



“AN DE PO CULLUD MAN IS IN DE WUSS FIX UV AWL”: BLACK OCCUPATIONAL STATUS IN HOUSTON, TEXAS, 1920-1940

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In June, 1919, The Houston Chamber of Commerce placed a half-page advertisement in the *Houston Informer*, the city's fledgling black weekly newspaper, outlining the many advantages available to Negroes in the Bayou City. In particular, this advertisement emphasized the “unexcelled industrial opportunities” accessible to blacks in “Heavenly Houstōn.”¹ Six years later, in a speech to members of the National Negro Business League, Clifton F. Richardson, the outspoken editor of the *Houston Informer*, corroborated this optimistic appraisal by asserting that Houston was the only city in Texas where blacks could obtain jobs in practically all occupational fields.² While the city's expanding economy certainly opened additional jobs to black workers in the early decades of the twentieth century, the implication of these observations – that the occupational status of Houston Negroes was improving significantly – is misleading.³ Despite absolute gains in the number of jobs held by black workers in the years between the world wars, the vast majority of positions available to them were confined to unskilled and domestic service occupations.

The decennial reports of the United States Census Bureau provide a convenient source of data from which we may determine the occupational status of specifically identified groups of workers. The measure for ascertaining this status is the “occupational index.” By applying this quantitative tool to the census reports for 1920, 1930 and 1940, we can identify the occupational status of

¹ *Houston Informer*, June 14, 1919. (During its half-century of publication, this newspaper was known at various times as the *Houston Informer*, *The Informer*, the *Houston Informer and The Texas Freeman*, and *The Informer and the Texas Freeman*. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to cite this source by the title used throughout most of the period under investigation).

² *Houston Informer*, August 29, 1925.

³ For the best studies of Houston's economic development, see Kenneth W. Wheeler, *To Wear a City's Crown: The Beginnings of Urban Growth in Texas, 1836-1865* (Cambridge, 1968) and David G. McComb, *Houston: The*

black and white workers during these years.⁴ As this essay and its supporting tabulations will demonstrate, black Houstonians suffered from a significantly lower job status than their white counterparts.

From their earliest arrival in Houston, blacks had performed the least desirable tasks in the town.⁵ As slaves in the antebellum period, they served their masters as menial laborers and domestic or personal servants, although some also acquired valuable skills. Following emancipation, this tradition of occupational subordination continued, largely as a result of racial prejudice and discrimination.⁶

Many white employers remained skeptical of the ability of blacks to perform non-agricultural labor, an attitude which served to restrict black workers to traditional "Negro jobs."⁷ In addition, many Negroes did lack skills necessary to

⁴ As the initial step in determining the occupational index, I have assigned each occupational enumerated by the Bureau of the Census in 1920, 1930 and 1940 to a ranked occupational group. The classification system employed in this essay closely follows that suggested in Alba M. Edwards, *An Alphabetical Index of Occupations by Industries and Socio-Economic Groups* (Washington, D.C., 1937), although I generally have adhered to the modifications of Edward's work proposed in Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, 1976), Appendix I. The following categories, from the highest status group to the lowest, were used:

Occupational Classification	Status Rank
Professionals	1
Proprietors, managers and officials	2
Clerical workers	3
Skilled workers	4
Semi-skilled workers	5
Unskilled workers	6
Domestic servants	7

To compute the occupational index, I have determined the percentage of black and white workers in each of the seven occupational categories and multiplied each percentage by its appropriate status rank integer (1 through 7). The index is obtained by adding these seven products, dividing by the sum of the percentages for the seven categories, and multiplying by 100. Or, in mathematical terms,

$$\text{Occupational index} = 100 \times \frac{1a + 2b + 3c + 4d + 5e + 6f + 7g}{a + b + c + d + e + f + g}$$

where 1 through 7 = the status rank

and a = the percentage of professionals

b = the percentage of proprietors, managers and officials

c = the percentage of clerical workers, etc.

