

“MIGHT AS WELL TRY TO DIRECT THE WIND”:
A STUDY OF WOMEN, LABOR, AND
THE MILLINERY INDUSTRY
IN DALLAS, 1900-1940

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Description |
|---------------------|---|
| AFL | American Federation of Labor |
| CIO | Committee on Industrial Organization |
| CIO | Congress of Industrial Organizations |
| DOSA | Dallas Open Shop Association |
| ILGWU | International Ladies Garment Workers' Union |
| IWW | Industrial Workers of the World |
| KKK | Klu Klux Klan |
| NCL | National Consumers' League |
| NIRA | National Industrial Recovery Act |
| NLRA | National Labor Relations Act |
| NLRB | National Labor Relations Board |
| NYWTUL | New York Women's Trade Union League |
| NRA | National Recovery Administration |
| URW | Union of Russian Workers |

I. INTRODUCTION

On September 24, 1937, diligent readers of the *Dallas Morning News* noticed a one-sentence line that read, “Are we to understand that a striking milliner is a mad hatter?”¹ Most readers probably didn’t even notice it, buried as it was at the bottom of page six, without an accompanying article. The paper’s attempts at humor and wordplay concealed an underlying disdain for the striking milliners, almost all of whom were female. The phrase “mad hatter” often referred to the erratic behavior of hatters and haberdashers as a result of their constant exposure to mercury in the hat-making process. In this instance, the reference to striking millinery workers as “mad hatters” had little to do with chemical exposure and everything to do with the female strikers’ disposition, thus equating “mad” with male perceptions of female hysteria and anger.

The newspaper did not contextualize the line or link it to an accompanying article. The lack of additional context implies that the *Dallas Morning News* either did not know why the milliners were striking, or, more likely considering the newspaper’s pro-business bias, considered the workers’ reasons for striking as trivial and unworthy of further investigation. Regardless of the reason, the newspaper’s failure to contextualize the strike reveals the disconnect between Dallas business leaders, the *Dallas Morning News*, and the city’s female working class.

Women’s roles in manufacturing garments and accessories have long been a subject of interest for women’s and labor historians. While there have been numerous publications on the role of women wage-earners at the turn of the twentieth century, few have studied women in the millinery industry in any great depth.

¹ Untitled, *Dallas Morning News*, September 24, 1937.

The millinery industry presents a unique opportunity for study because societal norms dictated that hats were essential to a woman's wardrobe until the 1930s. It would have been viewed as highly unusual or inappropriate for a woman to leave the house without a hat. Many women continued to wear them with regularity through World War II. While numerous studies have addressed various aspects of the industry, most limited their focus to cities on the Eastern seaboard or the Midwest.² However, by the early twentieth century, millinery shops existed in every state. Despite vast demographic and geographic differences across the country, studies of the millinery industry during the first decades of the twentieth century reveal several vital themes present across the United States. The challenges associated with the gendered nature of the industry, the presence of distinct seasons, and the struggle for workers to organize characterized the industry across all regions.

However, one would be remiss to think the presence of these themes indicates homogeneity within the millinery industry. The consistency of these themes often overshadows significant regional and cultural differences found within the industry. Further analysis of regional and cultural distinctions is necessary to understand the nuanced nature of the millinery industry across the United States. The millinery industry in areas away from the Eastern seaboard grappled with the same challenges as their East Coast competitors. Still, how they addressed those challenges indicates the presence of

² See: Mary Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry: A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917); Mary Van Kleeck, *Wages in the Millinery Trade* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1914); The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, "Report on the Wages of Women in the Millinery Industry in Massachusetts," (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1919); Lorinda Perry, "Millinery as a Trade for Women," (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916); Lorinda Perry, "The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia," (Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Co., 1916); Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, "Women and the Trades: Pittsburgh, 1907-1908," (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1909); and Edna Bryner, "Dressmaking and Millinery," (Cleveland: Cleveland Foundation, 1916).

regional variations within the industry. By examining how the millinery industry in Dallas addressed seasonality, worker demographics, and worker organization, we gain a better understanding of the complex nature of millinery work more broadly.

As Dallas grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, due in no small part to the expansion of the railroad, a thriving millinery industry developed in the city. Dallas milliners experienced the effects of seasonality and grappled with changes in worker demographics brought about by changes in modes of hat production. These experiences presented themselves, to varying degrees, in the millinery industry across the United States. However, the Dallas millinery industry's experiences with and handling of attempts by workers to organize are unique.

During the 1910s and 1920s, Dallas developed a reputation as a place unwilling to tolerate the presence of unions. The city formed an Open Shop Association deliberately to thwart the growing power of unions. At the same time, the re-emergence of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) blanketed the city with the fear of anything "radical." To the KKK, unions were radical organizations because the principal organizers were often characterized as foreigners with "unamerican" ideas about labor. As the years progressed, the perception of Dallas as vehemently anti-union continued to grow.

However, the Great Depression upended the labor status quo. Government intervention, in the form of New Deal legislation, sought to prop up failing industries, like millinery. The passing of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) allowed the federal government to set minimum wage scales for numerous industrial trades, including millinery. Such government interference upset Dallas' pro-business elites, who lined their own pockets by keeping wages low in the city's factories. A few years later, when the

Supreme Court declared the National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional, millinery manufacturers in Dallas rolled back workers' wages to pre-New Deal levels. Dallas doubled down on its strong pro-business stance and challenged the power of unions seeking to improve working conditions.

The struggle between unions and Dallas business elites resulted in sometimes violent confrontations. In 1935, Dallas dressmakers went on strike, clashing with police and strikebreakers. By 1937, the Dallas plant of the Ford Motor Company authorized a team of thugs to intimidate and threaten anyone in the city affiliated with unions. Millinery workers were dismissed from their position because they joined the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union. Some workers who ran afoul of the Dallas Millinery Council were blacklisted from the industry and forced to find positions elsewhere.

Despite Dallas' notorious anti-labor mentality in 1937, the city's millinery workers decided to strike. The strike and subsequent National Labor Relations Board hearings proved unable to secure lasting, positive changes for workers in the Dallas millinery industry because businesses and civic organizations held too much power. Dallas was too entrenched in anti-union rhetoric for the strikers to achieve their aims. However, the 1937 Dallas millinery strike is a significant event in Dallas labor history. It represented an attempt by workers to confront much larger and more powerful entities, despite unfavorable odds, in the hopes of challenging the status quo and agitating for change.

This thesis argues that Dallas milliners felt compelled to strike in 1937 as a result of unfavorable wages and working conditions. However, millinery's seasonal nature,

combined with the existing anti-labor atmosphere in Dallas ultimately prevented the strikers from achieving their aims. Because the millinery industry operated on a two-season schedule and catered to the whims of fashion, workers in the industry often faced economic uncertainty. Its seasonal nature and the overwhelming pro-business stance of Dallas elites allowed the city's millinery manufacturers to keep wages low and working conditions less than ideal. With New Deal legislation, such as NIRA, Dallas milliners experienced improved economic security during the Great Depression, a time of economic, political, and social uncertainty for many Americans. However, after the dissolution of the NIRA, Dallas manufacturers attempted to reclaim power and authority over their workforce by returning wages to pre-New Deal levels. Such actions angered the city's millinery workforce, who, in the fall of 1937, began striking in the hopes of finally achieving the economic promises of the New Deal.

Historiography:

Labor history has long neglected the contributions of women workers and labor organizers. Instead, scholarship overwhelmingly focused on male-dominated trade unions, such as the AFL. With the rise of feminism, scholarship addressing women's contributions to the labor movement began to increase. When considering women's labor history, one looks to Alice Kessler-Harris and her monograph, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, or Annelise Orleck's *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*. Kessler-Harris' study of women's productive labor spans from the American Revolution to the women's movement of the 1970s, while Orleck explores the lives of immigrant women

working in garment factories on New York's Lower East Side.³ Although neither Kessler-Harris nor Orleck discuss millinery specifically in their monographs, their exploration of the many challenges faced by workers, such as the struggle for women to successfully organize or the seasonal nature of the garment industry, are commonalities shared with the millinery industry. These works are regionally specific, focusing primarily on women's labor in the northern and eastern states. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall points to the lack of scholarship addressing women's labor in the American South as evidence that Southern women's labor history has been doubly ignored by both labor historians and women's historians.⁴

Further research of women's labor history reveals the presence of two distinct groups of scholarship. The first focuses on how women's organizations and women employed in government agencies championed women- and child-centric reform efforts. Historian Robyn Muncy terms the various networks of female reformers within women's organizations and government as the "female dominion."⁵ Orleck's *Common Sense and a Little Fire* and Landon Storrs' *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers' League, Women's Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal Era* fall into this first category.⁶ Orleck's work looks at the organizing efforts of women involved in the New York Women's Trade Union League (NYWTUL). During the New Deal, some of these

³ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

⁴ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (September 1986): 355.

⁵ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991): xii.

⁶ Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire*; Landon Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers' League, Women's Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

women transitioned into government careers with the Department of Labor, headed by Francis Perkins, because they were tired of the slow advances made by unions. Storrs' analysis of the National Consumers' League (NCL) during the New Deal comes to the same conclusion. While members of the NCL felt labor standards would improve through worker organization, the process simply took too long.⁷ Using their clout as a national organization and working through established government channels, the NCL hoped to bring about reform faster than could be achieved through traditional methods of worker organization. Because the focus is on women's organizations and government agencies addressing women's issues, the voices of workers themselves do not often appear in this type of women's labor history.

For their voices, we must turn to the second type of scholarship, that of grassroots organization, such as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South." Hall argues that historians must consider the influence of external factors, such as workers' culture and community, to gain a multi-dimensional understanding of the labor conflicts in question. Her study of a 1929 strike of female rayon mill workers in Elizabethton, Tennessee, serves as an example of how important it is to incorporate workers' culture and community into the analysis of labor conflicts.⁸

Regarding Texas labor history specifically, there exists among some labor historians the sense that scholarship on Texas labor history is nonexistent. While historians James Maroney and Bruce Glasrud agree that more work is needed in the field, they assert that plenty of research on the subject already exists. Their work, *Texas Labor*

⁷ Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism*, 11.

⁸ Hall, "Disorderly Women," 354-382.

History, emphasizes the variety of existing scholarship by compiling eighteen previously published articles addressing Texas labor history.⁹ If we assume their work presents an accurate statistical sample, it becomes apparent that the scholarship skews towards the analysis of labor in male-dominated industries such as oil, agriculture, and railroads. Studies focusing on trades where the majority of workers are female account for only two essays. One focuses on Emma Tenayuca, a Tejana worker who led the San Antonio pecan-shellers strike. The other focuses on homework in the garment industry.¹⁰ Scholarship addressing large-scale attempts at organization in Texas industries dominated by women are sparse in the historical literature. One notable exception, and of particular relevance to this project is Patricia Hill's article, entitled "Real Women and True Womanhood: Grassroots Organizing Among Dallas Dressmakers in 1935," which addresses the significance of a ten-month strike of Dallas dressmakers.¹¹

This thesis positions itself within the vein of Hall and Hill by analyzing both the internal and external factors which contributed to the 1937 Dallas millinery strike, a strike comprised almost entirely of Dallas working-class women. Focusing on the causes of the strike and its aftermath, and considering the culture and community of the workforce, allows for a lens through which to establish a more robust understanding of the conditions under which women toiled in industrial trades during the New Deal era in the American South.

⁹ Bruce Glasrud and James Maroney, eds., *Texas Labor History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 2.

¹⁰ Zaragosa Vargas, "Tejana Radical: Emma Tenayuca and the San Antonio Labor Movement during the Great Depression," in *Texas Labor History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013); Julia Kirk Blackwelder, "Texas Homeworkers in the Depression," in *Texas Labor History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

¹¹ Patricia Evridge Hill, "Real Women and True Womanhood: Grassroots Organizing among Dallas Dressmakers in 1935," *Labor's Heritage* 5, no. 4 (June 1994): 4-17.

Within the vast field of women's industrial work, few historians focus in-depth on the millinery industry. Historian Wendy Gamber is the primary exception. Her influential work, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*, is the most thorough existing historical study of the industry, exploring the unusual woman-to-woman business transactions so characteristic of custom millinery. Fashion historian Nadine Stewart followed in Gamber's footsteps when she recently made the jump to cultural and social history with her monograph *American Milliners and their World: Women's Work from Revolution to Rock and Roll*. Her work presents a broad analysis of the millinery industry and the workers behind such marvelous creations.¹²

Historians, such as Gamber and Stewart, and social scientists like Mary Van Kleeck and Lorinda Perry, agree on the tenuous nature of the millinery industry.¹³ It was often dominated by women workers, subject to precarious working conditions, and characterized by seasonality. Dubbed by Gamber as "the female economy," women occupied roles of both producers and consumers of millinery, allowing uncommon woman-to-woman business relationships to develop.¹⁴ As the industry shifted towards mass-production, men began encroaching on this female economy. They edited and published several significant trade publications, such as *The Illustrated Milliner* and *The Millinery Trade Review*. They worked in millinery factories in specific jobs which

¹² Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Nadine Stewart, *American Milliners and their World: Women's Work from Revolution to Rock and Roll* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).

¹³ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*; Lorinda Perry, *Millinery as a Trade for Women* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1916). Others contributing to the scholarship include Robin Dougherty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1975); Bertha Nienburg, *Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1939); and Martha Robinson, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1941).

¹⁴ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 4.

society deemed unsuitable for women.¹⁵ They also owned the factories where the female milliners worked to produce hats in bulk. In addition to changing gender roles and dynamics, the shift to mass production also brought about significant changes in worker demographics. Where native-born white women previously made up the majority of the workforce, by the early twentieth century immigrants dominated the millinery industry, working in the factories.

Scholars also point to working conditions as unsuitable or downright harmful to workers, citing overcrowding, long hours and failure by business owners to entertain worker organization. When addressing working conditions, most scholars draw from Mary Van Kleeck's famous investigation into the seasonal nature of the millinery trade. Although Sarah Stein's work, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce*, focuses on the feather trade, an industry adjacent to millinery, her analysis of the conditions in feather factories reveals a similarity to those of the millinery industry.¹⁶ She underscores that factory owners and operator subjected female workers to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and long hours. In many instances, these unsanitary conditions led to adverse medical conditions for the workers, affecting their productivity. Gamber, like Stein, agrees that the working conditions in the millinery industry were far from satisfactory, pointing to milliners' vulnerability to eye and spine conditions.¹⁷ Stewart supports Gamber's analysis but adds to the conversation by emphasizing the workers' exposure to toxic materials, such as arsenic and lead.

¹⁵ Men often work in positions such as cutters and blockers because factory owners felt women would not be physically able to operate the necessary machinery or lift the heavy materials.

¹⁶ Sara Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 84.

Additionally, the millinery industry operated on a seasonal schedule. New designs came to market twice a year. The bi-annual arrival of new designs from abroad launched the industry into a flurry of activity in late winter and mid-summer as manufacturers rushed to unveil new product lines for the public. New styles typically reached the consumer in the spring and fall. During the slow seasons, many manufacturers laid off workers until demand picked back up, while during the busy seasons, workers put in long hours, trying to keep up with the public's voracious appetite for new headwear.¹⁸ Gamber points to studies showing that women in the millinery trade traditionally experienced higher wages than women in other needle trade industries.¹⁹ However, considering the seasonal nature of the industry and the unlikelihood of consistent year-round employment, a higher wage became necessary to support them during the slow season, when employment was not guaranteed.

One aspect where Gamber and Stewart diverge regards their views on the efficacy of worker organization. Gamber, again citing Van Kleeck's 1917 study, asserts that milliners did not actively participate in labor organization. Unlike factory and warehouse workers, milliners often worked in small shops. This precluded them from forming strong social bonds with other milliners outside their shop. Gamber believes the typical union modus operandi, which "pitted employer against employee, failed to address the realities of millinery shops."²⁰ Owing to their small business model, employers worked alongside their employees, experiencing the same working conditions and physical demands. This

¹⁸ Stewart, *American Milliners and Their World*, 71.

¹⁹ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 76.

²⁰ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 92.

arrangement made organization difficult to justify because it failed to place the employer and employee in opposition.

Stewart agrees that millinery organization proved difficult, but she cites a different reason for why that was. She argues, “milliners’ concern with maintaining their genteel status in the work world kept them from unionizing.”²¹ Milliners in custom shops frequently interacted with their upper-class customers. Such interactions led many milliners to see themselves as social superiors to those who toiled in the factories. Unionizing and striking was something factory girls did, not “genteel” milliners.²² However, the shift from custom to factory-produced millinery in the early decades of the twentieth century brought significant changes to the status and class of milliners. Now hats were produced almost exclusively in factories. Gone were the days of the independent milliner operating out of her house. Stewart claims the change in worker demographic can be linked to an increase in attempts to organize after the turn of the century. Stewart cites a short-lived attempt by “60 Russian Jewish milliners to organize in 1905” as one such example.²³ Unfortunately, they were relatively unsuccessful, and their movement fell apart after one of the leaders had to bow out.

While Gamber and Stewart’s arguments regarding the failure of milliners to successfully organize have merit, neither scholar considers the influence of external factors, such as where the workers lived or the prevailing public sentiment about unions, on the success or failure of workers to organize. Gamber’s emphasis on millinery’s small-shop model as a deterrent to unionization bears weight if the scope is limited solely to

²¹ Stewart, *American Milliners and their World*, 2.

²² Stewart, *American Milliners and their World*, 2.

