CHAPTER THREE

Working-Class Neighborhoods and Everyday Life

African-American women who moved to Atlanta in the 1870s and early 1880s encountered a city still in its formative stages of development. The most dire postwar privation dissipated as the economy recovered from depressions and physical desecration. African-American efforts to make freedom meaningful were coming to fruition, even as circumstances beyond their control continued to infringe upon their life chances. In the post-Reconstruction era, as city leaders moved away from the economic ideals of the planter aristocracy and the erstwhile Confederacy, it became increasingly obvious that the capitalist dreams of the elites exploited black and poor people. Investments pouring into the city from financiers in the northeast and abroad were allocated to the benefit of those citizens who were already the most advantaged. This pattern of inequitable distribution of resources was nowhere more apparent than in the physical and social geography of the city. Jim Crow was already on the horizon, ordering separate and unequal black and white worlds. Black women would have to negotiate the literal rough terrain of Atlanta and the social consequences it imposed on their everyday lives as they struggled to earn a living for their families and searched for peace of mind.

THE RAILROAD, one of the most modern symbols of the era, played a prominent role not only in Atlanta's economy, as it had since the city's establishment, but also in the geography of the city as urbanism expanded. Rail lines formed intersections through the center of town, like spokes in a wheel, and streets were laid out at right angles to these projections within a grid pattern. Not only did this layout facilitate ground mobility, it accentuated the controlling influence of commerce and the railroad itself.

Unlike some modern metropolises in the northeast, where most black and poor people were housed in the inner city, Atlanta's Central Business District (CBD) and wealthy whites dominated the triangular core where intersecting railroad lines met. Residential development also differed from the antebellum "marble-caking" or "backyard" pattern of cities such as Charleston and New Orleans, where blacks were scattered behind the homes of whites. In Atlanta, African Americans lived in more sizable clusters throughout the city; large numbers of each race lived in every ward, and neither group significantly outnumbered the other. The short radius of the city limits in 1880 made it likely that residents would live in close proximity to one another and would walk to places of business or work. Rigid segregation was virtually impossible to achieve in the aftermath of the Civil War, as the massive influx of migrants compounded the scarcity of housing and forced everyone to find accommodations wherever they could; but this would soon change.[1]

The physical conditions of city life in this period were rugged at best, despite the best efforts of boosters to paint a pretty picture of Atlanta. A still primitive water system forced all except privileged residents to obtain their water from private wells and springs, which were vulnerable to contamination from many sources. Inadequate drainage and sewerage systems not only tainted the water supply but also subjected houses built on unevenly graded terrain to flooding. Unpaved streets were the norm, especially on low ground, because of the difficulty of maintaining roads with soil permeated with the outflow of thousands of individual privies. Malodorous and unsanitary debris generated from hog pens, slaughter houses, and guano plants, as well as household garbage and dead animals disposed of in streets and gullies, were typical.[2]

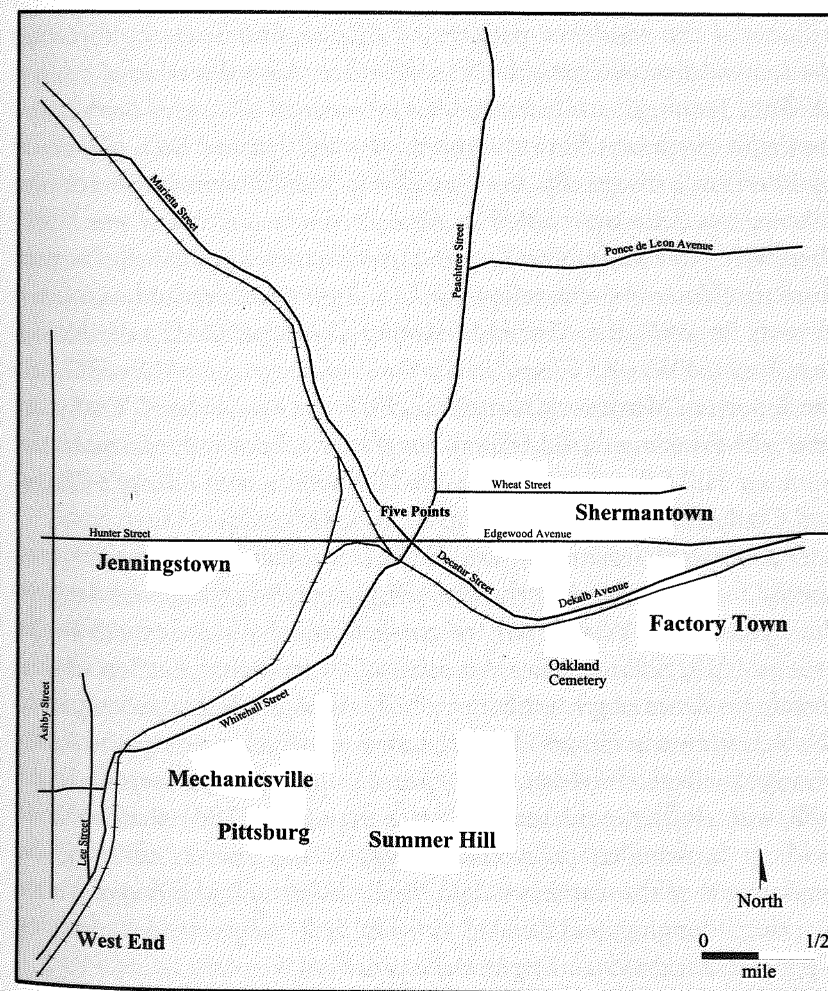
Despite the relative heterogeneity of residential patterns and rudimentary urban development that challenged the maintenance of optimal health and sanitation, not everyone suffered alike. There were already signs of the beginnings of Jim Crow by 1870, and this became more noticeable over the next decade. Poor people were thrust to the

outskirts in row houses, tenements, and shanties where unkempt streets prevailed. They were forced to live nearest the contaminated and unsightly areas on the lowest elevations of the city. Wealthier whites lived in houses located on the higher streets, which not only shielded them from natural disasters but also drained waste onto less fortunate residents living in the valleys.[3] As city officials began to address some of the needs for a clean and healthy environment, they implemented policies to benefit the most privileged citizens while willfully neglecting or exacerbating the burdens of the least powerful. In the late 1870s and 1880s, sanitary laws authorized the collection of garbage within the CBD to be dumped into outlying black and poor neighborhoods.[4] When the city began to build water and gas lines during Reconstruction, it purposely constructed them to begin and end at the city's commercial district and at the residential doorsteps of the elite. Wealthier residents had enough water to sprinkle their lawns and could also afford to purchase mineral water from secluded springs. Meanwhile, most others lacked potable water for drinking and bathing. Though wage-earners protested class-biased regulations, the majority of the population would continue to lug water from hydrants and wells until just prior to the First World War. The lack of convenient water supplies not only impaired the health of blacks, but it also encumbered the labor process for household workers reliant on water to do their jobs.[5]

Real estate promoters and street railway entrepreneurs, in many instances one and the same, were among the leading engineers of race- and class-driven urban development. In the 1870s, George W. Adair and Richard Peters introduced horse-drawn trolleys to extend the construction of fashionable Victorian mansions outside of the CBD. Adair and Peters shrewdly built the trolley lines to stretch from downtown to the southwest, conveniently passing through the new West End suburb, past their own private residences. Mass transportation encouraged like-minded professionals to purchase stately houses in the upper-class retreat.[6] From the beginning of its incorporation as a town in 1868, the West End took steps to secure the area as an exclusive suburb. Much of the town's early business was devoted to regulating saloons and driving out the "lower orders."[7]

Other street car lines were constructed in the 1870s to encourage affluent communities. The Peachtree Street line facilitated growth of

what would become Atlanta's preeminent neighborhood in the 1880s in the north, and the Ponce de Leon line provided access to a resort and mineral springs in the northeast. Two trolley lines also began and ended at principal industrial areas, enabling access to working-class whites who could afford the fee. The Marrietta Street line pulled white workers northwest, close to the Atlanta Rolling Mill, foundries, and railroad shops. The Decatur Street line, which extended east toward the



African-American and white working-class neighborhoods in Atlanta, 1880. Copyright © 1996 by Georgia State University, Department of Geography, Cartography Research Laboratory.

Oakland Cemetery in the vicinity of Factory Lot, was initiated in the 1860s as poor whites were driven from the center of town. The Atlanta and Charlotte Air-Line Railway built shops there by 1878, and the Fulton Cotton Spinning Company opened in 1881. The small rural village in this area grew into an urban slum that became known as Factory Town.[8]

The horse-drawn trolley system had the smallest effect on black settlement in the city, since most blacks could only afford to ride occasionally on Sundays for recreation. But real estate agents still influenced the residence patterns of African Americans by directing them toward certain areas in the city—those least desirable to whites. William Jennings, a Republican lawyer, owned a tract of land in the southeast quadrant of town in the third ward that had been plundered by Sherman's troops. By 1866, unable to induce whites to move into this section, Jennings turned to African Americans. But it was blacks themselves and white New England missionaries who built the institutions that fostered the development of cohesive enclaves and stimulated growth. In 1867, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination founded Wood's Chapel in the home of congregant Mary Hill, and the American Missionary Association built the Ayer School. Two years later, the Freedmen's Aid Society bought the school and renamed it the Summer Hill School. The Northern Methodists built Clarke's Chapel and Clarke University (later Clarke College).[9]

Due north of Summer Hill stood Shermantown in the fourth ward—named for the general of the liberating forces who occupied the area during the Civil War. From the perspective of a white tourist in the area in 1879, Shermantown consisted of "a random collection of huts forming a dense negro settlement." The lithograph that accompanied this description in *Harper's Weekly*, however, depicts a more consciously arranged village. Wooden shacks are set up in a circle surrounding a well, with clotheslines stretched across the middle, and a thatched roof held up by wooden poles stands right at the center, covering the implements of the washerwoman's trade. Women and men are shown working, lounging, and moving along in their daily activities, dodging a pig and chickens strutting in their pathways.[10]

Shermantown continued as the most vibrant and largest black settlement until the early twentieth century, when west side areas began to eclipse its prominence. Big Bethel AME Church was the first black

church in Atlanta, dating back to the 1840s. It was destroyed by the Union Army in 1864 and rebuilt in this area after the Civil War. James Tate, a grocer and former slave, started the first school for blacks in the church in 1865, which was then taken over by the American Missionary Association a year later and renamed the Storrs School. Bethel played a prolific role in community building since it was also the first home of Morris Brown College in 1881. Wheat Street Baptist Church and the First Congregational Church were also located in this area. The black business district on Wheat Street (later Auburn Avenue) would develop here by the end of the century.

