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UNF UNIVERSITY of NORTH FLORIDA

LAVILLA, FLORIDA, 1866-1887:
RECONSTRUCTION DREAMS AND THE FORMATION OF A BLACK COMMUNITY

By

PATRICIA DROZD KENNEY

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1990

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Social networks which connect one individual to another individual or one individual to a group played a significant role in the formation of the black community examined in this study. In the process of research and writing about the freedmen who settled in LaVilla I found myself connected to an academic network which greatly enhanced and facilitated my scholarly endeavor. I wish to thank the archivists, librarians, and city employees who provided expert assistance in the following institutions: the National Archives, Washington, D.C., the Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, and the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville. I also want to thank the following Jacksonville, Florida, organizations: the Haydon Burns Public Library, the Jacksonville Historical Society, the City Council Chambers, the Landmarks Commisssion, the Duval County Department of Records, and the Title and Trust Company of Florida. In addition, I wish to express my appreciation to the University of Florida's Department of History which granted me summer research funding. The department's generosity provided the opportunity to do research in the National Archives.

My understanding of community and the African-American

experience has been enriched and broadened by scholars who generously shared their knowledge and time. They include Dr. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Dr. James Amelang, Dr. George Pozzetta, Dr. Jeff Adler, Dr. Daniel Schafer, and especially Dr. Allan F. Burns. Special thanks go to James Mathis, a fellow graduate student, who willingly listened as I discussed the progress of "LaVilla." In addition, I wish to acknowledge and extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Darrett B. Rutman and Mrs. Anita H. Rutman whose encouragement, direction, criticism, and high standard of scholarship have contributed not only in the research and writing of this thesis, but in my personal development as a student of history.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

LAVILLA, FLORIDA, 1866-1887: RECONSTRUCTION
DREAMS AND THE FORMATION OF A BLACK COMMUNITY

By

Patricia Drozd Kenney

May 1990

Chairman: Darrett B. Rutman
Major Department: History

Several factors which influenced the formation of an urban black community following the Civil War are examined in this study. Prior to the war, LaVilla, a suburb of Jacksonville, Florida, was sparsely populated by wealthy white families. At war's end, freedmen seeking shelter and work took advantage of the inexpensive housing and proximity to employment LaVilla offered and, by 1870, became the majority population. The years 1866 through 1887 have been chosen for this study because they demarcate LaVilla's inception on the one hand and, on the other, its disappearance as an independent entity. Local, state, and federal records have been utilized to better understand the freedmen's decision on where to settle, finding work, securing a home, and political participation. Although an

integrated community, the focus of this study is on the role of blacks in community formation.

During the first twenty years of freedom, the blacks who lived in LaVilla came to organize their community along two separate and distinct paths: the social and the political. The social dimension was segregated and articulated through social networks created by family, kinship, and friendship anchored in and strengthened by the church, school, and voluntary associations. In the context of urban growth and development, these social networks would mitigate the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate housing. The political dimension was integrated and afforded black males power and influence concerning the civic decisions of their community. Following annexation to Jacksonville in 1887, LaVilla's blacks were removed from the political arena and disjoined from the decision-making process. As a result, the freedmen came to rely solely on the social dimension of their community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Empty lots, boarded-up and condemned buildings, sagging houses, litter and debris scattered along the streets, locks and iron bars protecting the businesses of those who have chosen to stay: This is the LaVilla of today, a mile-square, blighted area adjacent to downtown Jacksonville, Florida. LaVilla, however, has been in decline for a long time, the origins of its slow death deep in the history of this predominately black neighborhood. Indeed, the roots of decline are tangled in the decade of the 1880s when LaVilla, along with the town of Fairfield and eight unincorporated suburbs, was annexed to Jacksonville, a political expansion linked to a need to fund the growing demands for public works improvements in that burgeoning city.[1]

Originally part of a land grant given to John Jones by the Spanish Government in 1801, LaVilla underwent a succession of owners until the early 1850s when it was

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[1] Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 101. The unincorporated suburbs were East Jacksonville, Hansontown, Burbridge's Addition, Brooklyn, Riverside, Springfield, Oakland, and Campbelton.

subdivided and portions were sold to various whites.[2] The land received its appellation in 1851 from J. McRobert Baker who named his plantation house "LaVilla."[3] Prior to the Civil War, the only blacks who lived in LaVilla were slaves. But the war dramatically altered the social composition of LaVilla. Freedmen, seeking shelter and work, took advantage of the inexpensive housing and proximity to employment LaVilla offered and, by 1870, became the majority population. In 1869 LaVilla incorporated, an act that provided a political dimension to the freedmen's future.

Analysis of LaVilla's rise and decline is important because it illustrates a common phenomenon found in many cities. But LaVilla also represents an experiment in freedom played out during Reconstruction. In this sense, LaVilla's decline illustrates the failure of Reconstruction dreams. When LaVilla lost its political autonomy in 1887, it lost as well a symbiotic relationship that had developed between the freedmen and whites whose primary point of interaction was in local government. Together they had the power to enact laws, set and collect taxes, control crime, and vote for public improvements. Together they participated in the formation of a community.

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[2] For a description of ownership see T. Frederick Davis History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity, 1513 to 1924 (Jacksonville: The Florida Historical Society, 1925), 42-44; and Archibald Abstracts, Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

[3] T. Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, 44.

The focus of this study, however, is the role blacks played in LaVilla's development. As the subordinate group living in an integrated community, it seems essential that an understanding of the freedmen's experience precede that of the aggregate experience.[4] The freedmen who lived in LaVilla came to organize their community along two separate and distinct paths. The first path, the social dimension, was segregated and articulated through social networks created by family, kinship, and friendship. These social networks were anchored in and strengthened by the black church, school, and voluntary associations. The second path, the political dimension, was integrated. Participation in local government afforded black males with power and influence concerning the civic decisions of their community. Although blacks had established strong interpersonal ties through family,

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[4] For anthropological, sociological, and literary studies of the black community see: Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, Deep South (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941); John Dollard, Caste and Class In A Southern Town (New York: Harper Brothers, 1937); Molly C. Dougherty, Becoming A Woman In A Rural Black Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978); Shirley Brice Heath, Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Zora Neale Hurston, Mules and Men (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978 [1935]); idem, Jonah's Gourd Vine (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1934); Theodore Kennedy, You Gotta Deal With It: Black Family Relations In A Southern Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); John U. Ogbu, Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective (New York: Academic Press, 1978); Carol B. Stack, All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); and Donald J. Waters, ed. Strange Ways and Sweet Dreams: Afro-American Folklore from the Hampton Institute (Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1983).

friends, church, work, school, and leisure activities, when they lost direct political participation in community affairs, they lost the ability to control both their own fate and ultimately the fate of LaVilla.

Traditionally, the freedmen's experience in the South following emancipation has been associated with land, and historians have formulated questions regarding that experience within a rural milieu. Yet, thousands of freedmen crowded urban areas in the south and set down roots through family, church, work, school, and voluntary associations. While the black urban experience has received scholarly attention, to date, historians have concentrated only on broad general trends in the social, economic, and political status of urban blacks.[5] Such studies have deepened our understanding of the freedmen's experience in the southern city, but, they tell us little about how the urban community was formed. This study, however, will examine a black

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[5] On studies of the urban black experience see John W. Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto: The Making of the Black Community in Savannah, Georgia, 1865-1880." Journal of Social History 4(Summer 1973), 463-488; Blassingame, Black New Orleans, 1860-1880 (University of Chicago Press, 1973); Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Zane L. Miller, "Urban Blacks in the South, 1865-1920: An Analysis of Some Quantitative Data on Richmond, Savannah, New Orleans, Louisville, and Birmingham" in Leo F. Schnore, ed. The New Urban History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 184-204; James Borchert, Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); and Robert Francis Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979.

community in microcosm in an effort to understand the process of community formation. The freedmen who settled in LaVilla enliven the narrative with their personal experiences.

Four aspects of community formation will be examined: Choosing a place to settle, finding work, securing shelter, and creating political organization. Chapter Two examines the factors that influenced decisions in selecting a place to live and addresses the importance of social networks in the process of settlement. Chapter Three analyzes how work and home, in the context of urban growth and development, affected the lifestyles of the freedmen and the character of the community. And, Chapter Four focuses on voluntary associations of the freedmen and the role played in local government, as well as the impact of municipal corruption and annexation on the town of LaVilla.

This study has been informed by Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutmans' concept of community.[6] The Rutmans have argued that community does not develop from "specific behavioral characteristics or values"; rather, the social phenomenon of community arises from "the concurrence of group and place."[7]

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[6] Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place In Time: Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 19-35; Darrett B. Rutman, "Community Study" Historical Methods 13 (Winter 1980), 29-41; Rutman, "The Social Web: A Prospectus for the Study of the Early American Community" from Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History, ed. William L. O'Neill (Minneapolis, Minn.: Burgess Publishing Company, 1973); Rutman, "Assessing the Little Communities of Early America" William and Mary Quarterly 43(1986), 163-178.

[7] Rutman, "Community Study," 31.

Thus, community is an analytical tool--a social field of interaction--that enables the historian "to see how people organize their lives and relationships under the conditions prevailing at the particular time and place."[8] When place is studied over time it is possible to detect change, however subtle, in the social, economic, and political structure.

The Rutmans' theory of community is based on five assumptions, each of which have guided the study of LaVilla. First, that "people inevitably associate in groups." Second, that the associations are ordered and occur through "certain well-defined nodal points." The nodal points for the freedmen in LaVilla were not unlike those of other groups--home, church, school, work, voluntary associations, and government. Third, associations are affected by "land form, distance, and technology." LaVilla was physically adjacent to the city of Jacksonville. Clearly, frequent interaction occurred between the city and its suburb. Indeed, LaVilla's blacks worked and socialized within the city. Fourth, associations are affected by the social order. For all whites and blacks, defining their place in the social order was paramount following the Civil War. And fifth, associations form "observable networks".

The years 1866 through 1887 have been chosen for this study because they demarcate LaVilla's inception on the one hand and, on the other, its disappearance as an independent

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[8] Rutman and Rutman, A Place in Time, 20.

entity. Local, state, and federal records have been utilized in an effort to answer specific questions pertaining to settlement, work, home ownership, and civic participation. To be sure, this study will not be conclusive, but it can suggest the character of LaVilla and how it reflected the hopes and aspirations of the freedmen who called it home.

CHAPTER 2

FREEDOM AND THE PROCESS OF SETTLEMENT

Emancipation kindled the hopes and dreams of four million black slaves who envisioned their future in southern society. Aspirations notwithstanding, freedom necessitated pragmatic decisions about the day-to-day aspects of living. Choosing a place to settle was among the most fundamental. The majority of former slaves who desired land opted to remain in or near familiar rural communities.[1] Others, who preferred non-agricultural labor, chose the city. The sharp increase among blacks residing in southern cities in 1870 portended a steady migration of blacks to the urban environment; by 1890, fifteen percent of the southern black population lived in urban areas.[2] The decision to settle in a particular urban locale was influenced by environment, employment, kinship, and friendship. While the individual or

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[1] Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 42-44.

[2] Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Continuity and Change: Southern Urban Development, 1860-1900," in Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield, eds., The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977), 92-122; idem, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), ix.

family ultimately determined the place of settlement, social networks played a significant role in the settlement process. Networks established either on the plantation prior to emancipation or during military service were transferred to the city and provided cohesion and stability in an otherwise tenuous situation. LaVilla, a suburb west of Jacksonville, Florida was the destination for such a particular network of freedmen.

The suburb of LaVilla embraced a low-lying swampy area bounded on the south by McCoy's Creek, on the north by the black settlement of Hansontown, on the east by the city of Jacksonville itself, and on the west by pine woods (Figure 2.1).[3] Surrounded by small-scale farms, LaVilla, before the Civil War, had garnered a reputation as "one of the early aristocratic residence sections of Jacksonville."[4]

The Civil War was a wellspring of change in Jacksonville, and the change subsequently affected LaVilla. At war's end the city teemed with newly freed slaves, former Confederates, and northern entrepreneurs. Like other

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[3] Hansontown was organized by Daniel Dustin Hanson, a surgeon for the 34th Regiment, U.S.C.T. Hanson purchased the land and either leased or sold it to soldiers from his regiment or other blacks. Richard A. Martin and Daniel L. Schafer, Jacksonville's Ordeal By Fire: A Civil War History (Jacksonville, Florida: Florida Publishing Company, 1984), 272; Daniel L. Schafer, "Freedom Was As Close As The River: The Blacks of Northeast Florida and the Civil War" El Escribano 23(1986), 113.