²³ Stewart, *American Milliners and their World*, 78.

working hours. Stewart's assertion that milliners' pursuit of genteel status prevented worker organization is equally limited. Outside the shop, many milliners lived in working-class neighborhoods, sharing space with workers in other trades who successfully organized. It is unreasonable to assume that milliners would not communicate with others outside of working hours, sharing their experiences and exchanging ideas. As this thesis will show, forces outside the millinery industry played a significant role in determining the outcome of attempts at millinery organization. Unfortunately, existing scholarship too often focuses only on the industry itself. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the millinery industry and worker organization, the impact of external factors on millinery workers deserves more robust representation in scholarship on the millinery industry specifically, and labor history more broadly.

Overwhelmingly, millinery scholarship is regionally specific, focusing on the nature of the industry in large metropolitan centers along the Atlantic seaboard. For example, Gamber's *The Female Economy* addresses the industry in Boston during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Nadine Stewart's contribution appears to be an exception. *American Milliners and their World* is not regionally specific and addresses a much broader timeframe. While a worthy introduction to the industry, Stewart's work lacks the analytical depth that comes from studying the industry in a particular region. Scholars have not yet adequately addressed the nature of the millinery industry in other major cities in the United States. The lack of scholarship on millinery in the south and west represents a significant gap in the literature.

One possible explanation for the lack of study in areas outside the industrial northeast lies in the availability of source material. A veritable treasure trove to scholars and historians are the numerous studies by social scientists and government workers conducted during the Progressive Era. These studies often address working conditions in various industries in large urban centers. As with the existing scholarship, studies specifically addressing the millinery industry are regionally clustered in the large industrial centers of the North. Mary Van Kleeck's groundbreaking study, *A Seasonal Industry* (1917), focuses solely on New York City. While Lorinda Perry's *Millinery as a Trade for Women* (1916) addresses Boston. Perry also published a study comparing the Boston millinery trade to that of Philadelphia. Still, others manage Scranton, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland. These publications all have two common characteristics; the focus is on millinery in large industrial centers in the northern and eastern United States and the years in which researchers conducted their studies. The surveys all took place between 1910 and 1920.

As with the failure of scholarship to address the nature of the millinery industry in other regions throughout the United States, the literature also neglects to analyze the industry after 1920. After this time, the millinery industry underwent a significant shift as a result of new technological advances and the rise of mass production. Additionally, the Great Depression and subsequent government intervention in support of workers' rights, such as the establishment of the National Recovery Administration (NRA), had a profound effect on the operations of the millinery industry. This research focuses on a region and time overlooked in the historiography, not simply to fill an existing gap in the

literature, but to complicate our understanding of an industry undergoing significant strain during troubled times.

Millinery Moves to Texas:

At the turn of the twentieth century, most millinery production in the United States occurred in large urban areas along the Eastern seaboard. However, because hats were an essential part of a woman's wardrobe, milliners could be found wherever women lived, from the largest cities to the smallest towns. As the population expanded westward, many milliners saw an opportunity to start fresh in a new place. One benefit of the industry, especially for the independent milliner, was the ability to relocate their business with relative ease. When reporting on the status of the millinery industry in 1914, noted industrial labor researcher Mary Van Kleeck reiterated this point, stating, "a milliner may carry her occupation with her instead of being tied by it to one locality."²⁴ Unlike other occupations which required specific machinery, a milliner could set up shop in a new town or territory with little more than entrepreneurial spirit and investment capital. In 1908 the trade publication, *The Illustrated Milliner*, editors encouraged milliners to head to the "great and golden West" for new opportunities in rapidly expanding markets "out in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas."²⁵ And go west they did, to growing cities like Dallas.

In 1900, a few years before *The Illustrated Milliner's* article went to print, Texas recorded only 1,401 milliners working in the state. By 1910, that number jumped to 2,607

²⁴ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 29.

²⁵ "Success and Independence for the Woman who Dares," *The Illustrated Milliner*, (August 1908), 50.

milliners, with the majority working in Dallas.²⁶ Such a dramatic increase in the millinery trade can be attributed, in part, to the continued development of the railroad across the state, which made it easier to move people and products across the southwest.

In 1860, Dallas had a population of 2,000 people and only one recorded milliner.²⁷ The low number of milliners can be attributed to the challenge of getting supplies to such a remote area. In its early days, the lack of reliable transportation and infrastructure plagued both Dallas residents and businesses. Holland McCombs, writing in *Fortune*, wondered how Dallas came to be a city at all, given that it “sat astride no natural routes of trade.”²⁸ Early settlers hoped the Trinity River would provide a navigable waterway connecting North Texas to Houston, but low water levels in certain areas made ship traffic impossible.²⁹ Without the use of a river, overland transportation appeared to be the only way to sustain the Dallas economy.

Most supplies, millinery included, arrived in Texas via the New Orleans-Galveston-Houston trade network. Prior to the 1880s, New Orleans was the regional epicenter for imports and all things fashionable. Drawing any connection to the fashion center, Dallas milliners stressed that their wares came directly from the city.³⁰ Many of the styles advertised were similar to, or direct copies of, hats sold in New York City, the

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, “Statistics of Occupations,” 1900 Census: Vol. VII, Manufacturers, Part 1, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/volume-7/volume-7-p10.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau, “Table II: Total persons 10 years of age and over employed in each specified occupation, classified by sex, by state,” 1910 Census: Vol. IV, Occupation Statistics, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-4/volume-4-p4.pdf>.

²⁷ Elizabeth Enstam, “The Frontier Woman as City Worker: Women’s Occupations in Dallas, Texas, 1856-1880,” *East Texas Historical Journal* 18, no. 1 (1980): 19.

²⁸ Holland McCombs, “The Dydamic Men of Dallas,” *Fortune* 39, no. 2 (February 1949): 99.

²⁹ John William Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas* (New York: E.P Dutton and Company, Inc., 1951), 112.

³⁰ Enstam, “The Frontier Woman as City Worker,” 19.

millinery capital of the United States. However, to many Texans, New Orleans was the closest cosmopolitan city of any importance.

From New Orleans, goods were loaded onto ships and sent to Galveston, then on to Houston, the largest and busiest port city in the state. Getting goods and supplies to and from Houston often required the use of wagons and carts pulled by oxen.

Unfortunately, oxen proved slow and stubborn, making deliveries unreliable. For example, Baum & Sanger, a dry goods and millinery store located just north of Dallas, reported in 1858 that it took four weeks for their merchandise to arrive from Houston.³¹

Transporting goods from the East Coast to Texas became much easier after the railroads finally came to Dallas. The Houston & Texas Central Railroad arrived in 1872, and the Texas & Pacific railroad came just one year later. The intersection of the railroads in Dallas allowed the city to become “the shipping point for raw materials moving from regions north, south, and west to the large consumer markets in the east.”³² Seemingly overnight, the town experienced an economic boom, transforming it into a shipping hub and, in turn, allowing the southwestern millinery industry to flourish.

As the twentieth century progressed, Texas millinery production continued to expand. By the 1930s, Texas had become the fifth largest region of millinery production in the United States, employing over 750 workers, most of them females. As Chapter II will address, despite the large number of workers, the millinery trade in Dallas faced continued challenges to worker organization. As Dallas grew and millinery production shifted towards mass-production, business elites tightened their hold on manufacturing,

³¹ Leon Rosenburg and Meredith Greene Megaw, *Sangers’: Pioneer Texas Merchants* (Texas Historical Association, 1978), 6.

³² Leon Rosenberg and Grant M. Davis, “Dallas and Its First Railroad,” *Railroad History* no. 135 (Fall, 1976): 40.

creating an anti-union atmosphere. Chapter III explores the Dallas millinery industry during the New Deal, including the impact of the NRA on the city's millinery operations. The NRA implemented regulatory codes and wage scales to protect workers. Under the NRA, many Dallas milliners saw their working conditions improved, and wages increased for the first time. However, with the dissolution of the NRA, many Dallas millinery manufacturers soon began to roll back wages and try to reclaim some power over their workers by harassing, firing, and blacklisting union members. The chapter culminates with the millinery workers striking in attempts to restore wages and working conditions to New Deal era levels. Finally, Chapter IV addresses the aftermath of the strike, including the numerous National Labor Relations Board hearings filed by the strikers.

II. THE MILLINERY INDUSTRY IN TEXAS, 1900-1920

As Dallas experienced significant growth with the coming of the railroads, the number of milliners in the city increased. Many set up shop along Elm Street, a congested area in the heart of the city's downtown. In 1900, millinery was characterized by small independent shops where female workers created custom-made hats for their clientele.

However, by the 1920s, millinery production looked decidedly different than it had at the beginning of the century. Dallas' growth and industrialization led to the expansion of mass-production and millinery manufacturing operations. While such shifts in manufacturing brought about significant changes in social class, gender, and worker demographics in other parts of the country, Dallas millinery did not experience quite such a drastic change in worker composition.

Social Class in the Millinery Industry:

Until the early twentieth century, millinery production remained a bespoke operation. Milliners designed and constructed hats specifically for individual customers and did not usually keep many hats in stock. Because of its customized nature, the final product commanded a relatively high price. As a result, millinery workers, usually women, considered themselves "a cut above" other female laborers.³³ Selling their product allowed milliners to interact socially with a wealthy clientele, setting them apart from other female laborers who toiled in factories, never associating with the consumer. This division in the types of labor and means of production gave milliners a sense of superiority over their fellow colleagues in other needle trades.

³³ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 67.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, millinery operated in small-scale independent shops which typically employed less than ten workers. The owner-operator and her employees made and decorated hats on site as well as handled sales and assisted customers.³⁴ This business model meant that millinery operations identified more closely with craft-based industries rather than with other needle and garment trades, which began slowly shifting towards industrial modes of production during the early decades of the twentieth century.

While workers often served as both producer and saleswoman, the physical construction and decoration of hats was a specialized process comprised of hierarchically-organized jobs. The store owner-operator occupied the top tier. She often served as the designer as well, coming up with the overall vision for each hat, in addition to her other duties. Below her came the trimmers who adorned hats with all manner of accessories, such as lace, velvet, flowers, or feathers. The trimmers brought the designer's vision to life. Apprentices occupied the lowest position in the shop. These women, or in many cases, young girls, worked for little or no pay while they learned the trade.³⁵

When reporting on the millinery industry in 1914, Mary Van Kleeck noted the lack of official contracts between the apprentice and the owner-operator, stating that “no period of training is agreed upon in advance.”³⁶ Industry standards, however, generally accepted that it took between three and four busy seasons for an apprentice to learn the trade. The calendar year was divided into two busy seasons and two slower ones,

³⁴ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 73.

³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, *History of Women in Industry*, 156.

³⁶ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 145.

meaning the apprentice might work up to two years before collecting a wage. Completing an apprenticeship thus eliminated at least one family member from earning a suitable wage for an extended period of time. Because of this, apprenticeships created a financial burden that barred all but a few select members of lower socio-economic groups, such as African Americans and immigrants, from participating in the trade.³⁷ According to the 1920 census, 1,611 apprentices worked in millinery establishments across the country. Of those, only seventeen identified as African American and 231 as immigrants.³⁸ While, the census does not provide enough demographic information for apprentices in Texas to be conclusive, it does identify nineteen millinery apprentices in the state, seven who worked in Dallas.

The millinery industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century thus exhibited a hierarchical class structure reflective of the larger society. Only those able to afford the opportunity to apprentice could pursue a career in the trade. Moreover, from a consumer perspective, custom millinery was often cost prohibitive to all but the middle and upper classes. The means of millinery production ensured workers came from a “respectable” social class, while the cost of the product ensured consumers also came from an equal or higher social class. The significance the politics of class played in such a business transaction served to reinforce the notion of social superiority among milliners.

³⁷ Worker demographics changed as the millinery industry adopted new methods of production. The shift towards mass production created new opportunities for unskilled workers, such as immigrants.

³⁸ The seventeen African Americans represent less than 1% of the apprentice population, while the 231 immigrants represent only 14%. U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 5: Total persons 10 years of age and over engaged in each specified occupation, classified by sex, color or race of nativity, and parentage for the United States,” 1920 Census: Volume 4, Chapter 3, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch04.pdf>.

Gender in the Millinery Industry:

In addition to class, gender dynamics significantly shaped the millinery industry. Until the first decades of the twentieth century, women overwhelmingly served as both producers and consumers, making the purchase of a custom hat a female-to-female business transaction. Such transactions were relatively uncommon at the time, since men typically exerted financial control over their female family members. Women entered millinery shops expecting to conduct business with another woman. Such a business model allowed for an intimate, gendered space where men and masculinity were excluded. Historian Wendy Gamber termed this relationship between the milliner and the consumer “the female economy.”³⁹

The 1902 Dallas City Directory identified fourteen independent millinery shops in the city, with an additional three millinery wholesale businesses.⁴⁰ At this time, many smaller shops took the proprietor’s name as the name of the business itself, such as Mrs. Annie Perpere or Miss Leona Haynie.⁴¹ Half of the shops carried women’s names, and in the rest, the directory lists the workforce as predominantly female. The overwhelming majority of the female millinery workforce in Dallas supports historian Wendy Gamber’s notion of the female economy, where the buying and selling of millinery was a female-to-female business transaction.⁴² According to the 1910 census, of the 246 milliners in Dallas, women made up ninety-seven percent of the workforce, with 238 workers.⁴³ By

³⁹ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 4.

⁴⁰ *1902 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

⁴¹ *1902 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

⁴² Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 4.

⁴³ U.S. Census Bureau, “Table IV: Total persons 10 years of age and over employed in each specified occupation, classified by sex, for cities having 25,000 to 100 inhabitants,” 1910 Census: Vol. IV,

this time, the Dallas City Directory listed seven wholesale firms and nineteen independent millinery shops, most of which were still located along Elm Street.⁴⁴ The gendered makeup of the Dallas millinery industry still skewed heavily towards female workers, but the growing number of wholesale businesses indicated a coming shift in power dynamics between the sexes in the millinery industry.

Men may have been excluded from the millinery workroom, but they still played integral roles in millinery production, contributing significantly to the manufacturing side of the industry. They exerted almost complete control over the trade in raw materials. Feathers, for example, a popular millinery accessory, needed to be cleaned and processed before adorning a hat. Historian Sarah Stein notes that while women completed much of this complex process, men owned the warehouses and factories where the work took place. Once the feathers were processed and ready to be sold, wholesale millinery suppliers, commonly known as jobbers, served as intermediaries, selling them to the milliners.⁴⁵ Because it involved extensive traveling, men, not women, dominated the jobbing industry. While the final transaction in the millinery trade, that of the finished hat to the purchaser, was a female-to-female transaction, the success of independent retail shops depended on a successful working relationship between the female milliner and the male jobber.

Many jobbers joined together, forming trade associations, where they discussed the nature of the industry and speculated on trends. Some associations grew into national

Occupation Statistics, accessed June 9, 2022,

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-4/volume-4-p1.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *1910 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

⁴⁵ Sarah Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 116.

organizations and began publishing trade magazines, such as the *Millinery Trade Review*, which began circulation in the late 1870s. Even though women produced and purchased millinery goods, men edited the *Millinery Trade Review*, and so included articles that reflected the desires of the periodical's predominantly male readership.⁴⁶ By 1900, a new trade publication launched, *The Illustrated Milliner*, competing with *The Millinery Trade Review*. It too, championed the male voice. For example, a note from the publisher in January 1902 specifically addressed the male audience. The publisher, George P. Baldwin announced, "I want every reader to feel that *he* has a personal interest in the magazine."⁴⁷ Women's voices, it seemed, did not make it into trade publications addressing women's fashions. This dominance by men in a female-centric industry would become a characteristic of the millinery industry as it progressed into the twentieth century.

Dallas Goes French:

Trade publications like *The Illustrated Milliner* and *The Millinery Trade Review*, often served as the first source of news on the prevailing trends from abroad. The millinery industry in the United States closely followed the designs and fashions coming out of Paris and London. As one of the largest ports in the country, New York usually received the first run of millinery shipments from Europe, giving New York-based milliners an advantage as they raced to be the first to re-create the French and English styles.

⁴⁶ Stewart, *American Milliners and their World*, 83.

⁴⁷ George P. Baldwin, "The Publisher's Desk," *The Illustrated Milliner* 3, no. 1 (January 1902): 39. Emphasis is mine.

The advent of the railroad brought Dallas-based milliners greater access to the millinery markets of New York, which lessened the significance and influence of New Orleans. Dallas milliners could more easily venture to New York on buying trips, scouting the latest styles and purchasing materials not available elsewhere. Some larger establishments or retail stores with large millinery departments, began opening offices in New York where a representative could act quickly on the latest millinery developments. Sanger Bros., formerly the dry goods store Baum & Sanger, grew into a chain of department stores across Texas, many of which had bustling millinery departments. Therefore, it proved advantageous when one of the owners, Isaac Sanger, relocated to New York in 1868 and opened a designated buying office there.⁴⁸ Having an office in New York gave Sanger Brothers an edge over other Texas millinery outlets because they could more quickly ascertain millinery trends and purchase goods for their stores accordingly.⁴⁹

Dallas newspapers and millinery trade publications often advertised when milliners returned from New York and abroad, signaling to customers that new products would soon be available. If New York was the millinery capital of the United States, France was the pinnacle. French millinery was synonymous with the height of fashion and all things “à la mode.” Any connection, real or perceived, to France elevated the status of the milliner and her goods.

