

**A HISTORY OF INDIANOLA**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**the Faculty of the Department of History  
The University of Houston**

**M. D. ANDERSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts**

**by**

**Thomas Franklin Anderson**

**August 1951**

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## ABSTRACT

Though the city of Indianola no longer exists, it has been sadly neglected by historians in view of the fact that it was such an important port and distribution center during the second half of the nineteenth century. This city had its beginning during the later years of the Republic of Texas. As the state of Texas grew in population, industry, and prestige, even so did Indianola. Hundreds of immigrants disembarked at this thriving port; some remained at Indianola. During its period of greatest prosperity, Indianola was the chief port for the vast Southwest region of Texas.

Many Texas history text books include nothing about this once important port. Others mention the city briefly but do not give a complete picture of the important part that Indianola played in the building of Texas. Many writers have contributed articles, essays, and various works of writing on the subject of Old Indianola, but to the knowledge of the author, there has been no complete work that has been written on this subject.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, has been to relate the complete story of Indianola, possibly for the first time, presenting in that story a discussion of the historical background of the locality where Indianola was founded climaxed with an account of the be-

binning of the town; a thorough discussion of the economic and civic development of Indianola during the decade prior to the beginning of the Civil War; a short discussion concerning the Civil War as it affected Indianola and the period of economic recovery following the war; the story of the social, cultural, and religious life of Indianola; and finally, an account of the hurricanes of 1875 and 1886 which ended the life of this unfortunate city.

Much information has been received through the cooperation of members of the Indianola Association in the towns of Port Lavaca, Victoria, and Cuero by interview and by diligent search through private papers and scrap books. Also, material has been obtained from local records and reports in the county court-house at Port Lavaca. In the library of the University of Houston, the Texas Collection of the Houston Public Library, and the library of The University of Texas, contemporary books and periodicals of the period have been examined; current articles in periodicals concerning the subject have been studied; and newspaper files have been scanned. Photostatic copies of source material on file in the National Archives at Washington, D. C. have been helpful in this study. The net result of this research has been the presenting of an authentic and complete narrative of the history of Indianola, which has hitherto been neglected.

## PREFACE

The Purpose of the Study. Although from time to time many stories have appeared in various periodicals concerning Indianola, there has never been written as far as the author knows, a complete history of this town. It has been the purpose of this study, therefore, to relate, perhaps for the first time, a complete narrative of the history of Indianola with emphasis on the historical background concerning the locality where Indianola was founded; the story of the beginning of the town with an account of its economic and civic progress prior to the Civil War; the imprint of the Civil War on Indianola and the economic recovery of the city after the war; and finally, after a discussion of the social life of the town, an account of the storms which brought destruction to the city of Indianola.

Importance of the study. Many people are familiar with the details of the hurricanes that destroyed Indianola, but (few realize that in the early years of our state Indianola was one of the chief ports on the Gulf coast of Texas, that it became an important industrial and distribution center, and that it once rivaled Galveston as the queen city of the Gulf.) It is the opinion of the author that the role which this ill-fated city played in the early history of our state merits more attention than has

hitherto been given it.

Organization of the Study. Chapter I presents a story of the historical background of the region where Indianola was established with the closing paragraphs giving an account of the beginning of the town itself. Chapter II gives a complete discussion of the economic and civic development of Indianola. Chapter III tells of the events of the Civil War that took place in and near Indianola with a brief discussion of the economic recovery of the city after the war. Chapter IV is concerned with the religious, social, and cultural life of the town. Chapter V describes the hurricane of 1875 and the rebuilding of the city after the storm and finally, the hurricane of 1886 which resulted in the exodus of the survivors to other towns.

Sources and acknowledgements. The Texas Collections of the Houston Public Library and the library of The University of Texas were the principal sources of information for this study. Also, books and periodicals related to the subject in the Library of the University of Houston were of some value. Much information was obtained from interviews with people who had lived in Indianola or who remembered accounts that their parents had told concerning Indianola. Records in the county court-house at Port Lavaca were of value as was

photostatic copies of source material received from the National Archives in Washington, D. C. The author is especially indebted to Mrs. Theora Crosby who permitted the author to use her late grandmother's (Mrs. Lelia Seeligson) scrapbook and memoirs; to Mrs. Florence Blardone of Port Lavaca for her splendid assistance; and to the members of the library staffs in charge of the Texas Collections at The University of Texas and the Houston Public Library for their cooperation and assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

Before definitely beginning the history of Indianola, it may be well to observe that few areas are richer in history than the region bordering the Lavaca and Matagorda Bays. Momentous events of history took place near the tide water slopes of Matagorda Bay. The lover of history and particularly of Texas is fascinated with the romantic past which shrouds this section of the Gulf Coast. Many relics found in the sands on the west slopes of Matagorda Bay mark the spot where a city vanished in the waters of an angry sea. This city was Indianola - a city which played an important part in the early history of Texas, which rose to the rank of an important port, its harbor visited by ships from the leading cities of the world, and which vanished in 1386 when waves from the Gulf of Mexico came tearing through the city under the lash of a mighty hurricane.

A historical study of Indianola would not be complete without an examination of the earliest known records concerning this region. Exploration in the coastal region has proved extremely difficult because much of the material concerning man is covered by sand mixed with heavy deposits of silt brought down by the rivers. Archaeological investigation of the Gulf area, especially in the vicinity of

Matagorda Bay, indicates a few facts concerning the prehistoric men of this region. A clue concerning the life of prehistoric people in this area was unearthed the summer of 1932 when an expedition from the University of Texas discovered a large mound on the Guadalupe River some eight miles below Victoria. The significance of this discovery is given in an excerpt taken from the chronicles of the expedition:

In the trench ten burials were encountered. Numerous rather crude flint articles were found and various shreds of bones from animals that had been eaten and the bones broken and split to get at the marrow. No positive traces of agriculture were found. Two small pieces of potsherds were found which were of a high variety of pottery.<sup>1</sup>

Though information concerning prehistoric men in this area is limited, many facts related to the life of the aborigines have been recorded. According to the Texas Almanac the coastal area was inhabited by Indians who subsisted chiefly on a sea food economy. The Karankawa Indians were the most powerful of these tribes and extended southwestward from the Brazos River possibly as far south as the Rio Grande River.

The Karankawas are believed to have had the lowest civilization of an group in Texas. They had little tribal organization, and they were of very low social and cultural practices. They did not depend on agriculture

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<sup>1</sup>The Texas Almanac (Dallas, Texas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1936), p. 104.

for their livelihood. For sustenance the Indians sought fish, eggs of sea-fowls, sylvan roots, and fruits, and sometimes they feasted upon the bulksome carcass of a buffalo that happened to venture near their coastal lands. Because of their constant search for food, these tribes lived in temporary habitations built of poles and covered with reeds or skins. Physically the men were large and powerful. It was not uncommon for the male to attain a height of well over six feet. They were extremely warlike and were continually in conflict with the interior tribes.

(One of the early Anglo-American settlers of Texas who encountered the Karankawa Indians characterized them in the following manner:

They were a fierce coastal tribe whose hand was against every man. They lived mostly on fish and alligators with man for fete days when they could catch one. Their ugly faces were rendered more hideous by the alligator grease and dirt with which they besmeared themselves from head to foot as a defense against mosquitos.<sup>2</sup>

Though relatively small in numbers, the Karankawas were a constant source of annoyance to the Spanish and later to the colonies of DeWitt and Austin.) After a fierce battle with the Spanish in 1744, their number dwindled; however, they continued to cause minor disturbances as late as 1834.

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<sup>2</sup>Eugene C. Barker, Readings in Texas History (Dallas, Texas; The Southwest Press, 1929), p. 140.

The waters of the Matagorda Bay region were among the first of the Texas coast to be visited during the era of exploration and discovery of the sixteenth century. (In 1519 somewhat more than a quarter of a century after the landing of Columbus in the West Indies, Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, a lieutenant of Francisco Garay, Governor of Jamaica, sailed along these shores with a fleet of four vessels. He was the first European to explore and map the Gulf Coast line from Florida to Vera Cruz.<sup>3</sup>)

(Almost on the heels of Pineda, Cabeza de Vaca and his shipwrecked companions landed on the Texas coast, November 6, 1528. Slowly and cautiously they made their way westward passing from one Indian tribe to another. After eight years of aimless wandering, they came to a frontier of civilization at Culiacan, Mexico. Many of their most interesting experiences occurred in the vicinity of Matagorda Bay. Of Caballo Pass Cabeza de Vaca remarked that this inlet was a league wide and uniformly deep) and reminded him of the Espíritu de Santo Bay, which was the Spanish name that Pineda gave to the mouth of the Mississippi River.<sup>4</sup> Upon entering Matagorda Bay the explorer became lost. He stumbled upon a lonely neck of land which

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<sup>3</sup>Carlos E. Castaneda, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, Vol. I (Austin, Texas: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1936), pp. 1-14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

he referred to as "The Isle of Misfortune." Mr. Thomas Ripley, author of They Died with their Boots On, maintains that this island which Cabeza de Vaca spoke of was the future site of Indianola.<sup>5</sup>

(The first white settlers, members of Robert de La Salle's expedition, came to the area around Matagorda Bay in 1685. The announced purpose of La Salle's expedition was to establish a French settlement at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Possibly La Salle was driven on the Texas coast by adverse winds. There are some authorities, however, who contend that he sailed past the mouth of the Mississippi River for the deliberate purpose of establishing a French post within striking distance of the Spanish provinces of Mexico. The Belle was the only vessel of the original four to enter Pass Caballo and sail into Matagorda Bay.) The last ship was wrecked on the inner shoals of Matagorda peninsula. The explorer named this bay San Barnardo, which was later changed to Matagorda by the Spanish. (This is the first recorded discovery of Matagorda Bay.)<sup>6</sup>

After entering the bay, members of the La Salle expedition landed somewhere on the shores of this bay.

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Ripley, They Died with their Boots On (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1935), p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>Herbert E. Bolton, "Location of La Salle's Colony on the Gulf of Mexico," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVII (1923-24), p. 7.

Conclusive evidence does not point to any definite place where this first settlement was made, but it probably was in the area of Magnolia Beach. It is quite possible that La Salle visited the Indianola area for at least a brief period. (A statue comemorating his presence now stands on the site of old Indianola.) An iron cross which now ornaments the facade of the Episcopal Church in Port Lavaca was unearthed in the vicinity of the ill-fated port in 1934. It has been assumed that this cross was planted in this area two centuries ago by La Salle to mark the discovery of the Matagorda Bay region.<sup>7</sup>

The first site chosen by La Salle proved to be unsatisfactory because of its unhealthful location and its extreme vulnerableness to the hostile Karankawas. Henri Joutel, the official chronicler of the expedition, writes of the proposed move as follows: "Thus we spent the rest of the Month, til the Beginning of June. In the meantime, Monsieur de La Salle had begun to make another settlement, in the place he before told us of, looking upon it as better, because it was further up the country."<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, La Salle moved his colony to a better site near the head of Lavaca Bay. The exact location of

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<sup>7</sup>Mrs. Lelia Seeligson, History of Indianola (Cuero, Texas: The Cuero Record, 1930), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Henri Joutel, Journal of La Salle's Last Voyage, 1684-87 (Albany, New York: Joseph McDonough, 1906), p. 93.

Fort Saint Louis has been a point of disagreement among historians. Some writers maintain that the site was on the Lavaca River; however, Herbert E. Bolton has proved conclusively through his research that the settlement was on the banks of the Garcitas Creek on the Keeran Ranch located in Victoria County.<sup>9</sup>

Until La Salle's venture into Texas, the Spanish civil and military authorities had been interested primarily in the territory in the basin of the upper Rio Grande. It was in this area, according to rumor, that the Seven Cities of Cibola could be found. The priests, knowing of the great Indian population of the Texas coastal region, had urged that settlements be made in this area for the purpose of spreading Christianity to the heathen Indian tribes. The military authorities turned a deaf ear to the pleading of the priests until La Salle gave them motives other than those of purely missionary vision for wanting to establish Spanish sovereignty in Texas.

(In 1689 an expedition under the leadership of Captain Alonso de Leon, Governor of Coahuila, set out to find and destroy Fort Saint Louis. The first three expeditions turned out to be futile attempts. On his fourth expedition De Leon turned to the coast, making his way to the northern

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<sup>9</sup> Bolton, op. cit., p. 185.

shores of Lavaca Bay. The ruins of the French settlement were found, and a few survivors of the expedition were found and questioned. The expedition then returned to Mexico for consultation with the Spanish authorities as to the action to take.)

The following year De Leon accompanied by Father Massanet set out on his fifth expedition. Fort Saint Louis was visited again, and the remains were burned. The expedition then proceeded to East Texas where missions were founded for the purpose of establishing the faith, and, of course, the prime motive was to keep the French in check.

In reporting to the authorities the events of this expedition, De Leon mentioned that he had seen two bouys near the entrance to the stream on which the French colony had been founded. The Viceroy was concerned over the fact that these bouys might be indicative of future French activities, so an expedition was sent out by water under the leadership of Captain Francisco de Llano. Manuel Joseph de Cardenas went as master of fortification and mapmaker. The expedition entered Katagorda Bay and explored carefully the bay and its rivers and inlets. They visited the site of Fort Saint Louis, which had been burned by De Leon just a few months before.

(After returning to Mexico City, Captain de Llano, reported to the Viceroy that the bouys, which had been re-



ported by De Leon, had turned out to be logs; however, the importance of this expedition was that it gave to the Spanish a thorough knowledge of the geography of this region, a knowledge which was preserved by the map that Cárdenas made of the area explored.)<sup>10</sup>

For two or three years after the destruction of La Salle's colony the site of Fort Saint Louis was visited frequently by Spanish explorers. In 1722 the Marquis de Aguayo established on the very site of La Salle's fort the presidio of Nuestra Señora de Loreto, which was more frequently called Bahía. Captain Domingo Ramon, the man who led an expedition to East Texas and Louisiana in 1716, was left in charge of the presidio. The Spanish authorities gave the Tzacatecan missionaries permission to found near the presidio the mission of Espíritu Santo de Tuniga. Concerning the Indians for whom this mission was established, Father Pena, a member of the expedition, wrote in his Journal that "these tribes are very docile and will enter readily on the work of cultivating the earth and their own souls, more especially because they live in greater misery than the other tribes, since they subsist altogether upon fish and go entirely without clothing."<sup>11</sup>

The Spanish soldiers and the priests soon realized that Father Pena's statement about these natives was based

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>Rupert N. Richards, Texas the Lone Star State (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1943), p. 224.

totally on idealism and not on reality. Several Indian families were persuaded to settle near the mission, but trouble between the Indians and the whites commenced almost immediately. In the fall of 1723 there arose a personal quarrel between the Indians and the soldiers in the presidio. The soldiers attempted to punish the offending Indians. The result was a serious conflict. The tragic affair was climaxed with the death of Captain Ramon and the flight of the natives. In reprisal the Indians made surprise attacks from time to time upon the men in the presidio and mission.

The missionaries, discouraged by the constant hostility between the Indians and the soldiers, moved the mission of Espíritu Santo de Zuniga ten leagues northwestward to the Guadalupe River in 1726. They began laboring with the non-coastal tribes of this region who apparently had a somewhat higher civilization than the coastal tribes. To provide protection the presidio of Bahía was soon moved to a site near the mission by the successor of Captain Ramon. This location is now marked by the ruins in modern Mission Valley, west of the Guadalupe and near the northwestern line of Victoria County.<sup>12</sup>

It was not until Mexico won her independence from Spain in 1821 that the large scale colonization of Texas

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<sup>12</sup>Bolton, op. cit., p. 285.

began. On April of 1824 Martin de Leon, a native ranchman of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, decided that he would like to move with his herds to the grassy lands of Texas. On April 8, 1824, he petitioned the Mexican government for permission to settle a colony at a point on the lower Guadalupe River where he would found a town to be called Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de Jesus Victoria. The general boundaries of the grant were as follows: The Coleta on the west, Mission Valley on the north, the Lavaca River on the east, and Matagorda Bay on the south.<sup>13</sup> All members of the colony were required to be of good moral character and to have some trade, profession, or visible means of support. The colonists were to be permitted to cultivate anything they desired with the exception of tobacco. All of the products were to be free from excise duty for a period of ten years.<sup>14</sup>

De Leon's colony was different from others in that his contract did not specify a definite number of families to be introduced, it did not fix a time limit for carrying out the specifications of the contract, nor did it establish specific boundaries for the colony. The colony was unique in another respect. Of all the empresario colonies that

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<sup>13</sup>Mary V. Henderson, "Minor Empresario Contracts for the Colonization of Texas, 1825-34," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXII, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup>Loc. cit.

were settled during the period of Anglo-American colonization, De Leon's colony was the only Mexican colony that preferred Mexican customs and institutions to those of the United States. A few American names appear in the list of names to whom titles to land were issued, but they seem like outsiders among the numerous Spanish names.<sup>15</sup> In all the other colonies the Mexican names, when they appeared, stood out like foreigners on the soil of their own land. After 1832, the Mexican governmental authorities realized that such a colony as De Leon had established was the sort that they must establish in order to retain Texas as a loyal part of Mexico; however, history proved that they were too late in coming to this conclusion.