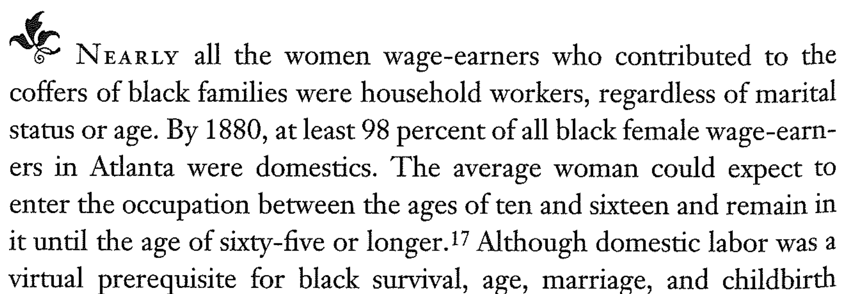
Just opposite Shermantown on the west side of town, Jenningstown began growing in 1867, named after the real estate promoter of Summer Hill. This subdivision was one of the few areas on hilly land available to black residents, and it acquired the appellation Diamond Hill. Land was priced to sell to people with few means. Congregants of New Hope Presbyterian Church, the Second Colored Methodist Church, and Friendship Baptist Church worshipped on this ground. The Haynes Street school was opened in a vacant building of Friendship Church, which was also the first site for the Atlanta Baptist Seminary (later Morehouse College) in 1879 and the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary (later Spelman College) in 1881. Atlanta University also acquired land in Diamond Hill in 1869.[11]

Three major enclaves were in place by 1870, and within just a few years Pittsburg and Mechanicsville grew next to each other in the southwest adjacent to the posh West End. The repair shops and clouds of smoke that gushed out from trains made the area resemble the industrial Pennsylvania city that inspired its name. The large number of black male common laborers employed nearby likewise accounted for the designation Mechanicsville. By 1880, more than a third of the African-American population was concentrated within these largely black enclaves.[12] Though segregation was not yet complete, these distinctive African-American neighborhoods showed marked signs of community life as their residents struggled to counter the deprivations produced by the exploitive physical and social geography of the city.

The women who constituted the majority of the black residents, and half of the black wage-earners, bore a large share of the responsibility for sustaining family and community within these neighborhoods.[13] In the 1880s, 70 percent of black families consisted of two parents. In

contrast to most white households of a similar type, most black women shared the burden of wage earning with their male spouses.[14] Black men were paid relatively higher wages than women, but even the combination of both spouses' incomes was sometimes insufficient for establishing a comfortable standard of living. Nor was marriage a guarantee of two steady incomes. Unemployment was a common experience for male common laborers—not to mention separation or the death of a husband, which could reduce a family's resources unexpectedly. As one widowed washerwoman recalled later: "I married a good man and we lived together seventeen years and had six children. He died and left me with all of these children to raise. He was a good husband and father and provided for his family as best he could." She remembered one of her most distressing days after her spouse's death when her children cried for food. "I hated to borrow. I scraped up enough meal to make a little hoe-cake of bread. I broke it among them and went back to my ironing, crying."[15]

Disproportionately high mortality among African Americans could take its emotional and financial toll on surviving relatives and friends. But the existence of relatively small urban families, on average six or fewer people living in the same household, had its benefits. Small family size permitted the pooling of resources, such as two families sharing one dwelling. This practice was evident in Shermantown where houses tended to be larger, though not as apparent in other areas. In Jenningstown, however, African-American families shared their living quarters with individual boarders at a higher rate than they did elsewhere in the city. The presence of several adults in a household increased the chances that families could survive on scant wages, as the one-third of black women living in Atlanta and other cities who carried the burden of raising families alone could attest.[16]

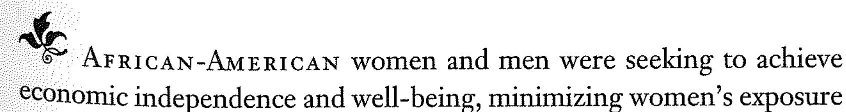


NEARLY all the women wage-earners who contributed to the coffers of black families were household workers, regardless of marital status or age. By 1880, at least 98 percent of all black female wage-earners in Atlanta were domestics. The average woman could expect to enter the occupation between the ages of ten and sixteen and remain in it until the age of sixty-five or longer.[17] Although domestic labor was a virtual prerequisite for black survival, age, marriage, and childbirth

affected the decisions women made about wage labor. Younger and single women tended to become general housemaids and child-nurses. Many girls were hired at a young age to perform tasks from rocking cradles to the full range of caretaking responsibilities for charges not much younger than themselves.

Pre-adolescent Dorothy Bolden acquired jobs washing baby diapers and babysitting when she and her brother helped her mother by picking up and delivering the laundry. Older and married women, especially those with children, chose cooking and washing. As Sarah Hill explained her employment history: "I'se been workin' ever since I knowed what work was. 'Fo' I got married I maided and cooked . . . Fust, I maided awhile, and then I cooked awhile, I never was no more good at workin' out after I got married and started havin' chillun, so I just stayed at home and tuk in washin'."[18] Younger women concentrated in general service positions and contributed to their parents' income. But once they married or began giving birth to children of their own, they made occupational choices that gave them more time and flexibility for their new responsibilities. Employers did not always appreciate these decisions, especially when they became attached to workers they liked. Georgia Telfair had worked for one family from age fourteen until age twenty: "My wite folkes begged me not to leave 'em, when I told 'em I wuz gwine to marry Joe Telfair."[19]

Married women like Georgia Telfair made decisions about wage work in conjunction with spouses who often preferred to assume the major responsibility for breadwinning themselves, if their incomes permitted. Some women expressed with pride their husband's desires to keep them out of wage housework, as Carrie Nancy Fryer exclaimed: "Dat was a good husband! I had six chillun. He say: Honey, no! I workin' makin' enough to support you. All I want you to do is keep dis house clean and me and my chillun." Mr. Fryer promised to pay Mrs. Fryer the money every week she would have normally earned from wage work, if she would stay home and take care of their family.[20] Fryer appreciated the gesture, but she would sneak out occasionally and do wage work.



AFRICAN-AMERICAN women and men were seeking to achieve economic independence and well-being, minimizing women's exposure

to white employers' impositions and sexual exploitation, despite the protestations of employers, who derided these efforts as "playing the lady" or displays of false pretension.[21] Moreover, black men, like women, valued the work that women did for their own families, as Edward Bacon, a brickmason, suggested. "During my first wife's lifetime she never worked out for no other family, for she didn't have to do it. I was making plenty to support her, and the only work she did was her own housework." During his second marriage, however, his unemployment made it necessary for his wife Susie to take in washing, which he also respected: "that dollar a week she gets for it comes in mighty handy when I'm out of work. A dollar's worth of flour or meal will keep you from going hungry a long time when you're out hunting for a job."[22]

African-American women established their own preferences within domestic labor, but these sometimes clashed with the expectations of employers. Initial negotiations occurred during the hiring process. Most household workers were hired by word of mouth, some by newspaper advertisements or employment agencies. Workers exchanged information among themselves about the availability of jobs and the reputations of employers seeking help. Women leaving good situations took special care to pass on the jobs to younger relatives or friends. Employers likewise communicated with each other to secure workers. The death of an employer or changed family circumstances prompted employers to place their favorite workers in the homes of other family members.[23] The average white wage-earner's family in the South engaged the services of at least a washerwoman. A middle-class home employed a general domestic in addition or perhaps a cook, full or part time. An upper-middle-class family most likely added a child-nurse. And the most elite white families enlarged their staff to include representatives from all of these positions, as well as specialized cooks, chambermaids, lady's maids, waiters, kitchen sculleries, butlers, and valets.[24] Although in theory workers were usually hired to fill specific occupations, in practice they were usually required to assume many roles.

Most workers labored from sunup to sundown seven days a week, though laundresses usually worked only six days. Their wages ranged on average from $4 to $8 a month; though in a few cases, some women earned as much as $10 to $12. The remarkable characteristic of these rates was that they changed so little over time and across occupations. When variations existed, cooks tended to command the highest wages per hour and kitchen sculleries the lowest. Laundresses could increase their earnings by adding on clients and seeking help from family members. These were low wages compared to those of most other workers at the time.[25]

Low wages made it difficult to survive, but no wages were even worse. Some employers cheated their workers by contriving spurious grounds for denying them their rightful earnings. Or sometimes employers would substitute perishables or durable goods in lieu of cash for remuneration, without the workers' consent. Daphne, a domestic worker, normally received between $3 and $8 a month in wages, according to her employer's record. Though the circumstances prompting a change in this pattern during one month are not clear, Daphne received okra and rice valued at $6.50 and $.50 in cash in lieu of her usual compensation.[26] Women could also face deductions for behavioral infractions such as lost time and impudence, or for breaking or misplacing objects.[27]

Bona fide agreements between workers and employers could lead to the use of nonmonetary compensation. But since domestic labor did not rank high in the priorities of the employers' budgets, changes in finances could prompt nonpayment or false promises to pay later. The low value that employers placed on domestic labor is strikingly apparent when one compares the outlays for wages to other expenditures: the yearly sum of wages for several workers usually constituted a mere fraction of the total yearly budgets of middle-class households.[28] Employers often spent considerably more money on their most trivial or inconsequential expenses—such as chewing gum, liquor, or donations to street beggars.[29]

There were distinct, if overlapping, skills and talents involved in household labor, and all of it was arduous. Even as the expectations of good housekeeping dovetailed with changes in the economy and family life, very little changed in the actual labor processes of housework in the nineteenth century. Technological advances hardly ever reached individual homes, and the few that did made limited improvements.[30]

The specific duties and work conditions of general domestics varied according to the economic means of employers and the number of other servants hired. Hauling water and tending fires consumed a large

part of the daily routine. The work of servants in wealthy families was facilitated by their access to gas and indoor plumbing. This advantage, however, was offset by the ostentatious surroundings and lavish objects that required extra care. Servants working in more modest homes might have fewer articles to maintain, but the work was harder if they lacked amenities such as piped-in water.

Any number of a dizzying array of chores were required of general domestics. They changed the bed and table linen, counted and separated the wash to prepare for the washerwoman, dusted furniture and staircases, scrubbed floors, emptied and cleaned chamber pots, polished silver, brushed carpets, and watered indoor plants. Sometimes they went on errands, fed and watered pets, helped with garden and yard work. Their bosses might also require cooking, helping with preserving and preparing foodstuffs, or washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen. Women hired to perform general duties would sometimes do the laundry, ironing, mending, and caring for children.[31] General maids were considered to be not only household workers, but also servants who performed a ceremonial role. In greeting arriving guests at the door, they signaled entry into households of high regard and social status. But work indeed it was, not only to perform the arduous physical labor, but also to respond to employers' constant beckoning to satisfy their wants. The relatively few servants who lived with employers faced the added encumbrance of having to respond to unpredictable intrusions that diminished time off for themselves.