Based upon this formula, the resulting index will fall between 100 (where all workers are professionals) and 700 (where all workers are domestic servants).

⁵ The use of slaves as common laborers in early Houston is described in O. F. Allen, *The City of Houston From Wilderness to Wonder* (Temple, Tex., 1936), pp. 1-2. Allen, the nephew of the city's founders, Augustus Chapman and John Kirby Allen, explained that slaves and Mexican laborers cleared the townsite of its "jungle and swampy sweet gum woods" because "no white man could have worked and endured the insect bites and malaria, snake bites, impure water, and other hardships."

⁶ The occupational status of blacks in Houston, both as slaves and freedmen, receives general treatment in Wheeler, *To Wear a City's Crown*, pp. 107, 109; McComb, *Houston: The Bayou City*, pp. 29, 36; Mary Susan Jackson, "The People of Houston in the 1850's" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1974), pp. 101, 117-118; Robert Eli Teel, "Discrimination Against Negro Workers in Texas: Extent and Effects" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1947), pp. 13; and Robert E. Zeigler, "The Workingman in Houston, Texas, 1885-1914" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1972), pp. 25-26, 36-37, 50.

⁷ Racial discrimination in hiring for industrial occupations in the South is discussed in Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944), pp. 279-291; and George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, 1967), pp. 161-162. That not all white employers agreed upon the value of black employees is apparent from the comments of some Houston employers in interviews conducted by an official of the National Urban League in 1928. One employer reported with respect to blacks: "I have found them loyal and anxious to please as a rule." Others, however, expressed disdain for black laborers: "it has been our experience," another white employer remarked, "that it is very hard to arouse enthusiasm or pride of accomplishment in Negro workmen. They will not assume even minor responsibilities, resulting in shiftlessness and lack of thrift." Jesse O. Thomas, *A Study of the Social Welfare Status of the Negroes in Houston, Texas* (Houston, 1929), pp. 13-14.

perform some of the jobs created in the wake of industrial expansion in Houston and local authorities proved reluctant to support a program of vocational and industrial training for the city's black inhabitants.⁸ Even when properly educated, not all blacks could be assured of locating work commensurate with their training and ability. A typical example was one black woman, Earlene Denman, who successfully completed nurse's training, but could find work only as a maid at Jefferson Davis Hospital.⁹ Confronted by these obstacles, black Houstonians nevertheless experienced slight improvements in their occupational status during the 1920s. These gains, however, proved to be transitory. With the onset of the Great Depression, Houston's blacks suffered high rates of unemployment which not only off-set their occupational advances in the 1920s, but plunged them into an even lower occupational status than they had held at the beginning of that decade.

Between 1920 and 1940, Houston's black population increased from 33,960 to 86,302 inhabitants. Despite this substantial increment, their proportion of the total population declined as a result of a more rapid growth rate of the city's white population.¹⁰ Within the labor force, however, blacks represented a larger proportion than their numbers in the entire population warranted because of the high frequency of black female workers. Black males, on the other hand, held jobs in numbers roughly equivalent to their proportion of the total population.¹¹

As the figures in Table 1 indicate, blacks occupied the lowest job status among Houston's male labor force in 1920. More than two-thirds of all black male workers served as unskilled laborers (53.6 percent) or domestic servants (16.6 percent), the two lowest status occupational categories. In contrast, only 10.4 percent of all white male workers served as unskilled laborers, while a mere 3.7 percent performed the duties of domestic servants. At the other end of the spectrum, only 5.4 percent of the city's black male workers managed to attain positions among the white-collar professional, proprietary, and clerical ranks, as

⁸ Complaints concerning the lack of black vocational education classes in Houston appear in Thomas, *A Study of the Social Welfare Status of the Negroes in Houston, Texas*, pp. 18; and *Houston Informer*, November 9, 1935, June 27, 1936.