By October 1824 De Leon and twelve families had established themselves on the Guadalupe River. Other families were to follow later. By the following spring the grassy wilderness had become the scene of a flourishing little settlement, which was to become the nucleus of present day Victoria, Texas.<sup>16</sup>

The success of the colony depended largely on the colonists' ability to receive and to ship goods by water. Matagorda Bay was well known as a suitable place for landing on the coast of southwest Texas; hence, shipping points

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<sup>15</sup> Henderson, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Loc. cit.

were seen to spring up on the banks of the bay.

Linnville, the site of which is approximately three and one-half miles northeast of present Port Lavaca, was the first town to be settled in what is now Calhoun county. John Joseph Linn, one of the few Anglo-Americans living in De Leon's colony, ordered some merchandise from Corpus Christi for his store in Victoria. He gave instructions for the captain of the vessel to sail into Matagorda Bay, and he made arrangements to meet the captain at the mouth of the Garcitas Creek. In 1831, at this place, he constructed a warehouse which he and his brother began to use as a base for a lucrative wholesale trade with the colony at Victoria.<sup>17</sup>

There were other landing points that sprang up soon after Linnville was established. In 1832, Philip Dimmit, another trader, built a pier on the shore of Matagorda Bay, and a second settlement, Dimmit's Landing, sprang up there.<sup>18</sup>

In 1836, Cox's Point, another landing place, was established.<sup>19</sup> The same year, Mary Austin Holley wrote:

The new town at Cox's Point will eventually rival

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<sup>17</sup>John L. Linn, Reminiscences of 50 Years in Texas, (New York: D. and J. Sadlier and Company, 1883), p. 326.

<sup>18</sup>The Texas Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the County Archives of Texas, (Calhoun County, Texas, 1941), p. 47.

<sup>19</sup>Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, Monuments Commemorating the Centenary of Texas Independence, (Austin, Texas, 1938), p. 154.

Matamoras, inasmuch as it has a better harbor.... It is situated at the mouth of the La Baca, and contains about 200 inhabitants.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly afterward, the Congress of the Republic of Texas enacted legislation to encourage the establishment of another town in this region. On November 18, 1839, a joint resolution postponed the sale of lots in the city of Calhoun pending the completion of a naval survey of the pass of Matagorda Bay.<sup>21</sup> On January 20, 1841, the Congress voted that "the sale of lots in the town of Calhoun shall commence in said town on the first Monday in June."<sup>22</sup> No further record of the proposed town of Calhoun is available in the archives of the state of Texas; however, Colonel Alexander Somervell, veteran of San Jacinto and a senator of the Republic, founded a town on Matagorda Island near the proposed site of Calhoun sometime before 1839.<sup>23</sup> It was necessary for the legislature to make a special law designating 640 acres of the island as a townsite. The town, named Saluria, soon attracted a number of inhabitants and became prominent enough as a shipping point to merit

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<sup>20</sup>Mary A. Holley, Texas (Lexington, Kentucky: Clarks and Company, 1836), p. 410.

<sup>21</sup>John Sayles and Henry Sayles, Early Laws of Texas, (Kansas City, Missouri: Vernon Law Book Company, 1891), I, p. 420.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 452.

<sup>23</sup>Inventory of County Archives, op. cit., p. 35.

having a customs station placed there in 1842.<sup>24</sup>

Linnville, laid out on a small bluff and situated to the north of Pass Cavallo within the protection of Matagorda Bay, was the most frequently used of the various shipping points that had sprung up around the bay. It was easily accessible to overland trade from the surrounding prairies. Furthermore, it was directly in the path of commerce flowing up the Guadalupe River Valley. With all of these natural advantages it is understandable that Linnville should have been preferred to other places as a port.<sup>25</sup>

From time to time marauding Indians had attacked Linnville and surrounding settlements killing a number of the people and stealing all of the goods they could get their hands upon. In 1834 a small band of Karankawas attacked Major James Kerr and a surveying party some twenty-five miles from Linnville; however, the white men bluffed the Indians by making them think that they had a canon to use against them. The Indians were pacified by generous gifts of tobacco. They crossed to the other side of the San Antonio Bay and remained there.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John S. Hadley, "Two Seaports - Port Lavaca and Indianola," Indianola Scrapbook (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 166.

<sup>25</sup> Chris Emmet, Texas Camel Tales, (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1932), p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Linn, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

Early in August of 1840, six hundred militant and highly organized Comanche Indians descended upon the coastal land from the northern plains. They appeared suddenly before Victoria in the late afternoon. The attack was a complete surprise, and the unsuspecting citizens were thrown into complete confusion and panic. Before any sort of resistance could be organized, several of the people had been killed and a large number wounded. While gloating over their easy victory, the Indians conceived the bold idea of proceeding to the next settlement, which was Linnville, and plundering the town.<sup>27</sup>

The Indians fell upon Linnville early in the morning on August 8, 1840. The inhabitants made no effort to resist; they fled to the wharf and in small skiffs made their way out to the ships anchored in the harbor. While the people watched in horror from the ships, the Indians sacked and burned the town. Later John Joseph Linn, describing the tragic scene, added a note of humor saying:

In my warehouse were several cases of hats and umbrellas belonging to Mr. James Robinson, a merchant of San Antonio. These Indians made free with them, and went dashing about the blazing village, amid their screeching squaws and "little Injuns," like demons in a drunken saturnalia, with Robinson's hats on their heads and Robinson's umbrellas bobbing about on every side like tipsy balloons.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas, (Austin, Texas: The Steck Company, 1935), pp. 25-27.

<sup>28</sup> Linn, op. cit., pp. 341-342.



In the afternoon the Comanches began to withdraw from the burning town. White men quickly gathered from all the settlements in the surrounding country and pursued the Indians to Plum Creek in present Caldwell County where in a running battle the Indians were defeated. This marked the end of organized Indian invasions of the coastal country.

Some of the inhabitants of Linnville went by boat to the present site of Port Lavaca, which consisted of only about six houses.<sup>29</sup> About a year later commission men from the North who were interested in shipping raw materials from this region of Texas to New York City and in importing manufactured goods to a large part of this territory opened their offices in Lavaca.

Shortly after the beginning of Lavaca as a shipping center, several families of hardy pioneers from the old South landed at the wharf, which the Lavaca merchants had constructed. They settled on grants of land some fifteen miles from Lavaca and established their first settlement, called Indian Point.<sup>30</sup> Situated on the northern end of a low, sandy strip of land along Lavaca and Matagorda Bays, Indian Point was located on a slight bluff facing the bay.

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<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Rupert, "Calhoun County Dates back to La Salle," Port Lavaca Wave, Calhoun County Centennial and Golden Jubilee Historical Edition, May 16, 1940.

<sup>30</sup> Paul T. Vickers, "Indianola's Last Inhabitant Moves Away," Indianola Scrap Book, (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 183.

To the rear was Powderhorn Lake; on the south side was Powderhorn Bayou; and Steven's Bayou cut the point off from the mainland to the north.<sup>31</sup> Thus, with the destruction of Linnville in 1840, two new ports, Lavaca and Indian Point, sprang up on the bay to take care of the shipping for the interior. The settlement of Indian Point actually marks the beginning of Indianola.

Although the actual beginning of Indian Point can be attributed to the settlers who came from the deep South, its subsequent growth was influenced greatly by German immigrants to America. (The attention of the German people had been focused on the great land of Texas about the time that the Anglo-American colonization began in Texas by literature telling of the vast expanses of fertile land in this area. As a result of the favorable publicity, several hundred German colonists immigrated to this section prior to the Texas Revolution. After the Texans won their independence a deluge of literature, giving glowing accounts of this new Republic, flooded Germany creating a "mania for emigration" among people of every walk of life - the nobleman, the peasant, the merchant, and the mechanic, all alike felt the appeal of the pioneer life waiting for them across the seas.) Furthermore, the Texas congress had passed a very liberal land act in 1837, which provided another strong inducement

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<sup>31</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 1.

for emigration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that on April 20, 1842, fourteen German Princes and noblemen met in conference at Biebrich on the Rhine. This meeting gave birth to the formation of a society for the purchase of land in Texas. The fourteen noblemen signed their names to a paper which read, "We, the undersigned, hereby make known that we have today associated ourselves and are constituted as a society for the purpose of purchasing lands in the free State of Texas."<sup>32</sup> (This marks the beginning of the Society for the Protection of German Emigrants to Texas, formed at a general meeting held at Mainz on March 24, 1844.) As only those of the higher nobility were permitted membership in the society, it gradually became known as the "Adelsverein" (League of the Nobility). No sooner had the organization been formed than its members began to advertize throughout Germany their scheme for colonization. The supporters of the Adelsverein traveled over the various states in Germany talking to groups and telling about the program of the society. Mr. Fritz Reinhardt, one of the early settlers who was attracted by this advertizing, tells of one of the speeches that Prince Solms Braunfels made in Germany concerning the Adelsverein:

Prince Solms had been in Texas as early as 1814, and

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<sup>32</sup> Moritz Tiling, History of the German Element in Texas, from 1820-1850, (Houston, Texas: Moritz Tiling, 1913), p. 58.

his accounts, as well as those of Spies and others, in writing and speeches, caused a sensation among the students of the universities of Giessen and Heidelberg. Solms also made a speech to the students of the independent schools in Darmstadt where I was studying. He remarked that there was no demand in the old country for all the professional men whom the universities were turning out, and that they must find a new and developing country where their services would be in demand. (He glowingly described Texas as a land of milk and honey, of perennial flowers, of crystal streams, rich and fruitful beyond measure, where reamed myriads of deer and buffalo while primeval forests abounded in wild fowl of every kind.)<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime the members of the Adelsverein had already entered into a land deal with a Frenchman named Bourgeois and an American named Henry Fisher. When Prince Solms Braunsfels, who had been appointed commissioner general for the colony, came to Texas, he discovered that the land grants for which the Adelsverein had negotiated were not recognized by the Republic of Texas, and the society lost heavily in these fraudulent deals. Realizing the predicament which confronted the society, the Prince wrote to the officials in Germany: "A troop of colonists coming and no land to settle them on."<sup>34</sup> This loss to the Adelsverein was not without compensation, for Prince Solms immediately began negotiations for a grant of land on the Comal River at its confluence with the Guadalupe River where New Braunfels is now located. After obtaining a grant in this area,

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<sup>33</sup>Fritz Reinhardt, "The Experiences of a German Immigrant to Texas," The Caero Record, June 24, 1925.

<sup>34</sup>Amnet, op. cit., p. 58.

he hastened to the coast to select a landing place for the immigrants. (He inspected the Matagorda Bay region for a suitable place for the debarkation of the German immigrants and selected the settlement of Indian Point for this purpose. Here he purchased a tract of land for the use of the society and named the location Carl's Haven, since Carl was the given name of himself and two other members of the society.)<sup>35</sup>

In November of 1844 the Johann Dethard arrived from Bremen at the port of Galveston bringing the first immigrants to Texas. By the end of the year, more than seven hundred German immigrants had landed at Galveston. Many well educated men, who were willing for the sake of personal freedom to give up their lives of ease in Germany for the rugged life of a pioneer in Texas, were among these first passengers.<sup>36</sup>

The immigrants were transported by small crafts to Matagorda Bay and landed at Carl's Haven on November 23, 1844. The site that Prince Solms had chosen had nothing to offer the travel-worn immigrants in the way of shelter or supplies. According to Mrs. Seeligson, there were only a few families living at Indian Point when the German immi-

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<sup>35</sup>Rudolph L. Bieseke, The History of German Settlements in Texas (Austin, Texas: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1930), p. 110.

<sup>36</sup>Tilling, op. cit., p. 60.

grants arrived.<sup>37</sup> No provision had been made for inland travel and roads were practically non-existent. Victoria was the nearest town of any size where supplies could be obtained. The newly arrived pioneers made the best of a very bad situation. They hastily constructed a tent village out of any available material. It was a sad Christmas that they celebrated in the little make-shift village. Divine services were conducted, and the people gave thanks to God, who had led them safely to Texas.

There in the crudest of quarters the colonists remained for more than two months, but their spirits were high in anticipation of better things to come. Miss Moore gives an incident that illustrates the attitude of many of the immigrants:

The Prince tried to make as much display as possible. He rode about with long feathers in his hat. A man named Wilde was at the head of the colony. His wife thought that everyone ought to show great reverence toward the Prince but a fat German with a pipe in his mouth would not take off his hat as the Prince came riding by. Mrs. Wilde was very indignant over this. The German said, "Damn the Prince, this is a free country."<sup>38</sup>

When the weather permitted the colonists left Carl's Haven, and after a journey of more than one hundred fifty miles reached the "promised land" in March 1845. A settle-

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<sup>37</sup> Seeligson, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Eureka Moore, "Recollections of Indianola," Indianola Scrap Book (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 95.

ment was established, and the town was named New Braunfels in honor of the Castle of Prince Solms on the Lahn River in Germany.<sup>39</sup>

From October 1845 to April 1846 some 5,247 German immigrants arrived at Galveston under the auspices of the Adelsverein. This was 1,200 in excess of the number that Meusebach, the successor to Prince Solms, had been told to expect.<sup>40</sup> On arriving at Galveston the immigrants were transferred to light schooners and then transported to Carl's Haven where they were crowded together in musty huts to wait for transportation inland. During the winter of 1845-46 there was an unusual amount of rain and bad weather. As a result of the miserable weather and the unsanitary conditions of the camp, fever and cholera broke out among the people, and several hundred of them died at Carl's Haven during the winter. Meusebach finally succeeded in getting a contract with Terry and Company, a Houston teaming concern, to transport the immigrants to New Braunfels.

In the meantime war had been declared between the United States and Mexico. The army needed every available means of transportation of troops to Mexico. The Houston teaming concern broke its contract with Meusebach when of-

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<sup>39</sup> Don H. Biggers, German Pioneers in Texas (Fredericksburg, Texas: The Fredericksburg Publishing Company, 1925), p. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

ferred more money by the United States government. Approximately one hundred wagons of immigrants had been hauled from Carl's Haven by the teamsters when they repudiated their contract with Meusebach. There were still about 4,000 immigrants left stranded in Carl's Haven.<sup>41</sup> The people were already despondent and upon hearing that there was no longer any transportation available, they were completely disheartened. Some five hundred of the young men joined the United States Army and marched into Mexico. Some of the immigrants decided to remain at Indian Point rather than make the long trip inland. The remainder of the immigrants, in utter despair, began their miserable march across the unfamiliar country. Tilling says, concerning this march, "This proved disastrous to many, hundreds perished on the way from exposure, hunger and exhaustion; while those who arrived at New Braunfels and later at Fredericksburg, carried with them the germs of disease that soon developed into a frightful epidemic, in which more than one thousand died."<sup>42</sup>

Even after the Adelsverein ceased to function in 1847, German immigration continued, and during 1848-1849 the number of immigrants coming from Germany increased greatly. The repercussion from the revolutions of 1848 which swept through Europe was felt in Germany. The king was forced to make

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>42</sup>Tilling, op. cit., p. 60.



liberal reforms, but the liberal revolution was put down in 1849. A period of reaction followed which forced many of the outstanding patriots of Germany who had taken part in the revolution to flee from the country. The exodus of university professors, literary men, artists, and students from every German state was joined by thousands of farmers and mechanics who immigrated because of unbearable administrative ordinances and provoking interference from the governmental authorities. (Many of these immigrants came to Texas, landing at the ports of Galveston and Indian Point. Many of them chose to remain at Indian Point and so formed the nucleus of a thriving settlement later to become known as Indianola.)

## CHAPTER II

### INDIANOLA BECOMES AN IMPORTANT PORT IN THE 1850'S

Soon after the establishment of Lavaca as a shipping point, a colony of wealthy planters disembarked at the newly constructed wharf. They settled at Green Lake, located twelve miles west of Lavaca. Other than their families, household goods, and farming equipment, the planters brought with them many negro slaves and began to farm on a large scale. They purchased stock in the Port Lavaca wharf and the steam dredge. With their coming the shipping business at Lavaca began to expand rapidly. Lavaca and Galveston were considered to be the principal ports on the Texas coast at this time.<sup>1</sup>

The arrival of the capitalist Jim Foster, labeled by Mr. James C. Hatch as the first multimillionaire to land in Texas, was destined to be an important factor in changing the situation in regard to Lavaca's position as the principal port for the Matagorda Bay region. Jim Foster came to Lavaca from the blue grass country of Kentucky in about 1845 for the purpose of engaging in cattle raising and shipping. Determined to dominate the cattle industry in this area of the state, Jim Foster located on Rio Chocolate in the vicinity of Green Lake where he began ranching on a one thousand

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<sup>1</sup>James W. Hatch, Lest We Forget the Heroes of the Alamo, copy of manuscript, (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Archives, undated), p. 1.

acre tract of land. In addition to cattle raising, he engaged in the farming of corn, cotton, and reband sugar. A spacious plantation house was built by slave labor of lumber imported from Florida. The work of the plantation was done by approximately a hundred negro slaves, who represented a huge investment for their master.<sup>2</sup> It seemed that Lavaca was the ideal shipping point for the great Foster enterprise.