[4] Lee E. Bigelow, History of Jacksonville, Florida, (Sponsored by Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, Florida, 1939), 193.

southern cities, Jacksonville attracted freedmen because the federal forces headquartered there offered safety, the Freedmen's Bureau offered education and welfare services, and a post-war commercial boom offered employment. Confederate sympathizers who had fled the city during its four occupations by Federal forces during the war returned and, for the most part, participated with the Northern Unionists and Republicans in rebuilding the city.[5] Both the increased population and the influx of northern capital altered the relationship between suburb and city.[6]

Jacksonville was ideally located for a quick economic recovery because it was situated on the St. Johns River which enhanced port development to supplement existing rail and

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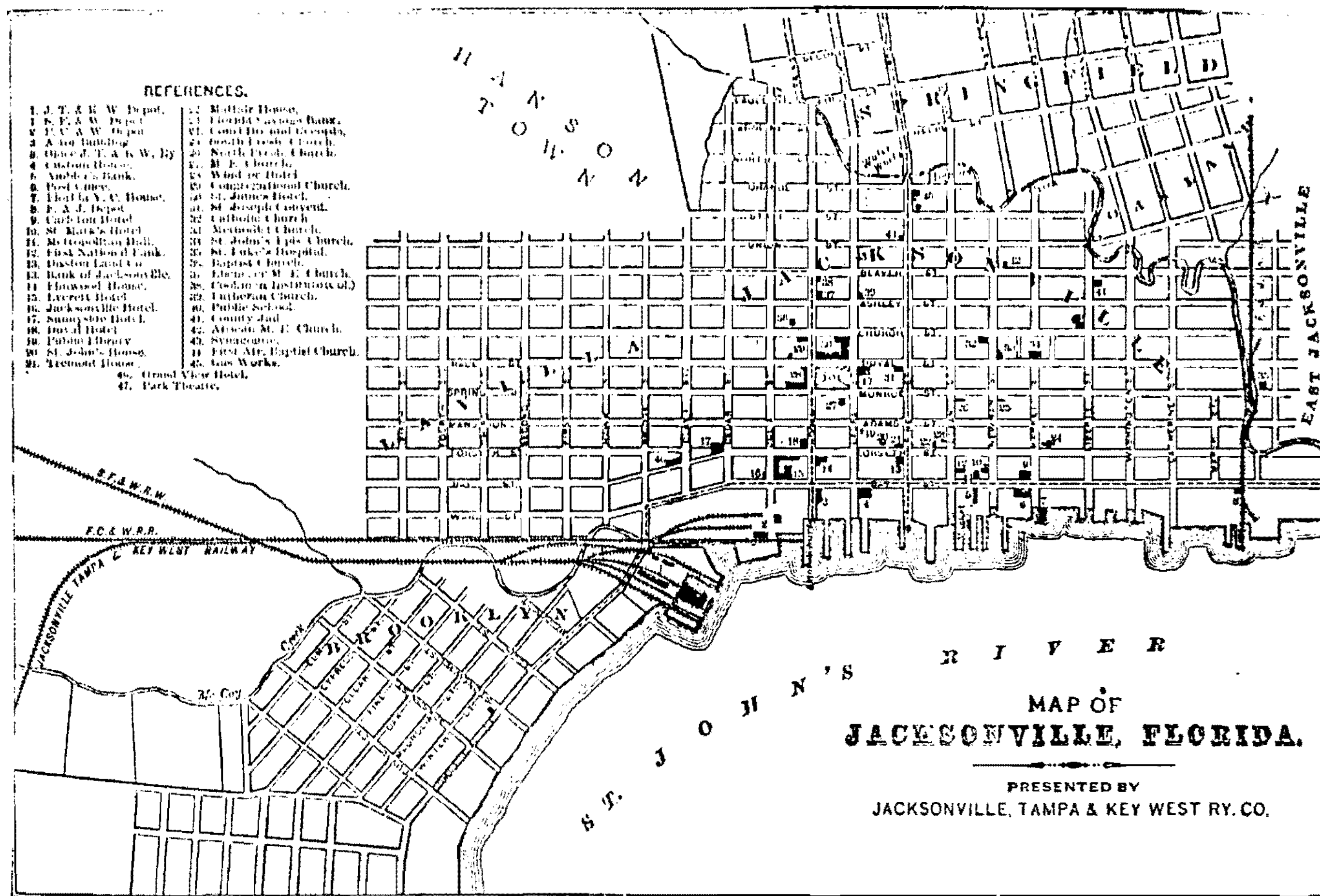
[5] On Jacksonville's Civil War experience see Martin and Schafer, Jacksonville's Ordeal By Fire, 1984; on Florida during the Civil War see Charlton W. Tebeau, A History of Florida (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), Chapters 14 and 15.

[6] Historians have largely neglected the development of suburbs in the southern city. On the general development of American suburbs see Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press & M.I.T. Press, 1962); Glen E. Holt, "The Changing Perception of Urban Pathology," in Kenneth Jackson and S. Schultz, eds., Cities in American History; Richard A. Walker, "The Transformation of Urban Structure in Nineteenth Century and the Beginnings of Suburbanization," in A. Callow, ed., American Urban History; for an examination of the pre-streetcar suburb see Henry C. Binford, The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on The Boston Periphery, 1815-1860, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).



Source: T. Frederi nge Library of
Florida History, U inesville, Florida.

Figure 2.1
Jacksonville and S

steamship connections to major cities.[7] The city of Jacksonville had suffered extensive damage during the war years and the need to rebuild stimulated the construction and timber industries.[8] Added to this was the city's growing reputation as a health and vacation resort. The opening on January 1, 1869 of the plush St. James Hotel signaled a new era of prosperity for enterprising entrepreneurs.[9] Thus, this bustling city in northeast Florida assured a variety of job opportunities for the hundreds of hopeful immigrants.

LaVilla, as well, offered employment for the freedmen. An 1872 city directory listed two brickyards, an iron and brass foundry and machine shop, a beer brewery, a nursery, and railroad depot located in the suburb.[10] By the early 1880s LaVilla had added a street railway, building supply company, ice company, cigar factories, planing mill, and a business district located along Bay Street. Scattered

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[7] Richard Martin, Consolidation: Jacksonville/Duval County (Jacksonville, Florida: Crawford Publishing Company, 1968), 45; Jerrell H. Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877, (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1974), 20.

[8] James R. Ward, Old Hickory's Town (Jacksonville, Florida: Florida Publishing Company, 1982), 90-91. The military census of 1864 revealed that as early as 1864 local businesses were in operation and skilled workers found ample employment. Martin and Schafer, Jacksonville's Ordeal By Fire, 260.

[9] Richard Martin, The City Makers, 90.

[10] Jacksonville City Directory (Florida Union Book & Job Printing Rooms, 1871). P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

throughout the suburb were grocery stores, meat markets, restaurants, and saloons.[11]

The earliest recorded black residents in LaVilla were forty-one freedmen who received ninety-nine year leases on May 30, 1866, from Francis F. L'Engle, a prominent lawyer who purchased a portion of LaVilla in 1856. The quarter-acre lots were located in the southeast quadrant and immediately south of Spring and Mansion Streets, where L'Engle and other white families lived. Nearly a year later L'Engle's wife, Charlotte, entered into a similar lease agreement with twelve other freedmen whose lots were located between Fourth Street and Division Lane.[12] The freedmen's imprint on the character of LaVilla was further affirmed when Fourth and Fifth Streets were renamed Letitia and Lagrand, respectively, in honor of two of the freedmen lessees.[13] Inexpensive housing and close proximity to employment favored rapid development, and by 1870 its official population numbered nearly eleven hundred

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[11] Webbs' Jacksonville Directory (New York: Webb Brothers & Company, 1880); Webbs' Jacksonville and Consolidated Directory, 1886; Richards' Jacksonville Duplex City Directory (Jacksonville, Florida: John R. Richards Company, 1887); and useful in locating spatial arrangement of businesses are the insurance maps of Sanborn Map and Publishing Company (New York, July 1884 and May 1887), and the Sanborn-Perris Map Company (New York, April 1891).

[12] Archibald Abstracts, Book A, 139-141, Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

[13] Map of tract of land in LaVilla known as "The Jacques Place" recorded in Plat Book (March 13, 1867), Duval County, Florida. Plat Book is a duplicate of original and located in The Title and Trust Company of Florida, Jacksonville, Florida.

of whom 77 percent were black (Table 2.1). Ten years later, LaVilla's black population had nearly doubled. A population decrease in 1885 may reflect the establishment of LaVilla's western boundary a year earlier.[14]

The rapid rise in the number of blacks resulted from in-migration.[15] The arriving blacks were largely Florida born, (Table 2.2), frequently from the outlying counties in northeast Florida. For example, Samuel Spearing, a former slave owned by Elisha Green of neighboring Baker County, brought his wife Percilla, six children, and one grandchild to LaVilla in 1866 and settled on Bay Street.[16] Spearing will bulk large in LaVilla's story. Thomas Warren Long, born near Jacksonville in 1832, moved to LaVilla with his wife

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[14] Council Minutes, Town of LaVilla, 1884-1887. Evidence suggests that the 1885 Florida State Census did not enumerate the entire population of LaVilla.

[15] The federal census of 1860 counted only 908 slaves and 87 free blacks living in Jacksonville. See Barbara Ann Richardson, "A History of Blacks in Jacksonville, Florida, 1860-1895: A Socio-Economic and Political Study" (Ph.D. diss., Carnegie-Mellon University, 1975), 10.

[16] Unless stated otherwise, all information regarding the residents of LaVilla come from LaVilla Database. This database is comprised of information gathered from the 1870 and 1880 Federal Manuscript Census, Duval County, Florida; 1885 State Census; city directories; county court records; and the state and county tax rolls, Duval County, 1866-1877. In addition, information was found in an obituary written by Spearing of his former owner reprinted in Columbus Drew: Something of His Life and Ancestry and Some of His Literary Work (Jacksonville, Florida: The Drew Press, 1910), 17-18; Archibald Abstracts, Book A, 139.

Table 2.1
Population of LaVilla, by Race, 1870-1887

Year	Black*	White	Total
1870	831 (77.1)	247 (22.9)	1078
1880	1541 (71.3)	619 (28.7)	2160
1885**	866 (66.9)	428 (33.1)	1294
1887+	849 (61.6)	529 (38.4)	1378

Sources and Notes: U.S. Census Office, Ninth Census, 1870; U.S.Tenth Census, 1880; Florida Census, 1885; and Richard's Duplex Jacksonville Directory, 1887. The Florida Census, 1885 did not include the total population of LaVilla. *Mulattoes are included as blacks. +Adult population. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

Table 2.2
Place of Birth, by Race, LaVilla, 1870

Birthplace	Black	White	Total
Florida	468 (56.3)	108 (43.7)	576
South Carolina	155 (18.6)	29 (11.7)	184
Georgia	141 (17.0)	46 (18.6)	187
Other	67 (8.6)	64 (25.9)	131
	831 (100.0)	247 (100.0)	1078

Source and Note: LaVilla Database. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

Cornelia and their four children following his discharge from the 34th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops.[17]

A smaller number of LaVilla's black settlers came from more distant places. James Johnson came to Jacksonville from Nassau, Bahama Islands, hoping to benefit from the "boom" that was occurring in the city. Johnson, born free in Richmond, Virginia, had moved to Nassau at the onset of the Civil War and became headwaiter at the Royal Victorian Hotel. While living in Nassau he married Helen Louise Barton and fathered one daughter. In addition to his job at the hotel, Johnson engaged in sponge-fishing and draying. But his economic success was short-lived; the Civil War and the destruction caused by a hurricane diminished his prospects in Nassau. American guests sojourning at the Royal Victorian advised Johnson that Florida had become popular as a winter resort. He decided to explore Florida's possibilities and ended up in Jacksonville in 1869. What he found was a "small, insignificant, and, for the most part, crude and primitive" town, but he decided to stay, relying on information that northern people and capital were interested in the city.[18] Johnson purchased a corner lot for three hundred dollars with a "four- or five-room dwelling, old

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[17] Joe M. Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877, (Tallahassee, Florida: The Florida State University, 1965), 195.