Railroads now brought Dallas milliners to the east coast, where ocean liners carried them to the world’s fashion capital. Those milliners fortunate enough to afford

⁴⁸ Rosenberg, *Sangers*’, 18.

⁴⁹ Author Leon Joseph Rosenberg believes Sanger Bros., was one of the first, if not the first, southwest-based retailer with a designated buying office in New York City. By the turn of the century, a buying office in the was common practice for large retail establishments across the country. Rosenberg, *Sangers*’, 19.

such a journey spared no expense in spreading the news. For example, an early 1900 advertisement for M.E. and A.B. Nies, a Dallas millinery shop, proudly proclaimed their new display of “Parisian Millinery” after one of the owners returned from Paris, dubbing the city “the fountain head of swell styles for all people.”⁵⁰

However, the expense of traveling to New York or France made it prohibitive for many milliners, especially those who owned or worked in small independent shops catering to a middle- or working-class clientele. In such instances, Dallas milliners might emphasize a French connection through the name of their business, such as The Parisian Millinery Company, or the millinery establishment of Mme Josephine, who took the French prefix “Madame” as opposed to the English “Misses.”⁵¹ For those unable to travel to other markets, millinery trade publications became essential if the milliner wanted to gain a sense of the prevailing trends in the field.



Figure 1: M.E. & A.B Nies Millinery Advertisement, *Beau Monde*, September 1900.
Source: MA 88.21, *Beau Monde Collection*, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

From Bespoke to Mass-Production:

After the railroad came through the city, the number of milliners in Dallas increased, as did the number of millinery wholesale businesses. By the first decades of

⁵⁰ MA 88.21, *Beau Monde* Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

⁵¹ 1902 *Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

the twentieth century, technological advances shifted millinery production away from bespoke towards wholesale manufacturing and mass-production. While there would continue to be a demand for custom millinery, new technologies allowed for the production of more hats at a fraction of the price. Wholesale factories rapidly churned out thousands of identical hats. Because they were uniform in style and produced so quickly, these hats sold at a lower price point, thus putting custom milliners at a disadvantage because their hats demanded a higher price.⁵²

By the second decade of the twentieth century, millinery factories operated by wholesale firms overshadowed small independent millinery shops in many East Coast cities. In Dallas, however, independent millinery shops still held the majority. Because industrialization in Texas lagged behind other parts of the United States, independent millinery shops in the state remained the primary site for millinery production for longer than their East Coast counterparts. Independent Dallas milliners did not yet feel the pressure to adopt methods of the mass-production needed to accommodate the demand for product seen elsewhere. But that would soon change.

Early in the twentieth century, many prominent millinery wholesale houses of Dallas joined together to form their own association, with the goal of establishing standards of competition between the houses. The collective of Daniel's Millinery Company, Baron Bros. Millinery Company, the Dallas Millinery Company, and the L. Wenar Millinery Company, all owned and run by prominent male members of Dallas society, launched what became known as the Dallas Millinery Jobbers' Association, a regional affiliate of the national Millinery Jobbers' Association. Each of the wholesale

⁵² Stewart, *American Milliners and their World*, 61.

houses were successful in their own right, but together, they made Dallas “The Great Millinery Jobbing Market of the Southwest.”⁵³ *The Illustrated Milliner* reported in 1906, that the Dallas jobbing business would exceed \$700,000 that year and predicted it would surpass \$1,000,000 the following year. The success of the Dallas Millinery Jobbers’ Association put Dallas on the map as “the most important jobbing center in all Dixie land.”⁵⁴

Hoping to cement their position as a national leader in wholesale millinery, the Dallas Millinery Jobbers’ Association hosted the national millinery jobbers’ convention in 1906. *The Illustrated Milliner* claimed the conference was a surprising success “demonstrated by the large attendance at a point so remote from a common centre.”⁵⁵

Although the success of independent millinery establishments lasted longer in Texas than in other parts of the country, by the 1920s, most hats in Texas came out of wholesale manufacturing operations. The number of shops in Dallas increased to twenty-nine retail and four wholesale, according to the 1915 Dallas City Directory.⁵⁶ Also, many of the shops no longer bore the female shop owners’ names, implying that independent milliners were not as prevalent as they once were. Instead, company names such as Neiman-Marcus Co. or Cash Millinery Co. appeared more frequently. The increased number of millinery shops, combined with the emerging dominance of department stores with a designated millinery department, suggests Dallas saw significant expansion in the consumer marketplace between 1902 and 1915. This aligns with census data which

⁵³ “Dallas Millinery Record,” *The Illustrated Milliner* 7 (November 1906): 39.

⁵⁴ “Wonderful Progress,” *The Illustrated Milliner* 8 (January 1907): 53.

⁵⁵ “Dallas Millinery Record,” *The Illustrated Milliner* 7 (November 1906): 39.

⁵⁶ *1915 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

shows Dallas growing rapidly at this time. In 1900, Dallas had a population of 42,638 people. By 1920, that number jumped to 158,976, a 373 percent increase.⁵⁷ In just a few short decades, Dallas went from a small town with only one milliner to one of the leading millinery centers in the south.

By the late 1920s, Dallas became the fifth largest millinery manufacturing center in the country, employing over 750 people. Most hats manufactured in Dallas did not remain in Texas for long. The city had become a regional manufacturing and distribution hub catering to much of the southwest market, including Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and large urban centers like St. Louis, Birmingham, and Atlanta.⁵⁸ Many Dallas-based manufacturers also sold their hats to milliners in New Orleans. Where once millinery goods traveled from New Orleans to Dallas, now trade flowed in the other direction.

Continuity or Change in Gender and Worker Demographics:

Changes in methods of production and retail brought changes to worker demographics throughout much of the United States. Previously, independent millinery establishments employed mostly white, native-born women. Now, immigrant women dominated the wholesale millinery industry. According to Van Kleeck's 1914 survey, in New York City, fifty-three percent of workers in wholesale manufacturing were foreign-born, as compared to only twenty percent in retail establishments.⁵⁹ They came from all over Europe, including England, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Romania, and France. By far,

⁵⁷ "City Population History from 1850-2000," Texas Almanac, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www.texasalmanac.com/drupal-backup/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>.

⁵⁸ "Millinery One of City's Big Manufacturers," *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1927.

⁵⁹ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 67.

the largest group of foreign workers employed in millinery factories and warehouses were Russian Jews. Many of these women came from the Pale of Settlement, fleeing religious persecution.⁶⁰

Despite the increased number of wholesale houses operating in Texas, such a demographic shift in millinery workers does not appear to have occurred in the state. According to the 1920 census, of the 1,555 millinery workers in Texas, only slightly above three percent identified as foreign-born. In Dallas, the percentage of native-born to foreign-born workers was almost equal to the state's.⁶¹ At this time, Texas faced a significant surge in ethnic violence. During World War I, Germans in Texas faced increased harassment and intimidation, the Red Scare caused many Texans to be suspicious of outsiders, and the Mexican Revolution brought many Mexican citizens across the border into the United States. The large influx of Mexicans significantly altered the demographic of Texas. However, the US census counts those of Latin-American heritage as "white," making it hard to ascertain the true diversity of the millinery workforce.

⁶⁰ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 67.

⁶¹ The 1920 census only identified parentage for the female millinery workers in Texas and Dallas. The number of male milliners appeared to be too low to warrant further investigation. See Table 1 above. U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 5: Total persons 10 years of age and over engaged in each specified occupation, classified by sex, color or race of nativity, and parentage for the United States," 1920 Census: Volume 4, Chapter 3, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch04.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 1: Total males and females 10 years of age and over engaged in each selected occupation, classified by color or race, nativity, and parentage, and age periods, by state," 1920 Census: Volume 4, Chapter 7, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch10.pdf>; U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 2: Total males and females 10 years of age and over engaged in each selected occupation, classified by color or race, nativity, and parentage, and age periods, for cities of 100,000 inhabitants or more," 1920 Census, Volume 4, Chapter 7, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch10.pdf>.

Table 1: Female Millinery Demographics.⁶²
 Source: 1920 US Census

| | National | | Texas | | Dallas | |
|---|----------|-------|-------|------|--------|------|
| Totals: Female Only | 69,598 | % | 1,555 | % | 258 | % |
| Native born: white, native born parents | 34,764 | 49.9 | 1,302 | 83.7 | 220 | 85.3 |
| Native born: white/mixed foreign born parents | 24,234 | 34.8 | 185 | 11.9 | 26 | 10.1 |
| Foreign born | 10,006 | 14.4 | 53 | 3.4 | 11 | 4.3 |
| Black | 583 | 0.84 | 15 | 0.96 | 1 | 0.39 |
| Indian | 8 | 0.01 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Japanese | 1 | 0.001 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 2 | 0.002 | 0 | 0 | UNK | 0 |

The growing number of men working in wholesale millinery manufacturing marked another shift in worker demographics. As hat production became more mechanized, hydraulic presses were used to create uniform hat forms. Men usually operated the presses because it was believed women lacked the strength to handle them.⁶³ Additionally, men worked as cutters, liners, and machine operators, all considered specialist positions in manufacturing.⁶⁴ According to the 1910 census, 122,447 women and girls worked in millinery across the United States. The same census recorded 5,459 men also working in the industry, representing approximately four percent of the nation’s millinery workforce. By 1930, the number of men in millinery manufacturing grew to twelve percent of the workforce.⁶⁵

In much the same way that a milliner’s race and parentage in Texas did not conform to national statistics, the proportion of male millinery workers also differed from

⁶² This table does not consider the ancestry of millinery apprentices or male millinery workers.

⁶³ Stewart, *American Milliners*, 61-62.

⁶⁴ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 47.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1930*, by Alba Edwards (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1943):114, 123.

national trends. Between 1910 and 1930, the number of men working in millinery manufacturing in Texas did increase. However, not to the level we see in national statistics. In 1910, the census listed ninety-eight men employed in millinery in the state; eight worked in Dallas.⁶⁶ This represents 3.8 percent of Texas milliners and 3.4 percent of Dallas milliners respectively. Jumping to 1930, the ratio of male-to-female millinery workers in Texas and Dallas ran parallel to each other, with percentages of the workforce nearly equal. Eighty men worked in the millinery industry in Texas, or 7.4 percent of the state's millinery workforce. Twenty-eight males worked in millinery in Dallas, representing 7.4 percent of the city's millinery workforce.⁶⁷ While the number of men in the trade more than doubled over the course of the decade, Texas milliners appeared much slower to accept men among their ranks.

The Consistency of Seasonality:

Because new styles from Europe arrived only twice a year, seasonality within the millinery industry developed around the dates of their release. Two seasons began to dominate the calendar, spring and fall.⁶⁸ During these times, milliners hired extra staff and extended their hours to accommodate the influx in orders. Mary Van Kleeck reported that during the busy seasons, "it is a common practice to keep the store open until ten o'clock or later on Saturday night."⁶⁹ However, during the slower seasons, it became more difficult for workers to secure stable employment. As a cost-saving measure, most

⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, "Table IV," 1910 Census: Vol. IV, Occupation Statistics.

⁶⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 4: Gainful Workers 10 Years Old and Over by Occupation and Sex, for the State and Cities of 100,000 or More," 1930 Census: Vol. 4, Chapter 12, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-4/41129482v4ch12.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 81.

⁶⁹ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 141.

shop owners laid off workers when the demand was low. It was not uncommon for those in the millinery trade, especially apprentices and those with limited professional experience, to find themselves unemployed for significant lengths of time in the summer and winter.

Despite changes in methods of production and worker demographics during the 1910s and 1920s, seasonality in the millinery industry remained constant. Two busy seasons continued to dominate the industry, followed by two slow ones. According to Van Kleeck's study, out of the 3,197 women surveyed, only 2.8 percent of milliners in New York City worked for fifty-two weeks in 1913. 7.6 percent worked more than forty-eight weeks, but less than fifty-two.⁷⁰ Perhaps the most telling statistic is that upwards of forty-two percent of milliners worked less than ten weeks out of the whole calendar year.⁷¹ These figures serve to emphasize the precariousness of the millinery industry.

Seasonality also played a role in limiting workers' wages. One of the main points Van Kleeck's study of the NYC millinery industry addressed was if milliners made a livable wage. When asked, most milliners agreed they needed a minimum of \$9 (approximately \$263 in today's value) per week to make ends meet. That amounted to a yearly income of \$468 (approximately \$13,667 in today's value).⁷² However, that number reflected continuous employment for fifty-two weeks. The study also reported the median wages of workers in various millinery occupations in 1913. Trimmers made about \$14 a week (\$408 in today's value).⁷³ If employed full-time, year-round, their annual income amounted to \$728 (\$21,259 in today's value), well above the suggested

⁷⁰ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 81.

⁷¹ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 119-120.

⁷² Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 122.

⁷³ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 114.

minimum threshold. However, if they only worked ten weeks or less, as forty-two percent did, and found no other employment, they only made \$140 (\$4,088 in today's value). Apprentices fared far worse. They averaged only \$3.50 per week (\$102 in today's value).⁷⁴ Full employment for them would only yield an income of \$182 (\$5,315 in today's value). Despite the bleak picture of seasonality and wages, Van Kleeck ends her study with a note of hope, stating, "tentative plans are being discussed now by such important groups as the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Consumers' League to influence the length of the seasons by educating women to new standards."⁷⁵

Seasonality continued to be a significant problem for the millinery industry. Not even Texas was exempt from the whims of fashion. In 1921, *The Millinery Trade Review* announced the formation of a new millinery association with plans to address the issue. In August 1921, the Southwestern Retail Milliners Association officially formed in Dallas. It was a reincarnation of the Southwestern Association of Milliners, a body of approximately 500 millinery trade representatives, which formed in Dallas around 1912, but discontinued operations as a result of supply chain challenges during World War I.⁷⁶ Upon re-forming, the new association planned to serve as a forum where milliners across the southwest could address the conditions of the industry impacting their region. The association launched with over 200 members, emphasizing the strength of the market in the southwest. They elected Edwin Sanger, of Sanger Bros., as president, and H.E. Dugan, of Neiman-Marcus, as vice president.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 114.

⁷⁵ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 195.

⁷⁶ "Southwestern Association of Milliners," *The Illustrated Milliner* 16 (March 1915): 22M.

⁷⁷ "Another Organization! A Real One, Too. – Southwestern Retail Milliners Association Launched in Dallas With a Membership of More Than Two Hundred," *The Millinery Trade Review* 46, no. 9 (September 1921): 65, 116.

From the outset, the association heavily favored Dallas manufacturers, and received endorsements from the Dallas Millinery Jobbers Association and the Dallas Retail Milliners Association. In his opening address, Edwin Sanger announced that “the formation of our Association means the further strengthening of Dallas as one of the greatest millinery market centers in the nation.”⁷⁸ One of their first orders of business was to address seasonality in the Texas market. The Association undertook a plan to eliminate the two-season model and implement a four-season rotation instead. Four seasons appealed to some manufacturers who hoped it would increase profits and decrease employee turnover during the slower seasons. However, the real determining factor would be getting the public to accept and endorse a new millinery production schedule. The idea of two prominent millinery seasons had been ingrained in the public’s mind for so long, switching to four seasons would require a period of adjustment. In anticipation, millinery wholesalers, like the Dallas-based Higginbotham Millinery Company, took out advertisements in local newspapers and business journals endorsing the “four-season movement.” They encouraged patrons to check out their new line of “mid-summer ideas of trimmed hats” when they became available in mid-April, previously considered to be the tail-end of the busy spring season. By doing so, they would “help further the movement of selling seasonable merchandise at the time wanted by the consumer.”⁷⁹

The notion of creating a four-season rotation was not unique to the Dallas millinery market. National organizations attempted to work around the “two-season problem” for years, with varying degrees of short-lived success. Writing in 1922, Julius

⁷⁸ “Another Organization!,” 65.

⁷⁹ Advertisement for Higginbotham Milliner Co., *The Progressive Merchant* 6, no. 9 (April 1920), 34. R NC 1920, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

Bloomfield, owner of a prosperous millinery wholesale business in New York City, encouraged milliners to reject seasons altogether and instead work towards “one long season to last twelve solid months.”⁸⁰ However, changing the seasonal nature of the industry proved practically impossible. Indeed, an industry survey from 1939 still identified seasonality as a significant problem.⁸¹

Organizing the Millinery Trade:

While seasonality created periods where work was scarce and unpredictable, it also proved a detriment to getting workers to organize. Van Kleeck put it succinctly when she stated:

It is exceedingly difficult to organize a trade in which the majority of the workers are together but half the year, especially when even that half is divided into two quarters and between these periods the milliners are no longer milliners but salesgirls, artificial flower makers, operators on clothing or indeed, workers in whatever occupations they can find.⁸²

Seasonality affected other industries as well, such as artificial flower making and feather working. Because these other trades operated adjacent to the millinery industry, labor organizers encouraged workers in these trades to join with milliners and organize.⁸³ They would have more power if they worked together as a single unit, rather than independently within their respective trades. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that workers took the organizers’ advice, nor any records to suggest any such union ever came to fruition.

⁸⁰ Julius Bloomfield, “Millinery Problems as I See Them,” *The Illustrated Milliner* 23 (February 1922): 3M.

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau, *Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States* by Bertha Nienburg (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 1-2.

⁸² Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 135.

⁸³ Stein, *Plumes*, 124.

The small-scale, independent nature of millinery work also contributed to the lack of unionizing efforts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Typically, unions tried to position the employer and employee in opposition, with the employer benefiting financially from the employee's labor.⁸⁴ However, in custom millinery establishments where shop owners often worked alongside their employees, the owner experienced the same challenges as the worker. This working arrangement created a shared sense of experience which undermined unions' assertions that employers often exploited employees.