On April 4, 1856, the Legislature of the state of Texas passed an act creating the (county of Calhoun out of territory which had formerly been a part of the counties of Victoria, Jackson, and Matagorda. Lavaca was designated as the county seat,<sup>3</sup> The county was named in honor of John C. Calhoun,) the great southern statesman who had been one of the more vehement advocates of statehood for Texas.<sup>4</sup>

On September 22, 1846, the county of Calhoun was organized at Lavaca. The first political functions of the county were carried out at the home of H. C. Kitchen. Theodore Miller, who had been appointed by the governor as chief justice of the county, presided over the meeting. Sylvester Hatch and Hermann Tkelpapa were appointed the first county commissioners and immediately held the first meeting of the

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<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, compiled and arranged by H. N. P. Gammel (Austin, Texas: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. II, p. 1354.

<sup>4</sup>Fulmore, op. cit., p. 157.

Commissioners' Court for the county of Calhoun.<sup>5</sup>

With Lavaca emerging as the county seat, it seemed evident that it would be the leading town in the Matagorda Bay region. Viktor Bract visited this region shortly after Lavaca became the county seat and described the suitability of Matagorda Bay for navigation as follows:

The greatest depth of Paso de Caballo is given at ten to eleven feet. During light south or southwest winds the bar offers little difficulty. Only during strong easterly winds do breakers from the shore and Pelican Island become dangerous... A gradual improvement of Caballo Pass has been noted for some time. It may be that in a few years this pass will have gained distinct advantages over that of Galveston Bay... Matagorda Bay is just better suited for navigation than other points on the Texas coast...<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Bract's statement concerning the suitability of Matagorda Bay for navigation was borne out by the increasing shipping activity at Lavaca. After 1845 the shipping from Lavaca had increased notably, and the town had become quite prosperous. There were those with vision who saw the possibility of the development of an important sea port; consequently, real estate prices rose to a new high. Hundreds of bales of cotton were shipped from the Lavaca wharves, and supplies for a large part of South and West Texas and northern Mexico were brought in and carried overland by wagon

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<sup>5</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, (Port Lavaca, Texas: Bound Volume in the county courthouse of Calhoun County), Vol. A, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Viktor Bract, Texas in 1848, (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Publishing Company, 1931), p. 2.

trains drawn by mules and oxen.

Mrs. Rupert in describing Port Lavaca during this early period of prosperity states that "Time was not very valuable in those days and the wagon trains, great high-wheeled, blue, covered wagons, drawn by six or eight mules glittering with silver trappings and accompanied by silent, grave looking guards, armed of course, would sometimes wait weeks for their teamers or for the roads to become passable."<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Bracht records the fact that "two competing stage coaches made at least two weekly round trips from Lexar via New Braunfels and Victoria to Port La Vaca, where they made connection with the steamboat to Galveston."<sup>8</sup> He recommended the stage coaches of William and R. McCullough, stating that "their fare was ten dollars with only a small charge for baggage."<sup>9</sup> In regard to shipping and travel by sea, Mr. Bracht stated that "regular trips between Port La Vaca, Matagorda, Indian Point and New Orleans are made by a packet ship with fare and meals for a cabin-passenger at fifteen dollars."<sup>10</sup>

No doubt the merchants of Lavaca rejoiced with the coming of Jim Foster, thinking that his enterprise would

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<sup>7</sup> Rupert, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Bracht, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

make use of their business houses and shipping facilities and that their port would soon surpass Galveston as a shipping center. To the contrary, he was to direct his trade and influence away from Lavaca as he did not think the port a suitable place for a shipping point. Perhaps his reasons were personal as well as practical. At any rate, shortly after his arrival, he began to look elsewhere for a seaport which would meet his needs.<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime, Indian Point, the place where the German immigrants landed and called Carl's Haven, had begun to make a bid for inland trade. Mr. H. J. Luck, the first judge for Calloun County, established a warehouse at Indian Point in 1843. He became an agent for the last group of German immigrants who landed at Carl's Haven under the auspices of the Adelsverein. The immigrants obtained supplies from his warehouse, but the Adelsverein did not have adequate funds to take care of the accounts that the immigrants had made with Mr. Luck. On the verge of bankruptcy, Mr. Luck sold his business to avoid a complete loss.

Mr. F. C. Luck related this interested story concerning his father's business at Indian Point:

Some of father's business friends at New Orleans learned of the hard luck that he had encountered. On good faith, they pooled their resources and sent two schooners to Indian Point loaded with sufficient merchandise to put father in business again. At first, father refused to sign the invoice that the captain pre-

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<sup>11</sup>Hatch, loc. cit.

sented to him. The captain told him of the benevolence of his friends in New Orleans, who had insisted that he accept the goods in order that he might get back on his feet again in business. They expected no recompense until their colleague had built up a prosperous business again. Rather restocked his store and had a thriving business in a short time. He was soon able to re-emburse his business friends in New Orleans for what they had sent and then some.<sup>12</sup>

The firm of H. Runge and Company was established at Indian Point late in 1845. It had its beginning in a small tent, but it was later to become an important banking concern. The business houses of Fromme's and of Jacob Vass were later established adjacent to the Runge firm.<sup>13</sup>

When Indian Point had begun to become quite active as a trading center, a small wharf was constructed from which small boats could deposit and receive cargo. The first record of commercial freight was the shipment of Captain Jerry Smith's cattle from Indian Point to an Eastern market in 1849.<sup>14</sup>

The merchants of Indian Point were hopeful that Jim Foster would use their town as a shipping point; however, as the wharf at Indian Point would accommodate only small vessels, the heavy freight from the larger vessels had to be lightened from vessels by flat boat and then brought up to

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<sup>12</sup>F. E. Huck to Thomas F. Anderson, Victoria, Texas, June 1, 1951.

<sup>13</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>S. W. Reed, "Memories of Indianola," Indianola Scrap Book (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 172.

the wharf to be unloaded. Jim Foster refused to consider using Indian Point as a shipping center for his cattle and made his own selection for a place to be used for this purpose at a site three miles nearer Pass Caballo. This location that he selected lay in the shape of a cow's horn; hence, the shipping port was named Powderhorn.<sup>15</sup> Jim Foster had a wharf constructed at Powderhorn and made a contract with the Morgan Steamship Company, which provided that on arrival of the Morgan steamship at Jim Foster's wharf at Powderhorn a shipment of three hundred fat steers was to be ready to drive onto the wharf.

Jim Foster was determined to do everything in his power to make his port the principal shipping center for the Matagorda Bay region, and he realized that the Morgan Steamship Company would be the determining factor in making his dream a reality. In making his contract with the Morgan Steamship Company, he attempted to force the steamship company to take off the steamer which went regularly to Lavaca, but he was not successful in this attempt, for the steamship company had a contract with the United States government to carry the mail to Lavaca.<sup>16</sup> However, in 1949 when the city commission of Lavaca made the very serious mistake of raising the channel and dockage fee, the Morgan interests,

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<sup>15</sup>Hatch, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Loc. cit.



which until that time had centered their activities at Lavaca, considered the increased rate prohibitive to their business and were forced to seek another port from which they could serve the bay region.<sup>17</sup> They naturally turned to the location that Jom Foster had been using to ship his cattle.

Powderhorn proved to be very advantageous to the Morgan Lines as a port, for the water at this place was of greater depth, and the location was more suitable for building docks than at any other point on Matagorda Bay. Thus, from an economic standpoint it may be said that Indianola was founded by Charles Morgan, since it was after the Morgan enterprizes had moved to Powderhorn in 1848 that the town began its rapid growth.<sup>18</sup>

After a wharf and warehouse had been constructed at Powderhorn, the Morgan Line established regular steamship service with ships sailing between that point and Galveston and New Orleans, and commerce developed rapidly.<sup>19</sup> Soon wagons from the vast hinterland with their loads of hides, skins, wool, cotton, and other materials were coming to the newly established port to do their trading.<sup>20</sup>

The promoters of Powderhorn contracted to have the

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<sup>17</sup> Rupert, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Reed, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>19</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Loc. cit.

city surveyed and laid off in an orderly manner in 1849. Levi Jones was awarded the job of planning the city.<sup>21</sup>

Because of the rapid growth of the town and increased population, the few merchants were not able to supply all of the needs of the people; hence, in the beginning many of the people made the trip to Indian Point to trade with the business houses that had become well established by this time.

(In 1842 a group of citizens lead by Mrs. John Henry Brown decided that Powderhorn was not a respectable name for their growing city.<sup>22</sup> The citizens brought the matter before Judge J. S. Huck, who had moved to Powderhorn from Indian Point, and he suggested that they name the town Indianola.<sup>23</sup> As Indian Point had previously been called Indianola by some, Powderhorn took advantage of the publicity attached to this name.<sup>24</sup> A majority of the citizens were also in favor of changing the name to Indianola; however, there were a few of the old inhabitants who did not wish to give up the original name and stubbornly continued to call the place Powderhorn.)

(In 1850 a notable event occurred. The Commission

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<sup>21</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>22</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>23</sup>F. E. Huck, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Vickers, op. cit., p. 182.

appointed by President Pierce to fix the boundary between Mexico and the United States under the provision of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo landed there and proceeded overland to their destination.)<sup>25</sup>

(In 1851 Indianola became the military depot of the United States for the coast of Texas. Large quantities of stores for army posts at San Antonio and El Paso began moving through the port. After the army supplies were unloaded from the ships, they were conveyed to the interior by special wagon trains, sometimes composed of a hundred and fifty vehicles.)<sup>26</sup>

A traveler viewing Indianola in 1851 was disappointed in the appearance of the town. She described it as being "a belt of white sand which separated the ocean of green prairies from the ocean of blue water, and along this belt was arranged a line of wooden buildings unrelieved by trees or enclosures, like a string of overgrown packing boxes set out on the beach to dry. It looked forlorn and undraped for in their hurry to commence business, they deferred adornments for a season."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Reed, Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Seeligson, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Dorothy Noble, The Story of Old Indianola, an essay receiving first award in a Texas history contest sponsored by the Sons of the American Revolution, (Beaumont, Texas: The Beaumont High School Press, 1948), p. 4.

(Indeed Indianola at this time was not very attractive, for the building boom was in progress and numerous houses and business establishments were being constructed from lumber imported from Florida.)

For drinking purposes the people were forced to use rain water which was collected in underground cisterns made of blocks, which the settlers themselves had manufactured from lime and crushed oyster shells. Boats went up the Lavaca River to old Texana where chord wood was loaded on boats and brought back to Indianola to be used as fuel.

Dr. Frederick Olmsted was amused by the intense rivalry that existed between Lavaca and Indianola when he visited the two towns in the early 1850's. He gives his impressions of the two ports as follows:

The beach on which the town of Indianola is built is some three hundred yards in width, and extends about a mile in length, having but two parallel streets, front and back. It has a more busy and prosperous appearance than Lavaca, and is much larger... The rivalry between the two towns is extreme and amusing. At Lavaca we hear of Indianola as "a little village down the bay where our vessels sometimes land goods on their way up." Each considers the other to be sickly. Indianola has the advantage of the deepest water... Lavaca has the advantage of 12 miles distance less over hard roads across the low prairies. Schooners of ordinary coasting draught come without difficulty to the wharves of Indianola, and with greater difficulty and with some liability to detention from grounding, to Lavaca...<sup>28</sup>

Mr. Olmsted was quite impressed with the town of Indianola. He described the beach as being "a pleasant prom-

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<sup>28</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, (New Dix, Edwards, and Company, 1857), p. 253.

enade." He was very pleased with his hotel accommodations at Indianola. He observed that "The Germans, who compose half the population have the enterprise to cultivate vegetable gardens, which furnish at least salads at all seasons." The proprietor of the hotel apologized to his guest for the difficulty in obtaining meat in a country covered with cattle and sheep saying "The butcher, in the summer, wouldn't kill because it was too warm for keeping meat, and in the winter because it was too cold or too rainy, he must go to a saloon to keep himself warm."<sup>29</sup>

(With Indianola increasing in population and prestige, the citizens began to agitate for the removal of the county seat from Lavaca to Indianola, the more populous center. An election was held on August 2, 1852, in which the majority of all the votes in the county were given for the removal of the county seat to Indianola.)<sup>30</sup> Several of the prominent citizens of Indianola put up a bond to the Commissioners' Court for the purpose of furnishing suitable buildings for county purposes at the new county seat, which were to be free of cost for six weeks. (Ample grounds were donated to the county for a court-house site. As soon as the county buildings were available, all the public offices

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Commissioners' Court, op. cit., Vol. A, p. 107.

and archives of the county were moved to the new county seat.<sup>31</sup>

(The death knell to the prosperity of Indian Point was sounded with the establishment of the Morgan interests at Indianola.) The population gradually began to dwindle as people began to drift to the rival town. The business houses at Indian Point were losing trade, for Indianola seemed to draw every ounce of vitality from the once thriving town of Indian Point. (In the early part of 1853 many of the people from Indian Point began to move all their belongings to the newer town three miles down the island.) Many remained in their homes and carried on household duties as the mules pulled the houses over the rolling logs down the road to Indianola. Most of the mercantile houses were moved in the same manner and re-established at Indianola. The firm of H. Runge and Company was among those moved from Indian Point.<sup>32</sup>

An act to incorporate the city of Indianola was approved by the state Legislature in February of 1853. The charter provided that "there be an election by the citizens by ballot, on the 1st Monday of January in each and every year for the purpose of electing one Mayor, one Recorder and eight Aldermen to serve one year..., who shall constitute the city council." The city council was given the power to

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<sup>31</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>32</sup>Loc. cit.

appoint a treasurer, an assessor and tax collector, a marshal, and other such officials necessary to carry out the provisions of the charter. The charter provided that "the Mayor and Recorder shall have all the authority and power of Justice of the Peace...." The council was given the authority by the charter "to levy and collect a tax not to exceed one-fourth of one percentum annually upon all real estate within the limits of the corporation, and the proceeds of the tax shall be applied to the cause of education in the town of Indianola."<sup>33</sup>

(By 1855 Indianola had left her adolescent days and had begun to assume the proportions of young cityhood. The shabby, hastily built business houses of earlier days were being replaced by substantial two story structures with an attractive appearance. Business lots were sold at the unbelievable price of \$4,000, which is indicative of the prosperity of the town.)<sup>34</sup>

In the center of the business section of Indianola was built a handsome two story court-house in 1857. It was one of the most attractive and substantial court-houses in that area of the Gulf coast. The blocks from which the building was constructed were manufactured by a process

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<sup>33</sup>Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 849-853.

<sup>34</sup>Seeligson, loc. cit.

known as the "lime cool." This was accomplished by placing timber and limestone on top of a layer of oyster shells. The substance was burned and then crushed into blocks which were laid carefully but substantially to form the structure.<sup>35</sup>

Handsome residences surrounded by attractive gardens had been constructed in various parts of the city. Houses dotted the beach all the way up to Indian Point, making it somewhat of a suburb of Indianola proper. (Thus, Indianola actually had two divisions; the upper part of the town which was first known as Indian Point and the lower part which was originally called Powderhorn.) It was when Indian Point ceased to exist as a commercial city that the people began to call the upper part of the city "Old Town."

Kr. W. S. Adair described life in Indianola at this time as follows:

(There were no rich people in Indianola, but there was plenty of money in circulation. It cost next to nothing to live. Fish and oysters were abundant, and anyone could obtain free beef at the slaughterhouse. The market was glutted with all kinds of game, and the air creaked under the weight of millions of wild game.<sup>36</sup>

The key to the prosperity of Indianola was its being the principal port for the vast interior trade with San Antonio, West Texas, and Chihuahua, Mexico.) The Morgan lines continued to handle most of the shipping to Indian-

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<sup>35</sup> Seeligson, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> W. S. Adair, "Indianola Thrived in the Early 70's," Dallas Morning News, February 22, 1925.



ola. The official records of the Morgan Lines do not go back further than 1869, but their slogan then was "Departures every day be the weather what it may."<sup>37</sup>

Indianola owed a debt of gratitude to Captain Morgan, a pioneer and preeminent leader in water transportation between Texas and points on the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Seaboard. During his lifetime he built and managed one hundred seventeen vessels of which thirty-one were large ocean going ships. He is credited with having built and owned more ships than any other individual at that time.<sup>38</sup>

By 1855 the Morgan Company was running two lines of steamers a week between Indianola and New Orleans. A steamer left New Orleans every Sunday and Thursday carrying mail and cargo to Indianola, and the mail was carried from Indianola by steamer every Wednesday and Saturday for New Orleans.<sup>39</sup> the Vanderbilt Line served Indianola for a time with its steamers; however, the Morgan Line eventually bought out this rival line.<sup>40</sup> There was a buyer in New York who represented the merchants of Indianola. He bought merchandise on the market in New York and shipped it to Indianola for distribution.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Reed, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>38</sup>Reed., loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup>News item in The Indianola Bulletin, April 26, 1855.

<sup>40</sup>Noble, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>41</sup>Hatch, op. cit., p. 10.