[18] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way (New York: The Viking Press, 1933), 6.

rough, and unpainted" on Lee Street in LaVilla and sent for his family. Along with his wife and daughter came his in-laws, Mary and John Barton, and the family's nurse and cook, Mary Bethel.[19]

An additional source for immigration was the Union Army. Slaves from northeast Florida had joined the three black regiments originating in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1862.[20] Other black soldiers had been mustered into service in Jacksonville. Still others been stationed there during their three year tour of duty. Black soldiers from the 33rd and 34th Regiments occupied Jacksonville for a brief time in March, 1863 and at war's end the 34th Regiment was headquartered there until September, 1865.[21] Conceivably, the black soldiers' military experience in Jacksonville affected the decision on where to settle.[22] Of the forty-nine black males who leased lots from L'Engle following the

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[19] Johnson, Along This Way, 6-7.

[20] Daniel L. Schafer, "Freedom was as Close as the River: The Blacks of Northeast Florida and the Civil War," El Escribano 23(1986), 91.

[21] Jacksonville Herald, August 31, 1965 and September 22, 1865. For a more detailed discussion of Florida's black soldiers see Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962 [1869]; Daniel L. Schafer, "The Blacks of Northeast Florida", 91-116; and Martin and Schafer, Jacksonville's Ordeal By Fire, chapter five.

[22] Howard N. Rabinowitz has found a similar pattern of black soldiers residing in Nashville, Tennessee where the 12th and 15th U.S. Colored Infantry was mustered out and many of the soldiers remained. See Race Relations in the Urban South, 23.

war, nine have been identified as having served in the U.S. Colored Troops. In all, thirty-five LaVilla residents have been identified as former soldiers.[23]

Thomas Holzendorff, Company D, 34th Regiment, is a representative case. Born a slave in Fernandina, Florida, Holzendorf had several owners before Samuel Sweringen purchased him and brought him to Kings Ferry. At age twenty he married Harriet, a slave from a neighboring plantation and had two children before the war. Harriet would subsequently write that, "my said husband and I ran away from our masters and went to the white federal soldiers who had come into the King's Ferry neighborhood [and they] took us to Fernandina where my husband enlisted right away." Discharged from service in Jacksonville, Holzendorf leased a lot from L'Engle, began preaching, and remained in LaVilla with his family until 1872. Harriet's half-brother, Charles Arnold, eventually moved from King's Ferry to live with the Holzendorfs.[24]

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[23] Identification of black soldiers was possible by compiling an index of all black males who resided in LaVilla from 1870 to 1885 and who were of age to serve in the military. This index was cross-referenced with the Register of Deceased Veterans' of Florida, No. 16, Duval County, (prepared by the Veterans' Graves Registration Project, WPA, 1940-1941) located in the Haydon Burns Public Library, Jacksonville; Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served With United States Colored Troops; Muster Roles and the Regimental Descriptive Books for the South Carolina Regiments; and the Pension Records, Records of Veterans Administration, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[24] Descriptive Roll, Company D, 34th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry; Pension Record (hereafter PR) 752.605.

Freedmen like Thomas Holzendorf settled in kinship networks.[25] While knowledge about personal details is limited for many of LaVilla's black residents, identical surnames and residential proximity among the freedmen who leased lots from L'Engle in 1866 suggest kinship ties.[26] Brothers frequently arrived with their respective families. Stacio and Stephen Benjamin leased a single lot from L'Engle. Scipeo and Lymus Middleton, brothers who served together in the army, moved from Fernandina and leased adjacent lots. Benjamin Middleton, another brother, moved in with Lymus' young family. William McRae leased a lot three streets south of his brother Absolom. Letitia Green, widowed, with her two year old daughter, Gertrude, leased two adjacent lots at the corner of Mansion Street and Letitia Street. Next door to Letitia lived John Green, his wife, their three children, and

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[25] Networks are defined as relationships between one individual and another. The relationship can be based on kinship, friendship, work, leisure, politics, voluntary associations, etc. For a discussion of social networks and their usefulness in historical inquiry see Rutman and Rutman, A Place in Time, 27-29; and J. Clyde Mitchell, ed., Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns (Manchester University Press, 1969), especially chapter one and three. On the types of roles within a social network see Barry Wellman, Peter J. Carrington, and Alan Hall, "Networks As Personal Communities," in Barry Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz, eds., Social Structures: A Network Approach (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 130-184.

[26] It should be noted that identical surnames might also represent non-kin slaves who lived on the same plantation and maintained their former owner's name. Nonetheless, living nearby suggests strong social ties.

Green's elderly mother Phebe. The Greens remained neighbors as late as 1887. Their proximity to the wealthy white households and the fact that a street was named for Letitia suggest that they may have been former slaves to one of the white families living in LaVilla.[27]

Next to kinship, the most important factor that influenced settlement in LaVilla seems to have been friendship, at times pre-existing freedom, in other instances created or strengthened in military service. Evidence detailing these networks can be obtained from the pension records of the black soldiers. An examination of these records indicates the existence of friendship among slaves living on the same or nearby plantations. In addition, the pension records document friendships that continued as male slaves joined the Union Army in groups, or those created among soldiers out of their common military experience.

The social network of Fred K. Hamilton exemplifies the paths of connection between individuals who lived in LaVilla (Table 2.3). Hamilton, a mulatto, was born in Nassau County, Florida in 1830 and mustered into Company G, 33rd Regiment in 1862. He was married to Viney Davis, who died in 1864 while they lived in Beaufort, South Carolina with their two children, Henry and Ella. In July, 1865 he married Fanny

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[27] LaVilla Database; LaVilla Property Database. The property database was compiled from Tax Rolls, 1866-1877, Duval County, located at the Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

Bland and, when discharged from the service, moved the family to LaVilla on a lot he leased from Charlotte L'Engle.

Hamilton's military friendships continued in LaVilla. Four of Hamilton's connections - to William Benjamin, Augustus Dorsey, David Hall, and Florida Singleton - were established during slavery and continued in military service. After discharge the soldiers leased lots from L'Engle in LaVilla and maintained contact through friendship, work, church, and leisure.

William Benjamin knew Hamilton for more than thirty years and "lived near him in this country about six years and saw him nearly every day during that time." Florida Singleton knew Hamilton's second wife, Fanny, for fifty years and "knew them both before they were married." Augustus Dorsey "knew Fred Hamilton in 1862 before he enlisted...[and] was with him all during the war...[and in LaVilla] lived about three blocks or so apart." Frederick Hamilton met Isaac Middleton "soon after my enlistment" and "kept up my acquaintance with [him] at the brickmason trade and we met each other most every Sunday at Church."[28]

The social networks of other soldiers revealed similar links. Moses Thomas and Moses Robinson, both born in Florida, knew each other twenty years before they joined Company F, 34th Regiment. Settling in LaVilla when mustered out of service, Robinson "lived [as a] close neighbor

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[28] PR 575.251.

Table 2.3
Social Network of Fred Hamilton, LaVilla

Source of Network Link	Fred Hamilton's Connections												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Pre-War	*	*		*									*
Military	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Neighbor	*			*									
Friend	*	*		*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*
Church		*											
Work											*		

Source and Note: PR 575.251, Pension Records, Veterans Administration, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Numbers listed in table correspond to individual connections listed below.

1 William Benjamin
2 Augustus Dorsey
3 Abram Grant
4 David Hall
5 William Baker
6 John Ryals
7 Benjamin Turner
8 Joseph Holder
9 Chancey Jones
10 Richard Masters
11 Isaac Middleton
12 Scipeo Middleton
13 Florida Singleton

to . . . Thomas ever since." Mathis Shavers, Joshua Jones, and William Johnson joined the service together in Key West, Florida, and upon discharge "returned to Jacksonville where we have lived and kept our acquaintance."[29]

Networks based on kinship, friendship, and comradeship not only influenced the process of settlement, they

[29] PR 402.053, 854.458, 444.674.

structured the social web of relationships which defined LaVilla's black community. The social web, moreover, was shaped by demographic factors. In 1870 the average age of all residents in LaVilla was twenty-one. This youthful population was nearly evenly distributed by sex, with black women slightly outnumbering black males. The age structure of blacks in 1870 indicates the large number of children from birth to fourteen years, suggesting that young families resided in LaVilla (Figure 2.2). The nuclear family, in fact, was the predominant household unit in LaVilla from 1870 to 1885 (Table 2.4). Changes in the structure of the household, however, are noticeable by 1885. Black households enlarged to accommodate relatives or boarders. This shift, discussed in the following chapter, was largely the product of low wages, unemployment, and poverty.

For a brief period, from 1869 to 1887, the freedmen participated in local government. The Republican-controlled legislature enacted a provision in the 1868 state constitution allowing for the easy incorporation of towns and cities.[30] That same year, the white residents of LaVilla decided to transform their informally bounded community into an autonomous political entity which ultimately enhanced political opportunities for blacks. And on February 5, 1869

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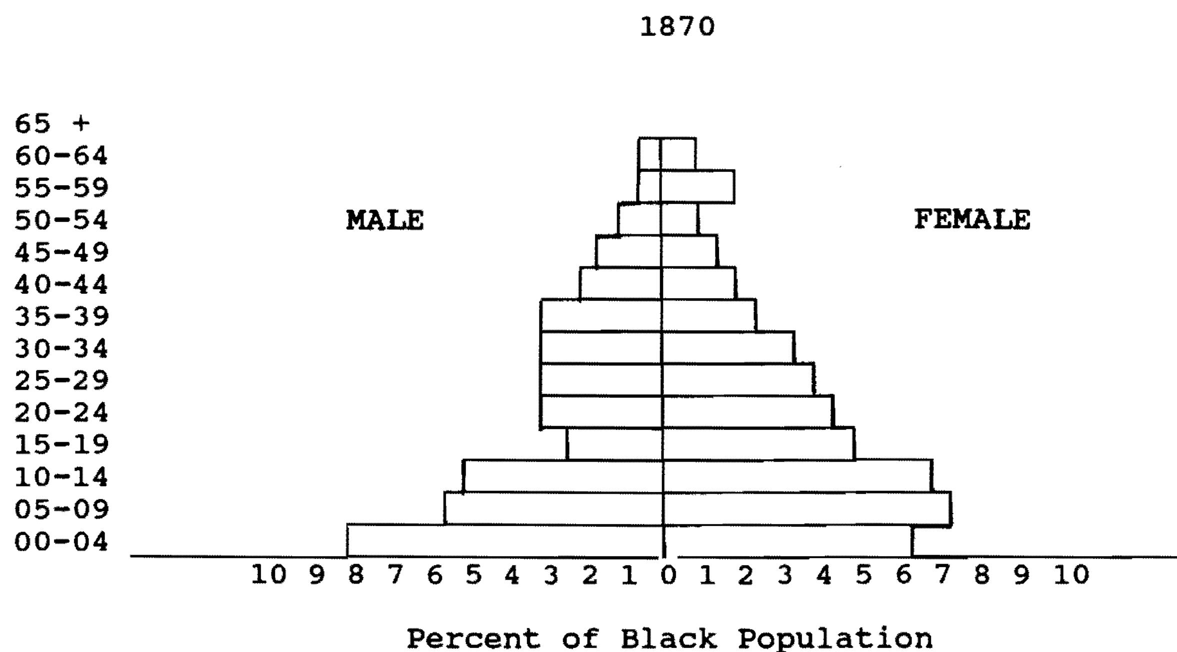
[30] Laws of Florida, First Session 1868, The Acts and Resolution. (Chapter 1, 638), 111.



Source: LaVilla Database.
Figure 2.2
Age Structure of Black Population, LaVilla, 1870

Table 2.4
Black Household Composition, LaVilla, 1870 and 1885

Household Composition	1870	1885
Nuclear	97 (57.7)	93 (47.9)
Extended	26 (15.5)	34 (17.5)
Augmented	33 (19.6)	45 (23.2)
Irregular	12 (7.1)	22 (11.3)
Total	168 (100.0)	194 (100.0)

Source and Notes: LaVilla Database. Nuclear: one or both parents and children; Extended: nuclear family with kin; Augmented: nuclear with non-kin members; Irregular: single or non-kin. Percentage in parentheses.