Given the long hours, especially during the busy seasons, millinery workers had limited opportunities to meet with workers from other shops. This lack of opportunity to communicate with other milliners isolated them from fellow workers in the same trade and prevented them from learning how other shops addressed employer/employee relations. Such isolation during the busy seasons hindered efforts at successful organization. According to one industry worker, "You might as well try to direct the wind as to organize milliners!"⁸⁵

However, in 1905, a small group of Russian Jewish workers organized in New York City, marking the first recorded instance of organization in the millinery industry. It is worth noting that these women worked not in independent shops, but in millinery factories, where immigrants made up the majority of workers. The union became affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and, at its height, numbered

⁸⁴ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 92.

⁸⁵ Anonymous as quoted by Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 69.

about two hundred women. However, it did not last very long and fell apart soon after one of the chief organizers moved away from New York City.⁸⁶

A separate attempt to organize milliners took place in Chicago in 1907. Calling themselves the “Milliner’s Union,” *The Millinery Trade Review* credits an unnamed “society leader” rather than a millinery worker, with its creation. Considering the masculine and often pro-business tone of the publication, it is likely that *The Millinery Trade Review* deliberately left the organizer unnamed in attempts to undermine the fledgling union’s efforts.⁸⁷ However, because the organizer moved in Chicago’s society circles, it did not take long for her identity to be revealed. Miss Helen Mahon, sociologist, clubwoman, and friend of Jane Addams, orchestrated the Milliners’ Union with the ultimate goal of improving working conditions for Chicago milliners.⁸⁸

The Union sought to eliminate piece-work, create a standard salary schedule, and regulate working hours.⁸⁹ According to the Mahon, “hundreds of girls work twelve to fourteen hours every day, and it is a shame.”⁹⁰ They also wanted to use a specific label to identify hats manufactured by businesses aligning with the Union’s mission and urged boycotts and strikes of places that refused. *The Millinery Trade Review*, emphasizing

⁸⁶ Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 134.

⁸⁷ In a later article in the same edition, *The Millinery Trade Review*, revealed the organizer’s identity as Miss Helen Mahon. “Chicago and the West,” *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 3 (March 1907): 64.

⁸⁸ “Sacrifice to the Cause,” *Piano, Organ and Musical Instrument Workers’ Official Journal* 9, No. 3 (February 1907): 11.

⁸⁹ Piece-work is the term used to refer to a compensation method whereby the worker is paid a fixed rate per unit. This system often incentivizes speed over accuracy.

⁹⁰ “Chicago and the West,” *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 3 (March 1907): 64. In 1893, Chicago passed a bill limiting the number of hours women could work in factories to eight hours a day. The bill was later struck down in 1895 in the case *Ritchie v. People*. It would not be until 1908 with *Muller v. Oregon* that protective legislation limiting the number of working hours for women was upheld. For more on protective legislation in the U.S., see Nancy Woloch, *A Class by Herself: Protective Laws for Women Workers, 1890s-1900s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

their significant anti-union bias when reporting on the union's efforts, exclaimed, "Fortunately, [millinery] is one branch of women's work that no Union can dominate."⁹¹



Figure 2: "The Union Label on Millinery"
Source: *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 4 (April 1907), 40.

Frederick Bode, President of the Millinery Jobbers' Association, agreed with *The Millinery Trade Review's* pro-business/anti-union stance. In a note to the publication, he expressed the belief that the union's aims did not align with the interests of milliners themselves, stating, "It is in direct opposition to what a milliner wants, her work is not a mechanical production but an art craft."⁹² To systemize and regulate the millinery trade undermined its existing hierarchical social structure. It would devalue millinery's inherent artistic and creative nature, putting it on par with other needle trades. Thankfully for businessmen like Bode, the union failed to gain enough members to impact the Chicago market.⁹³ However, the union's failure did not stop *The Millinery Trade Review* from poking fun at them the following month. They joked that the union intended to "have a 'business agent' at the portals of various churches on Sundays" checking to see if female parishioners' hats and clothes bore the appropriate union label.⁹⁴ The

⁹¹ "That Milliner's Union," *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 3 (March 1907): 56.

⁹² "Chicago and the West," *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 3 (March 1907): 64.

⁹³ Miss Mahon's untimely death in late February 1907 played a significant role in the union's demise. According to the *Hammond Times*, Miss Hammond died in a Chicago hospital after a bout of "insanity." Other news outlets report her death was the result of overexertion brought on by her work with the Milliners' Union. "Dies Suddenly Under Peculiar Circumstances," *Hammond Times*, February 26, 1907.

⁹⁴ "The Union Label on Millinery," *The Millinery Trade Review* 32, no. 4 (April 1907): 40.

accompanying illustration emphasized how such labels detracted from the beauty of the overall outfit, making the wearer look disheveled and unpolished.⁹⁵

Despite *The Millinery Trade Review*'s disdain for Mahon's use of labels, such a practice was already being used by unions, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and other organizations. For example, the National Consumers' League employed "white labels" as early as 1898 to identify employers who operated a "fair house."⁹⁶ And later, during the New Deal, the National Recovery Administration would implement the use of labels with specific registration numbers to identify products manufactured under fair labor standards.⁹⁷

Despite previous failed attempts to organize and the anti-labor sentiments of leading trade publications, millinery workers refused to believe organization was impossible. Though they continued to face difficulty, milliners attempted to join with other established unions geared towards headwear. The United Cloth Hat and Cap Workers Union, under the umbrella of the AFL, seemed the most promising. However, the union's membership was entirely male, and the AFL had a reputation for excluding union membership to women.⁹⁸ Indeed, in the opening years of the twentieth century, the AFL strongly advocated a paternal view towards women in the workforce, believing their place was in the home. According to historian Alice Kessler-Harris, the AFL exhibited a particular kind of masculine identity rooted in liberty, independence, and voluntarism.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ See Figure 1.

⁹⁶ Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism*, 20; Wendy Wiedenhof, "An Analytical Framework for Studying the Politics of Consumption: The Case of the National Consumers' League," *Social Movement Studies* 7, no. 3 (December 2008): 285-287.

⁹⁷ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry as Approved on December 15, 1933 by President Roosevelt* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 11.

⁹⁸ Stewart, *American Milliners*, 79.

⁹⁹ For more on the AFL and voluntarism, see David Saposs, "Voluntarism in the American Labor Movement," *Monthly Labor Review* 77, no. 9. (September 1954): 967-971.

Early AFL leadership believed women in the workforce would undermine the collective bargaining power of union members, thus challenging male wage-earning potential.¹⁰⁰

Although they did not directly bar women from membership, the AFL, “mainly showed interest in organizing women workers only as it helped to protect the earning power of men.”¹⁰¹

Undeterred, millinery organizers marked their first true success in 1916, when the AFL recognized straw hat makers as part of the Cap Maker’s Union.¹⁰² The Cap Maker’s union now represented makers of both cloth and straw hats. It seemed only natural that the union would soon admit milliners, since women’s hats were made from either cloth or straw. However, two years passed before that became a reality. Finally, in 1918, milliners were admitted into the union, which had been renamed the Cloth Hat, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union, to reflect the trades of their expanding membership.¹⁰³

While millinery workers in large East Coast cities enjoyed union membership and collective bargaining, millinery workers in Texas experienced no such representation. By 1926, the United Cloth Hat, Cap, and Millinery Workers’ International Union had forty local chapters and approximately 11,000 members.¹⁰⁴ Of those chapters, none existed in Texas. It would not be until 1936 that milliners successfully organized in Dallas, after a long uphill battle against the anti-union atmosphere blanketing the city.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67-68.

¹⁰¹ “Working-Class Life in Industrial America,” in *Social History of the United States: The 1900s*, ed. Brian Greenberg and Linda Watts (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2009), 85.

¹⁰² Stewart, *American Milliners*, 79.

¹⁰³ Stewart, *American Milliners*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of American Trade-Unions* by Estelle M. Stewart (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926), 127.

¹⁰⁵ See next chapter.

Dallas and the Open Shop Movement:

While World War I raged on in Europe, the U.S. labor market experienced a period of renewed interest in unionism. Unions saw an increase in membership and bargaining power. However, upon the war's end, industrial management sought a return to the pre-war status quo. Unions, unwilling to dispatch with their newfound influence, began demanding a greater voice in management and company decision-making, a condition management refused to entertain. This growing conflict between laborers and management ultimately led to a renewed interest in the philosophy of the open shop.¹⁰⁶

The Open Shop movement gained headlines at the turn of the twentieth century as a business practice characterized by “workplaces that promoted individualism over collectivism.”¹⁰⁷ Such businesses began employing workers regardless of their union status, thus challenging the power of unions, while also circumventing hiring practices favoring union members. Prior to World War I, most shops in Dallas operated as closed shops, or businesses that required employees to be a member of a particular union. However, with the war's end, management sought more control over their own businesses and began to push back against the power of the unions.

The year 1919 marked a turning point in American labor history. Constant conflict between organized labor and management led the United States to experience an intense strike wave. While the actual number of strikes occurring in 1919 decreased from those of years prior, the number of workers involved in those strikes reached

¹⁰⁶ Allen Wakstein, “The Origins of the Open Shop Movement, 1919-1920,” *The Journal of American History* 51, no. 3 (Dec. 1964): 465.

¹⁰⁷ Chad Pearson, “Employers’ Associations and Open Shops in the United States,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of American History and Life*, February 26, 2008, 1.

unprecedented levels.¹⁰⁸ The U.S. Department of Labor reported a significant spike in strike participation, calculating that over 4,160,348 workers went on strike at some point during the year.¹⁰⁹ Primary motivations behind the strikes typically included the workers' desire for increased wages to combat higher costs of living and the "determination of trade-unions to extend further [their] influence in areas in which they had obtained a foothold during the war."¹¹⁰ Significant strikes included the Seattle general strike, the Boston police strike, and national strikes in the steel and coal industries.¹¹¹ While the strikes in Seattle and Boston brought those cities to a standstill, the steel and coal strikes effectively brought the national economy to its knees.

Many smaller strikes occurred in areas boasting large urban and industrial centers. However, no state avoided the strike wave entirely. With its still largely agricultural economy, Texas fared better than many states in the Northeast and Midwest. However, with fifty recorded strikes in 1919, Texas surpassed all nearby states, save Louisiana.¹¹²

There had been talk of the open shop before the war, but the movement did not gain sufficient traction until the 1919 Seattle general strike brought it back to people's attention. As news of Seattle's efforts to organize local businesses into an Open Shop Association spread throughout the country, many cities saw open shops as a means to resolve their own local labor disputes. Not long after the Seattle strike, Beaumont became

¹⁰⁸ The U.S. Department of Labor reported that the number of individual strikes reached its height in 1917, with 4,450 recorded. It is estimated that 1,227,254 workers participated in these strikes. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Strikes in the United States: 1880-1936*, by Florence Peterson (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 21.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, *Strikes in the United States*, 21.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, *Strikes in the United States*, 24-25.

¹¹¹ For more information on the 1919 Seattle Strike, see Calvin Winslow, *Radical Seattle: The General Strike of 1919* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), and Robert Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

¹¹² Louisiana: 51, Arkansas: 7, Oklahoma: 32, Kansas: 45, Colorado: 31, New Mexico: 4; U.S. Department of Labor, *Strikes in the United States*, 37.

the first city in Texas to establish the open shop system. Texas Secretary of State George Howard granted the Beaumont Open Shop Association their charter in October 1919. Soon after, San Antonio and Austin established and received charters for their own open shop associations. The Dallas Open Shop Association (DOSA), also known as the Dallas Square Deal Association, quickly surpassed all other Texas associations in terms of power and influence.

Meeting on the roof deck of the prestigious Adolphus Hotel in mid-November of 1919, 300 to 400 of Dallas' influential businessmen voted to form the city's own association. The formation of an open shop association appealed to Dallas' elites because they were interested in blunting the power of unions by undermining their ability to control the supply of laborers. Newspapers reported on the near-unanimous vote, with only about a dozen attendees voicing dissent. One such dissenter, Tom Bell of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics, expressed reservations about Dallas becoming an "open shop city." He stated that, in his professional opinion, "the open shop in San Antonio, Austin, and Beaumont had aggravated the very conditions it sought to palliate."¹¹³ Not everyone believed that the open shop would bring growth and prosperity to the city.

Unlike associations in other cities, DOSA immediately partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, eventually becoming a department within it.¹¹⁴ This partnership allowed DOSA to leverage some of the resources allocated to the Chamber of Commerce, increasing its ability to spread the Association's message through media campaigns and public outreach.

¹¹³ "Business Men Favor 'Open Shop' Policy," *Dallas Morning News*, November 19, 1919.

¹¹⁴ Wakstein, "The Origins of the Open Shop Movement," 463.

DOSA hoped to foster economic development in the region. Such development made Dallas a favorable location for potential investors. At the start of its first public relations campaign, an advertisement for the Association appeared in the *Dallas Morning News*, encouraging readers to support the Association's mission and "help Dallas grow" by attracting new investors to the region.¹¹⁵ The Association's media efforts had already begun to draw new businesses to the area. In a note to the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, an interested party decided to build a factory in the area not long after the press declared Dallas an open shop city. The note specifically stated that Dallas' open shop policies had incentivized the investor because "labor conditions were regarded as more satisfactory under open shop conditions."¹¹⁶ In 1920, just one year after forming, the Association boasted of its success, claiming it helped bring over a thousand new businesses to Dallas. Furthermore, DOSA asserted that it contributed to the city's "increased efficiency, making possible the claim for Dallas as one of the Nation's highest wage cities."¹¹⁷

By principle, open shop businesses operated independently of unions. Business owners could hire or fire employees regardless of their union status. Many workers and union organizers opposed the open shop system, claiming it created an atmosphere unwelcoming to unions and union members. For example, George Slater, president of the Texas State Federation of Labor, encouraged unions to push back against open shop associations because "the 'open shop' means the 'closed shop' for the man with a union card."¹¹⁸ The by-laws of DOSA clearly tried to position the organization as one, not in

¹¹⁵ "Help Dallas Grow," *Dallas Morning News*, December 12, 1919.

¹¹⁶ "\$1,000,000 Concern will Come to Dallas," *Dallas Morning News*, December 11, 1919.

¹¹⁷ "One Year of the Open Shop in Dallas," Folder 4, Box 2E94, Labor Movement in Texas Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹¹⁸ "Declares Texas Unions will Fight the 'Open Shop'," *Dallas Morning News*, November 29, 1919.

opposition to unions. The first principle even states, “it is not the purpose of the association to prevent the formation of labor unions; but rather to protect personal liberty and property rights by seeing that non-union worker have an equal chance in Dallas with workers who belong to unions.”¹¹⁹ According to this statement, the Open Shop Association, sought only to put union and non-union workers on an even footing. Open shops, DOSA included, deliberately used language evoking equality to mask their desire to undermine the power of unions. Such language appealed to many individuals typically excluded from union membership, such as African Americans. The open shop system gave them the opportunity to find employment in formerly “closed shops.” The *Dallas Express News*, an African American newspaper, while not endorsing the open shop movement in Dallas specifically, did express some optimism. Addressing union exclusion based on race, the paper reported that “this kind of discrimination has had a tendency to embitter [African American] workers against labor unions.” Such exclusion pushed people of color towards employment in open shops, where their skills and expertise could be welcome. The newspaper concluded the article by reiterating this point, stating that “the open shop advocates are the largest employers of colored workers.”¹²⁰

African Americans’ acceptance into the open-shop workforce changed in the 1920s with the re-emergence of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) in Dallas. The Klan assured their meteoric rise to power in Dallas by running candidates in every Dallas county election in 1922. They won the majority of them.¹²¹ The Dallas chapter of the KKK,

¹¹⁹ “Constitution and By-Laws of the Open Shop (Square Deal) Association of Dallas Texas,” Folder 4, Box 2E94, Labor Movement in Texas Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹²⁰ “A.N.P. Calls 1922 Greatest Year of Negro Achievement,” *Dallas Express News*, December 30, 1922.

¹²¹ Kevin G. Portz, “Political Turmoil in Dallas: The Electoral Whipping of the Dallas County Citizens League by the Klu Klux Klan, 1922,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (October 2015): 149-150.

known as Klavern 66, became one of the largest and most influential in the nation, with at least 13,000 members. Even the Imperial Wizard, Hiram W. Evans, hailed from Dallas.¹²² Along with racism, the KKK built its platform by promoting nativism, echoing fears about the influx of Eastern European immigrants previously voiced during the Red Scare. Through political channels, the Dallas KKK amassed power, creating a conservative political climate that threatened business elites' plans for outside investment.

While both the KKK and DOSA expressed similar anti-union opinions and sought to hinder the growth of unions in their city, the two groups diverged regarding the best way to achieve their aims. The KKK sought immediate and visible action, often through public displays of violence, such as lynching. DOSA, on the other hand, favored more economical means. They hoped to present Dallas as an ideal place for investors because of the strength of the open shop movement. Public perception of Dallas was a determining factor for investors. Since investors often came from other regions of the country, their opinion of Dallas came predominantly from newspaper accounts. DOSA feared news coverage of KKK-sanctioned violence against African Americans and foreigners would deter investors, who might view Dallas as unruly and unsuitable for their business interests.