In the summer vessels brought cargos of block ice from ports in Maine. There was a large ice warehouse in Indianola where the ice was stored. The ice was placed in wooden hogsheads which were packed with sawdust and sealed. Then the ice was ready for shipment to Victoria, San Antonio, and other inland towns.<sup>42</sup>

(The most important cargo shipped from Indianola was cattle. Thousands of head of cattle were shipped to New Orleans and Cuba in a year's time.<sup>43</sup> Mr. Andrew Miller gave the following description of a typical scene in the streets of Indianola when the cattle were being driven into town for loading:

I can see great droves of longhorns traversing the main street of the town, headed for the pens and chutes of the docks. Some of the old steers, three to five or six years old, were of enormous size and paraded a startling growth of horns. They were so wild that many of them had never been branded. Whenever any animal broke from the herd, the cowboys galloped after it, roped it and brought it back even if they had to drag it.<sup>44</sup>

Large numbers of the cattle brought to Indianola were processed in the slaughter house. The cattle were driven into chutes, killed, hoisted by the hind legs and skinned. The Indianola butchers had no further concern for the carcasses after hide and tallow had been removed for shipment to east-

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<sup>42</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Noble, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>44</sup>Adair, Loc. cit.

ern markets. The carcasses were hauled some distance beyond the limits of the town and left for the scavengers to consume. At the slaughter house the people were welcome to all the fresh beef they could carry away.<sup>45</sup>

Cotton ranked next to cattle in importance in exports. In 1860 there were 30,000 bales of cotton exported from Indianola.<sup>46</sup>

The fish and oyster industry was very important to the economy of the town. Large fleets of fishing boats patrolled the bay with their nets and brought in large quantities of fish. The fish and oysters were packed in ice and loaded in steamers for shipment.<sup>47</sup> The jobbing houses of Indianola carried extensive stocks of goods. They did an immense wholesale business with towns in the interior.<sup>48</sup>

Large wagons called prairie schooners, drawn by ten and twelve yoke of oxen and the two wheeled Mexican carts with rawhide beds drawn by two yoke of oxen or by six small mules, came and went in long trains. They filled the streets and wagon yards and often overflowed into suburban camps.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Noble, loc. cit.

<sup>47</sup>Vickers, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>48</sup>Adair, loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup>Seeligson, loc. cit.

Wagons of the Wells Fargo Express Company, drawn by sixteen mules, four abreast, brought silver bullion from the mines in Mexico. The bullion was loaded on steamers and shipped to the United States mint in New Orleans. In the 1850's the Western State Coast Company operated a four-horse stage between Indianola, Victoria, San Antonio, and Austin. The badly shaken passengers, bound for distant San Antonio, arrived at their destination just forty-eight hours after their departure according to schedule.<sup>50</sup>

The Indianola Bulletin, which was established in 1853, did a remarkably fine piece of work in bringing the news to the people. The front page of the paper was given over to national and international news. The remaining three sheets carried the local news and advertisements. The Bulletin did much to help promote important civic projects. In May of 1855 an open letter appeared in the Bulletin from the mayor urging that action be taken for the erection of a municipal hospital. The mayor summed up his case as follows:

Once has our population been decimated by the ravages of yellow fever, and the year 1854, though not so fatal, swept from us as many of our increase by births and emigration. How then may its ravages be stayed? I would answer through an hospital alone; this to be of any value must be well officered and judiciously managed. Establish an institution on just and liberal principles, and you at once gain the confidence of your citizens, and the poor beings when stricken down by disease will enter its wards with a cheerful heart and firm confidence

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News item in The Indianola Bulletin, May 31, 1855.

in a speedy recovery.<sup>51</sup>

Later in the same year the mayor and council authorized the hospital committee to lease a suitable building to be used as a hospital and to employ a physician and a nurse. Since the hospital was to be maintained with municipal funds, everyone entering it was required to get a permit from the mayor.<sup>52</sup>

In 1858 a new act of incorporation for the city of Indianola was passed. Its provisions are indicative of the new progressive spirit of Indianola. The charter gave the city health board the authority to "provide for the support of paupers and others while in the hospital and for their burial expenses not to exceed the sum of fifteen dollars..." The health board was given the authority "to employ a physician and suitable nurses in the time of epidemics." The council was given the power to provide for the construction of sidewalks on the streets of Indianola at the cost of the property owners. The hospital fund, which received its revenue from the money collected from passengers of vessels, was declared "sacred for the erection and maintenance of the hospital, the employment of physicians and nurses, the support of paupers and sick persons."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>News item in The Indianola Bulletin, May 10, 1855.

<sup>52</sup>News item in The Indianola Bulletin, May 31, 1855.

<sup>53</sup>Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 1208-1215.

(In May of 1846 two steamers approached the harbor at Indianola bringing a most unusual cargo to port. It was the shipment of camels that the United States government had imported from the Near East to traverse the desert sands of the great Southwest.) During the Mexican war the need for transportation of troops and supplies in the Southwest was realized by Jefferson Davis, who was a colonel in the United States Army at this time. He became convinced that the possibility of using camels in this area was good.

In 1852, when Jefferson Davis became Secretary of War in the cabinet of President Franklin Pierce, he was in a better position to carry forward the scheme that he and other officials had advanced. Therefore, on December 1, 1852, in his report to the President, he stated:

For military purposes, for expresses and for reconnaissances, it is believed, that the dromedary would supply a want now seriously felt in our service; and for transportation with troops rapidly moving across the country, the camel, it is believed, would remove an obstacle which now serves greatly to diminish the value<sup>54</sup> and efficiency of our troops on the western frontier.

So it was that the first shipment of thirty-three camels were brought to Texas from the Near East. The cargo consisted of one Tunis camel of burden, male; one Sennaar dromedary, male; one Muscat dromedary, female; two Siout dromedaries, males; four Siout dromedaries, females; one Mount Sinai dromedary, male; two Baerian camels, males; one

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<sup>54</sup>Emmet, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

'booghdee', male; four Arabian camels of burden, males; fifteen Arabian camels of burden, females; one Arabian camel, twenty-four days old, male; and camel-conductors with native doctors."<sup>55</sup>

The voyage from the Near East to Indianola was accomplished with many difficulties. Other than the usual duties of the crew, they were kept busy rubbing the stiff legs of the camels; fighting the itch; and trying to prevent the animals from contracting "violent pneumonitis," a disease to which they were highly susceptible if they were permitted to get too warm. On reaching the harbor the crew had further difficulty in getting the beasts from the ship to land. However, on the thirteenth day of May, 1856, the first load of camels were driven down the wharf at Indianola to their pens. A month before the arrival of the camels, the citizens of Indianola had begun to take note of the preparation for these animals. May 5, 1856, The Indianola Bulletin carried the following:

Workmen are now busy erecting enclosures for the camels that are daily expected for service on the western plains. The enclosure will cover ten acres of ground.<sup>56</sup>

(The arrival of the camels created a sensation among the people of the town. Men, women, and children flocked to see them as though a circus had come to town. Mrs. Mary R.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>56</sup>News item in The Indianola Bulletin, May 5, 1856.

Kleinecke, Mrs. Amelia Lewis, Mrs. Lizzie Holzheuser, and Mrs. Bertha Miller, who were girls in Indianola at the time of the arrival of the camels, recall in the following statement their impressions of the event:

Yes, we remember the first camels. They were decorated with red blankets. My sisters and I ran after them. A whole lot in the first load were two hump camels. Where did they come from? I don't know. We were just girls, then... They were kept near Powderhorn Lake. Oh! how the people were scared of them. On Sunday the people would walk to the Lake. Everybody looked at the camels - a real sight!<sup>57</sup>

Old Uncle Jack Green, who was the slave of Doctor Sellers in Indianola, gave his story concerning the arrival of the camels:

After I come to Jackson County, I was sent to Indianola to work on dem wharves unloading ships. Whilst I wuz dar and working on de warf, some camels in charge of Mexican looking people done come to Indianola. I don't see um when they unload um from de ships. I don't know whar they come frum. They wuz jest that - right that in Indianola, walking around de streets when I see'd um. De men would load a camel and jest turn him loose and load another. And then a man would ride a horse and drive dem camels with packs on dar backs. You see, I was working on de wharf; I was a slave, and I don't have no business out dar with dem camels.<sup>58</sup>

The second load of camels arrived at Indianola in 1857; in 1860 private parties who were also slave traders brought the third shipment of camels from the Canary Islands. John Gonzales and Joseph Mendez, two of these men who arrived with the last shipment of camels, settled in Indianola and became

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<sup>57</sup>Emmett, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 24.



highly respected citizens of the community.<sup>59</sup>

The camel was evidently not the docile animal that the people had expected, for Mrs. Seeligson spoke of a drove of camels stampeding in the town and doing a great deal of damage. She stated that "the inhabitants were infuriated and scalded them with boiling water and pelted them with sticks." The camels were finally corralled in a beer garden outside the town.<sup>60</sup>

The desert animals were taken to Camp Verde where the headquarters of the camel caravan was to be maintained. The Civil War came before the camel experiment could be adequately tested, and this transportation system received its death blow. Some of the animals were sold at auction and the remainder wandered about in the desert, and after some years no more traces of them were found.<sup>61</sup>

As the problem of transportation in the Southwest had been of great concern to Jefferson Davis and other officials, likewise, it was of vital concern to the promoters of Indianola. Generally speaking, the roads in all parts of Texas were bad even under favorable conditions. Most of them reverted to impassable quagmires in wet weather. Frederick Olmsted described the road from Victoria to Lavaca as a "mere

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<sup>59</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>60</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>61</sup>Emmit, op. cit., p. 125.

collection of straggling wagon ruts, extending for more than a quarter of a mile in width, from outside to outside, it being desirable in this part of the country to avoid the road rather than to follow it.<sup>62</sup> For a period in 1858 the road leading from Lavaca to San Antonio was so bad that an empty stagecoach could not go five miles without getting bogged.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, it behooved the merchants and shippers of Indianola to aid in maintaining an all weather road to Victoria, the nearest important inland town. Early in 1850 the road from Indianola to Victoria was constructed. It was probably one of the finest stretches of road in Texas at that time. Lieutenant Michler, a government official in making a report to the government in 1855 concerning the feasibility of building a government warehouse at Indianola, described this road and compared it with the road from Lavaca to Victoria as follows:

In regard to the roads leading from Indianola and Port Lavaca to Victoria, the preferences must be given to the one from Indianola. I rode over them when they were certainly in their worst possible condition. The whole country had been flooded with rains, and the roads lately cut up by the large trains which had passed over them. From Port Lavaca to Victoria the road for the entire distance was over a "hog wallow" prairie... The road from Indianola to Victoria was an excellent road over a hard sandy soil, running parallel to and in sight

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Olmsted, op. cit., p. 257.

<sup>63</sup>Upert N. Richardson, Texas the Lone Star State, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1943), p. 214.

of the Guadalupe River. With the exception of the difference in length, the Indianola road possesses advantage over that of Port Lavaca as far as regards wood, water, and the quality of the road.<sup>64</sup>

The progressive citizens of Indianola had long been interested in getting a rail connection from Indianola to the interior. The first plan for a railroad from Indianola (Old Town) was evidence of the foresight of Prince Solms Braunfels and the German colonists who landed at Carl's Haven. The charter for this proposed railroad was issued May 8, 1846, and the railroad was to be called the Lavaca, Guadalupe, and San Saba Railroad. This was the first railroad charter issued by the Legislature of the state of Texas. The Germans planned to construct a road from Indianola to their new settlement which they could use for their freight wagons enroute to present New Braunfels, and then later to convert the road into a railroad. Wooden rails were to be used, and they planned to use horses for power until a steam locomotive could be brought from Germany. They were not able to build the road before their departure; however, the route was selected and names chosen for the various stations along the line. After reaching their permanent settlement, they had hopes that the railroad plan would become a reality, but there was no capital available for the project and the plan was dropped.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Kews item in the Indianola Bulletin, June 15, 1855.

<sup>65</sup>Reed, op. cit., p. 113.

The San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad was chartered in September of 1850 and was to run from Lavaca to San Antonio with a branch line connecting at Indianola. The citizens of Indianola soon lost faith in this project, and they had a public meeting to discuss the matter of chartering their own railroad. The following account appeared in the Galveston News of August 7, 1852:

The citizens of Indianola have had a public meeting and passed a series of resolutions that they have no confidence in the San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad and that they will proceed to construct a road of their own to Victoria and Gonzales and organize a corporation for their purpose. Committees were appointed to solicit subscriptions and secure a charter.<sup>66</sup>

A charter was granted for the Indianola and Victoria Plank and Turnpike Road Company on February 7, 1853, but the project never materialized. A new charter was obtained on September, 1856 for the Powderhorn, Victoria, and Gonzales Railroad Company, which was to be built from Indianola directly to Victoria, completely by-passing Lavaca. It was to extend from Victoria to Gonzales with the right to extend to Austin; however, nothing was ever done, and the charter was revoked in 1858.<sup>67</sup>

In the meanwhile the San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad Company had begun construction on the line from Lavaca, but no work on the Indianola branch had been done.

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., citing news item in the Galveston Morning News, August 7, 1852.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

The citizens of Indianola refused to permit Lavaca to get ahead of them in the matter of a railroad connection, so on January 23, 1858, the Indianola Railroad was chartered with Gonzales as its immediate objective. The Legislature granted the charter with the provision that the Indianola Railroad Company connect with the San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad Company not more than five miles from Lavaca and that joint track be used the remaining distance to Victoria.<sup>68</sup>

According to Mr. Reed, only the grading for the Indianola Railroad for a distance of fifteen miles had been completed when the Civil War stopped all railroad construction. He states that the Indianola Railroad was completed in 1871. The same year it was consolidated with the San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad.<sup>69</sup>

The population of Indianola was approximately 1500 by 1860.<sup>70</sup> The city enjoyed a stable economy, and the port of Indianola was looking forward to an even brighter future; however, the nation stood on the brink of a great civil war. Indianola was destined to have her progress greatly impeded by the effects of war and its aftermath.

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<sup>68</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>69</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>70</sup>Noble, op. cit., p. 10.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

The people of Indianola were southern in their sentiments regarding certain institutions and ideals of the South, and it was the growing breach between northern and southern idealisms that precipitated the Civil War. In anti-bellum days much of the wealth of the state of Texas was invested in slaves. By 1860 the total value of property in slaves was estimated to be \$64,000,000, which was approximately one-fourth the total of all property assessed; consequently, the loss involved over a run-away slave was of great concern to the owner. Information concerning the run-away slave often appeared in the local newspapers. Moreover, the owner was willing to spend a great deal of money in circulating notices which would lead to the apprehension of the fugitive, as evidenced by the following article carried by the Indianola Bulletin in 1855:

On or about the 20th my negro boy, John, ran away. He is about 55 years old--six feet high--weighs 170 pounds--little grey--has whiskers--some front teeth missing--one of the calves of his legs larger than the other--is very positive in his conversation. He says he is a horse trainer, and used to ride races when young.

I will pay \$25 to anyone who will lodge him in jail or bring him to me if he is caught in the county, or \$50 if caught out of the county. I will pay all jail fees.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>News item in the Indianola Bulletin, May 10, 1855.

With the economy of the state depending to such an extent upon the institution of slavery, it is quite understandable why the activities of the abolitionists were so bitterly opposed. As the abolition movement gathered more force, its supporters became more brazen in their accusations and demands. The South responded with increased bitterness. The American Anti-Slavery Society met in New York on June 11, 1855. The Reverend Theodore Parker, a well-known abolitionist, was the principal speaker for the meeting. Reverend Parker climaxed his address with the suggestion that "a certain day be declared when slavery shall cease to all members of this union."<sup>2</sup> Reverend Parker's speech created a storm of disapproval south of the Mason and Dixon line. The southern press vociferously denounced the meeting and the platform that it had adopted. Typical of the sentiment which came from the press is the following editorial from the Indianola Bulletin:

Reverend Theodore Parker - This designing demagogue was received with much applause, of course, on the occasion of the American Anti-Slavery Society's anniversary meeting at the Metropolitan Theatre in New York last week. He made one of his blasphemous and traitorous speeches, which he is reported to have closed with a comparison of the Union to a vessel which had lost mast, rudder and all its rigging, which drifted on the rocks and could not be repaired, contending such case it was wisdom to abandon the wreck and save the crew.

Parker spoke an hour and a half and made six points

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<sup>2</sup> The Indianola Bulletin, June 2, 1855.

as the basis of a "union of all parties in the North", a precious platform, truly!

The ascendancy of sound American principles in accession to office of a purely American party, bound to maintain the constitution and defend the Union, may be safely relied on by those who have their country's interest at heart,<sup>3</sup> to defeat all such treasonous machinations as these.

As a result of the increasing threats and demands of the abolitionists in the North, the secession movement gained impetus in Texas and the South. To aid in the propagation of the secession sentiment, an organization known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, which had been in existence in the South for a number of years, began to function in Texas early in the year 1860. New chapters were established in many Texas towns, and members of the Legislature and prominent politicians were counted among the knights of this order.<sup>4</sup> George A. Bickley, one of the leaders of the organization, wrote a pamphlet for circulation in which he said that the Knights of the Golden Circle "constitute a powerful military organization as a nucleus around which to hang political considerations which will, if well managed, lead to the disenthralment of the cotton states from the oppressive majority of manufacturing and commercial interests in the North."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Wharton, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>5</sup>Loc. cit., citing George A. Bickley,



The presidential campaign for the year 1860 was beginning to gather momentum in Texas, and the people were actively speculating as to the consequence of a Lincoln victory. John C. Breckinridge and Joseph Lane were running on the ticket of the Democratic party, while the opposition party led by Governor Sam Houston gave its support to John Bell and Edward Everett of the Constitution Union party.