⁹ Dr. H.E. Lee, interview in Charles S. Johnson, "Source Material for *Patterns of Negro Segregation*: Houston, Texas" (Research memoranda for use in the preparation of Dr. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, New York, 1940), pp. 8.

¹⁰ Houston's black population had experienced a steady decline in relation to whites since the end of Reconstruction. In 1920, blacks comprised 24.6 percent of the total population. This proportion declined to 21.7 percent in 1930, before increasing to 22.4 percent by 1940. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920* (Washington, D.C., 1922), vol. 3, *Population*, pp. 1026; *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930* (Washington, D.C., 1932), vol. 3, *Population*, pp. 1008; *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940* (Washington, D.C., 1943), vol. 2, *Population*, pp. 1044.

¹¹ In 1920, 1930, and 1940, black males in Houston accounted for 25.7, 21.6, and 21.4 percent, respectively, of the male work force in the city. In contrast, black women constituted 45.0, 38.2, and 36.9 percent of all female workers in the same three years. *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Population: Occupations*, pp. 368; *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Population: Occupation*, pp. 1577; *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 3, *The Labor Force*, pp. 463.

compared with 44.6 percent of all white male laborers who enjoyed the status associated with these upper-level occupational groups.¹²

A closer examination of the census data reveals that the few black men who penetrated the more prestigious categories were concentrated heavily in a handful of the many occupations included at these levels.¹³ Of the 261 black professionals, for instance, clergymen accounted for 48.7 percent and teachers supplied a more modest 16.3 percent. On the other hand, physicians and lawyers represented only 9.2 and 1.9 percent respectively. No black males were classified as civil, electrical, or mechanical engineers. Further, retail dealers accounted for two-thirds of the 243 black males in the proprietary class,¹⁴ and of the 171 black male clerical workers, 55.6 percent were classified as "clerks (except clerks in stores)."¹⁵

Comparative data for 1930 reveal a modest improvement in the status of black males in Houston's work force from the previous decade. This progress occurred as the percentage of blacks employed in unskilled and domestic occupations declined by 2.9 and 3.1 percent respectively, and the proportion of those in professional, proprietary, clerical, and semi-skilled jobs rose slightly. Black males remained concentrated in the lowest occupational categories, however, and only 6.9 percent worked in the professional, proprietary, and clerical occupations. The relative proportional differences between black males and their white counterparts in each job category remained virtually unchanged except in the unskilled occupational group (Table 2).¹⁶

As in the 1920s, black males in the higher status occupations continued to be concentrated in a few areas. Preachers accounted for 53.9 percent of all black male professionals, and retail dealers represented 44.7 percent of the black male proprietary class. In addition, over 80 percent of the black male clerical workers were engaged in only three jobs: mail carriers (24.4 percent), salesmen (28.5 percent), and clerks not employed in stores (27.7 percent).¹⁷

The occupational indices for black and white male workers in Houston reflect the difference in job status between the races. While the index for blacks stood at 569 in 1920, their white counterparts enjoyed a favorable index of 369. Ten years later, the index for black and white males had improved to 557 and

¹² In 1920, the Census Bureau provided occupational statistics for three separate groups of white workers: "native whites of native parentage," "native whites of foreign or mixed parentage," and "foreign-born whites." The percentage for white males presented in this paragraph were computed by combining the statistics for all three "white" groups presented in Table 1.

¹³ *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Occupations*, pp. 1114-1115.

¹⁴ Some of the other proprietary occupations enumerated in the census included: farmers; managers, officials and operators in extraction industries; builders and building contractors; manufacturers; bankers; and restaurant and cafe keepers. In none of these occupations did black males hold over twenty-six jobs.

¹⁵ Additional clerical positions listed in the census reports but which black males seldom held included: clerks in stores (9); insurance agents (20); real estate agents (11); salesmen in stores (27); bookkeepers (4); and canvassers and collectors (2).