Prior to the rise of the KKK in Dallas, African Americans were not alone in seeing potential employment opportunities in the open shop movement. Many women also believed the movement could improve their economic standing. During the early 1920s, many unions did not grant women full participation benefits. Seeking employment in open shop businesses allowed women to earn a wage and gain access to economic

¹²² Patricia Evridge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 101.

mobility that may otherwise have been denied to them. DOSA encouraged women to join the Association and promised them “membership on the same terms as men.”¹²³ As a benefit of membership, DOSA created an employment bureau that operated out of their offices in the Chamber of Commerce. The bureau helped place members in open shop businesses across the city while also helping Dallas elites further their hold over the labor market.

While DOSA welcomed African Americans and women during the early days, it did not accommodate everyone. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, a Red Scare swept across the United States in 1919 and 1920, ushering in a time of xenophobia and fear of anything deemed “unamerican.” The recent influx of Eastern European immigrants, with their non-Protestant religion and possible Communist ideals, scared politicians and businessmen alike. They worried these immigrants would enter the American workforce and start agitating for change, putting unsavory (to the businessmen) ideas about organizing into the heads of their workers.

Businessmen were not alone in their suspicion of new immigrants. Politicians believed they threatened the nation’s security. In late 1919 and early 1920, the U.S. Government authorized what became known as the “Palmer Raids,” a series of coordinated raids on the Union of Russian Workers (URW) and suspected communists in the hopes of eliminating the perceived threat of bolshevism. Agents arrested hundreds of Russian immigrants during the raids, and some, like the famous Emma Goldman, were deported.¹²⁴ However, in reality, the radical Bolshevik element remained relatively small,

¹²³ “Women Eligible to Join Dallas Open Shop Association,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 29, 1919.

¹²⁴ Adam Hodges, “The First Red Scare,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of American History and Life*, February 25, 2019, 16.

and many of the arrested URW members simply joined because of their common language and sense of shared heritage, not because they harbored any revolutionary ideas.¹²⁵ The Palmer Raids and the subsequent deportation of immigrants to Soviet Russia left an indelible mark on the American populous, instilling a growing sense of xenophobia, nativism, and American patriotism.¹²⁶

Open shops expressed their patriotism by excluding immigrants, socialists, and communists from their ranks, viewing them as dangerous radicals. Gilbert Irish, a DOSA board member, expressed his belief that foreigners were partly to blame for the existing labor problems in the United States. In an address to the Association, he exclaimed:

We believe, however, that through the wrongful influence of walking delegates, induction into the ranks of labor of countless half-baked foreign agitators and innumerable illiterates, unable to comprehend the genius of American institutions, or to even lisp a syllable of the English language, the contamination of I.W.s and bolsheviks element [...] have led organized labor into a political and economic swamp where the miasma of radicalism and unamericanism seems to have enveloped it.¹²⁷

Irish's words reveal his deep disdain for foreign workers and his fear that no good could come of their presence in Dallas. But just how much of a threat did they pose? According to the 1920 census, Dallas reported 8,730 white people of foreign birth residing in the city. The largest majority (26.1 percent) were born in Mexico. Indeed, out of 158,976 people residing in Dallas in 1920, only 1,614 were born in Eastern Europe. This

¹²⁵ Robert Murray, "Communism and the Great Steel Strike," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (December 1951): 446.

¹²⁶ According to historian Mark Grueter, immigrants were deported to Russia aboard the *USS Buford*. Their deportation remains "the only mass deportation of political dissidents in American history." Mark Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11, no. 1 (2017): 54.

¹²⁷ "Business Men Favor 'Open Shop' Policy," *Dallas Morning News*, November 19, 1919.

represents approximately one percent of the city's population, hardly enough to warrant the vicious language Irish directed at them.¹²⁸

DOSA also incorporated patriotic language in its press releases. In the realm of public opinion, such language further cemented that the open shop movement embodied true American principles. When announcing its formation in 1919, DOSA even went so far as to state that its "creed is but a restatement of the salient principles of the Constitution of the United States."¹²⁹

As the open shop movement gained traction in the early 1920s, more cities in Texas and the surrounding states began operating their own associations. While maintaining a tight grip on the city, DOSA joined with eighteen other cities to form a regional association. Known as the Southwestern Open Shop Association, it represented open shop cities in Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, Arkansas, and Louisiana.¹³⁰ Given its geographic proximity to the other cities, Dallas soon became the headquarters for the new regional association.

Coinciding with the formation of the Southwestern Open Shop Association, DOSA began to shift its attitude regarding union presence in the city. Although the by-laws of the Association stated it would not interfere with union activity in the city, in actuality, the Association actively sought to oppose and disrupt any attempts at

¹²⁸ 26.1% equals 2,278 Mexican-born people in Dallas. U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 10: Composition and Characteristics of the Population for Cities of 10,000 or More," 1920 Census: Volume 3, Summary Tables and Detailed Tables – South Carolina through Vermont," accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-3/41084484v3ch08.pdf>.

¹²⁹ "Dallas Adopts the Open Shop," Folder 4, Box 2E94, Labor Movement in Texas Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹³⁰ W.S. Mosher, "Open Shop in the Southwest," *The Open Shop Review* 18, no. 3 (March 1921): 120. The Southwestern Open Shop Association comprised of representatives from the open shop associations of San Antonio, Beaumont, Dallas, Austin, Palestine, Sherman, El Paso, Wichita Falls, Galveston, Vernon, Bartlesville, Durant, Oklahoma City, Ponca City, Tulsa, Phoenix, Tucson, Little Rock, and Shreveport.

organization. If unions grew in strength, manufacturers and businesses feared they would demand higher wages for workers in the city. DOSA worried that higher wages would drive away potential investors and undo all the hard work they had done to draw them to the region. Dallas' low wages incentivized investors. If unions gained bargaining power and increased wages, DOSA would lose its biggest investment driver. So, while open shops paid lip service to the presence of unions in their cities, in actuality, it was in their best interest to suppress any union activity.

The Association and its members used numerous intimidation techniques to keep workers or businesses from entertaining ideas about organizing. It came to light during an NLRB hearing that “any member of the Open Shop Association who knowingly employed a union member was subject to a \$3,000 fine.”¹³¹ The use of fines to punish manufacturers in Dallas proved effective in limiting union activity. In addition, open shops continued to use Red Scare rhetoric to turn public sentiment away from union sympathizers. Open shops successfully positioned themselves in opposition to labor organizers by categorizing them as radicals. In 1920, open-shop proponent George Armstrong wrote a letter to the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, which capitalized on public fear by stating that open shops were in conflict with “Bolshevik-inspired labor radicalism.” He went on to postulate that should labor win, the outcome would be “a Soviet government of industry and of the Country.”¹³² Such an outcome would be unfathomable and most certainly turned would-by sympathizers away from labor activities. Additionally, according to historian Courtney Welch, Texans had a deep distrust of socialists. This distrust significantly hampered the labor movement in the state

¹³¹ George Lambert, “Dallas Tries Terror,” *The Nation* 145, no. 15 (October 1937): 377.

¹³² Pearson, “Employers’ Associations and Open Shops in the United States,” 9.

since unions often worked with socialists to achieve their shared goals, such as improving working conditions.¹³³ DOSA used their affiliation with the Dallas Chamber of Commerce and their marketing and advertising acumen to capitalize on the public fear surrounding the Red Scare, successfully driving union efforts in the city into the ground.

Conclusion:

The millinery industry in Dallas expanded and adopted new methods of production during the early decades of the twentieth century to meet the needs of a growing populous. Infrastructure and urban development brought Dallas in closer proximity to other urban centers, creating thriving trade networks, which the city's millinery industry used to its advantage. Dallas became a thriving millinery center, catering to the needs of the southwest.

At the same time, social and political unrest across the United States created a sense of unease amongst business elites. The 1919 strike wave and the Red Scare had a profound impact on Dallas. As labor activism increased across the country, Dallas business leaders united, forming DOSA, hoping to curb the growing power of unions in the city. They employed patriotic rhetoric to create a sense of equality and righteousness while simultaneously deploying anti-radical sentiments so common during the Red Scare, to bolster distrust of anything deemed "other" or "foreign." The return of the KKK also fostered a growing sense of white nationalism, xenophobia, and racism. While DOSA members feared the KKK would drive business interests away from Dallas, both groups wanted Dallas free from outside influence, including unions. As both groups battled for

¹³³ Courtney Welch, "Evolution, Not Revolution: The Effect of New Deal Legislation on Industrial Growth and Union Development in Dallas, Texas," (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2010), 45.

power and influence in the city, they created a virulent anti-union atmosphere that blanketed the city for decades.

III. MAD HATTERS: UNIONISM, MILLINERY, AND THE BATTLE FOR DALLAS



*Figure 3: Zelma Boland.
Source: Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1937.*

In the sweltering heat of August, Zelma Boland walked up and down Commerce Street, shading herself with a large umbrella bearing the word “STRIKE” across the canopy.¹³⁴ She was not alone in using an umbrella to fight the unforgiving Dallas summer sun while simultaneously fighting for her rights to partake in industrial democracy. Many strikers, like Boland, preferred to use an umbrella for sun protection rather than the more practical summer bonnet. Their use of umbrellas was a strategic and deliberate choice,

¹³⁴ “New Style Picketing with Umbrellas Used in Millinery Strike,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1937. Folder 13, Box 2E308, Labor Movement in Texas Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

considering the strikers worked as milliners, making hats for the women of Dallas and the greater Southwest. It would not do for the milliners to appear on the picket line wearing hats made in the very factories against whom they were striking. Umbrellas worked just fine; they blocked the sun and also provided a suitable canvas on which to broadcast their message.

Labor unrest was not new to Dallas. The city previously experienced strikes involving streetcar workers in 1898 and building tradesmen in 1919. Given its pro-business status as an Open-Shop City since 1919, Dallas earned the reputation of being firmly anti-union. This perception extended well into the New Deal Era and beyond. Indeed, Charles Poe, a union representative with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), stated that by the mid-1930s, “Dallas [was] the worst town in America for labor.”¹³⁵

The International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) led one of the most significant labor disputes in the city’s history up to that point. Dallas’s garment workers labored for low wages in inhospitable working conditions. For example, one of the strikers, Charlotte Graham, recalled that one of the garment factories was “a hot and dirty place with no fans, where lint and dust hung from the ceiling.”¹³⁶ At the request of local garment workers, the ILGWU sent a representative to Dallas in 1934 to organize the workers. The workers, with the support of the Union, agreed to go on strike if

¹³⁵ “Fight Upon Open Shop Started by Federation,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 10, 1937. Folder 13, Box 2E308, Labor Movement in Texas Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹³⁶ As quoted in Melissa Hield, “‘Union-Minded’: Women in the Texas ILGWU, 1933-1950,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 62.

manufacturers did not raise wages and lower working hours. The manufacturers refused to accept the workers' demands.

On February 7, 1935, Dallas dressmakers began picketing. The strike quickly expanded to include all fifteen manufacturing plants in the city. What started as an organized, peaceful strike quickly devolved into violence and chaos. Strikers soon began to confront and attack both police and strikebreakers. The police reciprocated in kind, sending some strikers to the hospital and others to jail. Dallas police arrested at least eighty-six women during the course of the ten-month strike. According to historian Patricia E. Hill, "most of the violence stemmed from police efforts to enforce injunctions."¹³⁷ When recalling, years later, a strike amongst the city's millinery workforce in 1937, millinery labor organizer Carmen Lucia iterated that the violence experienced by dressmakers at the hands of law enforcement served as a poignant reminder to the striking milliners of the risks they were taking in their own fight. She stated:

There had been a lot of violence, and the Texas Rangers were used to cope with the girls. They were all girls, and, they were fighting mad at the conditions that prevailed in the shop, so they did their best to try to win the strike, but the Texas Rangers were vicious. They beat up the girls, and they arrested them, and they used to push them around.¹³⁸

Aside from Lucia's recollections, there appears to be no other reference to involvement by the Texas Rangers in the dressmakers' strike. Given the length of time between the event and her oral history years later, it is possible Carmen Lucia misremembered the participation of the Rangers. However, numerous accounts confirm that such violence did

¹³⁷ Hill, "Real Women and True Womanhood," *Labor's Heritage* 5, no. 4 (June 1994): 9.

¹³⁸ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

occur at the hands of Dallas police and private security forces hired by the manufacturing firms.¹³⁹

After ten months of striking, the ILGWU and manufacturers failed to reach an agreement. But time had run out for the Union, who could no longer afford to continue the strike. As a result, workers voted to end it and return to work.¹⁴⁰ The strike, one of the longest in Dallas's history, passed into history with little press coverage in November of 1935.

The dressmakers' strike failed to make any lasting change in the Dallas manufacturing industry. However, it clearly illustrated the militant nature of workers and law enforcement, which became a defining characteristic of so many garment strikes in the American south in the mid-1930s. Jacqueline Dowd Hall's exploration of the 1929 rayon mill strike in Tennessee provides another example. When strikers ignored injunctions stating that workers could not demonstrate, the governor called in the National Guard. Hall estimates that over 1,250 people were arrested for confrontations, sometimes violent, between strikers and the National Guard.¹⁴¹

While the dressmakers continued their strike, tensions between the city's millinery manufacturers and their workforce continued to rise through the mid-1930s. By the summer of 1937, they reached a breaking point. The overwhelmingly female workforce wanted to see higher wages and shorter working hours, conditions they previously enjoyed under progressive New Deal legislation, but which reverted to pre-New Deal levels in 1935, when the Supreme Court ruled the National Industrial Recovery

¹³⁹ Hill, "Real Women and True Womanhood," 11.

¹⁴⁰ Hill, "Real Women and True Womanhood," 15.

¹⁴¹ Hall, "Disorderly Women," 365-366.

Act (NIRA) unconstitutional. At the heart of the conflict between the workers and the employers was the desire to see unionizing efforts go unimpeded at the factories where the women worked. As union members and employers struggled to reach a suitable consensus, newspapers, such as the *Dallas Morning News*, reported that a strike among the city's millinery workforce looked to be inevitable.

Dallas Millinery Under the New Deal:

Millinery employment declined noticeably in the years leading up to the Great Depression. In 1910, government statistics showed that approximately 133,365 people were employed in the millinery industry nationally. By 1930, the number dropped to 49,794 workers and continued to fall.¹⁴² Numerous factors contributed to this decline, the most obvious being changes in fashion. Stylistically, hats became more streamlined, requiring less trimming and, therefore a less skilled workforce. Some women even rejected hats altogether and began to go bareheaded in public.

Following the stock market crash in 1929, the U.S. economy went into a tailspin. The crash hit craft industries especially hard.¹⁴³ With so many people out of work, the financial ability to purchase luxury goods, such as millinery, dropped precipitously, jeopardizing the livelihoods of milliners. The seasonal unpredictability of employment further compounded the challenges facing millinery workers nationwide. By the spring of 1933, the number of millinery workers in the United States dropped to 27,440, a decline

¹⁴² U.S. Department of Commerce, *Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States*, by Alba Edwards, 106, 114.

¹⁴³ Craft industries refer to occupations and trades where the production is completed by hand, not machine, by skilled artisans.

of around forty-five percent from just three years prior.¹⁴⁴ The Great Depression had pushed the millinery industry to the point of crisis. Its workforce feared what their futures would hold.

Women in industrial trades saw their financial solvency hit hard, especially those in Texas.¹⁴⁵ Female industrial workers in the state suffered some of the lowest wages in the nation.¹⁴⁶ A report by the Women's Bureau found that white women working in industrial jobs in Texas earned an average of only \$8.75 (\$181.99 in today's value) per week. Mexican-American and African-American women earned even less. Their weekly earnings totaled \$5.85 (\$121.68 in today's value) and \$5.95 (\$123.76 in today's value), respectively.¹⁴⁷ Millinery workers in the state, like their sisters in garment factories, may not have even reached that pay threshold. One startling statistic from 1931 revealed that "the median wage for Texas garment factory workers, almost all of whom were female, was less than \$6 a week for forty-four to fifty-four hours."¹⁴⁸ Given the similarity between the women's garment and millinery industries, it is probably that millinery workers experienced similar, if not lower, weekly wages. Indeed, the Women's Bureau report highlights that Mexican-American women working in the hat-making industry earned a meager \$3.85 (\$85.62 in today's value) per week, with no data provided on the

¹⁴⁴ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry as Approved on December 15, 1933 by President Roosevelt* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 3.

¹⁴⁵ The most common industries employing women in Texas were: Telephone operators; laundries; millinery; garment trades; and cotton mills. Judith McArthur and Harold L. Smith, *Texas Through Women's Eyes: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter 4, Table 3.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Women in Texas Industries: Hours, Wages, Working Conditions, and Home Work*, by Mary Loretta Sullivan and Bertha Blair (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936): 14.

¹⁴⁸ \$6 in 1931 is equal to \$114,12 in today's value. McArthur, *Texas Through Women's Eyes*, 84-85.

wages of black hat-makers.¹⁴⁹ However, the survey does report white women averaging approximately \$10.25 (\$227.95 in today's value) per week.¹⁵⁰ Of the industries covered in the report, only eight hat establishments had the necessary payroll data to be included in the final analysis. The lack of proper record-keeping is unsurprising, as payroll records for millinery manufacturers were notoriously inaccurate or missing entirely.¹⁵¹ Therefore, the report's wage data may be skewed given the small statistical sample.