LaVilla became an official political entity.[31] The details surrounding LaVilla's incorporation are vague at best. But the elite white property owners' desire to protect their property from Jacksonville's Republican controlled city government may have been a primary factor. Francis L'Engle spearheaded the legal act, and the ninety-nine year leases he offered to the freedmen may indeed have been a way to ensure passage.[32] Incorporation, nonetheless, was the first public demonstration of unity between the white and black residents. During its incorporated years, many of the freedmen became active in local politics. In 1871, L'Engle was elected mayor and four whites held council positions. Blacks, however, held important positions. Frank Andrews was elected marshall, Samuel Spearing tax collector, William P. Braddock tax assessor, and Joseph Holder, James Johnson, Alfred Grant, Thomas Legrant, and John Brown aldermen.

The presence of black soldiers in LaVilla fostered an aura of pride and had a positive influence on the town. In

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[31] The Florida Union, September 16, 1868; Archibald Abstracts, Book 1.

[32] This speculative scenario is based on LaVilla's eventual annexation to Jacksonville in 1887. The Board of Trade, controlled by Conservative-Democrats, who planned the expansion, noted that the "prominent citizens of LaVilla, who were formerly strongly opposed to being annexed to Jacksonville...had become convinced that the matter had now become an absolute necessity for the protection of their property, etc." The Florida-Times Union, February 24, 1987. On the use of incorporation to serve such means see Jon C. Teaford, City and Suburb (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 23.

the early days of freedom they became a rallying point around which blacks could express a collective identity. The Jacksonville Herald, the local Republican newspaper, reported on August 31, 1865 that a large crowd of spectators came to witness the 34th Regiment on dress parade. The reporter commented that "Their appearance in line, and their skill in going through the manual of arms appeared to our unmilitary eye, perfect. We were particulary struck with the manly and soldier like bearing of the orderly sergeants."[33] Black soldiers also helped to organize the local black population in political activities. They and other citizens, for example, met at the Baptist Church to organize a petition to a forthcoming convention concerning suffrage.[34] In addition, local blacks made arrangements to organize a farm in Jacksonville's vicinity for aged, infirm, and destitute "colored" people.

Many of the black male's who lived in LaVilla were active in the political activities of the Radical Union Republican Club. Samuel Spearing, Thomas Lancaster, John R. Scott, Thomas Legrant, Alfred Grant, and Noah Henderson organized a mass meeting for the "colored citizens" of Jacksonville "to give each to the other a true sentiment of our minds." The meeting was called on May 25, 1867 in response to the recently enacted Reconstruction Act.

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[33] Jacksonville Herald, August 31, 1865.

[34] Jacksonville Herald, September 22, 1865.

Resolutions were read and passed which voiced support for the Republican Party, reconstruction plans, and voting rights. Samuel Spearing was asked to address the gathering. "If any one expected him to make a speech," he began, "they would be disappointed, but, that what few remarks he did make would come from a pure and honest heart." Before a crowd of twelve hundred fellow "colored citizens" Spearing eloquently expressed how the freedmen envisioned their place in southern society, a vision generated not by emancipation alone, but by an understanding that, as slaves, they had contributed in the formation of southern society.

Spearing defended the freedmen's right to protect their lives and property as policemen, and the right to serve as justices of the peace. In freedom the whites had questioned the former slaves' ability to govern because of their poverty and ignorance. Spearing unequivocally stated, "we <u>are</u> qualified." Land and wealth were the measure of competence by the white's standards, but Spearing asked:

> [H]ow did they get the land and the wealth, who cleared off the very land upon which Jacksonville stands? It was done by the bone and the sinew of the colored man, and we have an equal title to enjoy and to govern it.[35]

Spearing also spoke of hopes and dreams for the future, a future that would be confirmed through their children: "We

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[35] <u>Florida Union</u>, June 1, 1867.

will educate our children, and they will make the white man blush. If we bring them up right and send them to school they will show the world what a people they really are."[36] Spearing, along with the other freedmen, strengthened by ties of family, kinship, and friendship, would strive to attain their aspirations through the social, economic, and political institutions they created within LaVilla.

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[36] Florida Union, June 1, 1867.

CHAPTER 3

WORK AND HOME

Upon settlement in the city, freedmen were unavoidably obliged to secure work and to find a place to live. In either situation, they were hampered by unfavorable constraints. Penniless, uneducated, and unskilled, the former slaves were dependent upon a white social structure which controlled access to jobs and homeownership. Contemporary observers and historians have debated the effect of the city on blacks, but, W.E.B. DuBois has argued that "in the cities...the Negro has had his chance."[1] While a small number of black entrepreneurs obtained financial security and became homeowners, the majority of LaVilla's black residents relied on low-paying jobs and rented their homes. During LaVilla's incorporated period, job opportunities steadily improved. Entry into the expanded economy, however, did not translate into improved social conditions: low wages, unemployment, and poor housing plagued the lives of the

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[1] Quoted in Zane L. Miller, "Urban Blacks in the South, 1865-1920: An Analysis of Some Quantitative Data on Richmond, Savannah, New Orleans, Louisville, and Birmingham," in Leo F. Schnore, ed. The New Urban History: Quantitative Explorations by American Historians (Princeton, 1975), 185.

former slaves.[2] The type of work and the quality of housing not only affected the worker's livelihood, but defined the character of the urban black community.

Initially, LaVilla offered limited opportunities for employment. In 1871 the city directory listed the LaVilla Brick Works, Christie & LaCourse Brickyard, LaVilla Iron and Brass Foundry and Machine Shop, and Eggenweiler Brewery.[3] But these manufacturers provided few jobs. The freedmen generally found employment as day laborers, earning between $1.50 and $2 per day when work was available.[4] Throughout the period examined, the majority of black workers were relegated to unskilled or personal and domestic service (Table 3.1). Yet, despite limitations, the freedmen found employment. James Weldon Johnson, born to James Johnson in 1871, recalled the daily labor of black males in LaVilla: "All the most interesting things that came under my observation were being done by colored men. They drove the horse and mule teams, they built the houses, they laid the

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[2] Barbara Richardson, "A History of Blacks in Jacksonville", 68-90; Joe M. Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 70; Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 61-62; and John W. Blasingame, "Before the Ghetto," 465-470.

[3] Jacksonville City Directory (Florida Union Book & Job Printing, 1871). P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida.

[4] Barbara Richardson, "A History of Blacks in Jacksonville", 102.

Table 3.1
Occupational Status of Black Workers, LaVilla, 1870, 1880, and 1887.

Occupational Status	1870	1880	1887
Professional	3 (1.0)	8 (1.5)	19 (2.3)
Proprietor, Manager, Official	1 (0.3)	20 (3.8)	30 (3.6)
Clerical	5 (1.7)	4 (0.8)	1 (0.1)
Skilled	24 (8.2)	60 (11.5)	158 (18.9)
Semi-skilled	34 (11.6)	127 (24.3)	126 (15.1)
Unskilled	153 (52.4)	191 (36.5)	313 (37.5)
Personal, Domestic Service	72 (24.7)	113 (21.6)	188 (22.5)
Total	292 (100.0)	523 (100.0)	835 (100.0)

Sources and Notes: U.S. Census Bureau, Ninth Census, 1870; Tenth Census, 1880; and Richards' Jacksonville Duplex City Directory (Jacksonville, Florida: John R. Richards Co., 1887). Occupational status from Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976):275-280. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

bricks, they painted the buildings and fences, they loaded and unloaded the ships."[5]

By the 1880s, options for work had improved greatly. As detailed in Table 3.1, more blacks were successful in securing skilled and semi-skilled jobs over time. Moreover, the number of black professionals and businessmen increased. This socioeconomic change occurred as black workers from LaVilla found employment in the hotel, timber, port, construction, and railroad industries (Table 3.2). Only one black male was employed by the railroad in 1870, for example; seventeen years later, 114 (14 percent) of LaVilla's black males worked for the Florida Railway and Navigation Company, Jacksonville Tampa and Key West Railway, or Savannah Florida and Western Railroad, Wharves, and Warehouses. Fifteen black males worked as carpenters in 1870. But in 1887 104 (12 percent) of black males worked in construction. Thirteen were employed as painters, twenty-three as bricklayers, and fifty-five worked as carpenters. In addition, more black males had entered service jobs as draymen or porters. The 1887 city directory listed twenty porters and twenty-five draymen, many of whom identified their employer: Henry Farnell hauled bricks for the Eureka Brick Manufacturing Company in LaVilla, and Andrew Long hauled for the Standard Oil Company in Jacksonville. The construction of a streetcar railway in LaVilla also created jobs for blacks as drivers

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[5] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way, 31.

Table 3.2
Black Workers Employed in Local Industry, LaVilla, 1870, 1880, and 1887.

Industry	1870	1880	1887
Civic/ Professional	4 (1.3)	18 (3.4)	27 (3.2)
Business/ Artisan	6 (2.0)	52 (10.0)	122 (14.6)
Railroad	1 (0.3)	36 (6.9)	114 (13.7)
Port	3 (1.0)	23 (4.4)	11 (1.3)
Construction	16 (5.4)	39 (7.5)	104 (12.5)
Service	102 (35.0)	127 (24.3)	231 (27.7)
Timber	7 (2.3)	44 (8.4)	2 (0.2)
Brick	8 (2.7)	12 (2.3)	13 (1.6)
Hotel	2 (0.7)	10 (1.9)	12 (1.4)
Misc.	1 (0.3)	53*(10.1)	15+(1.8)
Unknown**	142 (49.0)	109 (20.8)	184 (22.0)
Total	292 (100.0)	523 (100.0)	835 (100.0)

Source and Notes: See Table 2.1. * Includes twenty-nine farmers and farmhands. + Includes three farmers. ** Day laborers. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

and stablemen.

Between 1870 and 1887 the spatial landscape of LaVilla changed dramatically. A commercial district had developed along Bay Street, in part as an extension of Jacksonville's business district. The shift from residential to commercial and manufacturing in the southeast quadrant of the town

enhanced LaVilla's place in the larger urban economy and provided additional employment for the town's residents. LaVilla's economic development is further illustrated in a census of buildings in Jacksonville and its suburbs taken in 1886 by the Board of Trade. Jacksonville led in commercial and manufacturing establishments, but LaVilla ranked second in all but small manufacturing (Table 3.3). Included among the new businesses was the Jacksonville Refrigerator Ice

Table 3.3
Commercial and Manufacturing Establishments, Jacksonville and Suburbs, 1886.

Establishments	J	EJ	LV	HT	BK	OL	FF	RS	SF	Total
Wholesale Dealers	25									
Retail Dealers	243	26	57	13	10	5	2	1	2	359
W & R Dealers	49	1	6							56
Large Manufacturers	7	3			2		1			16
Small Manufacturers	26	7	5			1				39
Total	350	37	71	13	12	6	3	1	2	495

Source and Note: A Descriptive and Statistical Report by the Jacksonville Board of Trade, 1886. P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida. Abbreviations are as follows: J-Jacksonville, EJ-East Jacksonville, LV-LaVilla, HT-Hansontown, BK-Brooklyn, OL-Oakland, FF-Fairfield, RS-Riverside, SF-Springfield.

Works, located on the corner of Hawk and First Streets, which employed nineteen blacks in 1887.

The Board of Trade census reported LaVilla as Jacksonville's largest suburb and counted 3,228 "bona fide" residents living there.[6] The census counted 814 buildings in LaVilla, ninety-three percent of which were dwellings (thirty-two of them vacant), including eight boarding houses and seventy-eight tenement houses.[7] In addition there were six churches, two schools, three livery stables, two public halls, one cemetery.

LaVilla's businesses and manufactures were principally owned by whites, but by 1886 a small number of black businessmen had emerged: Wyatt J. Geter and his brothers, Jacob and Madison, owned a blacksmith and wheelwright shop on Forsyth Street; Robert F. Comfort owned the New Palace Shaving Saloon and Bathrooms on Bridge Street that was "opened to the public, both white and colored"; Thomas Claiborne owned a saloon and furniture store; other blacks operated grocery stores and restaurants.[8] The addition of black-owned businesses engendered an important alternative in

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[6] Population figures: Jacksonville (11,545), LaVilla (3,228), East Jacksonville (1,939), Hansontown & Burbridge (1,623), Brooklyn (1,039), Oakland (761), Fairfield (543), Riverside (555), and Springfield (356). Second Annual Statistical Report, Jacksonville, Florida, 1886.

[7] Buildings under construction were included in the figures.

[8] Richard's Jacksonville Duplex City Directory, 1887.

work relations, as black workers could now work for black employers. For example, black barbers worked in Comfort's barber shop, John E. Hunter hired black males to work in his grocery store on Bay Street, and Thomas Claiborne employed blacks to work in his stores.