In the meantime, there had been some agitation from certain abolitionists working under cover in the state; consequently, a serious wave of insurrections broke out in the northern part of the state and began to spread, creating fear and hatred among the people. Such violence and turmoil had not been seen in the state since the Revolution of 1836. The press was full of stories of crimes committed everywhere. An editorial appearing in one of the papers stated that "high-handed criminality stalks abroad through the land, and bloody deeds of violence and of vengeance are transpiring constantly to mar the peace and harmony of society. Human life hangs on the merest thread. No man's life is safe."<sup>6</sup> The Indianola Bulletin gives an account of incendiarism in that city, stating that "a vigilance committee was formed at Indianola after a house had been set on fire. The man suspected of starting the fire was put on the first boat sailing for New

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<sup>6</sup>Wharton, op. cit., p. 77.

Orleans."<sup>7</sup>

The activities of the abolitionists which brought on these crimes, aroused the people greatly against the dangerous doctrines of the Republican party. As the time of the election drew nearer, anti-Lincoln demonstrations were staged in various parts of the state. A liberty pole was erected in Gonzales and the Lone Star Flag run up to its head while Lincoln was burned in effigy.<sup>8</sup> A political demonstration in Indianola prior to the election was distinguished by a number of interesting placards. Some of them read: "The Time Has Come"; "States Rights"; "The 2nd of March"; "Cotton Is King"; "No Room in Abe's Bosom for Us"; "Crocketts and Bowles Not All Dead"; and "21st of April, 1836."<sup>9</sup>

After Lincoln's election to the presidency had been announced, South Carolina promptly seceded from the Union, and the other Southern states were quick to follow her example. A convention met in Texas on the 28th of January, 1861, to debate the question of secession. The ordinance of secession was adopted by the convention by a vote of one hundred sixty-seven to seven, and the question was submitted to the people on February 23, 1861. An overwhelming majority en-

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<sup>7</sup>William W. White, "The Texas Slave Insurrection of 1860," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, op. cit., LII, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup>Ralph W. Steen, "Texas Newspapers and Lincoln," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, op. cit., LI, pp. 199-200.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 200, citing Indianola Courier, November 10, 1860.

dorsed the work of the convention, and Texas went out of the Union on the day of its twenty-fifth anniversary of the declaration of independence from Mexico and on General Sam Houston's sixty-eighth birthday.<sup>10</sup>

After the adoption of the ordinance of secession by the people, the convention passed a decree requiring all of the state officials to subscribe to an oath of support to the constitution of the Confederacy. General Sam Houston, Governor of the state, and E. W. Cave, Secretary of State, refused to take such an oath; consequently, their offices were declared vacant by the convention. The next work of the convention was to appoint a Committee of Public Safety for defense purposes.

With the beginning of actual hostilities in April of 1861, the Committee of Public Safety began to take action to rid the state of Federal troops which were garrisoned at San Antonio, Brownsville, along the Rio Grande River, and the Indian frontier. The Committee ordered twenty companies of Texas soldiers to the coast to take action in preventing the withdrawal of Federal troops. On April 13, 1861, seven companies of Federal troops from the interior arrived at Indianola under the command of Major J. Sibley. These troops camped outside of the town awaiting the arrival of other Federal troops. After several days delay,

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<sup>10</sup>Wharton, op. cit., p. 85.

the troops boarded two small vessels at the Indianola wharf and proceeded to the mouth of the Matagorda Bay where they were to meet the steamer, Star of the West; however, this vessel was not waiting at anchor at the mouth of the bay as had been planned, for unknown to Major Sibley, this steamer, which was to be used to transport retiring Federal troops to the north, had been captured by the Confederates. Thus, the Federal troops under Major Sibley were forced to retire to Indianola where they hoped to secure other transportation. With the arrival of Colonel Van Dorn with his Confederate forces in Matagorda Bay on the steamer Rush, the Federals were compelled to surrender.<sup>11</sup> They were later paroled and allowed to leave the state.<sup>12</sup>

The vulnerability of the Matagorda Bay area to attack by Federal forces was realized by the officials of Calhoun county; therefore, the county commissioners appropriated the amount of fifteen hundred dollars which was to be used for the defense of the county. The funds were to be placed in the hands of a military committee, which had been appointed by the Commissioners' Court, and they were given the authority over materials to be used in the

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<sup>11</sup>War of the Rebellion Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), Series I, Vol. I, pp. 564-565.

<sup>12</sup>John H. Brown, History of Texas from 1635 to 1892 (Saint Louis: Becktold and Company, 1892), p. 405.

defense of the area. Later it was realized that the local effort to provide for the defense was futile; therefore, the commissioners of the county declared the ammunitions, which had been purchased and stored, "useless for county defenses," and they authorized that all of it be sold to the highest bidder. At the same time the court

Ordered that the Clerks of the District and County Courts of this County, be required to move the records in their Offices, to Victoria, for safe-keeping, retaining such books and papers as are in daily use; and that the books and papers retained be kept in a state to be removed immediately on the approach of the enemy.<sup>13</sup>

By 1862 the citizens of Indianola were beginning to feel the privations caused by the war. Common luxuries which the people had enjoyed were no longer available, and even those that had been considered necessities were becoming scarce. According to Mrs. Euroda Moore, author of "Recollection of Indianola," the old adage that "necessity is the mother of invention" was proved many times during the war years. Her parents found many ways to provide the necessities of life for their family:

Father bought a side of tanned leather for our shoe soles; the uppers were made of an old cloak of his. Mother made a pair of pants out of a parlor cover of wool, and dyed it with rind of pomegranates. I made hats for the boys out of shucks or palmetto, and mother made them cloth caps for winter wear.

An iron mortar and pestle was used for pounding various things, such as coarse salt, cloves, mustard, etc.

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<sup>13</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Calhoun County, op. cit., Vol. B, p. 20.

Our bread was usually made of cornmeal, as flour was scarce.... During the war we made tallow candles, as there was no oil for the lamps.<sup>14</sup>

Late in 1861 some Confederate soldiers were sent to Saluria Island, situated at Pass Caballo, for the purpose of building a fort as defense against Federal forces. The fort was built with slave labor and was named Fort Esperanza. The walls of the fort were twenty feet thick, fifteen feet high, and the longest one was two hundred yards in length.<sup>15</sup> In the spring of 1862 a detachment of men was sent to occupy the fort for the purpose of guarding the mouth of Matagorda Bay. A number of the soldiers died when an epidemic of yellow fever broke out during the hot summer months.

In the spring and summer of 1862 a company of Confederate soldiers under the command of Captain George were stationed at Indianola. During this time, the town was overflowing with soldiers. A number of the men boarded with private families; others brought their families with them. Entertainments were given for the soldiers in the court-house. Plays consisting of tableaux and charades were presented, and the proceeds were used for the benefit of sick soldiers.<sup>16</sup>

General Banks, a Union officer, took possession of Brownsville in November of 1863. He then proceeded up the

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<sup>14</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>15</sup>Rupert, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 104.

coast capturing Corpus Christi and Aransas Pass. His next objective was Fort Esperanzo.<sup>17</sup> In the meantime, Captain George's company had received news that the Federal forces were threatening the coast, and he was ordered to Fort Esperanzo. For several days the Federal fleet bombarded the fort. Later they landed a large force of men with orders to surround the fort. With the threat of being cut off from the mainland, Captain S. T. Breckenridge ordered the Confederate forces to evacuate the fort. The orders concerning their retreat contain the following instructions:

In addition to orders issued from this office today you will observe the following instructions: The bridge over Powderhorn Bayou will be entirely demolished, and enjoin all persons owning boats now in the bay to remove them to some safe place at once... You will advise the poor at Indianola and the families of soldiers to help themselves to railroad ties, but they must be cut up as firewood... The wharves must be dismantled so the army cannot use them; the bridges crossing all bayous in the vicinity of Indianola will be destroyed before you retire..<sup>18</sup>

Fort Esperanzo was evacuated the last of November, 1863. The forces immediately fell back to Indianola. It is believed that in their haste to retreat, they were unable to execute all of the detailed instruction of Captain Breckenridge. The troops proceeded to Lavaca from Indianola, where they remained for a short period until they were ordered to Galveston.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Daniell, op. cit., p. 424.

<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Calhoun County, op. cit., Vol. G, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup>Moore, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

Soon after the retreat of the Confederate forces, the Federal gunboats came up Matagorda Bay. Commander Renshaw, one of the officers of the Federal force, conferred with some of the leaders of Indianola and stated that "he might send a few men on shore to buy provisions and if he did, they were not to be interfered with or he might fire on the town."<sup>20</sup> Indianola was, however, turned over to the Federals peaceably by the mayor, Mr. Cleveland. The Federal commissionaire men obtained the supplies that they needed. There were no Federal troops stationed at Indianola at this time. The Federal gunboats proceeded to the District Confederate Headquarters at Lavaca and bombarded the city in order to destroy the arsenal situated near the town. The remaining Confederate forces made a last stand at Morris Bridge but were defeated, and Lavaca fell to the Federalists.<sup>21</sup>

On Christmas Eve of 1863, a detachment of Federal troops was sent to Indianola to occupy the town while awaiting the results of Banks' invasion of Texas. On March 13, 1864, the troops at Indianola received word of the defeat of General Banks, and the divisions were ordered to New Orleans.

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<sup>20</sup>War of the Rebellion Records of the Union and Confederate Navies (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), Series I, Vol. XIX, p. 795.

<sup>21</sup>Rupert, loc. cit.



Col. Oran Perry concerning his stay in Indianola:

The time we spent at Indianola, Texas, passed very pleasantly, a season of perfect rest after a long campaign in other parts. Our object in coming to Indianola was to march across the country to Tyler, Texas, where we were to meet General Banks' army which was to invade Texas via Red River, but Banks was defeated by General Dick Taylor at Mansfield, Louisiana, and our division was recalled from Indianola back to New Orleans. I performed my duty with never a hard feeling for the South and with great sorrow for the loss of life and property of the brave people of the South whom I fought.<sup>22</sup>

Several writers have contended that a battle was fought in the streets of Indianola while the Federal forces were there. Miss Moore tells of an incident that may have given rise to such an error saying; "While the Yankees were at Indianola some youths rode up west of town. A regiment with cannon went out on the prairie to meet them and fired a number of shells, but I don't think anyone was injured... The boys soon took their departure."<sup>23</sup>

On April 23, 1864, the following statement appeared in the minutes of the Commissioners' Court:

At an election begun and held on the 11th day of April, A. D. 1864, in accordance with the order of the Chief Justice of Calhoun County, to fill the vacancies (word missing) by the acts of the following, who took the oath of allegiance to the United States of America during the occupancy of Indianola by the public enemy: James Nolan, Sheriff; George W. Woodman, District Clerk; B. B. Cleveland, County Clerk. The following persons were elected to the offices, attached to their names, and gave bond and took the oath prescribed by law: James H. Duncan, Sheriff; J. K. McCrearey, District Clerk; J. W. Burke,

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<sup>22</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 105, citing letter of Colonel Oran Perry.

<sup>23</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 107.

County Clerk.<sup>24</sup>

This election was held at Lavaca, "no polls having been opened in Precincts Nos. 2, 3 and 4 of said County."<sup>25</sup> From the time of this election until after the war had ended, Lavaca was again the county seat of Calhoun County.<sup>26</sup> In September of 1854 the county seat was removed to Indianola.

Federal troops landed at Indianola several times after Colonel Perry's withdrawal; however, they came only for provisions or to search for a Confederate whom they suspected to be in the area. Mrs. Rupert gives an account of a Federal officer coming to the home where a young lady lay ill. He asked, "Where is the man of the house?" Her quick retort was, "Here he is. He just got in last night." With this she turned back the cover to show her infant son. The officer left, leaving the husband of the young lady safely hidden in the house.<sup>27</sup>

Very shortly after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, a large division of Federal troops were dispatched to the coast of Texas to occupy the towns along the coast. According to Miss Moore, the first Federal troops to occupy Indianola seemed to be angry for having been sent South. Some were

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<sup>24</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Calhoun County, op. cit., Vol. D, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup>Rupert, op. cit., p. 6.

said to be quite reckless in their conduct. A company of Negro soldiers were stationed near the town for some time, causing the citizens much alarm. The white officers kept them from getting completely out of hand.<sup>23</sup>

(The economy of Indianola had been completely shattered by the war. Its wharves, bridges, and other property were in disrepair. The scarcity of money was appalling, and the prices of commodities were out of reason. To make matters worse a disastrous fire broke out in the town in January of 1867. A line was formed by members of the "Bucket Brigade," and buckets of water were passed from one to the other and thrown on the fire. Before the fire was checked, fourteen buildings had been destroyed.<sup>24</sup>

Lawlessness was rampant over the country in the late 1860's. The Taylor-Sutton feud started during this era over an incident of cattle rustling in DeWitt County. It spread from town to town and from county to county throughout West Texas.) Though the neighboring towns were terrorized from time to time by members of the Taylor-Sutton conflicts, Indianola was able to keep her reputation of being a law-abiding town. Mr. Adair spoke of their activity in Indianola as follows:

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<sup>23</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>24</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 35.

But the feudist knew that it would not be good form for them to make Indianola the scene of their conflicts. The citizens had warned them to come to town in peace or not at all. Once the Sutton faction got noisy in one of the saloons. Mayor John Barlow and the four Aldermen, armed with shotguns, invaded the saloon and informed the gang that they were under arrest. The Mayor then marched them to the City Hall and fined them for disturbing the peace and confiscated their guns. After that, the conduct of both factions when they came to Indianola was exemplary.<sup>30</sup>

(The perfect crime record of Indianola was spoiled by the killing of Clinton Sutton, the leader of the Sutton faction. He had come to Indianola to board a steamer, but he was shot as he ascended the gang plank. The death of Clinton Sutton in Indianola was the culmination of the feud.)<sup>31</sup>

The economic recovery of Indianola was accomplished in a relatively short time. The following excerpt from the Indianola Times describes the business recovery of Indianola after the war:

While many of our sister cities are complaining of the dullness of trade, Indianola still continues to show about as much activity as any time since the war... Besides the building within the city limits, quite a number of houses are being erected on the other side of the bayou (Powderhorn)... They will probably form a nucleus for an extension of the city in that direction. We are told that greater commercial facilities will be provided above the mouth of the bayou... We look for our population to be doubled in less than 12 months.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Adair, loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup>A. L. Douglas, Texas Feuds (Dallas, Texas: The Turner Company, 1936), p. 95.

<sup>32</sup>News item in the Indianola Times, April 21, 1866.

(By 1871 Indianola and Lavaca were the principal sea-ports west of Galveston, and the Morgan Line was advertising that "new iron, low pressure steamers, constructed expressly for this trade would leave New Orleans for Indianola three and four times a week in winter, and twice weekly in summer."<sup>33</sup> Daily trains were running to and from interior towns. The census enumeration for the year of 1870 revealed a population of 2,129 for Indianola.<sup>34</sup> Business was booming, and new industries were being established. A turtle canning factory was established by a Mr. Harrison. Large sea turtles weighing as much as three or four hundred pounds were caught in the bay by means of huge nets and brought to the cannery for processing. Also oysters and vegetables were canned in season.) Mr. Francis Stabler operated a meat packing plant. The following notice appeared in the Texas Almanac for the year 1869 concerning this new industry:

The meats put up by Mr. Francis Stabler are gaining a wide notoriety, and must eventually come into general use by the navies and commercial marines of the United States. There is no excuse for vessels taking long voyages not having fresh meat every day for the crews, and thus eliminating the diseases engendered by a constant use of salt provisions. We are informed by Mr. Stabler that they put up the meat with the animal heat in it, being from six to seven hours from the time the animal is alive until it is soldered up in the cans finished, thus enabling him to be independent of the thermometer; and, as an evidence of this, he has been packing here

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<sup>33</sup>The Texas Almanac for 1871, (Galveston, Texas: Galveston, Richardson and Company, 1869), p. 96.

<sup>34</sup>Enumeration of the Census of Indianola for the Year 1870, Original in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

since the 18th of April, and it is his expectation to remain during the summer, packing without regard to the weather. Messrs. Haves, Tunstall and Company are the agents in New Orleans.<sup>35</sup>

(Two harness and saddle factories were located at Indianola after the war. A candy factory known as the Rundel and Nolda Confectionery was operating in Indianola by 1870. Besides candies they manufactured all kinds of soft drinks. James Hatch said that they made the choicest candies ever placed on the Texas market.<sup>36</sup> With the numerous business activities located in Indianola, there was little excuse for unemployment. That Indianola was a prosperous, growing city with a bright future is evidenced by the following statement:

Indianola was once Texas's Dream City. There was a time when it promised fair to become the world's greatest cattle port... Its Main Street and Bay Street were jammed with carts...and horses...rolling, square-rigged merchant brigs, rakish schooners, their sails stretching from stem to stern like the wings of giant birds, and dark pirate-looking sloops made the wharfs. Sometimes a side-wheeler, puffing and panting, tied up to take on a cargo of cattle. Cowboys from along the Colorado, Guadalupe, and Nueces, and the San Antonio brought in their herds and enjoyed the pleasures of a gay city.<sup>37</sup>)

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<sup>35</sup>The Texas Almanac for 1869, op. cit. p. 171, citing Indianola Bulletin.