¹⁶ In 1930, the Census Bureau presented occupational data for only two groups of "white" workers: "native whites" and "foreign-born whites." Unlike a decade earlier, however, Mexican laborers were classified within the category of "Other races," rather than as foreign-born. Apparently, this classification revision accounted for the significant drop between 1920 and 1930 in the numbers of foreign-born whites listed as unskilled workers. This change in classification may explain also the absolute decline in the numbers of foreign-born male domestic or personal servants during the 1920s. For the comparative figures for these categories, see Table 1 and 2.

¹⁷ *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Occupations*, pp. 1593-1595.

553 respectively. Despite gains made by both groups during the 1920s, then, the status of black male workers improved at a slower rate than their white counterparts, resulting in a wider divergence in occupational status than had existed between the two groups of laborers in the previous decade (Table 4).¹⁸

For black women in the Bayou City labor force in 1920, the situation was even more favorable than that of the black males, since three-fourths (75.2 percent) of all black females employed in Houston worked as domestic servants. Only 5.5 percent enjoyed employment within the white-collar occupational groups, as opposed to white women, 68.7 percent of whom worked in these positions. By far the largest relative disparity among female workers occurred in the clerical occupations, where 52.9 percent of all white women workers were employed, compared to a mere 1.0 percent of their black counterparts. On the other hand, larger proportions of black women worked in skilled and unskilled jobs than was the case for white women. Perhaps most significantly, although white women in the labor force outnumbered the black female workers 1.2 to 1, the number of blacks exceeded whites ninefold in the domestic services (Table 1).¹⁹

The fact that black women, like their fellow male workers, held jobs in fewer different occupations compounded the limitations of their low status. Eighty-four percent of all black professional women served as teachers in the city's Jim-Crow schools, and 71.6 percent of the black female proprietors were boardinghouse keepers. Black barbers and hairdressers comprised all of the skilled occupations enumerated for black women in the census reports. Even in the lower-status job categories, black women suffered from unequal occupational distribution. Laundry workers in factories and seamstresses accounted for 42.1 and 33.3 percent respectively of the Negro women employed in semi-skilled occupations. Similarly, laundresses and servants represented 46.6 and 50.9 percent respectively of the black women holding jobs in this occupational group.²⁰

The years between 1920 and 1930 produced no significant changes in the occupational status of black female workers in Houston. In general, an increase in the proportion of black domestics offset slight gains by black women in the professional, proprietary, and skilled occupations (Table 2). Nor did black women in the 1920s become more evenly distributed within the various job categories. By 1930, black teachers comprised more than three-fourths of all black female professionals, and boardinghouse keepers constituted more than one-half of the black women within the proprietary class. Of the black women engaged in semi-skilled occupations, 28.4 and 46.4 percent were dressmakers and laundry operatives. It is no surprise that 71.0 percent of the black women in domestic jobs were engaged as house servants.²¹

¹⁸ The occupational index as computed in this study measures *group* rather than *individual* mobility. As Table 4 indicates, the occupational status of black male workers was clearly subordinate to that of any group of white workers for which occupational data was available. Interestingly, however, according to these statistics, foreign-born whites enjoyed a higher job status than native whites following a significant upward mobility during the 1920s. Most likely, this dramatic improvement was partially the result of the decision to classify Mexican workers in the category of "Other races" rather than as foreign-born whites.

¹⁹ In 1920, the only skilled occupations enumerated for Houston women were "barbers, hairdressers, and manicurists." The larger proportion of blacks in this occupational category, then, reflected the large numbers of female beauticians in the city, rather than the fact that black women had acquired a wide range of skills.

²⁰ *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Occupations*, pp. 1116.

²¹ *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 4, *Occupations*, pp. 1595-1596.