Seeing the devastation the Great Depression had on industrial trades, including millinery, the federal government attempted to restore some stability to manufacturing industries.¹⁵² As part of his New Deal reforms, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the NIRA into law during the summer of 1933.¹⁵³ Overseen by a newly designated federal agency, the National Recovery Administration (NRA), the Act limited working hours and established minimum wages across numerous industries nationwide. According to historian Judith McArthur, NIRA "provided the first minimum wage guarantee Texas women had ever experienced."¹⁵⁴

One of the most significant aspects of NIRA was Section 7a, which stated that "employees shall have the right to organize and collectively bargain through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or

¹⁴⁹ The report does not differentiate whether these women worked in millinery manufacturing or in the production of men's headwear.

¹⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, *Women in Texas Industries*, by Mary Loretta Sullivan and Bertha Blair, 14.

¹⁵¹ For more information on the challenges of surveying the payroll records of millinery establishments, see Mary Van Kleeck's *A Seasonal Industry: A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York* and *Wages in the Millinery Trade* and Bertha Nienburg's *Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States*.

¹⁵² By this time, most millinery was mass-produced in factories. Because of this, it was no longer a craft industry but classified as part of the industrial trades.

¹⁵³ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 1.

¹⁵⁴ McArthur, *Texas Through Women's Eyes*, 84.

coercion of employers of labor or their agents.”¹⁵⁵ Section 7a became a thorn in the side of the Dallas Open Shop Association (DOSAs) because it hindered their ability to maintain control over the city’s labor supply and limit union presence in the industrial sector.

Addressing the millinery industry specifically, the NRA oversaw the creation of the “Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry.” It determined the parameters by which the millinery industry could operate in the United States. Across the nation, the Code set the work week at 37½ hours, with no more than 7½ hours worked in a 24-hour period. It did permit overtime, but only during certain times of the year, and strongly encouraged employers to do away with it altogether.¹⁵⁶

Understanding variations in the cost of living throughout the country, the Code divided the country into four regions and adjusted minimum wages accordingly. It required milliners and millinery manufacturers in Texas, located in Region 4, to pay their workers a minimum of \$13 (\$289.11 in today’s value) a week. The Code also stipulated that certain professions within the millinery industry required a minimum hourly wage as well, which often placed these workers’ weekly earnings well above the \$13 threshold.¹⁵⁷ This wage of \$13 a week more than doubled the weekly wages some millinery workers previously earned. Such an increase significantly improved their livelihoods during the height of the Great Depression.

¹⁵⁵ “National Industrial Recovery Act,” June 16, 1933. Library of Congress.

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/national-industrial-recovery-act>.

¹⁵⁶ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 7.

Table 2: *Hourly Wages for Millinery Occupations – Texas.*
 Source: National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 7.

| Occupation | Wage (hr.) | Weekly Earnings (based on 37 ½ hour week) |
|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Blockers | \$0.70 | \$26.25 |
| Operators | \$0.60 | \$22.50 |
| Cutters | \$0.60 | \$22.50 |
| Milliners (trimmers) | \$0.45 | \$16.88 |

The Code Authority, an 18-member committee, made up of representatives from various regional millinery associations, had the power to enforce the Code.¹⁵⁸ Given the power of the open shop movement in Dallas and the city’s conservative response to many New Deal programs, it is perhaps not surprising that the Dallas-based Southwestern Retail Milliners Association did not appear on the Code Authority’s roster. Indeed, it is worth noting that no millinery association from a southern state, aside from Georgia, had representation on the Code Authority. The Code Authority also controlled the use of the official NRA label. Manufacturers who abided by the Code could request an official NRA label be sewn into their hats, showcasing that the manufacturers operated under fair labor standards. According to the Code, “Each label shall bear a registration number especially assigned to each member of the industry by the Code Authority.”¹⁵⁹ The NRA’s use of labels harkens back to similar attempts by Helen Mahon’s Chicago Milliner’s Union to label hats made in pro-union shops and of the NCL’s use of “white labels” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to identify products manufactured under favorable labor conditions.

¹⁵⁸ Millinery associations who had representatives on the Code Authority include the Midwestern Millinery Association, Inc., the Associated Millinery Industries of St. Louis (Mo.), Inc., the New England Millinery Manufacturers and Jobbers Association, the Women’s Headwear Group, Inc., the Eastern Millinery Association, Inc., the National Association of Ladies’ Hatters, Inc., the Pacific Coast Millinery Association, the Philadelphia Millinery Manufacturers Association, the Cleveland Hat Manufacturers Group, and the Millinery Manufacturers of Atlanta, Georgia. National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 8-9.

¹⁵⁹ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 11.

The Creation of the Dallas Millinery Council:

The Dallas Millinery Council, a consortium of many of the city's wholesale millinery manufacturers, officially formed in 1933 to champion the business interests of millinery factory owners. In response to the establishment of the Millinery Code of Fair Competition, which set down definitive rules regarding wages and hours in the industry, the Dallas Millinery Council agreed to abide by their own interpretation of the Code. While the Code stipulated a 37 ½ hour workweek and a \$13 per week wage minimum, Dallas-based millinery manufacturers stated they would “operate on a basis of forty hours per week maximum with a minimum pay of \$12 per week” for all employees.¹⁶⁰ The *Dallas Morning News* speculated that adopting the Code would impact about 1,000 millinery workers in the city.¹⁶¹

However, almost six months later, in late December of 1933, the Dallas Millinery Council insisted the Code could not be implemented without the city's entire millinery industry operating at a loss. Charles Fox, vice-president of the Council, argued that the hourly wage schedule laid out in the Code did not adequately consider differences in the markets and cost of living between northern and southern states. Expressing his frustration, Fox stated, “the code was drafted by New York manufacturers and is based on the wages they have been paying.”¹⁶² Dallas, still a fledgling millinery market compared to New York City, could not pay their workers the hourly wages for specialists stipulated in the Code. The Dallas Millinery Council insisted on a minimum wage of \$12

¹⁶⁰ National Recovery Administration, *Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry*, 7.

¹⁶¹ “Texas Industry Quickly Joins Recovery Plan,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 26, 1933.

¹⁶² “17 Dallas Millinery Plants Close; 1,200 Workers Affected,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 24, 1933.

an hour and asked that no wage schedule be implemented.¹⁶³ Wage schedules, they argued, should be up to the individual factories, allowing them to pay what wages they could. In attempts to force the Code Authority into action, Fox, on behalf of the Dallas Millinery Council, announced that all seventeen Dallas millinery factories would shut down operations until a solution to the problem could be reached.¹⁶⁴ Thankfully for the approximately 1,000 millinery workers confronting layoffs, the shutdown ended quickly. Three days later, the Code Authority agreed to halt the implementation of wage schedules for the time being, while the Dallas Millinery Council agreed to meet the original minimum wage and hour requirements set down in the Code.¹⁶⁵ After Congress declared NIRA unconstitutional in May 1935, many Dallas manufacturers quickly expressed their continued adherence to certain policies enacted under the Act. Following the actions of other Dallas-based retail and manufacturing associations, the Dallas Millinery Council reported they would, for the time being, keep working hours and wages the same as they had been under the Act. However, they made the “decision to ignore trade practice agreements” the NRA established to govern the national millinery industry.¹⁶⁶ Dallas millinery workers worried it would not be long before the Council back-pedaled on its promise to maintain wages at the existing levels.

¹⁶³ See Table 1.

¹⁶⁴ “17 Dallas Millinery Plants Close; 1,200 Workers Affected,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 24, 1933.

¹⁶⁵ “Milliners to Reopen Factories on Stay of Application of Code,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 27, 1933.

¹⁶⁶ “Milliners to Have New Code; Pay and House to Be Same,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 2, 1935.

Circumventing the National Industrial Recovery Act:

As soon as the NRA introduced the “Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry,” Texas manufacturers sought ways to circumvent the new regulations on hours and wages. Many owners and upper-level management viewed the Code as a way to undercut their profits and a means by which government could infringe on their liberties and powers as business owners. Broadly encompassing any means by which the manufacturers swindled workers out of their rightful pay, “chiseling” had long existed in the millinery industry, and other garment trades, even before the passage of NIRA.¹⁶⁷ However, workers now appeared more cognizant of its illegality. Chiseling often took the form of kickbacks or mischaracterizing the nature of work in record keeping and employee records. For instance, a manufacturer might categorize all the employees in his factory as “milliners” instead of identifying them as “operators,” “cutters,” or “blockers.” Given that the “Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry” assigned “milliners” a lower minimum hourly wage than operators, cutters, and blockers, it served the financial interests of manufacturers to identify their workers in the category that would cost them the least.¹⁶⁸

Kickbacks also appeared as a common way to circumvent the NRA-approved codes. Later recalling her time in Dallas, millinery labor organizer Carmen Lucia believed such practices were rampant within the city’s millinery district. She stated that the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union believed “many of

¹⁶⁷ Hill, *Dallas*, 136.

¹⁶⁸ See Table 1.

the workers had to kick back, either to the foreman or to the employer” even though workers were often reluctant to talk about it.¹⁶⁹

Unfortunately, the NRA did not last long enough to see many reforms have a lasting economic impact. The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in May 1935.¹⁷⁰ However, some manufacturers, especially those along the East Coast, felt the “Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry” contained some beneficial aspects, and wanted to see it continue in another form. Given their conservative views towards labor and attempts at circumventing the NRA codes, it is unlikely the Dallas millinery manufacturers truly wanted to see the Code enforced through other means, despite the Dallas Millinery Council’s promise to keep hours and wages consistent to NRA-era levels. Millinery workers, on the other hand, largely favored its continuation. A general sense of unease existed among the workers concerning the dissolution of the NRA and how it would impact their work. They worried that all the gains they had made, especially regarding wages and working conditions, would be undone. Other garment industries in Dallas already cut wages back to pre-NRA levels.¹⁷¹ Millinery workers wondered just how long it would be until the millinery industry followed suit?

A few months after the dissolution of the NRA, Robert Wagner, a senator from New York and ardent New Deal supporter, championed a new piece of legislation ensuring certain protections for workers would continue. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), more commonly known as the Wagner Act, passed into law on July 5, 1935. The Act helped codify certain aspects of Section 7a from the NIRA, including

¹⁶⁹ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

¹⁷⁰ Paul Brissenden, “Progress and Poverty in the Millinery Industry,” *The Journal of Business of the University of Chicago* 12, no. 2 (April 1939): 114.

¹⁷¹ Hill, *Dallas*, 133.

workers' rights to collective bargaining. Additionally, the Act established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to oversee its enforcement. The NLRB, comprised of three members appointed by the President, ran investigations into unfair labor charges, upheld union elections, and attempted to mediate labor disputes between employers and employees through settlements.¹⁷²

Responding to the unease of their own workers about the status of the millinery industry within changing New Deal legislation, New York City millinery manufacturers united to form The Millinery Stabilization Commission in 1936. Though not a national or federal organization like the NRA, the Commission proved instrumental in further investigating conditions within the millinery industry, not just in New York City, but across the country.

An Industry in Crisis:

At the request of the Millinery Stabilization Commission, the Women's Labor Bureau implemented a nationwide survey of conditions in the millinery industry in 1937. A year later, they published their findings in a technical report entitled the "Report on the Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States." However, many members of the millinery community found the verbiage of the report too complicated. They requested the Women's Labor Bureau publish a simplified version of the report, which they did in 1941.¹⁷³

¹⁷² "1935 Passage of the Wagner Act," About NLRB, National Labor Relations Board, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/who-we-are/our-history/1935-passage-of-the-wagner-act>; "What We Do," About NLRB, National Labor Relations Board, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/what-we-do>.

¹⁷³ The *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry* stated that the intended audience of the "popular version" of the Bureau's report was "for distribution among employees in the industry and for use among civic interest groups." – U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery*

The report concluded what many already knew: the United States millinery industry was in a state of crisis. It identified seasonality as a rampant problem that seemed completely unsolvable; inconsistent wages existed across the country, and a lack of adequate business records among manufacturers and independent shop owners exacerbated seemingly insurmountable odds. Women's Bureau and the Millinery Stabilization Commission hoped the report would illuminate the ills of a troubled industry and pave the way for recommendations and creative solutions.

The report quantified the seasonal nature of the industry. In 1937, the millinery industry's busy season totaled twenty-four weeks; fifteen in the spring and nine in the fall. At either end of the busy seasons, the industry entered a brief period of transition. For a few weeks, manufacturers either increased employment in preparation for the fall and spring busy seasons or laid off workers in anticipation of the slow season.¹⁷⁴ Despite the best efforts of millinery associations, seasonality appeared to remain the one constant in the industry.¹⁷⁵

The report identified twelve regions with the highest volume of production, where large millinery firms exceeded \$1,000,000 in sales annually. The report identified Texas as one of the regions, with three percent of the national millinery workforce and two to three percent of national sales.¹⁷⁶ This appears to be the first recorded instance where researchers studied the millinery industry in Texas in any great depth.

Industry by Mary Robinson (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, Government Printing Office), introduction.

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Conditions in the Millinery Industry in the United States* by Bertha Nienburg (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 2.

¹⁷⁵ The "Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry" identified eliminating the seasonal nature of the industry as one of their main goals. By increasing wages and decreasing hours, the NRA and the Code Authority hoped to flatten out seasonal spikes in employment, creating a more uniform level of employment throughout the entire year.

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry*, 4.

The report identifies Texas as one of the most overcrowded regions when considering the proportion of jobs to workers. It stated that the region experienced “over 2½ times as many workers available as were employed in any single week.”¹⁷⁷ Too many workers for too few jobs became a defining characteristic of the Texas millinery industry. Competition for jobs allowed Texas millinery firms to pay their workers a much lower wage than other regions of the country. The report found that the average wage in Texas was a mere 36.8 cents per hour, scaled back from the forty cents per hour trimmers previously made under the “Code of Fair Competition for the Millinery Industry.”¹⁷⁸ The fears of the millinery workers about their economic status had been realized. All the gains they achieved during the brief period of the NIRA had been rolled back or eliminated.

Despite the less than adequate pay, the number of independent millinery shops and wholesale factories operating in Dallas increased. The 1937 Dallas City Directory listed forty-seven millinery retailers and twenty wholesale firms located in the city, up from twenty-nine retailers and four wholesalers in 1915.¹⁷⁹ The millinery industry in Texas, Dallas specifically, appeared to be thriving. By while the increase in manufacturing brought in more profits for factory owners, the livelihoods of the workers remained precarious.

The shift towards wholesale manufacturing across the nation also brought about changes in the social profile of workers. Where previously, millinery was viewed as a trade for native-born white women, new modes of production now allowed factories to

¹⁷⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry*, 17.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry*, 28. See Table 2.

¹⁷⁹ *1937 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library; *1915 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

employ unskilled workers, often immigrants. However, such demographic changes do not appear to reflect the worker demographics in Texas millinery establishments. The 1930 population census for Texas documented the sex and race of milliners, arranged by city. Of the 1,088 female milliners in the state, the largest portion, 381, worked in Dallas. Of those 381 workers, 369 identified as native-born white women, seven as immigrants, and only one identified as African American.¹⁸⁰ According to Carmen Lucia, a labor organizer sent to Dallas in 1937, of the 600 to 700 workers employed in millinery manufacturing in the city at that time, only a handful of the women identified as African American. She expressed surprise that there were any at all given “the prejudice that must have existed” within the factories at that time.¹⁸¹ While the rest of the nation, if not embracing the new worker demographic, certainly adapted to it, the Texas millinery establishments did not experience the same level of diversification. Thus they remained entrenched in current business practices, not challenged enough to address the needs of a changing workforce.

Ford’s Reign of Terror on Organized Labor:

In response to the gains workers experienced under New Deal legislation, Dallas elites scaled up their hostility towards organized labor. Without the protection of unions, Dallas working-class men and women faced dire economic circumstances and limited opportunities to address them.

¹⁸⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 12: Males and Females 10 Years Old and Over in Selected Occupations, by Color, Nativity, and Age, for Cities of 100,000 or More,” 1930 Census: Volume 4, Chapter 12, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-4/41129482v4ch12.pdf>.

¹⁸¹ Oral History with Carmen Lucia. Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

Prior to the advent of the Dallas Open Shop Association (DOSA), the city willingly cooperated with the AFL and their representatives. The AFL operated predominantly as a craft union and catered to skilled workers in the city. Many semiskilled workers in industrial trades, such as mine work and the garment trades, felt the AFL failed to address their needs. In response, they began to form their own unions. In 1935, leaders of several industrial trades united to form the Committee on Industrial Organization (CIO). The CIO represented industrial workers but still operated under the umbrella of the AFL.

According to Len DeCaux, the CIO's publicist, the "CIO started as a new kind of labor movement, a challenge to the old AFL and the status quo it complacently guarded."¹⁸² And challenge the AFL it did. As the CIO made tremendous strides in organizing the industrial trades, AFL leadership worried about the power the CIO amassed and the way it operated. Max Zaritsky, one of the original CIO leaders, represented the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union. Sensing the growing tensions between the AFL and the CIO, he began to scale back his affiliation with the CIO and more firmly align the Union with the AFL. Zaritsky's decision proved fortuitous for the union. In March of 1937, the AFL dismissed the CIO and all its affiliated unions, just a few months before violence erupted in Dallas.

One of the most formidable anti-union organizations in the United States during the 1930s was the Ford Motor Company. Based out of Dearborn, Michigan, Ford opened an assembly plant in Dallas in 1915, which churned out almost 300 cars a day.¹⁸³ For the

¹⁸² Len DeCaux, as quoted by Melvyn Dubofsky. Melvyn Dubofsky, *Hard Work: The Making of Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 135-136.