Many of the freedmen had arrived in the city unskilled and gradually improved their status through employment. Smart Tillman, a freedmen who leased a lot on Ward Street from Francis L'Engle in 1866, typified the occupational path taken by black males. As a slave, Tillman had worked as a fieldhand on a plantation in Fernandina, Florida. He moved to LaVilla shortly after his discharge from the 33rd Regiment and was employed as a laborer. In 1876 he was a woodchopper. In 1880 Tillman's occupation was brickmaker. And by 1887 he was foreman at Burch Brothers Brickyard. Changing occupations was not an infrequent occurrence, but it did not always mean advancement.[9] Frank Andrews, another freedmen who leased property from L'Engle, was a laborer in 1870. With incorporation, he became the city's marshall. But in 1873 he was the "former marshall", and worked out of town at James P. Talliaferro's log camp.[10]

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[9] Of the fifty freedmen who leased lots from Francis and Charolotte L'Engle, occupations are known for twenty-two. There were 13 laborers, 3 carpenters, and 1 each of river pilot, well-digger, seaman, grocer clerk, minister, and fruit dealer.

[10] The Weekly Florida Union, January 23, 1873. Andrews died while at the camp due to "foul play." A female cook was arrested for serving jessamine, a poisoned vegetable.

The most successful freedmen who lived in LaVilla arrived with marketable skills. Samuel Spearing came with his family in 1866 and quickly advanced in status through his accounting knowledge and leadership ability. Spearing's occupations included shoe store clerk (1870), blacksmith (1871), owner of a grocery store (1876), vice-president of the Florida Savings Bank and Real Estate Exchange (1876), and clerk for J.Q. Burbridge (1887). In 1866 and 1867 Spearing earned a salary of $600 per year. Moreover, Spearing held several political offices serving as representative in the state legislature (1874), Duval County tax collector (1874), and tax collector and treasurer for LaVilla city council (1871 through 1887).[11] By 1875 Spearing owned four adjoining lots in LaVilla valued at $1275.

Black females who lived in LaVilla also worked. Their experience, however, followed a different path from that of black males. While male workers were able to expand into the different industries in the urban economy, black females, with few exceptions, remained in personal and domestic service.[12] In 1870, all employed black females were simply domestic servants. By 1885, domestic service had been

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[11] LaVilla Database; The Florida Sun, May 25, 1876.

[12] On urban black female workers see Chapter 4 in Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985); on black domestic servants see David M. Katzman, Seven Days A Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

subdivided into specific tasks (washerwoman, cook, chambermaid, ironer, nurse). Two significant changes took place in the pattern of black female work in LaVilla. First, through 1880, over half of the working women were twenty years of age or younger; in 1870, no female over age twenty-five worked. But beginning in 1880 the age pattern for black working women had altered as more women over twenty-five began to work. By 1885, seventy-three percent of all black working women were over twenty-five years of age (Table 3.4). Second, eighty percent of all black female workers were single in 1870, but ten years later, married women dominated the workforce. By 1885 a significant number of widowed women had entered the workforce (Table 3.5).[13] A survey of black females who worked in 1885 reveals that forty-six percent headed households without husbands, while the other fifty-four percent lived with their husbands and family, or boarded. Male absence in the black household has been attributed to death, desertion, and out-of-town employment.[14]

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[13] On the change in women's life course see Howard P. Chudacoff, "The Life Course of Women: Age and Age Consciousness, 1865-1915," Journal of Family History 5(Fall 1980): 274-292.

[14] On the phenomenon of the rise of black female-headed households see Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery & Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 444-445; Orville Vernon Burton, In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985),284-287; and Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., Theodore Hershberg, John Modell, "The Origins of the Female-Headed Black Family: The Impact of the Urban Experience" in Theodore Hershberg, ed. Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group

Table 3.4
Employment of Black Females, By Age Groups, LaVilla, 1870, 1880 and 1885.

Age	1870	1880	1885
13-20	32 (59.3)	45 (52.9)	13 (12.0)
21-24	22 (40.7)	15 (17.6)	16 (14.8)
24-34	0	11 (12.9)	37 (34.2)
35-44	0	5 (5.9)	18 (16.7)
45 & over	0	9 (10.6)	24 (22.2)
Total	54 (100.0)	85 (100.0)	108 (100.0)

Sources and Notes: U.S. Census Bureau, Ninth Census, 1870; Tenth Census, 1880; Florida Census, 1885. Florida Census, 1885 is incomplete. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

Immediately after the war, black wives and mothers stayed at home.[15] Sons and daughters typically supplemented the family income. Young, single, black females worked as domestic servants and lived at home with their family or boarded with a black family. Mary J. Andrews, daughter of LaVilla's marshall, exemplified the economic hardships faced by many black women. In 1870, nineteen year old Mary worked

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Experience in the 19th Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[15] Gutman, Black Family, 167-168; Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow, 58.

Table 3.5
Marital Status of Black Female Workers, LaVilla 1870, 1880, and 1885.

Marital Status	1870	1880	1885
Single	43 (79.6)	8 (9.4)	29 (26.8)
Married	5 (9.3)	57 (67.1)	35 (32.4)
Widowed	6 (11.1)	12 (14.1)	37 (34.2)
Divorced	0	0	1 (0.9)
Unknown	0	8 (9.4)	6 (5.5)
Total	54 (100.0)	85 (100.0)	108 (100.0)

Source and Note: See Table 3.4. Percentage figures given in parentheses.

as a domestic servant, and lived with her parents and three younger siblings. Shortly thereafter she married and gave birth to two sons. In 1880 Mary Andrews Chapman was a widow, suffered from consumption, and remained home "keeping house" for her two boys. Elsie, Mary's mother, aged sixty and widowed, lived with her daughter, and worked as a servant earning between five and eight dollars per month.[16] Elsie's twenty-two year old brother, a laborer, also lived in the household.

Job security was tenuous for many urban black workers. Seasonal or casual work, unemployment, and disabilities

[16] Income figures come from Webb's Jacksonville Directory, 1880.

forced many blacks to leave their homes temporarily. Urban black males compensated for precarious employment by working out of town or changing occupations. The Jacksonville Board of Trade omitted "considerable numbers of men known to have been absent working upon new railroads" in its 1886 population census.[17] In 1887, Isaac Middleton left LaVilla to find work in Key West because "work had got dull here and he could get work there and better wages." Prior to his departure he had worked on several buildings as a brickmason. He left behind in LaVilla his wife Diana and his two children from a previous marriage.[18]

James Johnson adjusted his employment according to the tourist season. For thirteen years, throughout the winter months, he served as headwaiter for the St. James Hotel. But during the summer months he often traveled north to work in mountain or seaside hotels.[19] Johnson also supplemented his income as a caterer. In a newspaper advertisement in 1869 he boasted of, "his experience as head waiter and purveyor in many leading hotels in this country and the West Indies;" This assured "him of his ability to gain satisfaction in providing for weddings, picnics, dinner parties, excursions

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[17] Second Annual Statistical Report. Jacksonville, Florida Board of Trade, 1886.

[18] PR 550.921.

[19] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way, 15.

and like occasions."[20] In 1881 Johnson retired from the hotel business, became a minister, and served nearly fifteen years at the Shiloh Baptist Church in LaVilla.[21] In 1877 Johnson owned property valued at $1750 and personal property valued at $270.

Unemployment was a common reality in the work experience of urban blacks and multiplied the financial burden placed on the household. Unemployment data gathered in the 1885 Florida State Census reveals the length of unemployment and its impact on the household. Black males were more likely to be unemployed. Of the 241 black males who worked in LaVilla, twenty-three percent had been unemployed from one to twelve months the previous year. Forty-nine percent of unemployed black males were out of work from two to three months (Table 3.6). Unemployment was especially harsh when more than one worker in a family went without work. Jack Butler, a sixty-one year old carpenter, was unemployed for nine months. Living in the household was his wife Maria and their three sons, Jonathon (24), William (20), and Samuel (15). Jonathon, a laborer, was unemployed for six months, and William, a fireman, for ten months.

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[20] Florida Union, June 3, 1869.

[21] In his study of black Cleveland, Kenneth L. Kusmer noted that while black headwaiters were often highly respected in the white and black community, beginning in the 1880s, whites began to replace black waiters in the better hotels and restaurants. A Ghetto Takes Shape, 75.

Large households with young children were especially dependent on stable employment. Jody Wiggins, who lived with his father-in-law, Smart Tillman, was out of work for two months. Although Tillman and his son William were employed full time, their income supported eleven family members. The size of the Tillman household, like other black households fluctuated over time to meet the needs of the family. Tillman had moved into the house he leased from L'Engle in 1866 with his wife, four children, and his younger brother Isaac.[22] In 1880 his daughter, Susan Wiggins headed the household (husband Jody was not present). Living in the house was her widowed father, Smart, her sister Rosa and Rosa's eight month old son, and two brothers. Five years later, Smart Tillman was listed as head, and the household had enlarged to shelter his extended family: Sons William (18) and Alvin (14), Susan and Jody Wiggins and their two young children, and Rosa and her three children.

Black women, especially when they were heads of the household, endured added deprivation when they were unemployed. Emma Robinson, a forty-five year old widow, worked as a stewardess. Included in Emma's household was her twenty-five year old niece Dora, a washerwoman, Dora's young daughter, and a nephew, Henry, a laborer. Both Emma and

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[22] Tillman paid taxes on the property, valued at $350, through 1877. His personal property was $25. In 1887 Tillman was listed in the city directory with an address which coincided with the 1866 leased lot. Presumably, he continued his lease agreement with Francis L'Engle.

Table 3.6
Unemployment Among Black Workers, LaVilla, 1885.

Number of Months Unemployed	Black Males	Black Females
1	8 (14.5)	0
2	12 (21.8)	4 (19.0)
3	15 (27.3)	4 (19.0)
4	5 (9.1)	2 (9.5)
5	1 (1.8)	1 (4.8)
6	7 (12.7)	6 (28.6)
7	0	0
8	2 (3.6)	0
9	1 (1.8)	0
10	2 (3.6)	0
11	0	0
12	2 (3.6)	4 (19.0)
Total	55 (100.0)	21 (100.0)

Source and Note: State Census, Florida, 1885. Percentage figures in parentheses.

Henry went without work for several months (for five and eight months, respectively), placing a strain on the household finances. Black females who rented out rooms might experience reduced income when boarders were out of work. For example, Ester Andrews rented rooms to supplement her income as a washerwoman. Three of the five black male workers who boarded in the house were unemployed from one to three months. Under these circumstances the unemployed boarder left or paid at a later date. In either case, rental income was not always dependable.

Black veterans frequently suffered from disabilities which encumbered their work. Frederick Hamilton, a veteran of Company C, 33rd Regiment, was incapacitated "from manual labor by reason of rheumatism" which he contracted from "exposure doing guard and picket duty and heavy marching." Milton Haney, who lived across the river in Arlington said that "during 1868 and 1869 he employed [Hamilton] to work for him [as a stevedore] . . . that during this time [Hamilton] was unable to do very hard work, that he could not do more than half as much work as an able bodied man." Even so, Hamilton continued to work as a stevedore, at least through 1887, and managed to fulfill his lease agreement for the lot and house he rented.[23]

Scipeo Middleton, a sergeant in Company H, 33rd Regiment "was compelled to quit work" as a river pilot in the early

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[23] PR 575.251; LaVilla Property Database.

1880s because of rheumatism. Chance Jenkins, a neighbor, claimed that he had "worked with [Scipeo] for years, but he was never able to do any work that strained him." David Hall, an army comrade, "worked with him once or twice a month since 10 years before the war . . . [and] from 1864 to 1889 seen [Middleton] suffer from rheumatism."[24] In 1880, Middleton lived with his wife and three children, each of whom was employed and supplemented the family income.

Other black veterans were more destitute because of their war-time inflictions. Chancey Jones, a veteran from Company H, 33rd Regiment, was incapacitated from a service injury and, at age seventy, required daily attention from his fifteen year old daughter. "My wife is dead," Jones said, "[and] I have no means of living. I can eat when I can get it. My daughter has no chance to work as I am obliged to keep her at home to wait on me." George Garvin, a fellow veteran and neighbor, wrote to the Commissioner of Pensions that "[Jones] is supported by charity, being perfectly helpless and really in need of food."[25]

Low wages, unemployment, and disability frustrated the urban black worker. These conditions, moreover, thwarted the freedmen's ability to own a home, a privilege reserved for

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[24] PR 326.483.