The overall result of the proportional shifts within black job categories was an almost negligible improvement in the occupational status of black women. As Table 4 demonstrates, the occupational index for Houston's black female work force between 1920 and 1930 improved slightly from 639 to 636. In contrast, however, the status of white women laborers deteriorated from an index of 336 to 341.²² Even this reversal and the meager upward mobility experienced by black women still did not alter appreciably the distance between black and white women workers in Houston in terms of occupational status. Negro women clearly maintained their unsatisfactory position as the least favored workers in the city.

Unfortunately, the economic crisis of the 1930s dissipated the meager occupational advances enjoyed by Houston's Negro workers in the 1920s. Black Houstonians traditionally had suffered job losses during periods of economic dislocation — they were typically the "first fired and the last hired" — and the depression era continued this tradition.²³ The *Houston Informer* condemned the practice of replacing black workers with whites and warned that such actions might "disrupt the amicable relations existing here between the colored and white races."²⁴ Perhaps the most accurate description of the impact of the Great Depression upon black workers in Houston came from the pen of Simeon B. Williams, a black educator who wrote a column for the *Houston Informer* entitled "Cimbee's Ramblings." Each week, through the character of "Cimbee," a semi-literate raconteur and man-about-town, Williams commented upon the individuals and events affecting Houston's black community. Early in 1931, responding to the Depression, "Cimbee" complained

An de po cullud man is in de wuss fix uv awl. He lef de kuntry cause he dident hav er chance ter maik er krop an gether it in peace. He coodent git long ernuff skool turms ter ha'f ejjicate his chillen. He wuzent safe frum de mobs ner his boss. An now he is in town wid nuthin ter do. Skeered ter go back ter de farm, an nuthin ter liv on in town. Its er mell uv er hess he fines hisse'f in²⁵

²² As suggested in footnote 18, the large positive change in the occupational index of foreign-born whites between 1920 and 1930 probably reflects the removal of Mexican workers from the ethnic category.

²³ Broadus Mitchell, *Depression Decade: From New Era through New Deal, 1929-1941* (New York, 1947), pp. 373, and Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, pp. 197, 206, 285-286, assert that the policy of displacing black workers with whites spread throughout the urban South during the early years of the Depression. For evidence of this practice in Houston, see *Houston Informer*, February 15, 27, 1930.

According to one student, signs of economic recession in the mid-1920s led to black unemployment in Texas cities. Neil Gary Sapper, "A Survey of the History of the Black People of Texas, 1930-1954" (Ph.D. diss. Texas Tech University, 1972), pp. 173. For evidence of black displacement by white and Mexican labor in Houston in the late 1920s, see *Houston Informer*, March 24, 31, 1928, February 16, March 30, 1929; and Thomas, *A Study of the Social Welfare Status of Negroes in Houston*, pp. 18.

²⁴ *Houston Informer*, March 8, 1930.

²⁵ *Houston Informer*, January 24, 1931.

An analysis of the black occupational structure in 1940 provides statistical support for "Cimbee's" conclusion and raises doubt concerning the accuracy of the belief prevalent in the 1930s that Houston was "the town the Depression forgot."²⁶

As the statistics in Table 3 indicate, by 1940 Houston's black male work force remained heavily concentrated in the unskilled and domestic occupational categories. Although the percentage of black men in unskilled jobs declined during the 1930s, this decrease was offset by an influx of black workers into domestic service positions. Apparently black Houstonians, faced with losses of jobs in the unskilled occupations they had held previously, were forced by the Depression to seek employment in even lower status positions. Not only were there few black males in higher prestige jobs in the professional, proprietary and clerical occupational categories, but, in fact, the absolute numbers of black male professionals declined between 1930 and 1940.