Child-nurses would arrive early in the day to keep children occupied and protected while their parents engaged in other remunerative and social activities. One nurse described her duties as follows: "I not only have to nurse a little white child, now eleven months old, but I have to act as playmate or 'handy-andy,' not to say governess, to three other children in the home, the oldest of whom is only nine years of age." She washed and fed the children and put them to bed, which required around-the-clock work according to the infant's and children's needs. But even when the children demanded little attention, the work did not end there. "It's 'Mammy, do this,' or 'Mammy, do that,' or 'Mammy, do the other,' from my mistress, all the time. So it is not strange to see 'Mammy' watering the lawn in front with the garden hose, sweeping the sidewalk, mopping the porch and halls, dusting around the house, helping the cook, or darning the socks."[32] These child-care providers were often the primary caretakers of white children, yet their subordination imparted early lessons of power and privilege to their charges. Adolescent white Southerners witnessed and participated in the rituals eliciting servility and deference very early in life, learning the concrete meaning of their racial and class position vis-à-vis black servants.

Dorothy Bolden recalled the complicated relationships between nurse-maids and the children they cared for. Bolden loved taking care of children from the time she started babysitting for her mother's laundry patrons. She continued to take care of children as part of her duties as a general household worker when she became an adult. "You gave as much love to their children that you would give to yours almost," she acknowledged. "You respected the child and you protected the child in that home while you was working," she continued. Bolden stressed the emotional work expected of domestics and especially child-nurses, and she lamented the lack of regard that she suffered in return. She explained that white parents "would teach their children that they was better than you was. She dark, she ignorant," Bolden explained. She puzzled over the contradiction in this hostility: "'Cause when their mother would leave them and you had to take care of them, if they stumped their toe, you had to kiss it and comfort that child, pet him and let him know somebody cared." Bolden also suggested that white children behaved ambivalently toward her. A child might treat her with respect out of the parents' sight, but "he would turn around when his mother get there and spit on you. Call you black, call you nigger."[33]

If taking care of children was the most emotionally draining work, cooking required the most skill and creativity. Cooking was the only household chore to benefit from technological advances in this period.[34] The cast iron stove, common by the late nineteenth century, was the most important improvement, replacing the open fireplaces that had reigned in earlier kitchens. Cast iron stoves required less fuel, worked more efficiently and safely, and were built high enough off the ground to prevent constant bending by the cook. But the lack of built-in thermostats forced cooks to gauge the level of heat through trial and error—arranging dampers and drafts or placing foods in strategic spots according to estimates of the time and degree of heat required. In other respects, food preparation remained virtually the same in the 1880s as it had been in 1800. Most black cooks developed improvisational styles of food preparation that defied the notion of scientific housewifery.

They measured and added ingredients according to previous experience and the impulses of their imaginations. Black women recognized the intelligence required for the craft. As one cook described her work: "Everything I does, I does by my head; its all brain work."[35] In addition to the creative labor, cooks also washed dishes, mopped floors, cleaned and maintained the stoves, pots, pans, and utensils. The degree of autonomy they enjoyed varied, but they generally planned the meals and marketed for groceries.[36]

The comfort evoked by the warmth of kitchens and their pleasant smells made them a prime social space, especially for children of the employing household in search of company and treats. In this way, cooks also contributed to raising white children who sought refuge in their work areas. A white family without a cook was such an anomaly in one Georgia town that a visitor asked: "But who do the children talk to?"[37] If some employers were preoccupied with satisfying the needs of their children, cooks were concerned about their own families. Cooks sometimes had flexible workdays that allowed them to go home in between meals or leave following the afternoon supper.[38]

Cooking may have required the most inventiveness, but laundry work was the most difficult job. Unlike cooking, which benefited from technological advances in stoves, laundry work became more dreadful as a result of industrialization. Manufactured cloth not only increased the amount of clothing people obtained, but the production of washable fabric such as cotton increased the need for washing. Laundry work was the single most onerous chore in the life of a nineteenth-century woman, and the first chore she would hire someone else to perform whenever the slightest bit of discretionary income was available. Even poor urban women might send out at least some of their wash. In the North, this meant that women, especially those living in tenements lacking the proper equipment, might send their dirty clothes to commercial laundries.[39] In the South, however, where the adoption of technological advances lagged and manual laborers predominated, many poor whites sent out part or all of their wash to black women.[40]

A few washerwomen may have been too poor to afford the proper equipment, or too isolated from other women who could share their equipment, so that they ended up working in the homes of their employers.[41] But normally, most laundresses worked in their own homes and neighborhoods. The work of the washerwoman began on

Monday mornings and continued throughout the week until she delivered clean clothes on Saturday. The sight of "tall, straight negro girls marching through the street carrying enormous bundles of soiled clothes upon their heads," from the homes of patrons to their own homes, was common every week.[42]

Gallons of water had to be toted from wells, pumps, or hydrants for washing, boiling, and rinsing clothes. Washerwomen made their own soap from lye, starch from wheat bran, and wash tubs from beer barrels cut in half. They supplied washboards, batting blocks or sticks, work benches, fuel, and cast iron pots for boiling. Different fabrics required varying degrees of scrubbing and then soaking in separate tubs with appropriate water temperatures. When weather permitted, work was often performed outdoors under shaded trees. The saturated garments were hung on clotheslines, plum bushes, or barbed wire fences—marked by the telltale signs of three-pronged snags on the finished products. But inclement conditions moved the work inside, and clotheslines were hung across the main room. Once the clothes were dry, several heavy irons were heated on the stove and used alternately. After each use, the irons were rubbed with beeswax and wiped clean to minimize the buildup of residue. One by one items were sprayed or dampened with water or starch and pressed into crisp form.[43]

Flexibility marked the main advantage of laundry work, especially for women with children. They could intermingle washing with the fulfillment of other responsibilities and incorporate help from other family members. "I could clean my hearth good and nice and set my irons in front of the fire and iron all day [with]out stopping . . . I cooked and ironed at the same time," stated Sarah Hill.[44] Male relatives sometimes picked up dirty clothes in wheelbarrows or wagons. Children could also help with pickup and deliveries, as Dorothy Bolden and her brother did, assist with maintaining the fire, or beat the clothes with sticks.[45]

THE RANGE of job options for black women was severely limited to working for white families. But within these strictures, laundry work was the optimal choice for a black woman who wanted to create a life of her own. The washerwoman was the archetypal domestic laborer in Atlanta. By 1880, laundry work engaged more black women than any other single category of domestic work, and washerwomen outnum-

bered male common laborers.[46] A significant shift had occurred in the proportion of laundresses among household workers between 1870 and 1880; general domestics and cooks combined increased by only 15 percent, while laundresses increased more than 150 percent.[47]

The intense struggles between workers and employers over the character of wage work following emancipation influenced black women's decisions to establish themselves in jobs that permitted some of the advantages of a home business. Their constant movement in and out of the labor market demonstrated their incessant effort to try to find better terms for their work. One important advantage of laundry work was that whites were not employers of laundresses as much as they were clients. This did not mean that washerwomen could unilaterally set prices or establish terms, however, as grievances prompting strikes in Southern cities would make clear. The sharp increase in the number of washerwomen can also be attributed to the depression of the 1870s, which affected employers' fortunes, compelling them to make decisions to send out their clothes to laundresses rather than hiring full-time domestics.[48] The influx of white migrants into the city who were wage-earners also increased the demand for laundresses, whose services many could afford. Atlanta, and the urban South more generally, had the highest concentration of domestic workers per capita in the nation. The large number of laundresses contributed disproportionately to this regional discrepancy.[49]

Domestic workers who spent most of their workday in white workplaces fought to gain concessions from employers to mitigate the impositions of wage labor. In constructing lives consistent with the freedom that emancipation had bestowed they established a number of goals and strategies for achieving them. The desire to distance themselves physically from erstwhile masters ranked high in their priorities. In a walking city like Atlanta, cooks, maids, and child-nurses could live in areas that were within easy reach by foot, yet were far enough to establish autonomous lives. Though the "marble-cake" pattern in antebellum cities intermixed servants' houses in white neighborhoods to keep them in check, ex-slave women's insistence on living in their own homes contributed to the growing pattern of de facto residential segregation by race.[50] A minority of household workers continued to live either in the homes or in the backyards of employers after emancipation, but most were interspersed among the wider black community.

This pattern was unlike the situation in the northeast, where most domestic workers, who were native-born white and European women, lived in the homes of employers.[51] Black women in the urban South perceived few advantages from living-in, as "free" accommodations and food were usually meager, especially in comparison to the personal sacrifices required of them.

White employers responded ambivalently to this trend. Some resented the loss of control the arrangement exacted. "Very few of them, cooks or servants, will consent to sleep on the premises where they work as servants. They seem to think that it is something against their freedom if they sleep where they are employed," an employer unwittingly revealed. "Married or unmarried. They will rent a little house, perhaps a mile off, and pay $10 a month for it, and go there to sleep, when perhaps you would be willing to pay them just as much and give them a comfortable bed or cottage on your own place," he continued.[52] But others had mixed emotions about living in close contact with blacks. As the early growth of upper-class suburbs such as the West End suggested, whites were increasingly creating exclusive retreats to escape from the inner city, though they wished to do so without relinquishing the convenience of having black servants nearby.

In the spirit of securing their independence and making decisions about wage work that were commensurate with the needs of their families and communities, black women continued to rely on the tactic of resistance they had employed with great determination during the postwar period—they quit. Their movement in and out of the labor market continued to evoke conflict and dominated the private conversations and public deliberations among whites about their perennial "servant problem." "One great need of Atlanta is cooks who won't leave families without notice, and breakfast and housegirls who will remain a month," stated a familiar news report, which broached an alternative. "Isn't Atlanta getting large enough to have a few white servants?"[53] The idea of hiring white servants would be bandied about in discussions about the "servant problem," but very few employers ever took any concrete steps to make it real.

One employer described the inconvenience caused by black women's audacious self-assertion: "It is actually dangerous to invite company three days ahead. I have known them to leave when they knew that invitations were out for a dining in the house; they would just leave

without any particular reason at all, but simply from some foolish desire for change."[54] Rather than expressing "foolish desire," the workers wielded "incipient strikes" to deliberately sabotage a social event in order to cause embarrassment and shame to employers forced to entertain their guests without servants.[55]

Rather than abide by the strictures of unending hours of year-round toil, household workers also quit temporarily to labor in their own homes to take care of sick family or to participate in social activities. When church groups or secret societies sponsored train excursions as fund-raising and social events, employers were guaranteed sudden departures of their household help. "No matter how important the occasion may be, or how urgent the need for their services, whether you have a wedding in the house, or sickness, or whatever you may have, they will just leave the cooking-stove and the housework and everything else and go off on these 'scursions,'" one employer complained.[56] From the point of view of workers, however, time out of the labor market and unpaid work were as vital to the lives of working-class people as cash wages and more important to their personal enrichment.[57]

Quitting was a thriving strategy for resisting domination precisely because it could not be prohibited in a free labor system. Though some workers may have openly confronted their employers before departing, quitting did not require open or direct antagonism. Workers who had the advantage of living in their own homes could easily make up excuses for leaving, or leave without any notice at all. These small and fleeting victories of individuals accumulated into bigger results as workers throughout the city repeatedly executed this tactic, frustrating the nerves of employers.