[25] PR 921.652.

wealthy whites and a small number of blacks.[26] Tax records for Duval County from 1866 to 1877 indicate that blacks paid taxes on property in LaVilla, but this did not necessarily mean ownership of property.[27] In addition, the majority of black taxpayers paid taxes on property valued below five hundred dollars, while the majority of white taxpayers paid taxes on property valued over six hundred dollars (Table 3.7). Using household counts from the federal census as a general number of black households which may have existed during 1872 and 1877, the number of blacks who owned or leased their property was greatly reduced between the two years. Forty-five percent of LaVilla's black households paid taxes in 1872, while only twenty-two percent did so in 1877.[28] The data strongly suggest that rental, not

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[26] For a discussion of urban black housing see Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the South, Chapter 5. For an interesting study on the relationship between homeownership and social mobility see Matthew Edel, Elliott D. Sclar, and Daniel Luria, Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Surburbanization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. Edel, et al. quotes Stephen Thernstrom who found that in 1870 only 11 percent of Boston working-class families were homeowners which suggests that blacks were not alone in their inability to own homes.

[27] Identification of black property owners who lived in LaVilla was difficult because many blacks who entered into lease agreements were required to pay state and county taxes. Thus, blacks listed on the tax rolls were not necessarily homeowners. The Archibald Abstracts suggest that at least twenty-five blacks owned property in LaVilla between 1866 and 1881.

[28] It must be reminded that these are only rough estimates as precise number of households in the two tax years examined are not known.

Table 3.7
Value of Real Estate, by Race, LaVilla, 1872 & 1877

1872

Value in Dollars	Black	White	Unknown
0*	92 (54.8)	34 (64.1)	0
1-100	1 (0.6)	0	2 (4.3)
101-200	17 (10.1)	2 (3.8)	9 (19.1)
201-300	30 (17.8)	1 (1.9)	7 (15.0)
301-400	12 (7.1)	1 (1.9)	8 (17.0)
401-500	8 (4.8)	0	8 (17.0)
501-600	2 (1.2)	0	2 (4.2)
601 +	6 (3.6)	15 (28.3)	11 (23.4)
Total	168 (100.0)	53 (100.0)	47 (100.0)

1877

Value in Dollars	Black	White	Unknown
0*	296 (78.1)	120 (75.9)	0
1-100	9 (2.4)	2 (1.3)	4 (6.6)
101-200	29 (7.6)	4 (2.5)	13 (21.3)
201-300	24 (6.3)	3 (1.9)	9 (14.7)
301-400	12 (3.2)	3 (1.9)	2 (3.3)
401-500	3 (0.8)	5 (3.2)	8 (13.1)
501-600	0	0	2 (3.3)
601 +	6 (1.6)	21 (13.3)	23 (37.7)
Total	379 (100.0)	158 (100.0)	61 (100.0)

Source and Notes: Tax Rolls, 1866-1877. Series 28, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida. *Number of blacks who did not have property based on the number of households counted in the 1870 Federal Census, less the number of blacks who paid taxes in 1872. The 1880 Federal Census figures were used for 1877. These figures are rough estimates because the unknown race figures could not be considered. Percentages are in parentheses.

homeownership, was the norm for blacks who lived in LaVilla.

The ninety-nine year leases which L'Engle proffered provided a modicum of security for the freedmen, but the duration of the lease indicates that the value of the property was not expected to increase over time. L'Engle's motivation for offering the lease agreement is difficult to discern. James Weldon Johnson, a native son of LaVilla, wrote that, "long after the close of the Reconstruction period Jacksonville was known far and wide as a good town for Negroes." Johnson saw "a direct relation between that state of affairs and the fact that Jacksonville was controlled by certain aristocratic families, families like the L'Engles, Hartridges, and Daniels, who were sensitive to the code, noblesse oblige."[29]

Indeed, Francis L'Engle befriended many of the freedmen who lived in LaVilla. March Ponder, a freedmen who leased a lot in 1866, maintained a lifelong friendship with L'Engle. L'Engle witnessed Ponder's last will and testament which stipulated that Ponder's wife, Sophie should "confer with and be guided by the advice of my friend, Francis F. L'Engle, in the management of this estate."[30]

But paternalism and friendship aside, L'Engle was a businessman and held to his legal agreement with the

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[29] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way, 45.

[30] Probate Record 4586, Duval County, Jacksonville, Florida.

freedmen. In 1869 he voided sixteen of the original leases for non-payment. On March 1, 1872 L'Engle entered into a new leasing agreement with twenty-one blacks, five of whom were among the original lessees, stipulating an option to purchase the property in fee simple. As a result, several of the freedmen became property owners. In 1875 Cain Williams purchased the northeast quarter of his lot for $100. Reddick Evans, a well-digger, purchased the half-lot he leased for $125 in 1869. And Adeline Clark purchased the lot her husband leased for $250 in 1876. Other LaVilla whites sold property to the freedmen as well. William Sedgewick sold lots for one hundred dollars in 1869 to Scipeo Middleton, Joseph Holder, and Augustus Dorsey.[31]

During its incorporated years, LaVilla's black residents attempted to fulfill the dreams that freedom promised. The dreams, however, were tempered by adjustment and change. As Jacksonville developed and created job opportunities, LaVilla reaped the benefits of its proximity to the city. But access into the economic mainstream was limited. The majority of black workers remained in unskilled or service occupations. Black males, whose income was essential to the household, exercised remarkable agility in their efforts to improve their economic status, but often at the expense of the family. Moreover, a number of black veterans' income was handicapped by disabilities received during military service.

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[31] Archibald Abstracts.

Concomitantly, black females underwent an inexorable setback as their hopes of remaining at home were shattered when conditions forced more and more of them to join the workforce.

During times of economic urgency, the freedmen exploited the shelter made available to them. Family, kin, friends, and, sometimes strangers, crowded into the small, wooden structures to compensate for the economic straightjacket into which they were forced. The composition of the household adapted to the needs of the individuals who called it home. The black community that formed in the context of a rapidly growing southern city can be characterized as a place of strong, enduring, and resourceful relationships. Paradoxically, it was also characterized by instability and impoverishment.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

During eighteen years of incorporation, LaVilla's social, economic, and political structures experienced many of the problems found in other urban areas during the late nineteenth century. Jacksonville's rapid growth and economic development benefitted LaVilla. But it also generated conditions which contributed to poverty, unemployment, health hazards, municipal corruption, and crime. Jacksonville grew from a town of 2,000 in 1860 to a small city of 11,545 by 1886 (added to that 10,044 from the suburbs).[1] The continuing influx of newcomers swelled the suburban population and by 1886, LaVilla's population had nearly tripled.[2] The freedmen's response to urban problems can be viewed at two levels: social and political. On the social level, the freedmen functioned independently from the whites. As noted earlier, blacks looked to family, kin, friends, and neighbors in time of personal need. Additionally, the freedmen established an institutional framework of churches,

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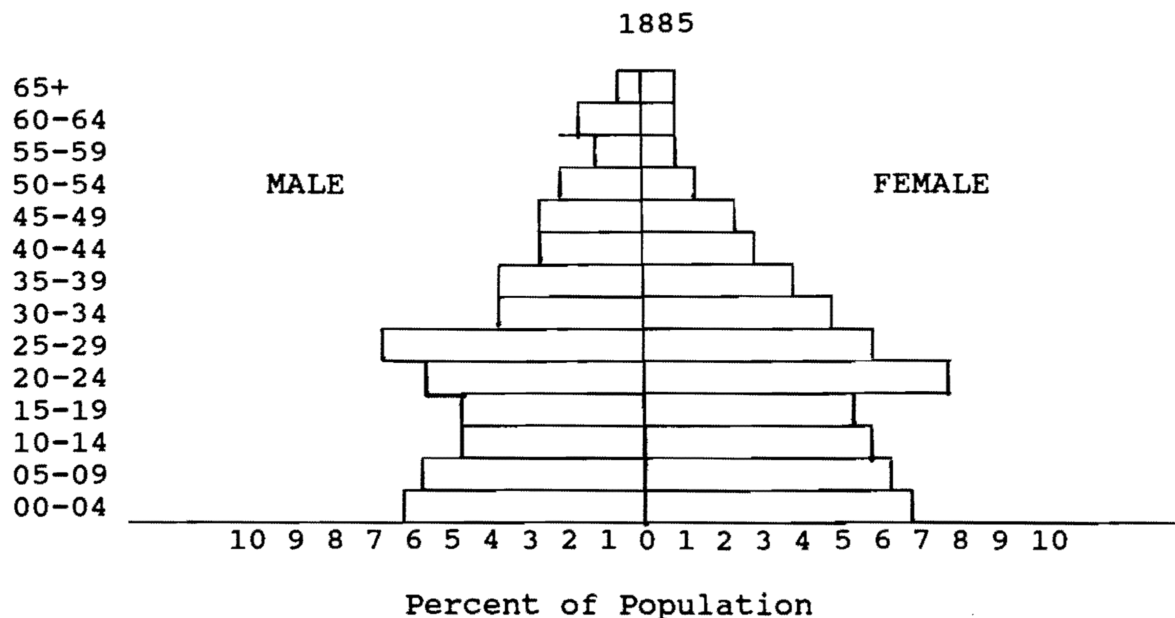
[1] Richard Martin, The City Makers, 80. Jacksonville Board of Trade, Second Annual Statistical Report, 1886.

[2] Based on population count in Richards' Jacksonville Duplex City Directory, 1887 and Jacksonville Board of Trade Population Census, 1886.

schools, and voluntary associations to undergird their collective needs. On the political level blacks allied with whites and shared in decision-making with respect to the civic needs of the community. Thus, in the first twenty years of freedom, blacks had organized a duality in their associational life. When annexation shut them out of the political dimension of their community, they came to rely solely on the social dimension of their community.

LaVilla underwent notable demographic and physical changes toward the end of its incorporated period. By 1885, a significant number of young, black males between the age of twenty and twenty-four were living in LaVilla (Figure 4.1). The majority of these males were single, a change which strained the otherwise family oriented community (Table 4.1). For example, three brothers (ages 25, 27, and 33), all single, had come from Georgia to work as laborers in the city. They boarded, along with seven other men, in Louis Deakle's household, which included his wife and daughter.

There was also a large number of females in this same age bracket. They, on the other hand, were more likely to be married. Three-fourths of all married women were between the age of twenty and thirty-nine. As noted in Table 4.1, there were a significant number of black female widows in LaVilla, of which fifty-three percent were heads of households. Many of these widows, forty-six percent, lived with their children and took in boarders. Susan Moody, a twenty-two year old



Source and Note: LaVilla Database. 1885 Florida State Census did not enumerate entire LaVilla population.

Figure 4.1
Age Structure of Black Population, LaVilla, 1885

Table 4.1
Marital Status of Black Males and Females, Age 15-over, LaVilla, 1885

Marital Status	Male	Female
Single	85 (35.1)	45 (17.2)
Married	152 (62.8)	167 (64.0)
Widowed*	5 (2.1)	49 (18.8)
Total	242 (100.0)	261 (100.0)

Source and Note: LaVilla Database. *Two divorced males and two divorced females included with widows.

widow worked as a washerwomen to support her four year old daughter Carrie and her six-month old son Edgar. Living in

widow worked as a washerwomen to support her four year old daughter Carrie and her six-month old son Edgar. Living in the household was a boarder, Edward Adams.

LaVilla's physical landscape also changed during the incorporated years. The increased population required additional housing which crowded LaVilla's residential area. In 1887 sixty-two new houses were built with a cumulative value of $85,550.[3] Along with the commercial district which developed along the southeastern fringe of the town was the increase in the number of saloons, gambling houses, and houses of prostitution.

The institutions, established by the freedmen shortly after settlement helped to cushion the harshness of urban life and provided a means for religious expression, education, aid, and social interaction. Shortly after the war, blacks throughout the South established their own churches, and LaVilla followed this pattern. After the family, the church became "the central and unifying institution in the postwar black community," serving not only the religious needs, but political and educational needs as well.[4] In 1865 monthly meetings were held at the Presbyterian Church "for the purpose of considering the wants

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[3] The Florida Times-Union, October 21, 1887.