An examination of the occupational indices for black males in Houston reveals an abrupt halt to the upward occupational mobility experienced by this group of workers during the Depression decade, and also discloses the disastrous impact of the economic crisis upon black job status. By 1940, the occupational index for black male Houstonians stood at 579, a twenty-two point decline from a decade earlier and this index represented a lower occupational status than this group of workers had held twenty years earlier. The occupational index for white males remained unchanged, indicating that while the Great Depression may have struck only a glancing blow at the job status of white males in Houston, it produced serious job dislocation among blacks.²⁷

Black women in the Bayou City also suffered setbacks in their occupational status during the 1930s. Despite the absolute gains in the number of black women engaged in each occupational category between 1930 and 1940, their proportion within the professional, proprietary, skilled and semi-skilled categories declined. The largest gains, consequently, occurred within the domestic positions (Table 3). The proportional shifts resulted in a net decline in the job status of black women in the city. In addition, the occupational index of 645 for black women in 1940 constituted a lower status for this group than they had in 1920, although the decline was not as large as that experienced by black males (Table 4). Black women appear to have been affected less drastically than white females whose status continued a downward spiral begun in the 1920s.²⁸ Despite

²⁶ For discussion of Houston during the Depression, see William Edward Montgomery, "The Depression in Houston During the Hoover Era, 1929-1932" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1966); Marsha Gaunt Berryman, "Houston and the Early Depression, 1929-1932" (M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 1965); and E. Thomas Lovell, "Houston's Reaction to the New Deal, 1932-1936" (M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 1964).

²⁷ Occupational data for 1940 were reported for "Whites," "Negroes," and "Other Races." The failure of the Census Bureau to break down white workers into native and foreign born prevents a more detailed analysis. In addition, the situation is complicated by the fact that Mexican laborers again were classified within the white category.

²⁸ Presumably, Mexican women classified as "Whites" accounted for some of the occupational losses incurred by white female Houstonians in the labor force.

this relatively more rapid rate of declining status among white women, however, black females clearly remained subordinate in terms of job status compared not only with all white workers, but also with black males in Houston.²⁹

The comparative data presented in this essay supports the notion that in Houston's occupational structure blacks occupied a subordinate status during the first half of the twentieth century which coincided with their inferior political and social position in this growing city of the "New South." Despite the obvious economic expansion of "Heavenly Houston" since the early 1900s, the jobs available to Negroes remained restricted largely to unskilled and domestic service positions. Black Houstonians of both sexes were concentrated in a handful of jobs within each occupational category, thus substantiating a charge made by the Urban League of 1945 that "occupationally the Negro was not in the mainstream of jobs held by the general population" in the Bayou City.³⁰ In terms of occupational mobility, black males and females experienced a slight upward turn in their status during the 1920s only to witness a reversal of fortunes in the Depression era which plunged their occupational status below the 1920 levels. By 1940, as the tide of economic crisis receded, Richard R. Grovey, one of the more vocal leaders within the city's black community, alleged that economic status (which certainly included occupational status) remained the most serious problem faced by Houston's blacks. Despite the booster rhetoric in the early post-World War I years by the Chamber of Commerce and black business leaders glorifying the city's economic opportunities, statistically evidence clearly suggests that between 1920 and 1940 the occupational status of black Houstonians was a good deal less than "heavenly."

²⁹ Black women in the female work force continued to be concentrated in only a few occupations within each category. School teachers accounted for 76.6 percent of all black women in the professions, while boardinghouse keepers comprised 51.8 percent of the black proprietary class. Among the lower-status occupations, black laundry operatives represented 47.9 percent of all black semi-skilled workers in the city. *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 3, *The Labor Force*, pp. 510-511.

³⁰ National Urban League, *A Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems of Houston, Texas As They Relate to Conditions in the Negro Population* (n.p., 1945), pp.35.

³¹ *Houston Informer*, April 6, 1940.