In the process of everyday life, African-American household workers found other ways of seeking justice besides quitting. One such strategy was reappropriating the material assets of their employers for their own use. The "pan-toting" custom of taking away table scraps or dry goods presents a microcosm of the competing expectations of workers and employers and the encroachment of the wage system. This customary practice evolved during the transition from slave to free labor as an expression of a dissenting "moral economy." It is consistent with the "vails" and perquisites claimed by servants across cultures and dating back centuries, however.[58] African-American women claimed rights and privileges as waged workers in part on the basis of their former

status as slaves who had produced the wealth of their masters without compensation. Household laborers expected employers to acknowledge their obligation to ensure basic subsistence openly, by supplementing wages with leftover foodstuffs, or else they literally reclaimed the fruits of their labor without the employers' consent.

Pan-toting helped to alleviate some of the onerous consequences of low-wage labor for black women. Some employers acceded to the practice, openly admitting that they paid low wages with table scraps in mind. Domestic workers who had no legal remedies to redress grievances sometimes used pan-toting to counter employers' tactics of dishonesty involving wages. Some employers interpreted "free" labor literally to mean expropriating labor without compensation. Outright refusals to pay wages, the use of coercion to pawn off extraneous articles in lieu of cash, depriving workers of wages for trivial "offenses," and assessing "insurance fees" were common occurrences.[59] Despite this, some employers attacked pan-toting as theft, as one employer celebrating the departure of a cook exclaimed: "This is our Emancipation day! We are free from *Susan Bell* . . . She has been robbing our table for months to support her mother."[60] The issue of perquisites would not be resolved to anyone's satisfaction and would become even more contested in the twentieth century.

Stealing breaks, feigning illness, and sloughing off at work were other strategies used by discontented workers. Child-nurses would sometimes schedule walks or outings with their charges in order to pass conveniently through their own neighborhoods to conduct business they would otherwise neglect. Feigning illness was a popular tactic, especially for live-in workers, who had less control over their time during or after work. On the spur of the moment, a dispute resolved without satisfaction to a cook or general maid could lead her to take action immediately by performing her job poorly. Even servants who were considered "well-raised" and "properly" trained by their employers would show "indifference" to their work if they felt unduly provoked. As one employer explained, "Tell them to wipe up the floor, and they will splash away from one end of the room to the other; and if you tell them that is not the way to do it, they will either be insolent or perhaps give you a vacant stare as if they were very much astonished that you thought that was not the way to do it, and they will keep right on."[61]

These tactics no doubt brought moments of relief and satisfaction to domestic workers, but gestures that outwitted employers or wore on their nerves were never sufficient to meet the needs of black women's subsistence. African-American women relied on their abilities to piece together a livelihood not only with the work they did for white families, but also with their non-remunerative labor for their own families.

The significance of laundry work to black families and communities is thrown into greatest relief within this context. The high visibility of laundry workers in black communities is illustrated by the prominent location of the wash tub in the center of the Shermantown village, or by the fact that one small Georgia town took its name—Shakerag—from the characteristic billowing clotheslines that enveloped the black settlement.[62] Laundry work was critical to the process of community-building because it encouraged women to work together in communal spaces within their neighborhoods, fostering informal networks of reciprocity that sustained them through health and sickness, love and heartaches, birth and death.

The practical value of communal labor was realized in sharing that broadened the meaning of kinship to create interdependence among women.[63] One widow washerwoman was given the assistance she needed from a neighbor who had saved the table scraps from her employer's table. Dinah Campbell explained other circumstances that could give rise to women pitching in for one another. "When my sister, what stayed home with Mandy and washed and ironed, took sick and died I had to take her place at the washboard," she stated. Sister Mandy picked up the story to explain how the circle of support continued: "Since Sister Jane done got no' count for work, Sister Ann come along here and axed us to take her in. We done it, and when she ain't workin' out she helps us with the washin' and ironin'." "Sister Ann," she noted when questioned about their relationship, "ain't no kin to us."[64]

This support system also facilitated the management of child care; washerwomen would watch the children of neighbors left at home or in the streets to fend for themselves while their parents worked away. And for washerwomen's own children, especially girls old enough to assist, laundry work nourished mother-daughter relationships. Girls learned the skills of their mothers' trades and were schooled in the lessons of adulthood within the camaraderie of women's work. Anna

Parks recalled her mother's words as she passed her knowledge and skills to her daughter: "Some day I'll be gone fum dis world, and you won't know nuffin' 'bout takin' keer of yo'self, less you learn right now." Parks remembered taking those lessons seriously and feeling proud after washing her first load of clothes and collecting her earnings. She saw this accomplishment as a rite of passage: "I felt like I wuz a grown [w]oman den," she stated.[65]

The intimacy of laundry work inspired unity, but it could also produce friction between women. Gossip cut both ways; individuals used it to pass on vital—literally life-saving—information. But as rumor and innuendo, it could also evoke jealousy or rouse ill will. A roaming reporter described the "true Lycurgus style" of a community laundry spot as a place "where all wash clothes harmoniously together until some sister gets in a bad humor."[66] Sharing did not occur indiscriminately, for past experiences determined one's reputation for adherence to social expectations. Nor did women redistribute scarce resources simply on the basis of abstract or sentimental principles. In the phrasing of the vernacular, working-class women gave with the understanding that what goes around comes around—they anticipated reciprocity. "Bad humor" could result from disagreements over the conduct or violation of this social rule. Public brawls and street fights were used as a method of airing grievances, seeking support, and obtaining resolution, with the sanction of the wider community. The passion with which women took their quarrels to the streets alarmed city authorities, who often dispatched the police. Though different assumptions may have informed this intervention, the arrests of working-class women for "disorderly conduct" frequently involved conflicts between individuals and groups within the community.[67]

Working in a communal setting also made it possible for women to use time during the day to salvage resources within their own immediate environment. Early in the morning before the business day commenced in Atlanta, women and children could be seen rummaging through the garbage pails of groceries, restaurants, fruit stands, and other merchants. They collected discarded cinders to generate fuel for cooking or for the laundry. Other goods from the public domain were recycled for use, trade, or resale in the neighborhood or in local pawn shops in exchange for cash. Sometimes children were sent out on their own to collect items for their mothers. "Troops of little

black boys, bare-footed, bare-headed, and ragged 'to a degree'" were noticed picking up rags.[68] Some whites objected to poor blacks' scavenging the streets and blamed the women for spreading disease and contamination. Since "only the extreme processes of decay cause them to reject what may be discarded," these critics urged the city health officer to remove garbage dumps, or at least to force merchants to sort out the spoiled throwaways from the merely unattractive but recyclable items.[69]

Shopping for fresh foods and dry goods was a luxury that not all working-class women could afford. The chickens and pig spotted in Summer Hill provide evidence that rural migrants continued to produce some of their own food once they arrived in the city. Into the 1880s, a few African-American men farmed on small plots on the edge of town, returning to the city on the weekends to spend time with their families. The backyard gardens and livestock seen in Atlanta were characteristic of urban scenes in working-class communities—in the North as well as the South. Fertile plots not only supplied food to their owners but also enabled sharing and fostered sociability among family, friends, and neighbors.[70] When black women were able to purchase foods, they bought what they needed in small quantities from black or Jewish street vendors, peddlers, and grocery stores near their homes. This meant, of course, that they could not obtain volume discounts, which raised their food costs. Hardly a disregard for economy, as some of their contemporaries claimed, this minimal shopping prevented food spoilage and permitted budgeting of small cash outlays, especially when wages were paid irregularly.[71]

A select few black women were able to stretch their earnings, save money, and buy property. Elizabeth Pope, a washerwoman and cook, moved to Shermantown from Augusta with her husband Alfred and their five children during Reconstruction. The couple opened a store in Summer Hill and accumulated over $1,000 in property in Elizabeth's name by the time she was forty-two in 1873.[72] Annie Johnson was among the small number of black seamstresses in Atlanta in 1880 and held over $1,000 in property at the age of thirty. Unlike Pope, however, Johnson did not have the benefit of a husband. She raised three sons and cared for an eleven-year-old girl with the help of her mother, a washerwoman, in Jenningstown.[73] Pope and Johnson were exceptional black women able to accumulate relatively substantial property through

domestic work. Most domestic workers did not accumulate property, however, beyond the pots and pans and modest furnishings in their homes. Those black women who did acquire property had to work overtime and combine their savings with resources of other relatives to buy even cheap houses.[74]

Despite the constraints of the Southern occupational structure, in which black women had only limited access to jobs outside private white homes, a few black women applied their skills to jobs elsewhere. Black women were hired in boardinghouses, brothels, and, increasingly in the 1880s, in hotels.[75] Working in commercial establishments sometimes paid higher wages than jobs in private homes and lessened direct paternalistic supervision. Immediately after emancipation, a woman identified only as Rachel moved to Atlanta with the idea of starting a laundry business. She hired several helpers before she arrived, including her daughter Frances. In a peculiar twist of customary Southern labor relationships, Frances returned to visit her ex-owner in the country to see if she would take care of her children while Frances helped her mother with the business. The ex-owner, appalled by the suggestion, later delighted in the apparent failure of the venture.[76]

Some black women established à la carte meal services or lunch carts. Dozens of these six-by-nine-foot establishments erected on busy streets were renowned for their fried fish, boiled ham, and bread. Some served as a catering service for white families as well. Many of these establishments became common gathering places for African Americans to meet and socialize. Some white residents found their presence objectionable, especially because they attracted large and boisterous crowds on Sundays and were rumored to serve alcohol in violation of the city's blue laws.[77]

WHATEVER their particular occupations, subsistence did not direct all the activities in working-class women's neighborhoods—though recreation and personal gratification could also serve economic ends. Lunch carts no doubt generated income and at the same time created outlets for leisure. Other places for leisure were the railroad depot, alleys, side streets, front porches, churches, and fraternal halls in African-American neighborhoods. In the conventional tone of a bemused outsider, a white Northern journalist traveling through the city just

after Reconstruction described what must have been a typical scene near the railroad depot: "I find five laborers, each black as the deuce of spades, sitting upon a circle of battered stools and soap boxes, and forming a 'string band' despite the inconsistency of a cornet." Medicine shows that included displays of patent pharmaceuticals and minstrel performers to draw attention would be set up in a vacant lot downtown near the railroad depot. Blackface black entertainers dressed in burlesque fashion could be found "dancing jigs, reciting conundrums, and banging banjo, bones, and tambourine" as two to three hundred spectators watched, sang, and danced along with them.[78]