<sup>36</sup>Hatch, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>37</sup>Ripley, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

## CHAPTER IV

### LIFE IN INDIANOLA

Life in any town has many facets, and no matter how important the economic and political life of a town may be, one can not see the complete picture until he has looked into the religious, social, and cultural activities of the town.

Since religion plays such a vital part in the life of man, it was only natural that the first social institution to have its beginning in Indianola was the church. The first religious service was held at Old Town (Indian Point) in a warehouse belonging to a Mr. Elder. Reverend Ohr, a Baptist minister, and James Howerton, Sr., a Baptist layman, organized the first Sunday School. Mr. Howerton was made superintendent and his daughter-in-law accompanied the singing with a violin. The first church to be built was that belonging to the Baptists.<sup>1</sup> Though the Baptists laid the ground work for religion in Indianola, there seems to be no record of the activities of the Baptist church in the later history of Indianola, other than the fact that the Baptist church remained in Old Town whereas the other churches moved with a majority of their membership to the main part of Indianola.

The Presbyterian church was organized by Reverend Daniel Baker, who came to Indianola (Old Town) from Kentucky

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<sup>1</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 4.

in June of 1847 as a missionary for the Presbyterian church.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Franklin Beaumont in a letter written to her husband in 1848 tells of the beginning of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Old Town (Indian Point):

I went to Indian Point last week to attend a Protracted Meeting and did not get back until Monday evening.... We had a very interesting Meeting. Quite a revival for such a place, indeed it seemed as if there was an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, and his blessing was upon us. There was a great deal of seriousness and solemnity throughout the whole of the Meeting. Some five or six professed conversion and were made to rejoice in the Savior and many were awakened and seeking the way, and some backsliders were striving to return again to the Ark.... The Meeting continued until Monday morning and the people were so loath to break up but Mr. Baker made an engagement to be here (Lavaca) at a Temperance Meeting on Monday night and could not stay with them any longer. The young converts united and had a Prayer Meeting that night and intended to have another in the course of the week. So the good work is still going on. Most of them united with the Presbyterian Church and some with the Methodists. There are members enough in both churches to organize separately, and Mr. Cocks intends going down next Saturday and Sunday to organize a Presbyterian Church, and Mr. Johnson, the Methodist Minister here (Lavaca), intends organizing one there very soon. Mr. Johnson is esteemed very highly here as a good man but not much of a Preacher, but at exhortation and Prayer he is excellent. Reverend Baker established a Sunday School at Indian Point and furnished them with a Library and set them with 44 children's names enrolled on their list.<sup>3</sup>

Reverend Holcinger, a Lutheran minister, came from Lavaca to Indian Point to hold services as early as 1854.

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<sup>2</sup>William S. Red, A History of the Presbyterian Church in Texas (Austin, Texas: The Steck Company, 1936), p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Letter of Mrs. Franklin Beaumont to her husband, July 20, 1848, original copy in possession of Miss Julia Beaumont Hensley, Fort Worth, Texas.



His congregation consisted of German people, most of whom were of the Lutheran faith.<sup>4</sup> There is no record of a Lutheran church in Indianola proper; it is possible that the German people from Indianola proper came to Old Town to worship when Lutheran services were held there.

The Presbyterian and Methodist churches were moved to Indianola proper when the people began to leave Indian Point. According to Mrs. Seeligson, the Presbyterian church was the leading church in Indianola. It had the largest membership and seems to have been the most active of all the churches there.<sup>5</sup> The Episcopal church was organized in Indianola sometime in the 1850's. Later a handsome structure was built. Reverend Jope served as the rector of the Episcopal church in later years. Although the Episcopal congregation was small, many of the prominent citizens of the town were members.<sup>6</sup> A very attractive little Catholic church, called Saint Joseph's Church, was built in Indianola in 1865. Father J. O. Eppinger was its first priest.<sup>7</sup> By 1870 Indianola was an important Catholic community with an imposing church and convent. Reverend Father Ferra, a French priest who came to

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<sup>4</sup>Seeligson, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Mrs. Lelia Seeligson, Memoirs of Indianola (Cuero, Texas, unpublished).

<sup>6</sup>Letter of Thomas M. Colston to Mrs. Lelia Seeligson, March 22, 1932, original in the possession of Mrs. Theora Crosby, Cuero, Texas.

<sup>7</sup>Letter of Mr. C. D. Hogan to Mrs. Lelia Seeligson, April 27, 1932, original in possession of Mrs. Theora Crosby, Cuero, Texas.

Indianola as rector of Saint Joseph's church in 1869, was very popular among the people of Indianola and helped to create a feeling of tolerance between the Catholics and Protestants of Indianola.<sup>8</sup> The Indianola Weekly Bulletin carried the following notices concerning the church services in Indianola in an 1871 issue:

Catholic: Rev. Mr. Glenn, Sunday morning Mass 8:00 and 10:00, Vespers 4:00.

Episcopal: Rev. Robert Jope, Service Sundays forenoon and every Wednesday P. M., Sabbath School every Sabbath forenoon. Exercises in music following Wednesday services.

Presbyterian: Rev. William Hall, Services every Sabbath at 11:00 and 7:30 P.M. Sabbath School at 9 A.M.

Methodist: Rev. H. G. Horton, Service every 2nd and 4th Sabbath in the month at 11:00 and 7:30 P.M. Sabbath School at 9:00.

The churches of Indianola not only fulfilled the religious needs of the people but also provided numerous social activities. For the children, there were Sunday school parties sponsored by the churches. During the Christmas season the children always looked forward eagerly to the community Christmas program held at the Presbyterian church, for following the dramatization of the Christmas story the program was climaxed with a social affair at the Christmas tree. Concerning the Christmas trees, Miss Moore recalled that

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<sup>8</sup>Henry C. French, "Reverend Joseph Ferra," Indianola Scrap Book (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>News item in the Indianola Weekly Bulletin, April 3, 1871.

"often a well-shaped China berry tree answered the purpose for a Christmas tree."<sup>10</sup> The Episcopal church frequently held bazaars and other social affairs for the purpose of raising money for the church. Mrs. Seeligson tells of a concert that the members of the Presbyterian church planned to have presented in their church for the purpose of raising money for church benefit; however, their minister objected to money being raised in this way. Mayor F. S. Stockdale heard about the disappointment of the performers and announced that "I'll see that my church accepts the money." The Presbyterians went on with the show and the next day turned over twenty dollars to the Episcopal church.<sup>11</sup>

There are no records available concerning the beginning of education in Indianola; however, from all indications the little one room school made its appearance about the same time the first church was organized. Before the Civil War a Miss Smith taught school in a little red school near the center of town.<sup>12</sup> There was a German school taught by Mr. August Windberg in the days before the Civil War.<sup>13</sup> During the war years, a Mr. Cleveland taught school in an old warehouse. The usual tuition charged was \$2.50 a month for a single pupil, but if two or more from the same family

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<sup>10</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>11</sup>Seeligson, Memoirs, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Seeligson, Memoirs, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>Loc. cit.

attended, the price was only \$2.00 each. After the Civil War, a Mrs. Willis arrived from New Orleans and began a select school for girls.<sup>14</sup> During the late 1860's a Catholic academy for boys was organized. The school was conducted by a local priest. The nuns conducted school for children of the primary age at the convent.<sup>15</sup>

The Legislature of the state of Texas passed an act to incorporate the Casino Society of Indianola on April 13, 1871. The society was organized "for the promotion of education and science, as well as social intercourse and amusement..."<sup>16</sup> In September following the organization of the Casino Society of Indianola, the Indianola Bulletin carried this article concerning the opening of the new Casino school:

The Casino School will be opened on the 4th of September under the charge of three competent and well educated teachers. Mr. F. Charge will take charge of the German department in the higher classes. Dr. F. Klein, a graduate of the University of Berlin and formerly at a Seminary in Virginia, will teach language and English branches. Mr. L. Pelus has been engaged for the primary departments.

Besides the German and English languages, reading, writing, history, geography, arithmetic, mathematics, natural history, and the natural sciences in their various branches; also singing, drawing, and gymnastics are embodied as objects of education.

Pupils will be received only by the month, but it would be most desirable and profitable for them to remain during the entire school term, as the course of instruction

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<sup>14</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>15</sup>Seeligson, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Laws of Texas, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 1281-1282.

is arranged for that length of time.

Private lessons for adults, as well as children, in Latin, French, and Spanish will be given at the school with extra charges.<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Thomas M. Colston arrived in Indianola in December of 1872 to become a member of the faculty of the Casino school. He had been invited to come by D. C. Proctor, T. J. Pool, and Henry Sheppards, members of the Casino Society, upon the recommendation of Dean Venagle of the University of Virginia. He gave the following statement concerning his teaching experience in Indianola:

As to the school methods and management of those days, I can only answer for my own. They were criminally crude and cruel. I was only twenty-two years old. I was without background of experience and teacher training, and viewed from my present standpoint, I was a driver rather than a leader. Strange to say, those dear, patient people tolerated me until the good Lord relieved them with a cyclone. In those days all Texas schools were supported by private subscriptions. My pupils<sup>18</sup> limited to forty, paid me five dollars each per month.

There were two fraternal orders in Indianola which made their contributions to the social life of the town. The Indianola Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons was organized on May 11, 1850, and was granted a charter in 1852, and a Masonic Hall was built some years after the order was established. The Indianola Lodge worked under dispensation from the Grand Lodge of the State of Texas until the

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<sup>17</sup> News item in the Indianola Weekly Bulletin, September 19, 1871.

<sup>18</sup> Colston, loc. cit.

time that the charter was granted in 1852.<sup>19</sup> The fraternal order of the Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria had been organized by 1855.<sup>20</sup> There is evidence that this society was of great benefit to the community. Annually they sponsored a patriotic celebration on the 4th of July. The following notice appeared in the Indianola Bulletin concerning the 4th of July celebration for the year 1855:

The Lodge of the Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria have resolved to celebrate the coming anniversary of our Independence... They have elected Mr. Henry Fielding Jones as the reader of the Declaration of Independence and the humble individual whose name flies at the masthead of the Bulletin, has been appointed as Orator of the day. (Mr. A. Marschalk, Sr.) The order of the day will be; a procession will be formed at the Hall of the Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria, which will proceed immediately to the church, (Presbyterian) after the ceremonies, the procession will return to the Hall and be dismissed. A<sup>21</sup>ball will be given at the Casimer Hall in the evening.

The Friends of Temperance Society was organized in Indianola in April of 1871. The Reverend J. Younghas gave a series of temperance lectures at the Presbyterian church. According to the Indianola Bulletin, "one hundred ten names were added to the roll of the 'cold water' army; and council 139 of the 'Friends of Temperance', embracing many of our prominent citizens, was organized."<sup>22</sup> Shortly after the or-

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<sup>19</sup>Letter of Leo Hart, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Texas to Thomas Anderson, June 22, 1951.

<sup>20</sup>News item in the Indianola Bulletin, June 22, 1855.

<sup>21</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>News item in the Indianola Bulletin, April 13, 1871.

ganization of the adult temperance society, the Bulletin stated that "The 'Band of Hope' temperance organization was formed among the young people by Mr. Young and 39 names of our little friends were signed to the pledge not to swear, use tobacco, or drink liquor."<sup>23</sup>

The cultural life in Indianola was probably more advanced than any other Texas town of comparable size. There were a number of organizations that contributed to the cultural life of the town. The Indianola City Brass Band was organized December 10, 1865, with the following charter members: C. H. French, Louis Budde, Fred Holzheuser, Louis Busch, John Freund, Louis Bernard, H. Nitsche, S. Evers, A. Mylius, Anton Bauer, and C. Wolk. There were three other members who joined the band after its organization. The band was organized, according to its by-laws, "for the purpose of our own entertainment; for the purpose of contributing our best, through performance, to the social life of our fellow citizens; and for the purpose of doing our best, so far as it is in our power to do through music, in the interest of general culture."<sup>24</sup> The band played for various occasions such as weddings, dances, parades, and other public events. One of the most popular social and cultural organizations was a glee club under the direction of Mrs. Cassie McClannahan. This

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>C. H. French, Indianola Scrap Book (Victoria, Texas: The Victoria Advocate, 1936), p. 57, citing By-Laws of the Indianola Brass Band.

organization was composed of young people who met weekly for practice. The glee club gave public performances from time to time, rendering a program of classical music with a limited number of semi-classical and popular numbers.<sup>25</sup>

There was a very popular gentlemen's quartette composed of William Garlick, Thomas Coston, Louis Peine, and August Wagner with Mrs. McClannahan as accompanist. This organization was also much in demand for public performances.<sup>26</sup>

Social meetings of the members of the Casino Society were held every Wednesday and Saturday evening. The Casino was available for public use when not being used by the society. Musicals and performances were often put on at the Casino by local talent. Mr. Frederick Geopfert, one of the music teachers in Indianola, frequently was in charge of amateur concerts, which were presented to the public at the Casino.<sup>27</sup> Theatrical performances were also given. Several times a year traveling troupes came to Indianola and presented their performances at the Casino. Mr. Colston recalled the troupe of John Templeton coming to Indianola several times.<sup>28</sup> Frequently local talent would present plays, generally to raise money for some organization. The Indian-

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<sup>25</sup>Colston, loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup>Loc. cit.



ola Bulletin gives the following notice of such a performance:

At this place of amusement tonight there will be a musical and dramatic entertainment for the benefit of the fire company and the Casino jointly. The "Toodles" and the laughable farce of "The Two Buzzards," together with musical entertainment make up a bill of unusual attraction which we trust will be sufficient to draw a full house....<sup>29</sup>

The Thespians was a dramatic club which met regularly to rehearse various performances. This group presented plays, both comedies and dramas of a more serious type, several times a year at the Casino.<sup>30</sup>

Lovers of classical music frequently met in various homes where they entertained themselves by each contributing his musical talent. Many of the people of this particular group had received their musical education in Germany or other European countries. This type of entertainment usually consisted of vocal selections given as solos and in groups and instrumental performances featuring musical selections from the piano and the violin. The studio of Mr. Geipfert was a popular meeting place for the musical talent of the town. He frequently entertained his guests by giving performances on the grand piano and harp, which he had brought from Germany.<sup>31</sup>

There were three beer gardens in Indianola owned by

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<sup>29</sup> News item in the Indianola Weekly Bulletin, June 5, 1872.

<sup>30</sup> Colston, loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Loc. cit.

German people. They were replicas of those found in the old country. Tables were located among trees and flowers in a beautiful garden. Here the German people and some Anglo-Americans met for social intercourse. As the Germans are a musical people, they frequently would form impromptu singing groups rendering popular songs in both German and English.<sup>32</sup>

(There was a variety of entertainment for the young people of the town in addition to socials sponsored by the churches and functions of civic organizations. Balls under the guidance of the dancing teacher were held frequently in the court room of the court-house. Miss Moore says: "some fancy dances such as the polka, schottische, mazourka and waltz were engaged in, mostly by the dancing pupils, but nearly everyone could participate in cotillions and reels.")<sup>33</sup>

A number of sailing vessels such as Belle of the Bay, Eddie Huck, and Fraudin, were used to take the young people out on sea excursions. For such an event, the Indianola Brass Band was frequently engaged to provide music for dancing. According to Mrs. Seeligson, these vessels would go far out into the Gulf, and "the young people would dance until the wee hours."<sup>34</sup> Boating and swimming were exceedingly popular amusements

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<sup>32</sup>Statement of Frank E. Bauer to Thomas F. Anderson, July 16, 1951, Port Lavaca, Texas.

<sup>33</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>34</sup>Seeligson, op. cit., p. 9.

for the people of Indianola. Powderhorn Bayou was the favored place for boating, but the beach was the swimming place for the town. Indianola was a very proper place in those mid-Victorian days; hence, Mrs. Seeligson said, "Of course, we went bathing in the salt water often, but always boys and girls went from separate bath houses and in separate places."<sup>35</sup>

(Baseball was a favorite sport in Indianola. The Indianola baseball club would occasionally meet teams from the neighboring towns of Lavaca, Victoria, and Cuero. Large crowds were attracted to the baseball park when the Indianola team played one of the other teams at home.)<sup>36</sup>

Card parties were popular in Indianola. A chess club was formed there in 1871 and the Indianola Bulletin said concerning the game: "It is a very pleasant and captivating game, considered by many as favorable to mental training, and carries with it none of the dissipating vices attending some other amusements."<sup>37</sup>

Yes, Indianola was lively and gay in those years. It was prosperous and happy and friendly. Winnie and Corrie Allen give this vivid description of the little seaport at its height:

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<sup>35</sup>Seeligson, Memoirs, Loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Bauer, Loc. cit.