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TABLE 1. Occupational structure of Houston, by racial and ethnic group, 1920

	Occupational Category													
	Professional		Proprietary		Clerical		Skilled		Semiskilled		Unskilled		Domestic	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Males														
Blacks	261	2.1	243	1.9	171	1.4	1,039	8.3	722	5.8	6,723	53.6	2,085	16.6
Native whites of native parentage	1,150	4.8	3,032	12.6	7,182	29.9	5,773	24.1	1,822	7.6	1,724	7.2	822	3.4
Native whites of foreign or mixed parentage	179	2.8	942	14.8	1,748	27.5	1,641	25.8	525	8.3	472	7.4	211	3.3
Foreign-born whites	136	2.3	1,166	20.0	608	10.4	1,272	21.8	321	5.5	1,554	26.6	313	5.4
All workers	1,726	3.5	5,387	11.1	9,710	19.9	9,725	19.9	3,390	7.0	10,473	21.5	3,448	7.1
Females														
Blacks	237	3.1	109	1.4	74	1.0	133	1.7	783	10.1	349	4.5	5,822	75.2
Native whites of native parentage	796	11.4	284	4.0	3,919	55.9	30	0.4	931	13.3	75	1.1	408	5.8
Native whites of foreign or mixed parentage	156	9.3	91	5.4	896	53.5	3	0.2	226	13.5	12	0.7	128	7.6
Foreign-born whites	85	11.3	93	12.4	176	23.5	2	0.3	132	17.6	63	8.4	114	15.2
All workers	1,274	7.4	577	3.4	5,066	29.5	168	1.0	2,073	12.1	499	2.9	6,475	37.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, vol. 4, *Population: Occupations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), pp. 1114-1116.

NOTE: Totals include the category "Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and all others." In 1920, 10.0 per cent of the male occupations and 6.1 per cent of the female occupations were unspecified by the Census Bureau or unclassifiable as a result of inadequate definition of the occupation.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*, vol. 3, *The Labor Force* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943, pp. 505-905.

NOTE: The above totals in each category represent all Houstonians age 14 and over who were employed (except on public emergency work) or who were experienced and seeking work. Totals for "All workers" include the category "Other races." In 1940, 15.3 percent of the male occupations and 0.02 percent of the female occupations were unspecified by the Census Bureau or unclassifiable as a result of inadequate definition of the occupation.

Occupational Category	1930		1940		1940		1940		1940		1940			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Domestic	804	085.12	8.0	104	7.01	899.5	1.3	659.1	7.82	012.51	6.4	695.2	8.8	389.4
Unskilled	991	855.5	9.0	912	7.21	842.4	6.3	162.1	6.44	986.41	7.9	922.2	12.1	930.4
Semiskilled	22.0	610.91	6.0	581	3.7	614.1	6.1	893	1.1	222	7.1	043	3.3	949
Clerical	7.8	989.01	6.21	426.51	5.01	816.21	5.81	218.22	9.61	432.42	2.31	033.91	8.5	011.7
Proprietary	5.3	163.3	5.9	362.9	2.11	006.01	7.12	620.12	4.42	659.32	2.91	869.51	6.9	159.9
Unskilled	4.72	242.7	5.93	339.6	9.7	966.1	7.9	187.1	1.2	095	3.2	965	7.1	454

TABLE 2. Occupational structure of Houston, by racial and ethnic group, 1930

	Professional		Proprietary		Clerical		Skilled		Semiskilled		Unskilled		Domestic	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males														
Blacks	484	2.2	521	2.4	488	2.3	1,755	8.1	1,461	6.8	10,913	50.7	2,900	
Native whites	3,720	5.5	8,877	13.0	18,023	26.5	17,455	25.6	5,693	8.4	4,802	7.1	1,331	
Foreign-born whites	258	4.7	1,549	28.2	792	14.4	1,481	27.0	343	6.2	322	5.9	267	
All workers	4,503	4.5	11,134	11.2	19,440	19.5	21,320	21.4	7,763	7.8	18,630	18.7	4,942	
Females														
Blacks	527	3.7	278	1.9	138	1.0	359	2.5	1,366	9.5	161	0.1	11,348	
Native whites	2,911	13.5	1,121	5.2	10,875	50.6	350	1.6	2,733	12.7	72	0.3	2,338	
Foreign-born whites	254	24.4	106	10.2	315	30.3	8	0.8	123	11.8	1	0.1	160	
All workers	3,702	9.8	1,589	4.2	11,406	30.3	720	1.9	4,526	12.0	275	0.7	14,049	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, vol. 4, *Population: Occupations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), pp. 1593-1596.