The sighting of African-American performers painted in blackface in the 1870s was consistent with broader national trends. Minstrelsy was the first form of popular culture, though it was originally performed by and for white men exclusively. But by the mid-nineteenth century, authentic slaves and ex-slaves challenged the monopoly once enjoyed by Caucasian actors mimicking Negroes. Within a few decades, black minstrel touring companies such as Silas Green's show from New Orleans and Pat Chappelle's Rabbit's Foot Minstrels from Port Gibson, Mississippi, traveled throughout the South; they featured musicians, singers, dancers, comics, and novelty acts under large canvas tents, performing material written and composed by other blacks.[79]

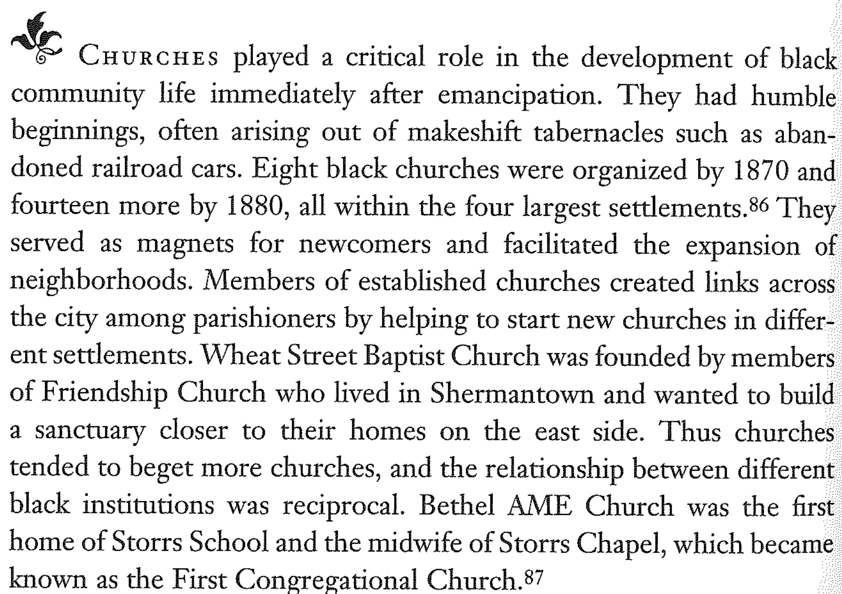
By 1880, outlets of commercial leisure in Atlanta were concentrated mainly on Ivy, Harris, Peters, and Decatur Streets, all located near the CBD and Shermantown, with the exception of Peters Street in the southwest, just above Mechanicsville and Pittsburg.[80] Blacks could frequent barber shops, billiard rooms, lunch rooms, restaurants, and beer saloons where they could play cards, gamble, smoke, eat, drink, and dance. At the corner of Decatur and Ivy Street stood the Willingham building, notorious for its association with worldly indulgences that landed people in jail. The building served as a boardinghouse and office space for a shoe shop, restaurant, billiard room, and beer saloon. As one investigative reporter described it: "Here by the light of a few smoky oil lamps, and to the soul-harrowing music of a string band, the colored beaux and dusky damsels, who rarely speak to a white person, trip the light fantastic toe, not forgetting to refresh themselves at the saloon counter when each dance is ended."[81]

Fun and reprieve from hard work awaited working-class women on the streets, but not without a price. If light-hearted fraternizing turned

into open conflicts, or when the police launched gratuitous raids, black women and men were carted off to jail, subjected to severe penalties for alleged petty crimes. African Americans began publicly criticizing police brutality and calling for the city to hire black officers in the 1860s. They condemned the over-zealous record of arrests that were often inspired by ambitions for higher salaries and promotions. Denied changes in public policy to reflect these concerns, blacks united to reduce apprehensions by providing asylum to individuals chased by patrolmen.[82] Nearly 60 percent of the individuals arrested in Atlanta in the 1880s were black, although blacks made up only 44 percent of the city's population. Most of the alleged criminals were men, but black women were far more likely to get arrested than white. Blacks represented 80 percent of the women apprehended, and over 90 percent of those actually sent to jail. Yet black women constituted less than half of the female population.[83] Black women arrested for minor crimes were often sentenced to work on the chain gangs at the city stockade or leased to private firms that contracted convict labor. Beatings, rapes, and sexual harassment by male convicts and officials were common experiences. Some employers capitalized on this captive labor force by buying out prisoners' terms in exchange for release in supervised custody.[84]

Violence and crime were among the many challenges of urban life that required inventiveness for survival, in the absence of protection or support from governing authorities. Working-class women pieced together their livelihoods beyond the labor that they performed in exchange for wages, using the various consumption strategies described earlier that were critical both materially and socially. Scavenging, borrowing, and pan-toting helped to increase the provisions for subsistence of those with little cash. Domestic workers transformed raw products into consumable goods for their own families, the same labor that they performed in the homes of their employers, albeit with much more austerity.[85] They conducted this activity at the level of neighborhoods, creating informal social networks in communal laundry spots, on the streets, in lunch carts, and in dance halls. The casual mechanisms of mutual aid, in turn, facilitated the development of more formal institutions such as churches and secret societies which provided other outlets for social, spiritual, and political expression, as well as economic cooperation. Churches and secret societies then tended

to reinforce the ties that bound people together as family, friends, and neighbors.



CHURCHES played a critical role in the development of black community life immediately after emancipation. They had humble beginnings, often arising out of makeshift tabernacles such as abandoned railroad cars. Eight black churches were organized by 1870 and fourteen more by 1880, all within the four largest settlements.[86] They served as magnets for newcomers and facilitated the expansion of neighborhoods. Members of established churches created links across the city among parishioners by helping to start new churches in different settlements. Wheat Street Baptist Church was founded by members of Friendship Church who lived in Shermantown and wanted to build a sanctuary closer to their homes on the east side. Thus churches tended to beget more churches, and the relationship between different black institutions was reciprocal. Bethel AME Church was the first home of Storrs School and the midwife of Storrs Chapel, which became known as the First Congregational Church.[87]

African-American churches served a multitude of spiritual, social, and political functions. Sunday, of course, was dedicated to religious activities, as individuals attended Sunday school and worship service, sometimes crisscrossing between programs at several institutions on the same day. During the week, converts attended prayer gatherings and meetings of various organizations. Periodic revivals, most frequent during the summer, played especially important functions in spiritual rejuvenation, adding new members, reinvigorating the commitments of the long-lasting, and unifying different congregations. The seriousness of African Americans' commitment to these religious activities was demonstrated by their willingness to sacrifice time from remunerative labor, if necessary, to participate. Household workers provoked the ire of employers by abandoning secular toil for what some scorned as "fetish follies."

In the summer of 1878, a two-week-long revival held at Wheat Street Baptist Church occupied the days and nights of many African Americans, including domestic workers. One employer complained that a cook spent four days at the revival, forcing her to hire a replacement. Another noted a washerwoman who had "gone crazy with the prospect of getting religion," making it impossible to rely on her to wash clothes

during the entire duration of the sacred jubilee. These grievances led the newspaper to editorialize: "Revivals may be a very good thing in their way, but when our cooks and washerwomen throw down their work and hurry off to the church to spend the week, they get to be a nuisance."[88]

Churches provided outlets of collective self-help, fostered leadership development, sanctioned group morals, and promoted public and private education. On special occasions, fairs were organized both as festive public events and as opportunities to raise money. The churches were sanctuaries for important secular and associational meetings, and they also provided settings for organizing ward clubs and political rallies, plotting electoral strategies, and coalescing votes.[89]

Religious institutions enhanced their power and position within the community not only by their individual acts but also by uniting in Sunday school and church associations that linked members of the same denomination within a city-wide and state network. These groups operated as umbrella organizations that carried out the same spiritual and social functions on a larger scale: they were involved in social reform movements like temperance, raised funds for black educational institutions, and allotted missionary funds. Their conventions promoted leadership development, skills in governance, and religious education, and also provided an arena for applauding the most dedicated religious converts. Those persons selected to represent their home churches as delegates, for example, were honored simply by their selection and obtained opportunities to partake in the widening of social networks.[90]

Although women composed the large majority of church members, their status and power were disproportionately small. Their leadership was significant and vital but usually subordinated to the most prestigious positions held by men, especially pastors. Toward the end of the century, some religious organizations devised rules for church governance that explicitly forbade women from voting and participating in official debates. A controversy over women's proper roles came to a head in the Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia in 1893. Those who favored a stronger role for women split from the old order to form the General State Baptist Convention of Georgia. The dispute at the local level mirrored similar controversies at the national level, as Baptist women's outspoken advocacy of missionary

roles and spiritual leadership was rebuked by male ministers.[91] The church could be stifling in other ways. Its commitment to governing the totality of people's lives addressed many of the needs of poor people beyond their spirituality, but it could also bring down the wrath of fire and brimstone against those who violated church rules or religious covenants, excommunicating or harshly punishing those who were judged as miscreants.[92]

Mutual aid and benevolent associations, also called secret societies, with antebellum roots in many Southern cities, rivaled churches in their popularity. They provided benefits for widows, orphans, and ill or unemployed members, as well as outlets for education, trade association, and political and social expression. Yet these were not always mutually exclusive institutions; some of these benevolent associations were organized through churches. Regardless of their origins, many exhibited religious influences. Names such as the Daughters of Samaria, Daughters of Bethel, Sisters of Friendship, and Sisters of Love demonstrated reverence for biblical figures and principles that meshed with their organizational purposes. It was not by accident that one group identified itself as the Daughters of Zion—the place of refuge, especially for the poor.[93] Church-affiliated organizations tended to emphasize raising funds for the church and aiding people outside of their organizations. The Daughters of Samaria, for example, started out as a small group in 1875 and grew to a membership of 500 by 1880. As in Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan who helped the traveler when he needed it most, the Daughters of Samaria identified themselves as latter-day missionaries to their people. When a yellow fever epidemic broke out in Savannah and Memphis in the 1870s, the Order sent charitable objects. Likewise, they aided the poor, sick, disabled, and survivors of the dead within their own city. By pooling their resources, they became the first black secret order in Atlanta to purchase property. Most secret societies did not achieve the material prosperity of the Samaritans, but dozens formed tributaries throughout the city that operated on a far more modest scale.[94]