<sup>37</sup>News item in the Indianola Weekly Bulletin, March 27, 1871.

Indianola was a social center... The town was gay with the many different kinds of people who passed through. Sometimes there were travelers from Mexico, from Germany, from Spain. Dashing U. S. soldiers who were sometimes stationed in town gave it a smart military air. Cowboys who had driven herds of cattle in to be shipped made the streets lively while they were there. The town became a seaside resort, somewhat as Galveston is now, and people from all over the state came there to enjoy the cool sea breeze. Gathering places along the beach were crowded with gay young men and with pretty girls dressed in long, spreading skirts. When a ship in the harbor raised anchor and headed for other ports, the young people of the town would board the vessel, and a string band would be hired. They would dance all night while the ship sailed steadily toward the Gulf of Mexico. In the morning they would go home in small boats, knowing that soon they would be rested and ready for another such bit of fun.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Winnie Allen and Corrie Allen, Pioneering in Texas, (Dallas, Texas: The Southern Publishing Company, 1935), p. 217.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST DAYS OF INDIANOLA

Unfortunately, the future for Indianola was not what the people had anticipated. Hurricane winds and a tidal wave sealed the doom of the little city that was fast becoming the most important port and distribution center on the Texas coast.

In order to foster a better understanding of the calamity, it would be well to discuss the nature of the catastrophe that sealed the fate of Indianola. Mr. I. R. Tannehill of the U. S. Weather Bureau describes a well developed hurricane as being "a vast whirlwind of extraordinary violence."<sup>1</sup> It is technically described as being a cyclonic storm of the tropics.

When a hurricane approaches a given locality, the winds increase gradually. In the extreme outer edges of the hurricane the winds are merely moderate breezes, though characteristically gusty and fitful. The velocity of the winds increases as the hurricane moves in. Records of the Weather Bureau indicate that the strongest winds often reach and for a short period maintain velocities of seventy-five to one hundred miles per hour with gusts of greater velocities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. R. Tannehill, The Hurricane, Miscellaneous Publication of the United States Weather Bureau (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

In the center of the hurricane is an area known as the "eye of the storm" which is characterized by almost a perfect calm. In this central area the sky sometimes clears so that the sun is visible by day and the stars by night. When the calm center of the storm moves past a place, the calm is followed by winds of as violent nature as the preceding winds. This calm center gives rise to the common belief that the "storm came back," whereas it was only the opposite side of the whirl.<sup>3</sup>

One of the first definite signs indicating the approach of a hurricane is the sea swell. Generally it first appears at sea as a long, unbroken wave, with the time limit between crests considerably longer than it is in waves of ordinary occurrence. As the storm approaches the mainland, the seas become heavier and rougher and the tide rises above its normal heights. Another indication is the appearance of high feathery clouds, which often seem to converge on some point on the horizon. At sunset and sunrise the clouds on the outer border of the hurricane are highly colored; hence a brilliant red sky is one of the most apparent indications of an approaching hurricane.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

A number of fatalities in hurricane winds have been caused by flying debris and wrecked buildings, yet more than three fourths of all the loss of human lives has been caused by the storm wave.<sup>5</sup> Usually the rise of the sea is gradual as the center of the storm approaches, but occasionally it comes very rapidly. The condition of water rising swiftly along with a hurricane is commonly referred to as a "tidal wave."

Mr. Tannehill gives the following description concerning the development of the tidal wave:

The true storm wave is not developed unless the slope of the ocean bed and the contour of the coast line are favorable. Like the gravitational tide, it reaches its greatest height in certain situations. If there is a bay to the right of the point where the cyclone center moves inland, the waters are driven into the bay. With a gently sloping bed, the water is piled up by resistance and becomes a great wave or series of waves which move forward and to the left, the principle inundation usually taking place on the left bay shore.<sup>6</sup>

(On Wednesday, the 15th of September 1875, there was much excitement in the city of Indianola. District court was being held for the trial of William Taylor, charged with the killing of Gabriel Slaughter on board a Morgan steamship lying off the dock at Indianola, and Joe Blackburn, charged with stage robbery and first degree murder. Several

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<sup>5</sup>I. R. Tannehill, Hurricanes Their Nature and History (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1938), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

people from out of town had come to Indianola for the court session. The court room was packed with people, for the coming trial of a member of the Taylor faction had created considerable interest in Indianola and the neighboring communities.<sup>7</sup> The people seemed unconcerned over the fact that heavy banks of clouds had been gathering over the horizon for several days with rain falling intermittently. On Wednesday morning it had been noticed by some that the bay was rapidly filling with water, but there was little alarm since this condition was the usual occurrence at this particular period of the autumnal equinox. The wind, blowing in a northeasterly direction, steadily increased during the day until it had reached gale proportions. Late in the evening the brilliant colored sky in the northeast was admired by many of the people, but they noticed with some concern that the water in the bay had increased to a higher point than ever had been known. The wind continued to blow a gale, but it was expected to decrease in violence as the sun went down. The people of the town slept undisturbed with little concern for the ominous sights that had been indicative of what was to come. As the town slumbered the northeasterly wind increased gradually.<sup>①</sup> Daylight Thursday morning revealed the eastern part of the town

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<sup>7</sup>J. W. Hatch, "Destructive Storm at Indianola," Frontier Times, October, 1925.



covered with water, and the water threatening the Main street of the town. The wind was still blowing at gale force.

By Thursday morning the people had become fully aware of the danger that faced them. All morning every available boat was engaged in moving people from the lower part of town, which was already submerged, to the upper part of Main Street.) People were pouring into Indianola from the area across Powderhorn Bayou. Some waited until it was too late and were lost in the attempt to get across the bayou to higher ground. Mrs. Florence Blardone tells of the tragic experience that befell her family while attempting to get across Steven's Bayou:

My parents were living across Steven's Bayou from Indianola. When the storm began blowing up, papa got a skiff to take the family to safety. Mother and father, my two brothers, Aunt Lizzie, and two neighbors started across the bayou in the skiff. The wind increased in strength all of a sudden and the resulting waves caused the boat to capsize. Papa caught the two boys and started swimming to the shore, but he lost both of the boys. The Jordans were swept down the bayou and never seen again. Mother and Aunt Lizzie caught hold to (sic) the oar locks on the boat and were swept down the bayou into Powderhorn Lake. Then the wind changed and they were brought back to the mouth<sup>7</sup> of the bayou where they fell upon the beach exhausted.

(By noon the wind had reached hurricane velocity. The water had increased to several feet in depth and was

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<sup>7</sup>Statement of Mrs. Florence Blardone to Thomas F. Anderson, June 1, 1951.

rushing through the cross streets of the town. The owners of stores and business houses ceased trying to save their goods from water damage and began to engage in rescue work. Ropes were strung along Main Street across the rushing currents of the side streets, and boats loaded with people were drawn up Main Street to the upper part of town where there was less danger from the water. By mid-afternoon the water had risen to a depth of five feet and the highest part of the town was submerged. Many who had moved earlier to escape the high water on the bay front were again in danger, and the buildings that were thought to be the most substantial were sought as a place of refuge. By late afternoon most of the buildings and residences on the bay front had been destroyed.) The large two story residence of Mr. George Seeligson was the first to give way at approximately 2:00 p. m.<sup>8</sup>

(As night came on the hurricane increased in intensity, and the horror of the screaming winds and the sound of the waves dashing against the buildings was magnified by the darkness of night.) Mrs. Augusta Grunder gives a vivid picture of the storm in the following paragraphs:

On September 15 after school was out we went down to the beach to watch the beautiful white capped waves come in, little thinking of the impending danger. On

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<sup>8</sup>News item in the Victoria Advocate, September 24, 1875.

the morning of the 16th the gale was on. The water was coming in from all directions.... Looking out of the house we could see men and women with children in their arms scurrying through the water to find a safe place. (At noon there was no more land to be seen; everything was under water.) By 1:00 p. m. the water was rushing in our house; the wind was getting stronger and stronger; in fact, a terrific hurricane was raging. My father nailed boards across the doors and windows to keep them from being crushed by the mighty like waves which were splashing against them. The water was rising on the first floor, so we went upstairs. There we stayed all afternoon watching the terrible scene.

Then came the darkness; it was not safe to have a lamp burning so my mother lighted a candle. Everything was shaking--tables, beds, pictures on the wall. Midnight came, and still there was no change... About 1:00 a. m. the wind changed from the southwest to the northwest. This sent the raging water back into the sea with a terrific speed. All at once we felt a terrible crash. We all jumped up and screamed as the house rolled to one side. The door frames and windows began to crack.... My father, thinking that the house would fall, opened a front window, and there he saw a big sandhill thrown against my brother's house. He decided to take us there for safety. Though cold and wet, for the first time, we felt more at ease as we grimly waited to see what tragedy daylight would reveal.

(It was during the night that a great portion of the loss of life and destruction of property took place. The raging waters were filled with shattered buildings carried by the great current into Powderhorn Bayou and out on the prairie beyond. Numbers of people, clinging to debris, were swept along with the current into Powderhorn Bayou and out on the prairie beyond.) The Victoria

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<sup>9</sup>Mrs. Augusta Grunder, "Indianola Storm Survivor Recalls Night of Terror," San Antonio Express, May 21, 1933.

Advocate stated that "near the lower part of the reef one building carrying with it thirty-one people, men, women, and children, was swept into and across Powderhorn Lake. Only eleven survived, leaving twenty-one to be added to the list of missing."<sup>10</sup>

(When the center of the storm had passed at approximately 1:00 a. m., the wind changed to the northwest and continued to blow with terrific violence. Thus, already shattered, the town was exposed to a new and more powerful onslaught from the waters. For eighteen hours the water from the bay had been driven by the mighty winds for miles inland. With the change of the wind to the opposite direction, the water first checked and then reversed its course and began to pour back into the bay. This great volume of water was swept back into the bay in one third the time which had been consumed in its passage inland. Buildings that had withstood the force of the water coming in from the bay were now swept out into the bay. Clinging to pieces of wrecked buildings, many people were also carried out into the bay.) The following account is given concerning such an experience:

William Coffin and his wife and two children were carried in the direction of the pass. The two children were lost, the mother died of exhaustion, and Mr. Coffin, after a night of fearful danger, was drifted on the

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<sup>10</sup>The Victoria Advocate, Loc. cit.

beach, where he watched by his dead wife until the storm was over. Of the two children the body of the eldest was found the following Sunday about six miles west of Indianola and buried.<sup>11</sup>

(Dawn of Friday morning, September 17, revealed an almost complete scene of devastation. The doors of the court-house, which had been the place of refuge for scores of people, were thrown open at 8:00, and the people began to pour outside. The survivors immediately began the task of trying to discover those who were missing.) There was no fresh water in the town, for the salt water had ruined the cistern supply. Food provisions were also scarce. Communication with towns in the interior was slow, for the railroad tracks were washed out and the telegraph lines were down; in addition to this, all the boats had been swept away and all of the horses had been drowned. Thus, the people of Indianola waited for relief to come from the outside.

A relief party from the Hatch ranch and other neighboring ranches was the first to reach Indianola. They brought barrels of fresh water and other provisions for the storm survivors. Several of the destitute were evacuated to the Hatch ranch.<sup>12</sup> Early Monday morning a supply of water and food arrived from Victoria and on Tuesday

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<sup>11</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup>James W. Hatch, "Destructive Storm at Indianola," Frontier Times, October, 1925.

relief came from Cuero. A relief committee was organized in Victoria immediately after receiving word of the destruction of Indianola. This group did a fine job of helping the storm sufferers in and around Indianola.<sup>13</sup> The Morgan steamship Harlan arrived at Galveston on September 22, 1975, and the following note was sent to the people of Galveston:

We are destitute; the town is gone. One tenth of the population is gone; dead bodies are strewn for twenty miles along the bay; nine-tenths of the houses are destroyed. Send us help for God's sake. (Signed) W. H. Crain, District Attorney.<sup>14</sup>

When this appeal appeared in various papers, many towns in Texas quickly responded and sent relief supplies to the stricken town of Indianola.

The relief party, which had brought provisions from the Hatch ranch, immediately began the task of searching over the flooded prairie for bodies. Mr. J. W. Hatch, a member of this party, gives this account of the work:

It was early discovered that many dead bodies were under the roofs and other wreckage which had collected against the great live oak trees on La Salle prairie. The work of collecting the dead would constitute the work of months. Each wagon had brought shovels, picks, and spades to assist in the internment of the dead. All who had been exposed to the pitiless wind and waves were in a nude state. Large boats were lying on the prairie, and we decided to make the U. S. Mail Boat Agness our headquarters... Many dead bodies were discovered by buzzards sailing around. We buried the bodies where we found them without coffins. If

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<sup>14</sup>The Texaco Star Reporter, Vol. XI, December, 1924, p. 10.

the body could be identified by anyone in the party, the name was written on the headboard. A fence picket was driven at the head and foot of each grave. Many of these bodies were later disinterred and properly buried in the Indianola cemetery.<sup>15</sup>

《According to a report from the U. S. Weather Bureau, "One hundred and seventy-six lives were lost and three-fourths of the town swept away. The highest wind registered was 88 miles an hour when the anemometer blew away; the highest wind estimated was 100 miles an hour."<sup>16</sup>》

《No accurate estimate of the total property damage was given; however, the loss in property was tremendous. None of the buildings in the town escaped damage, and only four buildings remained on their foundations.》 The buildings which did not collapse from the force of the wind and water were shaken and wrenched to the extent that they required considerable expensive repair.

The Victoria Advocate carried a detailed description of the property loss; a portion of this list is quoted here:

The Bulletin office and building was destroyed; the broken presses being about all that remains of a complete printing office... The court house escaped without serious damage, and the jail lost a portion of its roof. The singular old building, standing near there, and which has long been considered insecure,

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<sup>15</sup>Hatch, Manuscript, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>16</sup>H. J. Dunwoody, Monthly Weather Review (Washington City: Signal Office, 1886), p. 210, citing Monthly Weather Review of September 1875.

is still standing with as few indications of the destructive nature of the storm as any building on the reef. North of the court house fewer buildings were washed away, although most of them floated more or less, and were only saved by cutting holes in the floor and letting the water in. This device appears to have been very successful in all parts of the town, especially where the building was only a single story. Of all the churches, six or seven in number, but one, the Presbyterian, is standing, and it severely shaken and leaning to the south. The Catholic church was crushed together, and totally destroyed.... The Masonic building was washed away, entailing a heavy loss on the fraternity at Indianola. The Casino Concert Hall was wrecked and lies in a mass of ruin. The hospital was swept to the westward several blocks and stands now in the marsh near the lake. Of the custom house, not a vestige remains. Whitteman's jewelry store was washed across the street, where the upper story alone remains. Where stood the Gulf Hotel another building now stands, considerably shattered. H. Runge and Company suffered a loss of about \$75,000. The dry goods store of Mr. D. H. Regan, Main Street, escaped serious damage...<sup>17</sup>

The eastern part of the town was completely destroyed. The force of the water cut a deep ditch across the lower end of town connecting the bay with the lakes in the rear. Smaller ditches were cut where many of the cross streets had been.

Although the destruction of property at Old Town was extensive, there was no loss of life there. This was attributed to the fact that this part of Indianola was located on a slight bluff and the damage from inundation was not as great as in the main part of town. Most of the houses were damaged, and very few remained standing

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<sup>17</sup>The Victoria Advocate, loc. cit.



on their blocks.

For miles the beach and the western shores of Powderhorn Lake were littered with debris of every description. Lumber wrenched from buildings, wooden cisterns, pianos, trunks, boxes, barrels, house furniture, and articles of every type were found in the drifts along with decaying bodies of animals.<sup>18</sup> In fact, it was said that "anything from a collar button to a coffin could be found there."<sup>19</sup> Many things of value were salvaged from the huge drifts of debris; however, scavengers were quicker to commence the work of salvaging than the rightful owners, who immediately after the storm were more concerned about locating their missing friends and loved ones. The looters gathered a rich harvest before a group of men were organized to patrol the area. It was reported that bodies were robbed and that fingers were severed from the hands of some of the corpses to secure the rings; earrings were removed with knives.<sup>20</sup> The looting ceased when organized bands of men began patrolling the beach. Reports of the looting aroused great indignation, but unfortunately none of the guilty ones were ever apprehended.

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<sup>18</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Loc. cit.

The damage to shipping was tremendous. A number of schooners were blown by the mighty winds several miles out on the prairie. The Advocate gave the following list of schooners that suffered damage during the storm: "Schooner Edith Bell Mason Dover, Schooner Cora Bickford, blown 5 miles into the prairie; Schooner Democrat, beached; Schooners Commodore Norbitt, Phoenix, Tidal Wave, Flounder, Agnes Grey, mail boat Emory, Agnes, and Alice wrecked. Sloops--Demore, Royinia, Shell Fish, and Star of the South lost."<sup>21</sup>

(After the storm of 1875 some citizens talked of abandoning the town; on the other hand, many reasoned that perhaps a century would pass before another severe hurricane would visit Indianola.) The Morgan Steamship Company announced that it would rebuild its wharves and buildings; likewise, the railroad soon let it be known that their facilities would be restored to Indianola. When assured that the basis of the town's prosperity would not be removed, many of the businessmen began restoring their buildings and merchandise.