NOTE: Totals include the category "Other races." In 1930, 12.3 percent of the male occupations and 3.6 percent of the female occupations were unspecified by the Census Bureau or unclassifiable as a result of inadequate definition of the occupation.

TABLE 4. Occupational indexes, Houston, 1920-1940

	1920	1930	1940	Change 1920 - 1930	Change 1930 - 1940	Change 1920 - 1940
Males						
Blacks	569	557	579	+12	-22	-10
All whites	369	353	353	+16	NC	+16
All native whites	359	354	NA	+ 5	NA	NA
Native whites of native parentage	358	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Native whites of foreign or mixed parentage	364	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foreign-born whites	419	344	NA	+75	NA	NA
All workers	421	405	399	+16	+ 6	+22
Females						
Blacks	639	636	645	+ 3	- 9	- 6
All whites	336	341	368	- 5	-27	-32
All native whites	331	341	NA	-10	NA	NA
Native whites of native parentage	329	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Native whites of foreign or mixed parentage	340	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foreign-born whites	398	329	NA	+69	NA	NA
All workers	477	459	471	+18	-12	+ 6

SOURCE: Tables 1, 2, and 3.

NOTE: Since the occupational categories upon which the occupational index is based are ranked from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest), a change in the index from a higher to a lower number indicates an improvement in a given group's occupational status. This change is denoted with a plus (+) sign, while the deterioration of a group's status is denoted with a minus (-) sign. NC indicates no change. NA indicates data not available.

THE WAY WE WERE: HOUSTON'S CULTURE IN THE 1940's

BY MARTIN DREYER

The big bang we hear throughout Houston is what is popularly known as a cultural explosion. It gets noisier with the years and with the growing prosperity of the city. Art, theater, symphony, opera, ballet, literature are mushrooming on all sides. A recent weekend preview in a local newspaper listed, among other cultural showcases, sixty-three art galleries, thirteen museums and twenty-five theaters. Not all Houstonians are excited by the city's stepping into the Golden Age. Many prefer the boots-and-spur image. And it is a tired fact of life that much of the local arts is supported by the status-seeking rich. However, the explosion is there, sounding right through the smog of progress. And who helped light the fuse? Many of us— in the "Good Ol' Days."

Circa 1940. There I was, fresh from Chicago, checking out this purer, less complicated Houston, No cowboys or hosses. But not much culture either. I found an art museum, a few galleries, a Little Theater, a symphony orchestra. A handful of other groups trying to score on the cultural front. I rented a room in the basement studio complex in the Beaconsfield Apartments on Main Street. It was Nydia Dallas' studio and was said to be a cultural hangout. Nydia, statuesque and modish, taught voice, drama and charm, when she wasn't munching on raw carrots or other health food. My room featured a cot and battered Underwood typewriter. I was in business.

I taught creative writing— classes and private instruction. My qualifications? Well, fiction in *Esquire* and the Little Magazines and stories cited in Best Short Stories collections. That qualified me in those more naive days. I conned some people to sit in on my first class and there I stood, in tie and jacket and with ears showing, tossing out nuggets about narrative hooks, story plants and character development. Things really looked up when Ellen Garwood, daughter of the Will Claytons, and Annie Laurie Trousdale, wife of a rice rancher, joined the class. They were paying customers.

It was interesting, even the periods of starvation. There was the time when I was awakened by a rhythmic clapping outside my door. I staggered up and peered through the glass partition into the main studio. I blinked hard and stared