes to Oñate, especially among the region's substantial Native American minority. The most notorious episode in the life of this newly celebrated conquistador came during his conquest of the Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico. In retaliation for casualties inflicted on his soldiers by the Acomas during this campaign, Oñate banished the Acoma children to Spanish control in Mexico City and the pueblo's adults to slavery for twenty years. The capstone of these punishments, however, was the amputation of one foot of twenty-four Acoma warriors. This severe treatment, thought Oñate, would send an unmistakable message to other native peoples that the Spanish meant business.[40]

Four hundred years after Oñate first passed into New Mexico, a new battle brewed between the state's Latinos and Native Americans. On what was supposed to be a celebration by the Latino community of their "founding father," a group of Acomas, armed with an electric reciprocating saw, descended in the dead of night upon a massive bronze equestrian sculpture of Oñate in Espanola, New Mexico. In short order, the Acomas severed the statue's stirrup-bound right foot in a gesture of symbolic retaliation for Oñate's offense so many years ago. The raiding

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[39] Tina Griego, "A Foot Note to History: Amputation of N.M. Statue Underlines 400-Year-Old Grudge," *The Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 21 June 1998

[40] Ibid.; Loewen, *Lies Across America*, 119-121; James Brooke, "Conquistador Statue Stirs Hispanic Pride and Indian Rage," *The New York Times*, 9 Feb. 1998

party sent snapshots of its newly acquired foot to news outlets accompanied by a statement stating, "We see no glory in celebrating Oñate's fourth centennial, and we do not want our faces rubbed in it." Predictably, Latino reaction was unfavorable. The director of the monument's visitor's center complained, "Give me a break – it was 400 years ago. It's O.K. to hold a grudge, but for 400 years?"[41]

Authorities welded a new foot onto Oñate, but the Acomas achieved a great deal of publicity from their adventure, even garnering a healthy amount of support from editorialists and some historians. The need for monumental prosthesis notwithstanding, and despite growing calls for telling "the whole story," the Latino community generally presented a unified front of support for an unmodified and unmolested heroic representation of Oñate. Perhaps as a symbol of the Latino community's political might in contrast with a relative weakness in Native American power, several more images celebrating Oñate have appeared through New Mexico and Texas. A smaller statue is now on display in Santa Fe, and in Albuquerque, despite protests that Oñate may be offensive to Native Americans, the city has moved forward with plans for its own conquistador memorial. Perhaps the ultimate symbol of this new Latino "consensus" came in El Paso, Texas, where authorities have commissioned a massive three-story high equestrian bronze of Oñate. The only debate seems to be whether it should go downtown, or six miles away at the border where the Latin hero crossed the Rio Grande.[42]

The memorials to Oñate are reminders of this once-marginalized group's emergence as the region's political power. In this regard, these statues serve the same purpose as the Liberty Monument had in 1891. Both sought to tap into a glorious past – in the case of Oñate, a distant past – in order to legitimize their ascendancy to the top of the political mountain. That these

[41] Ibid.
[42] Monica Merced, "Debate Over Its Placement Bigger than 3-Story Statue Itself," *The Houston Chronicle*, 31 October 1999.

heroes have flaws is not nearly as important as their perceived accomplishments, particularly those accomplishments that legitimize those doing the commemorating.

Perhaps the best comparative study with the Liberty Monument is the recently renamed Little Big Horn Battlefield in Montana. The site made famous by the "last stand" of George Armstrong Custer has once again become contested ground. The 1876 battle that pitted Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse against Custer's troop of the Seventh Cavalry was roughly contemporaneous with the 1874 Canal Street battle. In fact, Custer accompanied the Grand Duke Alexis to New Orleans for his famous 1872 Carnival visit – the two had spent previous weeks together hunting in the West. The similarities, however, go beyond their chronology. Both represent decisive battles – one a defeat, the other a victory – that were far more important symbolically than they were strategically substantive. While most Americans are familiar with the tale of "Custer's last stand," "Liberty Place," as an historical event, remains largely confined to the city limits of New Orleans. Yet, both are key events in parallel narratives, or as some might label them, myths, of the American experience.