[4] Leon F. Litwack, Been In The Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 471.

of their poor and making provisions for them."[5] The freedmen would also discuss, under the leadership of their preacher, educational interests, civic responsibility, suffrage, and "the condition they will find themselves when the military is removed."[6]

The establishment of several denominations reflected the individuality of the freedmen. In 1869 a small group of blacks met in the home of Samuel and Violet Williams. Service was held out-of-doors under a wooden frame covered with palmetto leaves and bushes. Congregants sat on plank benches and used kerosene lamps for lighting. In 1870, under the leadership of Reverend John R. Scott, land was acquired and St. Paul A.M.E. Church was constructed.[7] Scott, not only provided religious direction, he provided political direction. From 1868 through 1874, he acted as Representative in the State Legislature.[8]

Another group of freedmen held prayer meetings in the home of Mother Lena Jenkins, a sixty year old widow who lived

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[5] Jacksonville Herald, August 31, 1865.

[6] Jacksonville Herald, September 22, 1865 and August 31, 1865.

[7] "History of Greater St. Paul A.M.E. Church." Souvenir Program, 104th Annual Cession, East Florida Conference. African Methodist Episcopal Church, November 8-11, 1979.

[8] Scott also worked for the federal government as collector for the Customs House. In 1877 he owned three lots in LaVilla valued at $1400. He was married to Mary C.Scott and they had five children. At the time of his death in 1879 he owned personal property valued at $514.20.

with two young boys, presumably her grandchildren. Noah and Anna Henderson with their daughter boarded in the household in 1870. Members of the group included several of the freedmen who leased lots from L'Engle, including Smart Tillman (deacon) and Samual Spearing (superintendent of the Sunday school). In 1875 this informal group organized into the Shiloh Baptist Church and erected a church.[9]

The freedmen built schools to educate their children. Leading blacks from Jacksonville and its suburbs organized the Trustees of the Florida Institute in 1868 charged with establishing a school. The nine-member group included two of LaVilla's blacks, Samuel Spearing and John R. Scott. With financial assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau, the Trustees purchased land on Ashley Street in the northeast perimeter of LaVilla. Within a year Stanton Normal School was dedicated and the freedmen's children were being educated.[10] James Johnson's wife Helen was one of the first black females to teach in the school. Throughout the year recitals, plays, and lectures were held at the school which brought black members of the community together. The poor children who attended the school were cared for through donations made to

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[9] "History of the Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church," Landmarks Commission, City of Jacksonville, Florida. On December 17, 1884 the congregation bought the lot on which the church stood from Lena Jenkins for $150.

[10] In 1882 the Trustees agreed to lease the school to the Board of Public Instruction and provide free education for black children.

the school. In 1877 a package of "cast-off clothing" was sent to the school by the St. James Hotel.[11] By 1886 there were two public and three private black schools in LaVilla.[12]

In addition, voluntary associations were organized, many of which met in Jacksonville. These organizations responded to the social and welfare needs of the black community. Among the associations were the Daughters of Israel who assisted in the burial of the poor; the Benevolent Association of Colored Folks who cared for the aged; the Colored Law and Order League which encouraged "orderly conduct"; and the Colored Medical Protective Health Association which guarded against disease.[13]

Blacks associated less formerly through festivals, picnics, excursions, dances, and parades.[14] Emancipation was usually celebrated with great fanfare. In 1869 Noah Henderson directed the ceremonies for that year's celebration in a local park. Samuel Spearing read the proclamation aloud and the citizens formed a procession which paraded through the principal streets of the city. Upon their return, the

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[11] The Daily-Florida Union, March 30, 1877.

[12] Webbs' Jacksonville and Consolidated Directory, 1866.

[13] Barbara Richardson, "A History of Blacks in Jacksonville", 110-118.

[14] See Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) for an insightful examination of the how public events such as parades can reveal the social tensions which often underlie society as city streets become a contested arena vied for by various urban groups.

ladies served a "collation".[15]

Black voluntary associations served one set of social needs for LaVilla's blacks. Their participation in local government served another. Throughout LaVilla's incorporated period, from 1869 to 1887, blacks held political office, fulfilling an aspiration born in freedom.[16] Recall Samuel Spearing's poignant speech of 1867 when he proclaimed the "colored man's" right to become policemen "for we have lives and property...and an equal right to protect them," and "a right to hold a few offices." In LaVilla, black males served not only as marshall and policemen but at all levels of public office.[17] LaVilla's political structure, however, must be understood within its historical context.[18] The Confederacy's loss in the Civil War and the inauguration of

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[15] Florida Union, December 30, 1869.

[16] On the success of blacks in local government during Reconstruction see Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988).

[17] Eric Foner argues that blacks were most successful in the political realm at the local level "where the decisions of public officials directly affected daily life and the distribution of power." Reconstruction, 1863-1877, 355.

[18] The standard interpretation of Reconstruction in Florida is Jerrell H. Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet which argued that intra-party factionalism precluded the Republican Party in Florida from formulating a comprehensive program and stressed the absence of militancy in Florida's black leaders. On Republican factionalism see Peter D. Klingman, Neither Dies Nor Surrenders: A History of the Republican Party in Florida, 1867-1970 (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1984); on black leadership see Peter D. Klingman, Josiah Walls: Florida's Black Congressman of Reconstruction (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1976).

Republican dominion over the insurgent states swiftly changed the composition of the political order. Republicans now controlled all levels of government, a circumstance which ushered blacks into the political sphere. Democratic rule returned to Florida in 1876, but as late as 1886 Duval County was considered one of the core counties of Republicanism.[19] Jacksonville, moreover, remained an active biracial political community through 1893, at which time blacks were systematically excluded from the political process.[20] And as Jacksonville went politically, so went LaVilla.

When LaVilla incorporated in 1869, it politically severed itself from Jacksonville. Thereafter, annual elections filled the office of mayor, marshall, tax collector, tax assessor, clerk, treasurer, and alderman. The officials met bi-weekly in a building owned by Francis L'Engle, the first mayor, who leased it to the city for five

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[19] For an in-depth study of the reinstatement of Democratic rule and the termination of Republican influence in Florida see Edward C. Williamson, Florida Politics in the Gilded Age, 1877-1893 (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1976).

[20] Edward N. Akin, "When A Minority Becomes The Majority: Blacks In Jacksonville Politics, 1887-1907," The Florida Historical Quarterly 53(October 1974), 136. Disenfranchisement legislation had begun to black voting and no blacks were elected to office in the 1893 municipal election. An exception was George E. Ross, a black representative of the sixth ward who held office as councilman from 1901 to 1907.

dollars per month.[21] In 1884 this agreement was terminated and a new facility was rented from Hiram N. Brooks, a white businessman, who owned a grocery store on West Adams Street.

In six out of the seven elections for which results are known, the office of mayor was held by a white resident who figured prominently in LaVilla's social and economic hierarchy (Table 4.2).[22] Francis L'Engle, mayor in 1870 and 1871, owned a large portion of LaVilla, was trained as a civil engineer, and later practiced law. John L. Burch, co-owner of LaVilla Brickyards, held the position in 1884. Porcher L'Engle, born to Francis and Charlotte L'Engle in 1859, served as mayor in 1885 and 1886, and practiced law with his father. And J.E.T. Bowden, husband of the daughter of Francis L'Engle, owned a dry goods and clothing store on Bay Street and served as mayor in 1887. But on at least one occasion a black was elected mayor. Alfred Grant, an Alabama native, held the mayor's office in 1876. Grant had purchased a lot in LaVilla from Jonathan Greeley for $450 in 1872, and worked as a grocer clerk (1870), drayman (1871), and a farmhand (1880).

As shown in Table 4.1, the aldermen in LaVilla's city

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[21] The LaVilla City Council met sporadically from 1884 through 1887: fourteen meetings in 1884, four in 1885, eight in 1886, and ten in 1887. In 1882 the council met, as reported in the newspaper, once a month. Florida Daily-Times, June 4, 1882.

[22] Data were gathered from select years: 1870, 1871, 1876, and 1884-1887.

council were frequently black and, like their white counterparts, represented a cross-section of occupations (Table 4.2). The office of alderman frequently conferred status and power on those elected. Aldermen have been described as the "voice" of the neighborhoods servicing neighborhood needs, "the means by which residents obtained services, improvements, permits, exemptions, and sometimes jobs."[23] In LaVilla, for example, Alderman Jones at one time requested permission for Squire English and Thomas Clairborne to grade the streets in their neighborhood; Dinah Tucker brought complaint, through the president of the council, "that the prisoners were suffering considerable in the LaVilla jail for the want of blankets"; and Captain J. W. Fitzgerald asked permission, through Alderman Jones, to lay water pipes on Adam Street to Bridge Street.[24]

Aldermen were especially powerful in recommending and approving various municipal jobs for the local constituents. The aldermen controlled the hiring of policemen who, in 1886, were paid between thirty and forty dollars per month. Other city jobs included sanitary inspector (thirty dollars per month), street lamp lighter (ten dollars), scavenger (thirty-three dollars), and jail guard (forty dollars).

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[23] Jon C. Teaford, The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 25 and 36.

[24] Town Council Minutes (hereafter TCM), May 19, 1884; December 6, 1884; and January 21, 1885.

Table 4.2
Elected Officials, by Race, LaVilla, 1870-1871, 1876, and 1884-1887*

Office	Black	White	Unknown
Mayor	1	6	0
Marshall	6	0	0
Tax Collector	6	0	0
Tax Assessor	1	3	2
Treasurer	4	1	0
Alderman	37	14	5
Clerk	5	0	1

Sources and Notes: 1870 Federal Census; 1885 Florida State Census; Jacksonville City Directory, 1871 and 1876-77; Webb's Jacksonville Directory, 1880; and Richard's Jacksonville City Directory, 1887. *Data were accumulated for seven elections.

Table 4.3
Occupations of Elected Officials, by Race, LaVilla, 1870, 1871, 1876, 1884-1887

	Occupation	
Office	Black	White
Mayor	Dray Proprietor	Lawyer Brick Manufacturer Merchant
Tax Collector	Blacksmith Furniture Dealer	Merchant
Tax Assessor	Carpenter	Merchant Clerk
Treasurer	Clerk	Real Estate Agent
Alderman	Laborer Carpenter Stevedore Clerk Retail Grocer Brakeman Butcher Bricklayer Railroad Worker Drayman	Laborer Carpenter/Builder Contractor Clerk Retail Grocer Brakeman Painter

Sources and Note: LaVilla Database; City Directories. Occupations are a select representation of officeholders.

Aldermen held considerable power regarding local issues. Clearly, whites, especially Francis L'Engle and his family, dominated the mayor's seat. But white control of the office did not necessarily translate into dominance over the whole structure. John Spearing, son of Samuel Spearing and president of the council from 1884 to 1887, along with other aldermen, opposed the mayor on several matters. In 1884, for example, the council passed an ordinance, over Mayor Burch's veto, which granted the Jacksonville and LaVilla Street Railway Company permission to build a track within the city limits.[25] Mayor Burch objected to the street railway's plan because the company had made no attempt to build their road in Jacksonville, and he insisted that the road, to be useful, should be continued into "the business center of Jacksonville."[26]

Power, for a few, like Samuel Spearing, developed through longevity in office; for others power was temporary. Fifty-nine males held positions on seven city councils examined. The majority (sixty-one percent) served only one term, twenty-five percent two terms, ten percent three terms, and three percent at least five terms (Table 4.4). But the offices of marshall and treasurer were held by individual blacks for an extended period and their length of service generated considerable influence within the community.

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[25] TCM May 19, 1884.

[26] TCM, May 19, 1984.

Hiram N. Huggins was marshall of LaVilla at least five years (1880, 1884-1887). In 1870, as a twenty-three year old laborer, he lived with William Green, also a laborer. He became socially active in the community and served as leader of the all-black Union String Band (1876-1877). As marshall, Huggins received one of the highest paid city salaries, fifty dollars per month, plus twenty-five percent of the proceeds of the mayor's court. In addition to keeping law and order in the community, Huggins supervised the police force and jail, and was required, by city ordinance, to submit a monthly report detailing offenses.[27] Notwithstanding the monthly reports, Huggins was only indirectly represented in the council minutes, but his influence was unmistakable.

Huggins carried great influence on who would remain on his police force. For example, R.J. Mitchell, a black, was recommended by the council to fill a police position on March 3, 1884. Two weeks passed and Mitchell came before the council to complain that the marshall "will give him no instruction whatever and asked the council who must he receive orders from." The mayor intervened on Mitchell's behalf, but the matter remained unresolved. Within two months Mitchell resigned his position.