The people benefited from a new provision which had been written into the state constitution. The constitutional convention was in session when the hurricane of September 1875 struck the Texas coast; therefore, it incorporated the following provision in the constitution: "The Legislature

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<sup>21</sup>Loc. cit.

shall have no power to release the inhabitants of, or property in, any county, city or town, from the payment of taxes levied for State or county purposes, unless in case of great public calamity in any such county, city, or town, when such release may be made by vote of two thirds of each house of the Legislature."<sup>22</sup> The Legislature passed an act on August 15, 1876, which provided that "the persons and property of said place (Indianola) shall be exempt from taxation during the year eighteen hundred and seventy-six."<sup>23</sup>

(Feeling that their business investments were not secure there, many of the prominent citizens of Indianola left after the 1875 storm. Mr. Dan Sullivan moved to San Antonio and went into the banking business. The Litzenstein Dry Goods firm went into business in Corpus Christi. H. Runge and Company moved to Cuero and opened their business there. Doctors Hughes and Leake went to Dallas to start a practice in that city.) (Others too numerous to mention left, but many had faith that Indianola would never be subject to another storm like the one of September 1875 during their life time.)

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<sup>22</sup>Constitution of the State of Texas, adopted 1876, as published in H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas (Austin, Texas: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. VII, p. 1011.

<sup>23</sup>Laws of Texas, compiled and arranged by H. P. N. Gammel (Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. VI, p. 1296.

(The population of Indianola in 1880 was approximately half of what it had been ten years earlier. The exact figures, according to the United States Census Report, was eight hundred eighty.<sup>24</sup> In the years that followed, the town made great progress in recovery from the storm. The wharves were rebuilt of stronger lumber and were reinforced with crossbeams to prevent their destruction by the waves, and there continued to be much shipping business from this port. After 1880 the population increased somewhat, and it appeared possible that the town might regain and even surpass its former position.<sup>25</sup>)

Mr. John S. Munn gave the following picture of Indianola in August, 1886:

The finances of Calhoun County were in as prosperous if not the most prosperous condition of any county of the state. The general fund has a surplus of \$2500. Their school fund gave \$12 per capita to the children of the county and all other funds overflowed their treasury. Their courts were not profitable to either lawyers or county officers. Their people were healthy, happy, and prosperous. The new Masonic Lodge in Indianola is a beautiful structure, the furniture of which would compare with any in the state. The three magnificent carriage drives, one of four miles along the beach, one of equal length by the lake and one in the direction of Long Mott, either of which is far superior to the famous beach drive at Galveston and equal perhaps to any in the world. The courthouse has been recently repaired and repainted and is one of the most

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<sup>24</sup>Enumeration of the Census of Indianola for the Year 1880, Original in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

<sup>25</sup>Mrs. Charles Reichardt, "Waves Lap Relics of Texas City that Storm Killed," The Houston Chronicle, January 4, 1931.

conveniently arranged and commodious the writer has ever seen. The jail is one of the most secure in the state, unlike Victoria's pile of trash... Freights from Galveston only cost twenty-five cents per hundred, fourth class, by schooner, the people being free from the extortion of common carrier monopolies. Churches, schools and charitable institutions are liberally supported and everything about the place indicates prosperity.<sup>26</sup>

(During the afternoon of the 19th of August 1886, the weather was threatening in Indianola. Ominous black clouds had shrouded the city during the day, blotting out the sun.) The northwest wind which had been blowing intermittently all day, slackened somewhat at 8:00 p. m. but soon rose again. Captain Reed, who was in charge of the United States Signal Office, reported a wind velocity of thirty-six miles an hour at 9:00 p. m. and then began to hoist the storm signals. At approximately 3:00 a. m. of the 20th of August, Captain Reed left his home for the telegraph office in order to notify the Chief Signal Officer that a storm was approaching Indianola. From the telegraph office he proceeded to the signal office to make observations with his instruments. There he remained with several other men watching the barometer and the anemometer, which indicated that the velocity of the wind was steadily increasing. (At about 3:30 a. m. the circuit between the anemometer and the recording instrument broke;)

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<sup>26</sup>John S. Munn, "Wind, Wave, Fire and Water--The Last Days of Indianola," Indianola Scrap Book, op. cit., p. 141.

the wind at the time registered approximately seventy-two miles per hour. The barometer was falling rapidly and the wind increasing in strength, but Captain Reed and the others remained in the Signal Office until a short time before 5:00 a. m., when they left to take refuge in a safer place. They had scarcely emerged from the building when it collapsed, crushing Captain Reed and Dr. Rozenoranz beneath the timbers. The building immediately took fire from a lamp that had been burning inside. In spite of the high water and the rain which was falling in torrents, the entire building was soon in flames. The fire crossed the street and consumed more than a block of buildings on Main Street.<sup>27</sup>

The terrible night of wind and rain became more frightening by the added danger of fire. The terrific force of the wind wrenched pieces of the burning lumber from the fired buildings, filling the air with flames and embers. (Many people thought that the end of the world had come. Survivors say that scores of persons ceased trying to save themselves and began praying. Old Aunt Mary Webb, a colored servant known to everyone in town could be heard by her employers calling out in a high shrill voice above the roaring wind: "Chilluns, it's

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<sup>27</sup>Letter of T. D. Woodward to Chief of Signal Bureau, Washington, D. C., August 22, 1886, the original in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

de judgment day, pray, pray, pray! De Lawd am acomin.  
It am rainin' fire, pray, pray, pray."<sup>28</sup>)

In the following account, Mr. John Munn tells of the experience that he and the people with whom he was staying had trying to save themselves from the wind, water, and fire:

The wind did not abate and every moment we expected our little retreat to go to pieces. The most dreadful appeared inevitable as a lady said very demurely, "Well, I guess we have our choice, to be drowned or roasted". It was impossible to make the voice audible. The howling blast, the roaring sea, the crash of falling timbers, the explosion of powder in stores, the crackling of flames as they shot up from and lapped over the doomed buildings, which rapidly yielded to the wind, wave and fire, tottered, quivered and fell. In using buckets we were compelled to be leeward of the cottage or the wind would sweep us into the seething foaming waters, while the heat was intolerable, sometimes singeing our hair and exposed flesh. As the fire began to subside, the wind shifted to the southeast and all, if not audibly expressed, felt a renewal of hope. The wind gradually abated and seemed to moan and the waters to sob over their work of death and the ruins they had wrought.<sup>29</sup>

After the Signal Office had fallen, the wind grew still stronger, blowing from the east, and it was between 1:00 a. m. and 5:00 a. m. of the 20 that most of the damage to property was done. About 11:00 a. m. of the 20th, the wind had moderated and by the evening of the same day only a light south breeze was blowing. The water receded

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<sup>28</sup>Paul Franke, "The Isle of Tragedy," The Houston Chronicle Magazine, November 16, 1947.

<sup>29</sup>Munn, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

slowly, however, and it was not until Sunday evening, the 21st of August, that the main streets of the town were free from water.

Twenty lives were lost as a result of the hurricane. This figure seems very small in comparison to the death toll of the previous hurricane; however, this may be attributed to the fact that the population of Indianola was only one-half of what it had been at the time of the storm of 1875 and that the worse of the storm commenced after daylight.<sup>30</sup>

The letter sent to the Chief Signal Officer in Washington, D. C., in reporting the storm which had just visited Indianola, gave (the following report of the stricken town after the storm:)

The appearance of the town since the storm is one of universal wreck. Not a house remains uninjured, and most of those that are left standing are in an unsafe condition. Many were washed away completely and scattered over the plains back of the town; others have been lifted from their foundations and moved bodily over considerable distances... Nearly three miles of the Gulf, Western and Pacific Railroad track was torn up and scattered over the prairie, the rails being bent and twisted like wire. Over all the strips of low ground as far as can be seen are the wrecks of houses, carriages, personal property of all kinds, and a great many dead animals. Very few people were able to save anything whatever, and as the houses which are left are scarcely habitable, (the town is being deserted as fast as possible. I have met but one person who intends to stay here, that is the postmaster, and he will stay to retain his position.) Most of the women and children have already been sent away,

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<sup>30</sup>Letter of E. M. Van Haringen to the Chief Signal Officer, Washington, D. C., August 27, 1888, original in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.



and the few people who remain are so unnerved that the least indication of a storm is enough to frighten them. On Wednesday evening just after dark the weather grew stormy and a strong east wind sprang up, causing a panic among the people left in town, and everybody hurried back to the prairies several miles from the coast...<sup>31</sup>

(After the storm, the railroad announced that there would be no effort made to repair the damage done to the railroad track in the Indianola vicinity and that an effort would be made to have the charter changed and the remaining portion of the road would be removed. The shipping interests were not restored because the shippers would not consider further investments in Indianola. Everyone was convinced that the risks of restoring property at Indianola was too great. In a very short time all of the buildings left standing had been dismantled and moved to Lavaca, Victoria, or Cuero. On November 8, 1886 the citizens of Calhoun County voted to have their county seat moved to Lavaca, the town that had been the keen rival of Indianola. The United States government announced on May 7, 1887 that postal service at Indianola would be discontinued.)

The Victoria Advocate gave the following obituary for Indianola:

Many of our readers will learn with great regret of the recent determination by the government authorities to abandon Indianola as a site for a post office, and that once prosperous little city, at one time filled

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<sup>31</sup>van Waringen, loc. cit.

with a busy populace, with its wharves crowded with shipping and warehouses alive with commerce, seems destined to disappear altogether from the Texas map. Not many years ago, Indianola was the center of a traffic aggregating more than a million dollars annually. It then possessed a class of citizens noted for their clever bonhomie, and a society famous for brilliancy and polish. Both commercially and professionally there were worthy representatives, the mere mention of whose names will recall to our older readers a flood of recollections connected with this period of Indianola's greatest prosperity.<sup>32</sup>

(Descendents of Old Indianola may be found scattered throughout Texas. Many live in Victoria, Goliad, Cuero, and Gonzales as well as in the larger cities of San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas. Old Indianola never lost its hold on the survivors who sought safer locations. They were as proud of their connection with Indianola as Virginians are of their residence in the Old Dominion. On April 19, 1930, in order to perpetuate the memory of proud Indianola, a society of its survivors and their descendents was organized. The Former Citizens of Indianola and their Descendents was the name given this organization, but the society is more commonly called The Indianola Association. Mr. M. M. McFarland of Austin was elected first president and was later succeeded by Mr. S. G. Reed of Houston. This association met annually until World War II interrupted its meetings, and there have been no further meetings since 1940.)

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<sup>32</sup> News item in the Victoria Advocate, May 7, 1887.

The first two meetings of the association were held in Cuero and Victoria respectively and the following meetings on the court-house lawn in Port Lavaca. The meetings were informal affairs with no rigid parliamentary rules to break its informality. The youngest and the oldest descendants were recognized, Indianola history was reviewed, an address was given by a distinguished person, then followed a fish fry on the court-house lawn, climaxed by a pilgrimage to the site of Old Indianola. Here, the descendants reminisced among the relics of the former city. Many writers class Old Indianola as a "ghost city", for all that remains are the crumbling walls of the court-house near the bay, numerous underground cisterns filled with sand and shell, foundations of buildings, and oleanders and twisted cedars where gardens once grew. However, the (members of the Indianola Association are sensitive regarding the terminology "ghost town" since they contend that a ghost town is one which is gone and forgotten. Indianola does not fall in this category, for it is very much alive in the memories of these people. Through their efforts, a statue of La Salle was provided by the Texas Centennial Commission in 1939. Erected near the ruins of the old court-house, it is somewhat ironic, yet appropriate, that it stands gazing over the barren island as desolate and foreboding as it was when first visited by La Salle.)

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## APPENDIX

BUSINESS DIRECTORY OF INDIANOLA IN 1878  
(From Texas Business Directory of That Year)

**Agricultural Implements**

R. C. Warn &amp; Co.

C. W. Short

R. G. Dale

H. Iken

**Auctioneers**

W. P. Kilby

**Confectionery**

A. Largus

J. Morrison

**Bankers**

H. Runge &amp; Co.

**Crockery & Glassware****Billiard Hall**

C. H. French

A. &amp; H. Keller

R. G. Dale

D. Schultz &amp; Co.

W. A. Hogan

J. Cahn

D. Lewis

**Books & Stationery**

D. Lewis

**Dentist****Boots & Shoes**

E. Thurber

J. Cahn

D. H. Regan

**Druggists**

D. Lewis

J. M. Reuss

Dr. H. T. H. Schultz

**Carriage, Buggy and Wagon**

D. Schultz &amp; Co.

**Dry Goods****Cigars & Tobacco**

C. H. French

A. Rahn

J. Cahn

D. H. Regan

**Clothing and Gents' Furnishings**

J. Cahn

D. H. Regan

**Furniture Dealer**

W. P. Milby

**Coffins & Undertakers**

E. L. Miller

**Groceries****Commission Merchants**

H. Paepcke

D. Schultz &amp; Co.

Anton Largus

H. Runge &amp; Co.

H. Mylius

A. &amp; H. Keller

R. G. Dale

D. Lewis

C. Eichlitz

Hardware

R. C. Warn  
D. Lewis

Hats & Caps

D. H. Regan

Hides & Wool

H. Paepcke  
C. W. Short

Hotels

City Hotel, John McDonald  
Indianola Hotel, A. Largus

Insurance Agents

T. D. Woodward

Jewelry and Watches

Louis Peine

Lawyers

W. H. Woodward  
W. A. Hogan  
Stockdale & Proctor  
W. Merriman  
W. H. Crain

Liquor Dealers (Wholesale)

C. Villeneuve

Liquor Dealers (Retail)

C. Villeneuve  
L. Presig

Lumber Dealers

H. J. Huck  
W. Westhoff & Co.

Meat Market

A. Swartz

Paints & Oils

D. Lewis

Restaurant

A. Largus

Ship Chandlery

R. C. Warn

Stoves and Tinware

R. C. Warn

Wagon Maker

Louis Peine

District and County Officers

County Judge, Jas. McCoppin  
County Attorney, W. A. Hogan  
County Clerk, F. J. Deck  
Dist. Clerk, W. H. Seeligson  
County Surveyor, Chas. Goff  
County Treasurer, D. Lewis  
County Assessor, Frank Rohn  
County Sheriff, F. L. Busch

Notary Public

Wm. C. Chickester  
C. W. Short  
J. Cahn  
W. C. Edwards  
John Boemer  
James McCoppin

Railroads

Gulf, Western Texas & Pacific  
Railway; Henry Sheppard,  
president, supt. and chief  
engineer

## AMATEUR CONCERT

---

A concert will be given at the  
Court House in the City of Indianola, on

SATURDAY EVENING, AUGUST 30, 1861, under  
the direction of Prof. F. Goepfert, as-  
sisted by Ladies and Gentlemen of the city  
for the purpose of raising a fund for a  
Brass Band

---

### PROGRAMME

---

#### PART FIRST

- 1.--OVERTURE--"Caliph of Bagdad," Quintette  
arranged by Prof. F. Goepfert . . . . . Boyeldieu
- 2.--CHORUS, from the Opera Jessonda . . . . . Spohr
- 3.--OVERTURE to "Don Juan," on the Piano,  
four hands, by Messrs. Goepfert & Voegel . . . Mozart
- 4.--VARIATIONS FOR THE VIOLIN, performed  
by Mr. Kreutzer . . . . . Beriot
- 5.--SOLO--"Stay with Me," sung by Mr. Meugge . . . . . Abt
- 6.--WALTZ--Quintette, arranged by Prof.  
F. Goepfert . . . . . Labitzky
- 7.--BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA . . . . . Miss E. Rouff
- 8.--BALLAD . . . . . Mrs. S. F. Anderson
- 9.--LUCREZIA BORGIA . . . . . Mr. & Mrs. R. F. Clement
- 10.--MILITARY MARCH, Orchestra . . . . . Goepfert



## PART SECOND

- 1.--SYMPHONY--Quintette . . . composed by Prof. Geopfert
- 2.--CHORUS, "Das Fahnenlied," (Flag Song) . . . Jul. Otto
- 3.--POTPOURRI, Barbier de Seville, on the  
Piano, for four hands, by Miss E.  
Rouff and F. Geopfert . . . . . Rossini
- 4.--IM FLIEDERBUSH, by Messrs. Voegel  
and Geopfert . . . . . C. Evers
- 5.--WALTZ--Quintette, by Prof. Geopfert . . . J. Strauss
- 6.--SOLO--"Ein Schuetz bin ich," Nachtlager  
von Granada, sung by Mr. Thielepape . . . Kreutzer
- 7.--HOME SWEET HOME--Quartette . . . . .
- 8.--IL TROVATORE . . . . . Mr. & Mrs. R. F. Clement
- 9.--SOUTHERN CONSTELLATION, by Eleven young  
Ladies, followed by "Dixie Land" . . . . .
- 10.--INDIANOLA GUARDS' MARCH. . composed by Prof. Geopfert

---

Concert to commence precisely at 8 P. M.

ADMISSION 50 CENTS

Tickets for sale at the store of Messrs.  
Lewis & Hughes, Labe & Rouff, H. Iken,  
and Henry Runge & Co.