¹⁸³ Hill, *Dallas*, 148.

first few decades of operation, the Dallas plant operated successfully without a union. However, by the mid-1930s, employees began expressing the desire to unionize, which concerned upper-level management. According to a NLRB hearing, Ford officials tasked Stanley “Fats” Perry, an intimidating-looking employee at the Dallas plant, with investigating pro-union activities taking place in and around the city.¹⁸⁴ The Ford Motor Company was particularly interested in disrupting any organizing efforts by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) because of their attempts to organize auto workers in other cities.¹⁸⁵ However, Ford chose not to discriminate solely against the CIO. The Company viewed anyone connected with unions, or who expressed any union sympathies, as potential targets for intimidation and even violence. AFL representatives and Socialist Party members would all suffer at the hands of Ford’s “war on labor” in Dallas.

When Ford’s violence and intimidation tactics first came to light, the AFL remained noticeably silent. Even the local Dallas pro-labor newspaper, *The Craftsman*, did not report heavily on Ford’s actions because the paper aligned with the views of the AFL and not the CIO.¹⁸⁶ However, the AFL found itself in an uncomfortable position in 1937 when Ford’s “goon-squad” brutally beat George Baer, an organizer with the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union, an affiliate of the AFL, in Dallas.

¹⁸⁴ Hill, *Dallas*, 148.

¹⁸⁵ After the split between the AFL and the CIO, the CIO changed their name from the Committee on Industrial Organization to the Congress of Industrial Organizations and operated independently of the AFL. For clarity, any subsequent use of CIO in this paper refers to the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

¹⁸⁶ Hill, *Dallas*, 131.

Two years earlier, in 1935, Max Zaritsky, president of the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union received numerous letters from Dallas millinery workers wanting to form a union chapter. Acquiescing, Zaritsky sent George Baer, one of the union's labor organizers, to Dallas to meet with the workers.¹⁸⁷ In the summer of 1936, the union officially stationed Baer in Dallas to form a local chapter of the union.¹⁸⁸ He, and a fellow organizer, held meetings at Baer's house to recruit interested milliners. By September 1936, the Union secured enough interest to form a local chapter of the Union. Local 57, the Dallas chapter of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, was officially chartered in Fort Worth, Texas, on September 8, 1936.¹⁸⁹ Union officials probably felt it was safer to charter the chapter just outside of Dallas, given the city's view on unions. Miss Mossie Crofford, a twenty-seven-year-old machine operator working at the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company Inc., was one of about forty workers who traveled to Fort Worth to attend the charter meeting. Almost a year later, on August 5, 1937, the chapter finally held its first meeting in Dallas at the Jefferson Hotel, with over 125 millinery workers in attendance.¹⁹⁰

Two days after the union meeting, on August 9, 1937, George Baer met with M. Bierner of Bierner & Son, one of Dallas' leading millinery manufacturing companies, to discuss organizing the workers at the factory. They met at the Bierner's office on Commerce Street, in the heart of the city's wholesale millinery district. Upon leaving the meeting, three unknown individuals kidnapped Baer and brutally assaulted him.

¹⁸⁷ Some news sources refer to Baer as the vice-president of the union. However, this appears to be erroneous as official NLRB documents refer to him simply as an organizer.

¹⁸⁸ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

¹⁸⁹ I can find no evidence explaining why the chapter was chartered in Fort Worth and not in Dallas. It is perhaps because of Dallas' vehement anti-unionism, that the union felt it safer to officially charter outside the city limits.

¹⁹⁰ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

Witnesses reported seeing the men hit Baer repeatedly over the head with a blackjack before forcing him into a car and driving away.¹⁹¹ Baer recounted years later that his attackers left him unconscious and seriously injured on the side of a road outside the city. When he regained consciousness, he flagged down a passing car. The driver agreed to take him to the hospital. When the driver learned of Baer's union connections, his demeanor changed. He became terrified and wanted Baer out of his car as quickly as possible. Emphasizing the fear crippling the city, Carmen Lucia remembered, "It was the atmosphere that existed in Dallas as a result of the anti-union attitude, as a result of the beatings, as a result of the newspaper items that appeared in the local paper..."¹⁹² Such was the hold Ford and other anti-union elites had over the people of Dallas. The fear of being connected to any union prevented people from partaking in simple acts of human decency, like driving an injured man to the hospital.

Despite the *Dallas Morning News* initially reporting otherwise, George Baer suffered severe injuries. He experienced numerous "lacerations to the scalp, an orbital hematoma of the left eye and possible head injuries."¹⁹³ Fearing the attackers would return to kill Baer, the Union tried to secure him police protection while he remained in the hospital, but Dallas police denied their request. Unfortunately, the Union's instinct proved correct. Carmen Lucia later recalled that someone "attempted at one stage to go into the room and throw him out of the [hospital] window."¹⁹⁴ The attackers, or their associates, also went so far as to call Baer's wife at home and inform her that they had

¹⁹¹ A blackjack is a concealable weapon used for the purpose of bludgeoning. It is similar to a policeman's billy club. "Union Official Kidnaped, Carried to Country and Blackjacked After Fight on Downtown Sidewalk," *Dallas Morning News*, August 10, 1937.

¹⁹² Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

¹⁹³ "In Hospital for Week," *Dallas Morning News*, August 11, 1937.

¹⁹⁴ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

ten hours to leave Dallas or face the consequences.¹⁹⁵ After that, Dallas police finally awarded Baer police protection, but the Union remained fearful for his safety and sent him away from the city.

Although it wouldn't be revealed until much later, the men sent to attack George Baer belonged to Ford's strong-arm group in Dallas. This information came to light during an investigation and subsequent hearing by the NLRB in 1940.¹⁹⁶ Previously, Baer and the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union assumed the Dallas millinery industry orchestrated the attack. Unfortunately, by the time the attackers were identified as Ford agents, the statute of limitations had expired. Baer and the Union could no longer file charges against the Ford Motor Company.

One question remained though. Why did the Ford Motor Company target George Baer? How did a representative of an AFL-affiliated union get caught up in Ford's battle with the CIO? Union President Max Zaritsky believed his personal views regarding the AFL's stance on organizing the industrial trades may have played a role.

Many labor organizers considered Zaritsky one of the more liberal union leaders at the time. People knew him as "the kind of person that worked with the rank and file."¹⁹⁷ He wanted to be directly involved when it came to strikes and other attempts at organization. As such, he often traveled to cities where organizing events occurred. This meant his work with the AFL was often publicized, including his previous position as one of the leaders of the CIO.

¹⁹⁵ "Beaten Union Leader Given Ten Hours to Leave Dallas," *Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1937.

¹⁹⁶ *National Labor Relations Bd. v. Ford Motor Co.*, 119 F.2d 326 (5th Cir. 1941).

¹⁹⁷ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

Even though Zaritsky and the Union distanced themselves from the turmoil brewing between the AFL and the CIO, Zaritsky's previous affiliation with the CIO may have been what put Baer in danger. He speculated that, in Dallas, "every effort was being made to punish the people they thought had a background of CIO, because the CIO was trying to get recognition in the Ford Plant" and "they must have mistaken us for a CIO union, because of my affiliation, and they beat George Baer up as a result."¹⁹⁸

On the same day as the attack on George Baer, Socialist Party members George Lambert and Herbert Harris planned to show two pro-labor films in Fretz Park.¹⁹⁹

Lambert recalled years later that he and Harris decided to show the films in the park specifically because of its proximity to the South Dallas Cotton Mill, stating that they hoped to "attract some interest from the textile workers where wages and working conditions were particularly low and bad, even for Dallas."²⁰⁰ As was the case with millinery, Dallas experienced a surplus of labor across many industries. This surplus, combined with the power of anti-union business elites, allowed factories like the South Dallas Cotton Mill, to operate under subpar working conditions without penalty.

According to the "Women in Texas Industries" report, cotton mill employees worked some of the longest hours allowed by law. At the time, women could work up to fifty-four hours per week. Of the women in the cotton mills surveyed, ninety-three percent worked right up to that threshold.²⁰¹ They also experienced unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, such as poor ventilation, insufficient lighting, and hot temperatures

¹⁹⁸ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

¹⁹⁹ The titles of the films were "The Plow that Broke the Plains" and "Millions of Us."

²⁰⁰ Oral History with George Lambert, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

²⁰¹ 93% represents 1,180 workers in Texas. Sullivan and Blair, "Women in Texas Industries," 11.

in the workrooms.²⁰² Given their long hours and unsavory working conditions, it is no wonder George Lambert and Herbert Harris hoped the workers would view the films and demand change.

Towards the end of the evening, Lambert and Harris noted many large men in the audience who did not seem to appreciate the films. They stood out amongst the cotton mill workers and their families. Towards the end of the second film, one of them shouted, “Get the goddamn Communists. We don’t want any Reds in Dallas.”²⁰³ His exclamation set off an attack against the Socialists in attendance. One of the attackers knocked George Lambert to the ground, leaving him bleeding and unconscious. His wounds required numerous stitches, but he escaped the worst of the violence. His comrade, Herbert Harris, was not so lucky.

Like Lambert, Harris was knocked unconscious. In a pamphlet published the following month, Harris documented the attack and his experiences. When he came to, he found himself blindfolded and shoved into a car by a group of unknown men. As they drove away from the park, they threatened to burn him alive.²⁰⁴ They changed their minds and decided to tar and feather Harris instead, all while interrogating him. He recalled their desire to uncover his union affiliation, stating he “was abusively asked to confess that I was employed by the CIO. My reply was that I got no money from the CIO, but that the Socialist program carried a labor policy that was sympathetic.”²⁰⁵ Not getting the answers they wanted, the attackers finally drove Harris back to the city. They deposited

²⁰² Sullivan and Blair, “Women in Texas Industries,” 56-57.

²⁰³ Oral History with George Lambert, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

²⁰⁴ Herbert Harris, “Terror In Texas,” George and Latane Lambert Papers, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, 3.

²⁰⁵ Herbert Harris, “Terror In Texas,” George and Latane Lambert Papers, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, 17.

him in front of the *Dallas Morning News* building, where a photographer was ready and waiting. A photo of Harris, covered in feathers, appeared in the newspaper the following day. After recovering from the ordeal, it didn't take Harris long to conclude that the attack had been arranged by Ford's men.

The Dallas Morning News had long positioned itself as a pro-business newspaper and often painted a condescending picture of labor organizers. However, it seemed suspicious, almost *too coincidental*, that a photographer just happened to be waiting when the attackers dropped Harris off at the paper's doorstep. It would later be revealed during an NLRB hearing that "the *News* had prearranged with the Ford thugs to have Harris dropped off at the *News* so it would be much more convenient for them to get a picture of him."²⁰⁶ In addition to colluding with the *Dallas Morning News*, the hearing also uncovered that Ford collaborated with the Dallas Police Department. According to Lambert, "there had also been prearrangements with the Dallas Police that the Ford thugs wouldn't be interfered with."²⁰⁷ Such collusion explained why, despite Harris' assertion that there was plenty of evidence pointing to the Ford Motor Company, no arrests were made in the months after the attacks on Baer, Harris, and Lambert. Such a revelation also helps explain why the Dallas Police denied the Union's request that Baer be given police protection while recovering in the hospital after his own ordeal.

The attacks on labor organizers, and collusion with law enforcement, illustrate the depth of anti-union sentiment present in Dallas during the mid-1930s, as well as the lengths to which Ford would go to squash any union activity in the city. It would be into this volatile atmosphere that Dallas milliners would agitate for change.

²⁰⁶ Oral History with George Lambert, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

²⁰⁷ Oral History with George Lambert, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

“Are Angry Milliners Called Mad Hatters?”:

At the same time that Ford pursued organizers with any perceived connection to the CIO, and with memories of the violence experienced by the dressmakers still fresh in their minds, the Dallas millinery workers decided to strike.²⁰⁸ Despite worries about the possibility of a confrontation with Ford and those colluding with them, including the Dallas Police Force, the millinery workers continued to express displeasure with their working conditions and attempts to organize thwarted by manufacturers. Striking seemed like the only way to air their grievances. After the attack on Baer became public, the milliners were incensed. At the time, they, like Baer, thought Dallas millinery manufacturers ordered the attack, not Ford. How dare their employers arrange for an attack on a union man? The time had come to insist on real and lasting change.

The strike officially began on August 16, 1937, during the height of activity leading up to the fall millinery season. Because of this, employment levels in Dallas’ millinery establishments were at their highest levels for the year. Two days later, the strike expanded, and workers from eighteen different millinery manufacturing establishments in Dallas joined the picket lines. Herman Finn, the vice-president of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union boasted to the *Dallas Morning News* that he predicted one hundred percent participation among union members in the strike.²⁰⁹ In all, between 600 and 700 people, almost all women, participated, comprising a very large percentage of the city’s millinery workforce.

²⁰⁸ The title of this chapter comes from a brief aside found in the *Dallas Morning News*. *Dallas Morning News*, September 24, 1937.

²⁰⁹ “One Hat Firm, Strikers Start Negotiations,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1937.

When the NRA was abolished, Dallas millinery manufacturers rolled back many of the wages of their employees. Carmen Lucia speculated that hardly any workers earned more than \$12 per week, and a percentage of that certainly went back into the pockets of the manufacturers through kickbacks.²¹⁰ Additionally, manufacturers abolished the 37½-hour workweek established under the NIRA and returned to previous levels. In Texas, this meant female millinery could work up to nine hours a day or up to fifty-four hours per week. A report on the conditions of women working in Texas disclosed that of the 290 millinery workers surveyed, 251 reported working between fifty and fifty-four hours a week.²¹¹ Underscoring the challenges of long hours and meager pay, Jack Spry, an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), claimed that Dallas's female millinery workforce "were worse off than former negro slaves."²¹² While not quite as dramatic in their language, the Texas Bureau of Labor Statistics agreed that wages for women in the state "are beyond dispute shamelessly inadequate and therefore against the public welfare."²¹³

The milliners voiced discontent over a reduction in their wages and an increase in the hours they were required to work. However, at the heart of the strike lay the issue of organizing. Workers believed their employers violated the Wagner Act when they denied employees the opportunity to collectively bargain with a union of their choosing. The language of the 1935 Wagner Act specifically states:

Representatives designated or selected for the purpose of collective bargaining by the majority of the employees in a unit appropriate for such purposes, shall be the exclusive representatives of all the employees in

²¹⁰ Oral History with Carmen Lucia, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

²¹¹ Sullivan and Blair, *Women in Texas Industries*, 10, 12.

²¹² "Police Prevent Fight as C.I.O. Workers Talk," *Dallas Morning News*, March 7, 1938.

²¹³ Sullivan and Blair, *Women in Texas Industries*, 14.

such unit for the purposes of collective bargaining in respect to rates of pay, wages, hours of employment, or other conditions of employment.²¹⁴

The Wagner Act codified that a specific union may serve as the only collective bargaining agency for a group of employees, so long as the union could prove membership of more than fifty percent of the workforce. The United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers International Union argued that its membership represented approximately ninety percent of all milliners in the city.²¹⁵ The manufacturers did not believe the Union had such high numbers and asked to see union membership rolls as proof. However, the manufacturers may have had ulterior motives for wanting to see the union's membership rolls. Union rolls revealed not only the number of members, but also their names. Manufacturers could use this information to action against union members in their factories.

In response, the union filed charges with the NLRB against four of the city's millinery manufacturers for violating the Wagner Act, arguing that the firms discriminated against employees because of their union membership. The four firms were M. Bierner & Son, the Block-Friedman Company, the Fox-Coffey-Edge Company, and Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company, Inc.

The strike brought millinery manufacturing in the city to a halt. Some of the firms continued to operate, albeit with a much-reduced workforce. Because of the seasonality of the millinery industry, the Union attempted to maximize their leverage and cause the most disruption to the industry by timing the start of the strike with the ramp-up in production for the fall shopping season, a time when the demand for millinery workers

²¹⁴ *National Labor Relations Act, U.S. Code 29 (1935), §§ 159.*

²¹⁵ "One Hat Firm, Strikers Start Negotiations," *Dallas Morning News*, August 18, 1937.

was high. If the strike did not resolve quickly, store shelves would be bare in the coming weeks, just as shoppers looked to update their fall and winter wardrobes. The timing of the strike was a strategic measure on the part of the millinery workers to cause the most financial damage to the manufacturers.

For some of the eighteen manufacturers, the strike forced them to consider closing their doors for the season. The *Dallas Morning News* warned, in a hyperbolic tone, on August 26th that, “unless the workers are back in the factory, new lines are designed and samples in the hands of salesmen in a few days, the bulk of Southwestern businesses already will have gone elsewhere and the Dallas factories will have lost the cream of the fall business.”²¹⁶ While this statement may have been no more than a thinly-veiled threat by the pro-business newspaper to undermine the strike, elements of it rang true. Women’s fashion changed rapidly, and the longer the strike lasted, the less up-to-date the fashions on the shelves became. The most fashionable hat today might be out of style by next week. Shoppers seeking the most recent fashions would quickly take their business elsewhere. By the time the article appeared in the newspaper, the strike had entered its second week and showed no signs of ending anytime soon, especially since negotiations between the union and the manufacturers continued to deteriorate.