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[27] The Town Council Minutes gives information on who was arrested, the offense, and the amount of fine and/or jail sentence. The Marshall's report was submitted January through December 1884 and February through May, and August 1887.

Table 4.4
Terms of Office, LaVilla City Council, 1870, 1871, 1876, and 1884-1887

Terms in Office	Number of Individuals
1	36 (61.0)
2	15 (25.4)
3	6 (10.2)
4	0
5	2 (3.4)
Total	59 (100.0)

Sources and Note: Town Council Minutes, 1884-1887. Located in the Duval County Council Chambers, Jacksonville, Florida; Florida Times-Union, Jacksonville City Directory, 1871; Webbs' Jacksonville Directory, (New York: Webb Brothers & Company, 1880); Webbs' Jacksonville and Consolidated Directory, 1886; Richard's Jacksonville Duplex City Directory (Jacksonville, Florida: John R. Richards Company, 1887). Percent given in parentheses.

Again, under different circumstances, Huggins used his influence to determine the outcome of a police related problem. In October, 1887, the police committee met to consider an alleged swindle by a town policeman. On the day of the meeting two of the three committee members "went to the council room with a prepared report written by Marshall Huggins . . . [which was] acted upon fully half an hour before the hour set for the meeting." Although evidence supported the abuse of office, the committee recommended (via

the Huggins' report) that the charges be dropped. Moreover, Huggins received support from the community; in the 1887 election, a period of heightened criticism of immorality and lawlessness, he won by a vote of three to one.[28]

The city council served as a forum through which the community acted upon public concerns. Standing-committees were formed that dealt with the major civic concerns: finance, laws, police, street, sanitary, and public improvements. Occasionally, ad hoc committees were formed to investigate an unusual problem, such as establishing the town's western boundary.

On certain occasions, the LaVilla Council assumed a moral posture which reflected the community as a whole. In 1884, for example, a commendation was extended, to former mayor L'Engle; in 1886 the council paid the funeral expenses of Edward Patterson, who "was murdered while on duty for the city of LaVilla"; and in 1886 donations and a letter of condolence was sent to the earthquake victims of Charleston, South Carolina. The council also carried out the town's day-to-day needs. Street lamps were installed, water and sewer pipes laid, sidewalks constructed, trash and dead animals removed from the streets, and police protection ensured.

On other occasions, the council dealt with outside entities regarding internal concerns. During 1884 and 1887 LaVilla seemed beset with problems. The Duval County Board

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[28] TCM.

of Health communicated with the council several times about the need for sanitary improvement. In 1884, the Board of Health charged the LaVilla's sanitary inspector with negligence (a council committee cleared the inspector of any wrongdoing). In addition, the Board of Health requested, and received, two hundred dollars for local sanitary improvements. Again, in 1887, the Board of Health, requested that additional men be hired for sanitary and scavenger work as "this matter is urgent in view of the present alarm in such matters and you will please provide the necessary force at once." In most matters the council complied. Further, the council sent a letter to the Board of Trustees of the Sanitary Improvement Board which advised them that they had agreed to pay Jacksonville "the sum of $50 per year as a donation for cleaning the sewers connected in the limits of LaVilla."

Meeting sanitation standards was not LaVilla's only civic problem. In addition, there were problems of corruption, malfeasance, and various annexation attempts. By the 1880s, LaVilla had acquired notoriety for being an unsavory place to live, and had become the locus for gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, and frequent fighting, amplified by what its critics thought to be an inept and corrupt municipal government. "If I owned Hell and LaVilla," a white Jacksonville policeman exclaimed in 1888, "I would

rent out LaVilla and live in Hell."[29] A year earlier the editor of the Florida Times-Union wrote, "let Jacksonville think what it would be with LaVilla's government and shudder."[30]

Accusations that LaVilla contained crime and corruption were not far off the mark. Police records for 1884 and 1887 point to the problem of drunkenness, disorderly conduct, fighting, vagrancy, and houses of prostitution (Table 4.5). The problem of allowing certain liquor kings to operate on Sunday became a major battle between the council and the mayor in 1887. Efforts to enforce the Sunday law by Lavilla's reform mayor, J.E.T. Bowden had been hampered by corrupt town officials. Bowden's campaign promises to "to give the town a business administration" and carry out the law were foiled through "the utter ignorance and ill support" of the Town Council. In a letter published in the Times-Union, Bowden wrote that "the majority of the council is composed of drunkards, bar-room pimps and men who have the least regard for their oath of office, and for a drink of whiskey some of them will sell their vote for any purpose."[31]

Bowden exonerated Aldermen John Spearing, T.J. Boyd, and Samuel Bouse in his condemnation, but municipal corruption

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[29] Quoted in Barbara Richardson, "A History of Blacks in Jacksonville", 126.

[30] Florida Times-Union, October 27, 1887.

[31] Florida Times-Union, October 26, 1887.

Table 4.5
Crime Figures for LaVilla, 1884 and 1887.

Type of Crime	1884	1887
Disturbing the Peace/ Drunkenness	128 (61.8)	159 (72.0)
Fighting	44 (21.2)	32 (14.5)
Shooting	8 (3.9)	2 (.9)
Gambling	13 (6.3)	0
Vagrancy	11 (5.3)	18 (8.1)
Selling Liquor on Sabbath	0	4 (1.8)
Keeping a Disorderly House*	1 (.5)	4 (1.8)
Other**	2 (1.0)	2 (.9)
Total	207 (100.0)	221 (100.0)

Source and Notes: Town Council Minutes. LaVilla, Florida, 1884-1887. *House of prostitution. **Includes racing a horse, fast driving, cruelty to animals, and contempt.

did exist. As noted earlier, certain policemen had been accused of acting improperly, but were cleared by the council of any wrongdoing. One alderman, H. W. Arpen, a Dutchman, was arrested for selling liquor on Sunday. James Weldon Johnson recalled a common scene he witnessed at Arpen's general store, located on the corner of Ward and Second Streets: "The store included a bar, and it seemed that there were never less than a dozen drunks, black and white, hanging around. There was generally lots of profane and obscene language, and not infrequently a play of pistols and knives."[32]

Further, malfeasance and failure to keep proper records plagued the town council. In 1882, the incoming president of the council had reported in the newspaper that the outgoing council "left a mass of matter on [his] hands that will take some time to straighten up."[33] In 1883 dissatisfied taxpayers called a public meeting regarding recent acts of municipal authorities. Thirty to forty black and white voters attended the meeting and criticized the council for paying Porcher L'Engle five hundred dollars to go to Tallahassee on town business. Other complaints included the mayor's failure to go through proper channels in the allocation of money, the marshall's dereliction of duty, and improper record keeping.

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[32] James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way, 23.

[33] Florida Daily Times, May 10, 1882.

Several citizens stepped forward and voiced their criticisms. Citizen W. D. Trupeller "thought it strange that LaVilla could pay an attorney $500 for a few weeks service when the town could not afford to make any improvements." For his part, J.E.T. Bowden, attacked the very existence of a city government: He "did not see any benefit to be derived in maintaining a separate corporation when all the money collected for taxes was to be placed in the pockets of private individuals." Alderman Jones addressed the meeting in defense of council's sending L'Engle to Tallahassee. And to appease the taxpayers, the Council named a committee of three, A.W. Barrs, James A. Marvin, and Samuel Spearing, to examine the books and to "report at a called meeting of the citizens the indebtedness of the city, the amount of money collected for current expenses, etc."[34] The civic storm died down and calm was momentarily restored in local government. But not for long.

Annexation was a constant threat to LaVilla's political autonomy. As early as 1873 movements were afoot to enlarge Jacksonville's tax base. The editor of the Weekly Florida Union complained that "the city needs ten times the capital and energy it now possesses and all public spirited citizens should endeavor to promote this step." To this end, he recommended that "the city should now take steps for

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[34] Florida Times Union, June 19, 1883.

extending its limits."[35] The issue arose again in 1883. And in an effort to pay for necessary public health improvements, the Board of Sanitary Trustees recommended in their 1882 report the "annexation of the suburbs in order to broaden the city's tax base to pay for ongoing municipal services."[36]

Annexation surfaced once more in 1887. This time the democratic power structure in Jacksonville, supported by LaVilla's prominent property owners "who had become convinced that the matter had now become an absolute necessity for the protection of their property, etc.," guaranteed success.[37] By 1885 Conservative-Democrats had gained sufficient power to abolish the 1868 Constitution and rewrite a new state constitution by which annexation could be accomplished by a simple majority in the State Legislature. The Jacksonville Board of Trade submitted a bill to the State Legislature which would allow for a new city charter in Jacksonville, and concomitantly, abolish the charters of both LaVilla and Fairfield.

While prominent residents in LaVilla supported annexation, others did not. Thomas Boyd, a white laborer, represented LaVilla's efforts to remain autonomous. A newcomer to LaVilla, Boyd had been elected alderman in 1886 and 1887. On May 3, 1887 the council agreed to send Boyd to

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[35] The Weekly Florida Union, January 23, 1873.

[36] Richard Martin, City Makers, 129.

[37] Times Union, February 24, 1887.

Tallahassee "to look out for the interest of the town."[38] While in Tallahassee, Boyd wrote a letter to a Jacksonville paper denouncing annexation efforts "Have the suburbs no rights that our lords and masters are bound to respect?" he asked. Boyd's concern was for "the defenseless poor who have built their little homes around the city, and who are not able to pay the increased taxation." which he anticipated would follow annexation.[39]

Ultimately, however, even Boyd gave up. After two weeks of meetings with state legislators, he returned to LaVilla to report that "our interest was safe even if we did go into Jacksonville as the [city] charter had been modified a way by which we could get legal representation."[40] On May 31st LaVilla's city charter was abolished, its corporate limits dissolved; Jacksonville's new city charter ensured "safeguards for the protection of white dominance in the city's political affairs."[41] In the new charter a ward system of election replaced at-large representation, a move which weakened the powerful black voting bloc in Jacksonville's suburbs.[42] LaVilla was reduced to one

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[38] TCM, May 3, 1887.

[39] Florida Times Union, May 23, 1887.

[40] TCM, May 24, 1887.

[41] Edward N. Akin, "When A Minority Becomes A Majority", 128.

[42] Ibid, 129.

representative on the Jacksonville City Council.

Annexation dealt a severe blow to the black residents of LaVilla. Participation in the political sphere was dramatically reduced from active participation in civic decision-making to a single representative who would, by necessity, have to compete with other wards for important services. This fact, in conjunction with newly passed Jim Crow legislation restricted the leadership roles available for blacks.

The freedmen who came to the city following the Civil War, had arrived with hopes and dreams for their future: job and home security, education for their children, and social and political equality. In LaVilla, as elsewhere, they struggled to act upon their aspirations. They entered "freedom" unskilled, uneducated, and poverty-stricken. But their social networks grew in the grid of the urban landscape and matured into perpetuating relationships; these would mitigate the harsh realities that fractured their dream. In the city, the freedmen structured their lives around family, kin, friends, neighbors, and war-time comrades while the political organization of LaVilla served as the locus of joint efforts on the part of both its whites and blacks. Despite the small gains made by the freedmen during the first two decades of freedom, however, they still found their lives controlled by white society.

In 1867 Samuel Spearing had addressed a crowd of hopeful freedmen and reminded them of the white man's essential position: "We have the land and the wealth, and if you will put matters into our hands, we will rule for you."[43] For twenty years the freedmen in LaVilla had stood against this political inequality, but in the end their efforts proved a paper tiger. Removed from the political arena, the blacks of LaVilla were disjoined from the decision-making process. In the future they would be acted upon, rather than acting with.

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[43] Florida Union, June 1, 1867.

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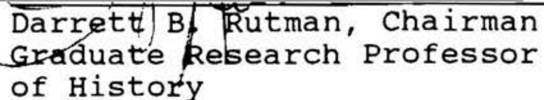
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



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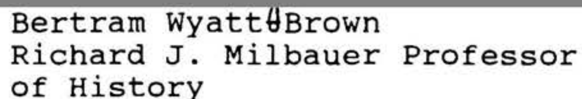

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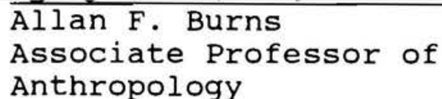

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