The religious, secular, social, and political purposes of these organizations sometimes overlapped. For example, in its twelfth annual anniversary celebration in 1888, the Morning Star Lodge of the Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria staged a parade from their hall on Peachtree Street toward Bethel AME Church in preparation for a special sermon delivered in their honor. On the next night the group sponsored a social event at the Odd Fellows Hall that it billed as "*the* entertainment of the season."[95]

At least a few of these associations were organized as labor unions or political leagues (and sometimes a combination of both). William Finch founded the Mechanics and Laborers' Union in 1868, which bridged labor issues and Republican Party concerns. Laundry workers formed Washing Societies in the 1870s and 1880s.[96] Another group known as the Union Benevolent Society may also have focused on work-related concerns. Disfranchised women exercised their influence in electoral politics through organizations like the Rising Daughters of Liberty Society—counterpart to the Sons by the same name usually affiliated with the Republican Party. The Rising Daughters of Liberty promoted political education among members and the wider community, raised funds, and stimulated enthusiasm for the campaigns of candidates or issues of their choices.[97]

Some associations were made up entirely of one sex or combined both women and men. But occasionally one finds the presence of a male officer, usually the secretary, in organizations where working-class women predominated and illiteracy prevailed. Though some female groups acted as subordinates to male groups, a striking feature of the Gospel Aid Society is the seemingly conscious effort to balance the power and positions of men and women. The president and secretary were men, the vice-president and treasurer were women, and an equal number of each sex served on the finance committee. Similarly, the Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria, which operated separately as well as in a unified group, elected nearly equal numbers of men and women upon its founding.[98]

Whatever the makeup of their organizations, working-class women were active and visible members and leaders in these societies in Atlanta. Household laborers such as Amanda Bradbury, Rachel Oliver, Nancy Wilson, and Lizzie Ford helped to found the Daughters of Samaria. Rebecca Thomas not only served as president of the Rising Daughters of Liberty Society, but at various points she also headed the Daughters of Bethlehem and served on the bank committee of the Star of Bethlehem. Elizabeth Russell and Mildred Fane, president and vice-president of the Daughters of Bethlehem, were both washerwomen. The True Sisters of Honor elected Harriet Tolliver, a washerwoman,

as vice-president, and her daughter Keziah Wood as a member of the finance committee.[99]

It is not just a coincidence that working-class women were involved in mutual aid and benevolent associations. The groups proved indispensable within the panoply of institutions designed for the purposes of urban survival, race advancement, and personal enrichment. Paying in small, regularly assessed fees, individuals pooled their resources and reserved them for emergencies. Blacks in Georgia paid $16.5 million to the lodges between 1870 and 1920, confirming that these fraternal orders were the most popular insuring agents in the state.[100] By their willingness to share their resources with others, they provided insurance for themselves. Secret societies in New Orleans, for example, contributed the largest share of health care services to African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[101] Societies contracted for physicians or pharmacists upon whom members could rely for treatment or medicines. Perhaps most important, laypersons from the order visited the sick, and in cases of serious illnesses they would move in with the patient to help with general household cares. The fervent spirit with which associations undertook these responsibilities is shown by the commitment to fine members who failed to carry out their duties diligently.[102]

Death benefits were critical to the very existence of these associations. The desire to ensure financial relief for surviving family members and to secure a respectable burial were among the most important reasons for joining. Secret societies facilitated the incorporation of community into the funeral as a public event. Mourners gathered special fees, collected food for wakes, dressed themselves and the deceased in the appropriate reverent apparel, and planned associational services in conjunction with the religious ceremony. They led elaborate processions and laid the physical body to rest, stressing a spirit of life embarking on a new stage in the world beyond, rather than the finality of death.[103]

Other rituals added to the secret societies' appeal for personal and group enhancement. Initiation, oath-taking, and self-improvement ceremonies with all manner of regalia, titles, and parades inspired a sense of collective objectives, and brought prestige and status to those who belonged. Elaborate rites taught members the secrets of symbols and instructed them to aid their fellow sisters and brothers and to live uprightly, according to principles such as love, charity, purity, and justice. Through the complex body of procedures and rules that regulated

the conduct of meetings, rituals, and standards of membership, these groups promoted self-governance and discipline of a high order.[104]

The scant existing records do not permit a precise calculation of the number of societies in Atlanta during the late nineteenth century, but the general consensus among contemporary observers was that they were numerous throughout the South. In Richmond, there were four hundred secret societies organized by the early 1870s.[105] The well-established antebellum slave and free black community in Richmond, of course, gave that city a head start. But the promptness of these groups' appearance at the commencement of emancipation in a relatively new city such as Atlanta, enabling a major infrastructure for weaving together individuals and extended families, is testimony to the fact that they embodied and drew on preexisting values that stretched back over many generations, across time and space.

Critics were fond of disparaging the "natural proclivities" of African-American people toward congregating and socializing, but it was hard work rather than nature that cemented the ties in mutual aid societies, churches, and neighborhoods, all of which were crucial to meeting the challenges of urban life. Employers disdained this rich associational life that they perceived as upstart imitations of whites. Mutual aid societies were mocked as organizations with "funny names." "They have the society of the 'Immaculate Doves,' and the society of the 'Sisteren,' and the society of the 'Beloved Disciples,'" one employer remarked. Though the depth of meaning of African Americans' mutual aid groups may have escaped some employers, they undoubtedly understood the subversive implications of the collective culture that sustained domestic workers. The existence of secret societies, one employer admitted, "makes them perfectly independent and relieves them from all fear of being discharged, because when they are discharged they go right straight to some of these 'sisters.'"[106]

African-American women did indeed look to their sisters and brothers for mutual support. They responded to the growing pressures of exploitation in everyday life by pooling their resources through informal organizing in their neighborhoods and, increasingly, formed institutions that extended the boundaries of community across the growing metropolis. They pursued the line of least resistance when feasible, but took aggressive collective actions when necessary to secure their rights as workers and human beings.

49. Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 387–388.

50. Testimony of Z. B. Hargrove, 13 July 1871, KKK Hearings, vol. 1, p. 83. See also testimony of George B. Burnett, 2 November 1871, KKK Hearings, vol. 2, p. 949. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jesse Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

51. Bvt. Maj. John Leonard to Capt. W. W. Deane, 30 July 1866, Unregistered Letters, ser. 632, Ga. Asst. Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-5411]; Lt. Col. Geo. Curkendall to Brig. Gen. Davis Tillson, 26 December 1865, G-18 1866, Letters Recd., ser. 15, Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-5189]; A. Ramsey Nininger to Bvt. Maj. Genl. Davis Tillson, 8 July 1866, Letters Sent, ser. 4389, vol. 226/583 DS, p. 60, Dept. of the South, U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group: 393, NA, [FSSP C-1557].

52. Affidavit of Barbara Price, 15 May 1867, Misc. Court Records, ser. 737, Atlanta, Ga. Subasst. Comr., BRFAL; Bvt. Maj. Fred. Mosebach to Mayor and City Council of Atlanta, 15 May 1867, and Bvt. Maj. Fred. Mosebach to Col. C. C. Sibley, 21 May 1867, vol. 99, pp. 49 and 53–54, Letters Sent, ser. 729, Atlanta, Ga. Subasst. Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-5709]. See also James M. Russell and Jerry Thornbery, "William Finch of Atlanta: The Black Politician as Civic Leader," in Howard N. Rabinowitz, ed. *Southern Black Leaders of the Reconstruction Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 317, 332.

53. The apprenticeship system was not entirely limited to the conscription of minors; young adults actively providing for themselves were also apprenticed. For example, a turpentine worker with a wife and child was defined as an orphan in North Carolina. See Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 201.

54. Martin Lee to Mr. Tillson, 7 December 1866, in Ira Berlin et al., "Afro-American Families in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Radical History Review* 42 (Fall 1988): 102–103.

55. Entry of 27 May 1865, Thomas Journal, DU. Evidence from ex-slave narratives suggests a pattern of exploitation of child laborers; they received little or no cash wages. See testimony of Nancy Smith, in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1941; 1972), *Georgia Narratives*, vol. 13, pt. 3, p. 302 (hereafter cited as WPA Ga. Narr.); testimony of Georgia Telfair, WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 13, pt. 4, p. 5.

56. Rebecca M. Craighead to Rev. E. Smith, 5 May and 25 April 1867, Georgia, AMA Papers.

57. See Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865–1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 152–153.

58. Rebecca M. Craighead to Bvt. Brig. Gen. J. H. Lewis, 11 May 1866, Ga. Asst. Comr., C-69, 1867, Letters Recd., ser. 631, Ga. Asst. Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-415].

59. F. Ayers to Rev. George Whipple, 15 February 1866, Georgia, AMA Papers.

60. *American Missionary* 15 (September 1871): 200–201.

61. Prescott, "Reminiscences of the War," p. 56, AHC. Prescott goes on to reveal that Silvey died penniless, without the help of former owners.

62. Freedman's Bank Records.

63. See Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 185–256.

64. Freedman's Bank Records.

65. Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 9–23; Berlin et al., "Afro-American Families," pp. 92–93.

66. Corporal Murray, as quoted in J. R. Johnson to Col. S. Lee, 1 June 1866, in Berlin et al., "Afro-American Families," p. 97.

67. For examples of these efforts see Wm. H. Sinclair to Freedmen's Bureau agent at Savannah, Ga., 12 September 1866, Unregistered Letters, ser. 1013, Savannah, Ga. Subasst. Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-5762]; R. F. Patterson to Col. D. C. Poole, Letters Recd., ser. 732, Atlanta, Ga. Subasst. Comr., BRFAL, NA, [FSSP A-5704].

68. Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 418–425.

69. 1st Lt. F. E. Grossmann to the Acting Assistant Adjutant General, 1 October 1866, in Berlin et al., "Afro-American Families," pp. 97–98. Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 418–425.

70. Affidavit of Rosa Freeman, 24 July 1866, in Berlin et al., "Afro-American Families," pp. 99–100.

71. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 4–9, 16; Herbert G. Gutman, "Schools for Freedom: The Post-Emancipation Origins of Afro-American Education," in Herbert G. Gutman, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working-Class*, ed. Ira Berlin (New York: Pantheon, 1987), p. 294; Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, p. 59.

72. Gutman, "Schools for Freedom," pp. 286, 294; Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, p. 62; Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, pp. 4–32.

73. Drago, *Black Politicians*, pp. 27–28.

74. Ibid., pp. 27–28, 35–54.

75. Russell and Thornbery, "William Finch of Atlanta," pp. 319, 322; Russell, *Atlanta*, p. 181.

76. Mrs. E. T. Ayers to Rev. Samuel Hunt, 1 September 1866, Georgia, AMA Papers.

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78. Sarah J. Thomas to Mr. [Edmund A.] Ware, 11 October 1869, Edmund A. Ware Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Clarke Atlanta University.