Memorial construction at the Montana site began a scant seven years after Custer's defeat with the erection in 1881 of a substantial marker to the fallen soldiers. As with the victorious Redeemers in New Orleans, the federal government did not see virtue in recognizing their formidable foe. Instead, they installed a monument that celebrated their new, firmly established authority of the Great Plains. If the men of the White League became heroes, then comparatively, Custer's Seventh Cavalry became secular gods. Endless books, plays, movies glorifying the tragic hero, Custer, became an essential ingredient in the lore of the American West. What

middle American child growing up in the twentieth century did not know that these men "died with their boots on?"[43]

As with the Liberty Monument, by the mid 1970s, politicians began to hear discontent over the blatantly pro-Custer tenor at "Custer Battlefield National Monument." Native American groups believed that the National Park Service, the caretakers of the Montana site, diminished the accomplishment of the Sioux at the battle, choosing only to glorify Custer and the Seventh Cavalry. By this time, America seemed willing to reconsider Custer, even producing films sympathetic to the Sioux such as *Little Big Man* in 1970. In time, the federal government recognized these grievances, and in December 1991, President Bush signed into law a bill that renamed the park "Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument." The bill further provided for the addition of a memorial recognizing the Indian point of view, so long as it did not exceed in size the existing monument to Custer (which is remarkably similar to the Liberty Monument.)[44]

To the National Park Service, the addition of the new Indian monument at Little Big Horn seemed like a reasonable solution to the problem of squaring two disparate traditions. In 1996, they unveiled a design competition for the new marker, which would stand 200 feet from the existing Custer memorial. Further underscoring their desire to use this monument to indeed "yield resolution," the NPS advisory committee gave a theme to the proposed monument: "Peace Through Unity."[45]

Among the "pro-Custer forces," there were those who were not interested in yielding this sacred space. What angered this group even further were the Native American spiritual celebrations at the site. Apparently, the annual reenactment of the battle during "Little Big Horn

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[43] Of course, Errol Flynn's 1941 portrayal of Custer is the most famous of these epics. *They Died With Their Boots On*, MGM, 1941

[44] *Little Big Man*, Paramount Pictures, 1970; "Goodbye Custer, Hello Truth," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN) 13 Dec 1991; Fergus M. Bordewich, "Echoes Along the Little Big Horn," *The New York Times*, 27 Oct 1991

[45] "Indian Monument at Little Big Horn," *The Washington Post*, 2 July 1996

Days" fell within their parameters of decency, but the thought of Native Americans gloating over their victory seemed to be too much to take. Ultimately, they successfully lobbied for the removal in 1998 of Girard Baker, the Native American park superintendent who oversaw the name change as well as an increased diversity of perspective at the site. [46]

When the "peace through unity" monument finally debuted in June of 2003, it received mostly kind remarks. Dignitaries in attendance included Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and the family of Lori Piestewa, the young Native-American woman killed while fighting in Iraq. The creation of this new monument may signify that the Sioux have finally emerged victorious in their struggle with the Custer crowd. It could also be that the changed national mood in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks has undermined the petty differences between the two sides. If that is truly the case, then a new consensus has grown out of circumstances that neither side of this debate could have foreseen, and may also reflect a need for the acceptance of Native-Americans into the great pantheon of American civil religion.[47]

In each of these examples, societies struggled to bring divisive monuments into line with community standards with decidedly mixed results. The modification of Budapest's Millennium monument with each shifting political wind had produced little political consensus. Hiding Franz Joseph and Gavrilo Princip in a Sarajevo basement have possibly made their image more controversial than had they remained in public. That the Latino community of the American Southwest can pursue the creation of monuments to a conquistador with a checkered past stands in testament to their modern political power. Lastly, at Little Big Horn, powerful new themes have diminished the Custer myth, possibly proving that the only cure for a contested monument is an entirely new consensus.

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[46] "Custer Fans Rout Little Big Horn's Indian Superintendent," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 3 January 1998; National Park Service, Little Big Horn National Battlefield Monument web site, http://www.nps.gov/libi/index.html

[47] *Indian Country Today*, 15 June 2003

There are differences between the European model of rapid-fire removal and replacement of monuments and the seemingly American tradition of incremental change. This appears to be, in part, a byproduct of our divergent political systems and the level of stability therein. As the Hungarians, the Bosnians, and the Russians have witnessed sweeping and revolutionary change, American society has undergone a slow, evolutionary change in attitude, particularly in our relations between America's white, Anglo majority and the nation's minorities. As such, our monuments have undergone slow, incremental, and sometimes painful and acrimonious change. Yet, with some very rare exceptions, few American monuments have passed from the scene in a fashion similar to monuments of Stalin, Lenin, or even Gavrilo Princip.[48]

Like people everywhere, Americans embrace tradition, no matter how invented it might be. As Kirk Savage points out, "Public Monuments exercis[e] a curious power to erase their own political origins and become sacrosanct, a power that is still evident today whenever people rise to defend monuments from change or attack." As a nation, we seem comfortable with our myths, and equally uncomfortable with dispelling them, even if in the process, we recognize the legitimate grievances of those for whom our myth is an anathema.[49]

The Liberty Monument is also a product of southern history, but acrimonious debates over a community's past are in no way unique to the South. Despite intense media coverage of issues such as the Confederate flag -- and the resulting attention that such issues draw to a supposed southern penchant for hanging on to the past -- one does not have to look far beyond the region to find similar conflict. David Blight wrote that "southerners don't lie, they just

[48] The only American monument that the author is aware of that has faced complete removal from view by the general public is Chicago's Haymarket Square monument. This statue of a policeman received the attention of anarchists from the get-go, and never reflected any sort of consensus. In fact, it was violently rejected several times with the assistance of explosives. Loewen, *Lies Across America,* 152-157

[49] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves,* 7

remember big." Yet these examples show that "remembering big" is hardly a southern trait. The desire to control the narrative of one's past is seemingly universal.[50]

The question, then, may not be whether New Orleans should remove the Liberty Monument, but how the city can come to grips with its existence. The underlying controversy surrounding the Liberty Monument had never been so much a case of the history it purportedly represented, but the presence of modern-day tensions between its proponents and detractors. Removing it could never solve this problem, and as the European examples have shown, gone does not necessarily mean forgotten. As some have suggested, modification offers the greatest possibility for "telling the whole story." Noble as this intention might be, the fact that two credible scholars can come up with seemingly incongruent conclusions on the same topic often threatens to derail such efforts. To its credit, the city has tried this route in an effort to be responsive to its citizens. They have also found the path fraught with peril.

For the time being, at least, it seems that most citizens of present-day New Orleans have learned how to live with the Liberty Monument. More accurately, they have learned to forget about it. In its present location, the monument it easy to miss, but societal changes have more to do with its diminishing importance than urban geography. Some of the key pot-stirrers over the monument's fate have moved on to other causes. David Duke fell from the limelight, and has recently completed a term in a federal penitentiary for tax fraud. Carl Galmon wore out his welcome at public debates when he referred to Marie Couvent, the nineteenth-century Afro-Creole benefactor of public schools, as a "whore" during a 2001 school board meeting. It is also because the present city council feels that managing the city's meager finances is a greater legislative priority than lamenting nineteenth-century monuments. Perhaps the formation of the

[50] Blight, "Southerners Don't Lie, they just Remember Big"

"Eracism" movement was the most emblematic manifestation of this change of heart. It is an organization borne directly out of New Orleans's racial turmoil of 1993, and its debut promised the beginning of a much-needed citywide racial détente. Perhaps that most people in New Orleans seem to have shifted their attention away from this once-divisive landmark is for the best.[51]

[51] For a summary of Carl Galmon's post-monument public career see *Times-Picayune*, 5 April 1998. Among other things, Galmon has a fondess for the word "whore," and has a tendency to call blacks who disagree with him, "misguided Negroes."; Before his most recent appearance in a bright orange jumpsuit, David Duke spent much of the late nineties and early 2000s promoting "anti-Zionism" to receptive audiences in Muslim nations. For an example of this see Gulf News (Dubai, online edition,) 11 December 2002 at http://www.gulf-news.com/Articles/news.asp?ArticleID=68231; For more information about Eracism, see www.erascismneworleans.org

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