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2. Richard J. Hopkins, "Public Health in Atlanta: The Formative Years, 1865–1879," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 53 (September 1969): 299.

3. Howard L. Preston, *Automobile Age Atlanta: The Making of a Southern*

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4. See Ellis, "Businessmen and Public Health," p. 200; Russell, "Politics, Municipal Services," pp. 487–488.

5. See for example, entries for 1 September 1877 and 1 June 1878, Samuel P. Richards Diary, Atlanta History Center (hereafter cited as AHC); Russell, "Politics, Municipal Services," pp. 480–491; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 114–120; Ellis and Galishoff, "Atlanta's Water Supply," pp. 6–22. Even city officials acknowledged that limited potable water bred disease. See "Report of the President [George Hillyer]," in Atlanta, Board of Water Commissioners, "Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Water Commissioners to the General Council of the City of Atlanta, for the Year Ending December 31, 1898," pp. 6–7, AHC.

6. Preston, *Automobile Age Atlanta*, pp. 7–12; Don L. Klima, "Breaking Out: Streetcars and Suburban Development, 1872–1900," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 30 (Summer-Fall 1982): 67–82.

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9. On black residential enclaves see *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 July 1881; F. Ayers to Rev. E. Smith, 22 July 1867, Georgia, AMA Papers; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 16–43; John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era 1900–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 12–14; White, "Black Sides of Atlanta," pp. 199–225; Eugene M. Mitchell, "Queer Place Names in Old Atlanta," *The Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 1 (April 1931): 29; Annie S. Barnes, *The Black Middle-Class Family: A Study of Black Subsociety, Neighborhood, and Home in Interaction* (Bristol, Ind.: Wyndham Hall Press, 1985), pp. 27–30; Mildred Warner, "Community Building: The History of Atlanta University Neighborhoods" (Atlanta, 1978), in Neighborhood File, AHC; Alexa Henderson and Eugene Walker, "Sweet Auburn: The Thriving Hub of Black Atlanta" (unpublished paper prepared for the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site and Preservation District), Neighborhood File, AHC.

10. Ingersoll, "City of Atlanta," pp. 41–43.

11. See Richard R. Wright, *A Brief Historical Sketch of Negro Education in Georgia* (Savannah: Robinson Printing House, 1894); Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951).

12. Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 33–35.

13. See Tables 1 and 2 at the back of the book. The figures for 1870 were probably small partly as a result of census under-counting, a typical problem for women workers and blacks generally.

14. In 1870 and 1880, Southern black women were three times more likely to participate in the labor force than Southern white women, and married black women were nearly six times more likely to participate than married white women. See Claudia Goldin, "Female Labor Force Participation: The Origin of Black and White Differences, 1870 and 1880," *Journal of Economic History* 37 (March 1977): 94; William Harris, "Work and the Family in Black Atlanta, 1880," *Journal of Social History* 9 (Spring 1976): 319–330; Janice L. Reiff et al., "Rural Push and Urban Pull: Work and Family Experiences of Older Black Women in Southern Cities, 1880–1900," *Journal of Social History* 16 (Summer 1983): 39–48; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 34; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 113; Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. 442–450, 624–642.

15. "Washer and Ironer," pp. 187–188.

16. *Atlanta Medical and Surgery Journal* 1 (October 1884): 427; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 34, 35, 37, 41; Gretchen Ehrmann Maclachlan, "Women's Work: Atlanta's Industrialization and Urbanization, 1879–1929" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992), pp. 162–170.

17. See Table 2 at the back of the book for statistics related to household laborers.

18. Dorothy Bolden, interview by Bernard E. West, 7 December 1978, typescript, Living Atlanta Collection, AHC. Sarah Hill, "Bea the Washerwoman," Federal Writers Project Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as FWP, SHC).

19. Testimony of Georgia Telfair, in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1941; 1972), Georgia Narratives, vol. 13, pt. 4, p. 8 (hereafter cited as WPA Ga. Narr.); Elizabeth Kytle, *Willie Mae* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 26; Gutman, *The Black Family*, pp. 630–631; David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 79–82.

20. Testimony of Carrie Nancy Fryer, WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 341; see also "The Three Sisters," p. 9.

21. For insightful readings of the meaning of ex-slave women's presumed withdrawal from wage labor to "play the lady" see Thavolia Glymph, "'I'se Mrs. Tatom Now': Freedom and Black Women's Reconstruction," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, November 1992 (in Tera W. Hunter's possession), and Leslie Schwalm, "'In Their Own Way and At

Such Times as They Think Fit': Work and Family in Former Slave Women's Definitions of Freedom," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, November 1992 (in Tera W. Hunter's possession). See also Jones, *Labor of Love*, pp. 58–59; Gutman, *Black Family*, pp. 167–168; Litwack, *Aftermath of Slavery*, pp. 244–245; Foner, *Reconstruction*, pp. 84–87.

22. Edward Bacon, "I Don't Know What's the Matter," FWP, SHC.

23. Testimony of Susan Castle, WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 182; Lucille Smith Hughs, "My Pot Pourri of Ninety Years," vol. 1, p. 165 in Sussana M. Hughs Papers, AHC; entry of 7 August 1876, Evelyn Harden Jackson Diaries, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia (hereafter cited as UG).

24. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 117–118; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 82–94.

25. For a trenchant critique of how scholars have erroneously calculated domestic workers' wages see Bettina Berch, "'The Sphinx in the Household': A New Look at the History of Household Workers," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 16 (Spring 1984): 105–121. For secondary literature that discusses wages see Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 273, 304–305; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, pp. 107, 110; Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), pp. 219–225, 325; Jones, *Labor of Love*, pp. 128, 132, 206–207; Elizabeth Ross Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service in the United States," *Journal of Negro History* 8 (October 1923): 413–426. Wage rates cited in this study have been determined by primary sources that follow:

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26. See entries for 1866, Burroughs Commonplace Books, 1865–1881, SHC.

27. See entries for 1880–1899, Edwin Edmunds Account Books, 1838–1892, SHC.

28. See Woofter, "The Negroes of Athens," p. 48.

29. Ker Diaries, 1891–1899, SHC; Burroughs Commonplace Books, 1865–1881, SHC; Robert Harding Towels Account Books, 1866–1869, Calvin Henderson Wiley Papers, SHC. See also Patterson Diaries, 1911, SHC; Mrs. W. S. Chisholm Day Book, SHC.

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31. See "The Daily Routine of Work," n.d., Grimball Family Papers, SHC; A Negro Nurse, "More Slavery at the South," p. 196.

32. A Negro Nurse, "More Slavery at the South," p. 196; Kytle, *Willie Mae*, p. 62.

33. Dorothy Bolden, Interview.

34. Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 36–46.

35. As quoted in Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service in the United States," p. 411.

36. See Polly Stone Buck, *The Blessed Town: Oxford, Georgia, at the Turn of the Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 15–16; and Kathleen Ann Smallzried, *The Everlasting Pleasure: Influences on America's Kitchens, Cooks and Cookery, From 1565 to the Year 2000* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956), pp. 93–102.

37. Buck, *Blessed Town*, p. 16.

38. Kytle, *Willie Mae*, p. 25; Reed, *The Negro Women of Gainesville*, p. 16.

39. Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 105–121; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 65, 98.

40. See Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 185–187; British Board of Trade, *Cost*

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41. Strasser, *Never Done*, p. 109. For examples of a washerwoman working in employers' homes see Mary Raoul Millis, *The Family of Raoul: A Memoir* (Asheville, N.C.: The Miller Printing Co., 1943), pp. 109–110; and Minis Diary, Minis Family Papers, vol. 12, n.d., SHC.

42. Ingersoll, "City of Atlanta," pp. 33–34.

43. Hill, "Bea the Washerwoman," pp. 4, 13–15; Jasper Battle, "Wash Day in Slavery," in WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 70; testimony of Rias Body, WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 12, pt. 1, p. 87; Ruby Lorraine Radford, "Slavery: Compilation Made from Interviews with 30 Slaves," in WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 13, pt. 4, p. 352; Buck, *Blessed Town*, pp. 116–120; testimony of Paul Smith, WPA Ga. Narr. vol. 13, pt. 3, p. 321; Millis, *Family of Raoul*, pp. 109–110; Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*, pp. 50, 52; Reed, *Negro Women in Gainesville*, pp. 15–16, 32; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 72, 82, 124; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, p. 92; Dudden, Serving Women, pp. 224–225; Patricia E. Malcolmson, *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 11–43; Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 105–121.

44. Hill, "Bea the Washerwoman," p. 14.

45. See Buck, *Blessed Town*, p. 115; Battle, "Wash Day in Slavery," p. 70; Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*, p. 52.

46. See Table 2 at the back of the book; and Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 222.

47. See Table 2 at the back of the book.

48. McLeod, *Workers and Workplace*, p. 102.

49. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 60–62; see Table 3 at the back of the book.

50. On similar trends in Baltimore and Washington, D.C., see Paul A. Groves and Edward K. Muller, "The Evolution of Black Residential Areas in Late Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Historical Geography* 1 (1975): 186–190.

51. Joseph A. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations 1870 to 1920* (Washington, D.C., 1929), pp. 334–336; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 87–91.

52. Testimony of Albert C. Danner, 13 November 1883, *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 105.

53. *Atlanta Journal*, 3 March 1883.

54. Testimony of Mrs. Ward, 15 November 1883, *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 343.

55. On incipient strikes see Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, pp. 195–197. For more examples of domestics quitting constantly see entries for 2 and 21 October

1883, 28 September and 16 October 1884, Richards Diary, AHC; entries for 1886 through 1902, Ker Diaries, SHC; "Your affectionate mother" [Elizabeth A. D. Van Dyke] to Jodie [Van Dyke Inman], 18 November 1889, Inman-Grant-Slaton Family Papers, AHC; entries for September, October, and November 1880 and February and March 1884, Emily J. W. Bealer Diary, Georgia Department of Archives and History (hereafter cited as GAH).

56. Testimony of Mrs. Ward, 15 November 1883, *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 328.

57. This helps to explain the undercount of black women wage-earners in the census reports. A surprising number were listed as "at home," as non-wage-earners, at the time of the census. These figures are perhaps best understood as an indication of the number of black women withdrawn from the labor market at any given time, as opposed to an absolute number of non-wage-earners.

58. E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 76–135. For an insightful discussion of a similar practice involving "social wages" see Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 116–152. For comparison of "vails" and customary rights in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London see Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 250–255.

59. Meta Morris Grimball to J. Berkeley Grimball, 18 December 1865; Kytle, *Willie Mae*, pp. 116–117.

60. Entry for 4 May 1879, Richards Diary, AHC.

61. Testimony of Mrs. Ward, 15 November 1883, *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 343; 22 May 1883, Robert [Murphy] to Georgia [Russell Murphy], J. Eagan Papers, AHC; 6 November 1885, [Mary Owens Campbell Kelley] to "old friend," Campbell Family Papers, DU.

62. Buck, *The Blessed Town*, pp. 114–115; *Savannah Tribune*, 27 July 1912.

63. See, for example, *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 September 1875. A newborn mulatto baby was abandoned and a black woman living nearby assumed care for the infant; Hill, "Bea the Washerwoman," p. 4; Julia Campbell Buggs et al., "The Three Sisters," pp. 5, 9, FWP, SHC; *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 September 1875.

64. Buggs et al., "The Three Sisters," pp. 5, 9.

65. Testimony of Anna Parks, WPA Ga. Narr., vol. 13, pt. 1, p. 163; see also Hill, "Bea the Washerwoman," pp. 4, 5.

66. *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 July 1881.

67. More people were arrested for disorderly conduct than any other offense. Atlanta, *Annual Reports*, of the City Officers, 1884–1914, AHC; Reed, *Negro Women of Gainesville*, p. 38; testimony of Mrs. Ward, 15 November 1883, in *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 326.

68. Ingersoll, "City of Atlanta," p. 34.

69. Ibid.; *American Missionary* 13 (April 1869): 75.

70. See Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 210; Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 16–31.

71. Black consumers provided a thriving business for Jewish street peddlers, who invested the profits in grocery stores, clothing and dry goods stores, saloons, and pawnshops. See Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of*

Atlanta, 1845–1915 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), pp. 183–184.

72. *Atlanta Constitution,* 21 August 1875; U.S. Department of the Treasury, Register of Signatures of Depositors in the Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, Atlanta Branch, 1870–1874 (Microfilm Publication, M-544), National Archives (hereafter cited as Freedman's Bank Records); Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 204, 324.

73. U.S. Manuscript Population Census, Fulton County, 1880; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 329.

74. See, for example, testimony of Anna Parks, WPA Ga. Narr., p. 163, and Buggs et al., "The Three Sisters," p. 12.

75. McLeod, *Workers and Workplace,* pp. 41, 100.

76. Gay, *Life in Dixie After the War,* p. 288.

77. *Atlanta Constitution,* 28 July 1880 and 20 July 1881.

78. Ingersoll, "City of Atlanta," p. 43.

79. See Henry T. Sampson, *Blacks in Blackface: A Source Book on Early Black Musical Shows* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), p. 4; Tom Fletcher, *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), pp. v–vi; Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Michael Rogin, "Black Masks, White Skin: Consciousness of Class and American National Culture," *Radical History Review* 54 (Fall 1992): 141–152; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); William Barlow, *Looking Up at Down: The Emergence of Blues Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 119. For local coverage of the Rabbit's Foot Co. see *Atlanta Independent,* 25 October 1908.

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81. Ibid., 20 July 1881, 3 February 1882, and 10 August 1879.

82. James Michael Russell, "Atlanta, Gate City of the South, 1847 to 1885" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1971), p. 310; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 229.

83. City of Atlanta, *Annual Reports,* 1884–1886, 1902–1903, AHC. For state crimes see Georgia Prison Commission Report, Principal Keepers Report, 1873–1897, GAH.

84. British Board of Trade, *Cost of Living,* p. 51; *The Gospel Trumpet,* April 1877, in Georgia, AMA Papers; Georgia, House of Representatives Special Committee, "Joint Committee of the Senate and House to Investigate the Convict Lease System of Georgia," 1908, vol. 3, pp. 169–177, GAH; Susan Tucker, *Telling Memories Among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Segregated South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 87; *Atlanta Constitution,* 9 September 1881.

85. On women's neighborhood networks and survival strategies see Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789–1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), pp. 41–62; Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighborhood Sharing in London Before World War I," *History Workshop* 15 (Spring 1983): 4–27; Jeanne Boydston, "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working-Class Subsistence," *Radical History Review* 35 (April 1986): 7–25.

86. *Atlanta City Directory,* 1881; F[rederic] Ayers to Rev. E. P. Smith, 22 July 1867, Georgia, AMA Papers; Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 138, 147–148, 158–159.

87. See Henderson and Walker, "Sweet Auburn," pp. 19–25; "Background Research on Auburn Avenue," Living Atlanta Collection, AHC; Homer C. McEwen, "First Congregational Church, Atlanta: 'For the Good of Man and the Glory of God,'" *The Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 21 (Spring 1977): 131–132.

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89. Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," pp. 147–169.

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92. First Congregational Church Records, microfilm, GAH.

93. See, for example, Isaiah 14:32 (Revised Standard Version); Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 830.

94. All information on secret societies in Atlanta is taken from the following sources: Freedman's Bank Records; U.S. Manuscript Population Census, Fulton County, 1870; *Atlanta City Directory,* 1870–1872, 1874; E. R. Carter, *The Black Side: A Partial History of the Business, Religious and Educational Side of the Negro in Atlanta, Ga.* (Atlanta, 1894; reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), pp. 24–27; W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., *Some Efforts of American Negroes for their Own Social Betterment* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1898), pp. 12–20; W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., *Efforts for Social Betterment Among Negro Americans* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1909); *American Missionary* (October 1889): 292; Southern Regional Office Records, National Urban League Papers, Library of Congress; *Atlanta Constitution,* 23 October 1912.

95. *Southern Recorder,* 20 April 1888.

96. *Atlanta Constitution,* May 1877, 9 January 1879. Thornbery, "Black Atlanta," p. 255. See also Chapter 4.

97. See Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865–1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), pp. 30–31.

98. Freedman's Bank Records; Carter, *Black Side,* p. 26.

99. See Freedman's Bank Records; U.S. Manuscript Population Census, Fulton County, 1870 and 1880; *Atlanta City Directory,* 1870–1872.

100. Dittmer, *Black Georgia,* p. 45.

101. Claude F. Jacobs, "Benevolent Societies of New Orleans Blacks During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Louisiana History* 29 (Winter 1988): 21–33.

102. Ibid. Some white health care professionals objected to this function and accused secret societies of spreading disease. See, for example, Oscar Dowling, "The Negro and Public Health," in *The Call of the New South: Addresses Delivered at*

the Southern Sociological Congress, Nashville, Tennessee, May 7 to 10, 1992, ed. James E. McCulloch (Nashville: Southern Sociological Congress, 1912), p. 213.

103. See Betty M. Kuyk, "The African Derivation of Black Fraternal Orders in the United States," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25 (October 1983): 559–592; Carter G. Woodson, "Insurance Business Among Negroes," *Journal of Negro History* 14 (April 1929): 202–226; Monroe N. Work, "Secret Societies as Factors in the Social and Economic Life of the Negro," in *Democracy in Earnest: Southern Sociological Congress 1916–1918*, ed. James E. McCulloch (Washington, D.C.: Southern Sociological Congress, 1918), pp. 342–350.

104. Kuyk, "African Derivation of Black Fraternal Orders," passim.

105. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*, pp. 13–33. Sarah Jane Early estimated that women's mutual aid societies for the entire South numbered more than five thousand, with at least 250,000 total members. See Early, "The Organized Effort of the Colored Women of the South to Improve Their Condition," *National WCTU Annual Report* (1894), in *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women*, ed. Ellen NicKenzie Lawson (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984), pp. 718–724; Kathleen C. Berkeley, "'Like a Plague of Locust': Immigration and Social Change in Memphis, Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1980), pp. 165–223; Armstead L. Robinson, "Plans Dat Comed from God: Institution Building and the Emergence of Black Leadership in Reconstruction Memphis," in *Toward a New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities*, ed. Robert McMath and Orville Burton (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 71–102; Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs* 14 (Spring): 610–633.

106. Testimony of Mrs. Ward, 15 November 1883, *Labor and Capital*, vol. 4, p. 344; Ma [Margaret Cronly] to darling Rob [Cronly], 29 June 1881, Cronly Family Papers, DU.

4. "*Washing Amazons*" *and Organized Protests*

1. *Jackson Daily Clarion*, 24 June 1866, in *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, 8 vols., ed. Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978–1984), vol. 2, p. 345; see also Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton Press, 1984), p. 356.

2. *Jackson Daily Clarion*, 24 June 1866, in Foner and Lewis, *Black Worker*, vol. 2, pp. 344–345.

3. Ibid.

4. Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 441; Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619–1973* (New York: International Publishers, 1974), pp. 17–22; Eric Arneson, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class and Politics 1863–1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 21–25, 28–32, 53–59; Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865–1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), pp. 42–44, 73, 81.

5. Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press, 1977), pp. 7–9.

6. Ibid., pp. 197–199; *Galveston Daily News*, 31 July 1877.

7. *Galveston Daily News*, 1–7 August 1877.

8. Ibid., 1 August 1877.

9. Ibid.; Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters*, pp. 356–357; Foner and Lewis, *Black Worker*, vol. 2, p. 167.

10. *Galveston Daily News*, 7 August 1877.

11. Ibid., 1 August 1877.

12. Ibid.

13. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown, 1989; reprint ed., New York: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 92–95; Suecheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), pp. 33–34; Paul C. P. Siu, *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation*, ed. John Kuo Wei Tchen (New York: New York University Press, 1987), pp. 45–54.

14. *Galveston Daily News*, 1 August 1877.

15. Ibid., 5 August 1877.

16. Maud Cuney-Hare, *Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People*, ed. Tera W. Hunter (Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1913; reprint ed., New York: G. K. Hall, 1995); Lawrence D. Rice, *The Negro in Texas: 1874–1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), pp. 35–37, 78, 82, 95, 189–190.

17. *Galveston Daily News*, 1 August 1877. See the biography of Cuney written by his daughter, Maud Cuney-Hare, which praises Cuney and condemns the strikers' grievances as "not important enough to demand public sympathy." Cuney-Hare, *Norris Wright Cuney*, p. 24.

18. For a discussion of the variety and forms of black political leadership in this era, see Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 14–16, 65, 71–137, 243–255; Thomas C. Holt, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

19. *Galveston Daily News*, 1 August 1877.

20. Ibid., 5 August 1871.

21. Ibid., 7 August 1877.

22. Ibid., 2 August 1877.

23. Ibid., 16 August 1877.

24. On women's protest styles and the use of public space see Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918," *Signs* 7 (Spring 1982): 552–564; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 366, 372–375.

25. Mary Roberts Davis, "The Planning of the Industrial Expositions of 1881 and 1895: Expressions of the Philosophy of the New South" (M.A. thesis, Emory University, 1952), provides a splendid critique of the Atlanta Expositions and the New South movement unmatched by other accounts. See also Augusta Wylie King, "International Cotton Exposition: October 5th to December 31, 1881, Atlanta, Georgia," *Atlanta Historical Bulletin* 4 (July 1939): 181–198; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 124; James Michael Russell, *Atlanta, 1847–1890: City Building in the Old South and the New* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988),