The timing of the strike may have been the most substantial leverage the millinery workers had, but manufacturers also saw time as a bargaining chip to further their own interests. While the strikers hoped to keep the strike going long enough to empty store shelves and pressure manufacturers to accept their demands, manufacturers hoped to run out the clock on the strikers. The longer the strike lasted, the closer it came to the end of

²¹⁶ “2 Big Hat Plants to Shut Down Sept. 1 Unless Strike Ended,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 26, 1937.

the season and when the strike ended, work opportunities would be scarce. If the strike lasted too long, millinery workers might find themselves out of a job until the next busy season. The strikers wanted the strike to last just long enough for the manufacturers to feel the pressure, but not so long as to last the entire busy season. Manufacturers were willing to wait out the strikers, knowing their workers' finances were more precarious than their own.

Remembering the violence and militancy which occurred during the Dallas dressmakers' strike just a few years previously, union president Max Zaritsky worried about the safety of the strikers and police presence. In 1935, during the dressmakers' strike, Dallas police clashed with the strikers, something Zaritsky desperately hoped to avoid in 1937. He assured the city that the millinery strike would remain peaceful and would not disrupt other business operations in the area. In exchange, the police force would not harass the strikers and protect them should the need arise. Following Zaritsky's directive, the milliners behaved peacefully, despite the increased police presence around the picketing area.

Despite the promise of peace, the recent attacks on George Baer, Herbert Harris, and George Lambert concerned Governor Allred who ordered the Texas Rangers to Dallas to monitor the strike. Thankfully, the strike continued to remain peaceful. Still recovering from the attack, Herbert Harris expressed relief at the Rangers' presence. There had been no further attacks on any union official or Socialist Party member since their arrival in Dallas. However, not everyone was so pleased. Harris recalled that "the mayor of Dallas strenuously deplored the action of the Governor in sending in the Rangers," believing the Dallas police force could handle the situation without assistance

from the Rangers.²¹⁷ The mayor would have known that the Ford Motor Company was colluding with the Dallas Police. It is possible that the mayor's office also actively participated in the collusion with Ford. Therefore, his objection to the presence of the Rangers had more to do with the fear that they would uncover his own duplicity rather than his belief that the local police couldn't protect the citizens of Dallas. They could; they just chose not to.

Conclusion:

Making the decision to strike would not have come easy to the Dallas milliners in 1937. Only two years prior, they witnessed the city's dressmakers come to blows with law enforcement as their own strike failed to force manufacturers to negotiate on wages and working conditions. Would the milliners face the same consequences?

Additionally, the anti-union mentality encompassing the city in the 1920s had only grown stronger in the intervening years. The Dallas Open Shop Association continued to exert significant power over the city's business interests. In much the same way, the Dallas Millinery Council controlled the city's millinery industry, successfully hampering efforts at worker organization in their factories.

Ford became one of the most recognizable anti-union forces in the city at this time. Through violence and intimidation, Ford successfully kept workers from organizing at their Dallas plant. But they did not stop their anti-union efforts at the doors to the plant. Associates, like "Fats" Perry, patrolled the city, looking for union members, not bothering to discriminate on their union affiliation.

²¹⁷ Herbert Harris, "Terror In Texas," George and Latane Lambert Papers, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, 10.

Recognizing the city's known attitude toward agitation, and acknowledging the very real possibility of violence, the Dallas milliners still felt the need to express their rights to participate in industrial democracy. Striking would have been the last resort. It was certainly not a decision they came to lightly. However, the Dallas milliners took to the street, advocating for better working conditions and the right to unionize. The desperation felt by the milliners which forced them to pursue such a course of action cannot be overlooked, but neither should their determination to proceed despite such adverse conditions be ignored.

Knowing full well that a strike in Dallas, at a time when labor agitation could incite intimidation and violence, had no guarantee of success, 600 to 700 of the city's milliners stood up against much more powerful forces and demanded change. Though news reports and government documents failed to record the names of the mostly female strikers, it is important to remember their commitment to workers' rights in a city notorious for undermining them. Their efforts and willingness to strike, despite the odds, only serves to further emphasize the resolve and commitment of the Dallas millinery workforce.

IV. RAMIFICATIONS AND RECOMPENSE: RESPONSES TO THE DALLAS MILLINERY STRIKE

By the end of August, the general millinery strike extended into its second week. Production for the fall and winter line of hats began at the beginning of the month. With most of the workforce now out on the picket lines, production slowed to a trickle. To salvage the season, owners operated with skeleton crews who could barely keep up with demand. Because of the seasonal nature of the industry, the financial solvency of many manufacturers depended on a successful fall selling season. As the strike dragged on and disrupted carefully planned production schedules, many of the city's eighteen millinery factory owners worried about the impact the strike would have on the Dallas economy and, more importantly, their bottom line.

Despite the fact that it adversely affected both the workers and the employers, a quick end to the strike seemed unlikely. The workers, represented by the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union, and the manufacturers, represented by the Dallas Millinery Council had reached an impasse regarding worker organization. Each side blamed the other for a failure to compromise. The Union asserted that certain millinery manufacturers in the city "engaged in unfair labor practices," including discriminating against workers they believed to be Union members. Such discrimination directly violated the Wagner Act.²¹⁸ The Dallas Millinery Council denied any such action. The Council also refused to recognize the Union as the sole agent for collective bargaining among the millinery workers since they did not believe Union membership exceeded 51 percent of the workforce.

²¹⁸ Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1940).

The Texas Industrial Commission Investigation:

In hoping to reach a compromise between the employers and employees, Governor James Allred called for a state-appointed industrial commission to investigate the causes of the strike and claims made by both parties. The Texas Industrial Commission would have the same power and authority as that of a district court.²¹⁹ Established in 1920, the Commission served to “aid the governor in arbitrating labor-management disputes.” It comprised of five members who served for two-year terms and were appointed by the governor.²²⁰ On August 30th, Governor Allred revealed the names of the five individuals appointed to oversee the investigation.²²¹ Clarence R. Miller, the vice-president of numerous Texas cotton mills, would represent the interests of the employers, while George W. Fisher, editor of the *Southwestern Railway Journal*, would represent the workers. The other three members of the commission, Everett L. Looney, Nat Harris, and O.P. Norman, represented the interests of the general public.

Everyone hoped the commission’s investigation would lead to a suitable and peaceful, solution. However, because millinery transactions often crossed state lines, the federal government also had a vested interest in the outcome of the strike. As such, Joseph S. Myers, a representative from the U.S. Conciliation Service, arrived in Dallas on the same day as the unveiling of the Texas Industrial Commission.²²² If the Commission failed to achieve a compromise between the milliners and the manufacturers, the federal government already had an individual well-positioned to intervene.

²¹⁹ The Texas Industrial Commission had been called out once before during Governor Allred’s term, during the Dallas dressmakers’ strike in 1935. He would call the Commission again, just a year later to investigate civil rights violations during the Pecan-Shellers’ strike in San Antonio.

²²⁰ “Texas Industrial Commission,” *Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, last modified September 1, 1995, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/texas-industrial-commission>.

²²¹ “U.S. and State Start Moves to End Hat Strike,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 30, 1937.

²²² “U.S. and State Start Moves to End Hat Strike,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 30, 1937.

The U.S. Conciliation Service, formed in 1913, operated as a department within the newly established Department of Labor. Members of the Service worked to negotiate settlements between workers and employers after direct negotiations failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion. The Secretary of Labor appointed various commissioners, such as Joseph Myers, to resolve labor disputes through mediation.²²³ Myers, a longtime Texas resident, and employee of the U.S. Conciliation Service, had years of experience working through arbitration cases in Texas and the nearby states.²²⁴ Should his expertise be needed, he would be ready.

Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that the Commission would face significant opposition from manufacturers. After only a week, the Texas Industrial Commission announced it had failed to reach an agreement between the workers and employers. They initially proposed to hold an election to “determine the percentage of unionists among the working milliners.”²²⁵ However, internal discord among members of the commission and the unwillingness of the manufacturers to allow an election stymied any chance of success.

Members of the Commission could not agree if holding an election to determine if the Union possessed enough members to become the sole collective bargaining agent fell within their purview. They wanted to put the notion to a vote among the five commissioners. Clarence Miller, representing the manufacturers, refused to participate in

²²³ “U.S. Conciliation Service,” *Monthly Labor Review* 65, no. 2 (August 1947): 172.

²²⁴ According to his obituary, Joseph Myers was the first Texas Labor Commissioner. He also participated in conciliation efforts during a significant copper strike in Arizona and a telephone operators strike in Arkansas, both in 1917. “First Texas Labor Commissioner Dies,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 1956; Kyra Schmidt, “Hello Girls on Strike: Telephone Operators, the Fort Smith General Strike and the Struggle for Democracy in Great War Arkansas,” (M.A. Thesis, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 2020), 33.

²²⁵ “U.S. and State Start Moves to End Hat Strike,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 30, 1937.

the vote. Should the Commission move forward with the election, Miller said he would not recognize the results. Without Miller's participation, the Commission did not have enough people to reach a majority decision, and the election among the milliners could not proceed.

Miller's refusal to acknowledge any election results conformed to the position taken by the manufacturers. Charles Fox, President of the Dallas Millinery Council and partial owner of the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, voiced his opposition to an election and vowed not to allow his employees to participate. Without the consensus of all participants in the labor dispute, and with some questions looming over the legality of holding an election, the Commission reached a stalemate. In a statement to the press, the Commission acknowledged that it could go no further towards resolving the dispute:

When [Fox] said that they would not agree for us to hold an election amongst employees on this question, it then became apparent that they would not negotiate unless compelled to do so by law. Since this commission has no legal authority to compel negotiations between employer and employee, there was nothing else for us to do but adjourn the hearing. The employees do not request anything more than an election to determine their choice of an agent for collective bargaining and have gone as far as possible to this end, in that they have expressed their willingness to call the strike and return to work pending any such election.²²⁶

According to their statement, the Commission laid the blame for the arbitration's failure on Fox and the Dallas Millinery Council. Fox's refusal to recognize the results of an election could be seen as an attempt to run down the clock on the striking workers. The longer negotiations stalled, the more desperate the strikers might become, and thus more willing to concede some of their demands.

The employees, it seemed, would willingly return to work if the employers agreed to an election. While the workers wanted to see an increase in wages and better working

²²⁶ Statement to the Press, "Ending is Abrupt," *Dallas Morning News*, September 4, 1937.

conditions, they clearly understood that the most efficient means to accomplish those goals required collective bargaining and union representation. Hence, the issue of worker organization rose to the top of the workers' demands.

In response to the breakdown of negotiations, Max Zaritsky, the head of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union, wrote a letter to Everett Looney, chairman of the Commission. In it, he expressed his disappointment and belief that the Dallas Open Shop Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the millinery manufacturers worked to "conceal and suppress the true facts" behind the nature of the strike.²²⁷ The notion of a conspiracy between the Dallas millinery manufacturers and anti-union civic organizations would continue to be an active topic of discussion among Union members.

U.S. Conciliation Service's Plans for Arbitration:

Despite the failure of the Texas Industrial Commission, another option for arbitration still existed. Zaritsky wanted Joseph Myers, the representative from U.S. Conciliation Service, and Clarence Miller from the Commission to work together on a new arbitration plan and negotiate a settlement. Miller, though, was hesitant. How would this arbitration be any different from the one undertaken by the Texas Industrial Commission?

The reasoning behind Miller's hesitation proved correct. Just as they had with the Texas Industrial Commission, Fox and the Dallas Millinery Council proved unwilling to cooperate. They did not want to work with Myers or Miller towards an amicable resolution. Instead, Fox declared that the Dallas Millinery Council "would follow through

²²⁷ "Ending is Abrupt," *Dallas Morning News*, September 4, 1937.

with the Governor's Industrial Commission before taking up any other arbitration proposals."²²⁸ This was in direct opposition to Fox's stance from just a few days prior. Whereas the manufacturers originally resisted working with the state commission, when confronted with federal government interference, suddenly, the state commission became a much more palatable option.

It appears Fox did not want to engage in federal arbitration when he felt the strike would end shortly. The strike had lasted just a little over three weeks when Fox told the *Dallas Morning News* that many of the strikers had willingly returned to work or had begun to reapply for jobs in the millinery factories.²²⁹ If Fox believed the strike would end soon without any concessions on the part of the manufacturers, it would behoove him to delay federal arbitration for as long as possible.

The same day as Fox's statements ran in the newspaper, the *Dallas Morning News* also reported that the strike had, indeed, come to a peaceful end, but that arbitration was still expected. However, the article disputes Fox's assertion that many strikers returned to their jobs. Given the lateness of the millinery season, the strikers found it difficult to return to work because the fall season was almost over. Indeed, the paper reported, "Most are seeking work in other lines until next February, when the spring season opens."²³⁰ The strike began during the height of fall production when workrooms would have been full. But by mid-September, when the strike ended, factories had already begun to lay off workers in anticipation of the slower season. The strike may have officially ended, but many strikers did not return to work because there was no work to be had. In the end, the

²²⁸ "Milliners Want State Mediation of Strike Issues," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

²²⁹ "Milliners Want State Mediation of Strike Issues," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

²³⁰ "Hatters' Strike Ends, Everyone Blames Others," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

timing of the strike may have been strategic for the strikers, but manufacturers were able to hold out longer than the workers.

The Union announced that many of the strikers remained out of work after the strike ended, but they did not see seasonality as the culprit. Rather they felt the fault lay with the manufacturers who deliberately refused to rehire some of the strikers.

Approximately 120 milliners could not find a job in the industry after the strike ended. To alleviate their suffering, the Union attempted to support the unemployed strikers by giving them a \$7 weekly contribution until they could find more stable employment. Calls that certain manufacturers, such as the Fox-Coffey-Edge Company, actively blacklisted the milliners circulated throughout the town. Blacklisting may well have happened, as the Union leveled such charges against the manufacturers in previously filed NLRB cases.²³¹

Joseph Myers expressed a willingness to work with Clarence Miller towards arbitration. He identified five specific points he hoped to see resolved through arbitration. Those points included (1) that strikers be rehired without discrimination; (2) an agreement on a 40-hour work week; (3) a ten percent increase in wages; (4) no more evasion of Texas's hours-of-work law for women; and (5) the segregation of white women from African American men in the factories.²³²

One of Myers' main aims for arbitration was establishing a standard 40-hour work week for the Dallas milliners. According to the current hour law in Texas, women could work up to 54 hours per week. Mary Sullivan's report on "Women in Texas Industries" to

²³¹ Numerous charges against Dallas millinery manufacturers were filed prior to the start of the strike. But by September 1937, the cases had not yet been heard.

²³² "Hatters' Strike Ends, Everyone Blames Others," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

the Women's Bureau, found that over half of the female milliners surveyed did, work up to the 54-hour threshold.²³³ However, Myers' wanted the work week to align more closely with that of other states. He claimed that most millinery manufacturing firms across the country operated on a 35-hour per week schedule. *The Dallas Morning News* expressed that moving to a 40-hour work week constituted a reasonable compromise between the milliners and the manufacturers.²³⁴ The milliners would work less than the state maximum, but still more than milliners in other states.

In 1937, Texas did not have an established minimum wage. Nationally, the Millinery Industry Committee recommended a \$0.40 hourly wage. The U.S. Department of Labor accepted the committee's recommendation and issued a national minimum wage for millinery workers. It went into effect on January 15, 1940.²³⁵ According to a report by the Women's Bureau, Texas milliners working in any millinery occupation made substantially less money than milliners in other states.²³⁶ Before establishing the millinery industry minimum wage, Texas was the only millinery production center studied where the average wage fell below the recommended threshold, with the average hourly wage just below \$0.37.²³⁷

Even if Myers succeeded in increasing Texas millinery workers' wages by ten percent, he believed it would only bring them up to half of what milliners made in other cities. As illustrated in Table 3, Illinois milliners made approximately twenty-seven percent more, and milliners in New York City made fifty-two percent more than Texas

²³³ Sullivan and Blair, *Women in Texas Industries*, 12.

²³⁴ "Hatters' Strike Ends, Everyone Blames Others," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

²³⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry*, 28.

²³⁶ See Table 2.

²³⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, *Primer of Problems in the Millinery Industry*, 28.

milliners. Some manufacturers pointed to the higher cost of living in the north as justification for their higher wages. If it cost more to live in the northern portions of the country, of course, manufactures needed to pay their workers more. In response, Myers referenced a recent Bureau of Labor Statistics survey which claimed the cost of living in northern cities was only three percent higher than the cost of living in southern cities. He believed a three percent cost-of-living differential did not justify a thirty to fifty percent wage differential.²³⁸

*Table 3: Anticipated Weekly Wages in Texas Millinery Occupations.
Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, "Conditions in the Millinery Industry."*

| Occupation | Texas Weekly Wage | Illinois Weekly Wage | New York City Weekly Wage |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Blocker | \$17.45 | \$35.37 | \$43.27 |
| Cutter | \$16.97 | \$36.05 | \$42.68 |
| Operator | \$14.14 | \$24.83 | \$37.43 |
| Trimmer | \$11.40 | \$14.59 | \$18.55 |
| General Factory Worker | \$11.59 | \$15.12 | \$17.27 |
| Average | \$14.15 | \$19.50 | \$27.18 |

According to Myers, the Texas Industrial Commission's investigation revealed that certain millinery manufacturers violated the Texas hour law.²³⁹ The hour law, passed in 1913 and expanded in 1915, limited the number of hours women in Texas could work in a single day to nine hours.²⁴⁰ For example, reports circulated that Justice Walter Stovall fined J.H. Mittleman, the manager of Queen Hat Company, \$111.70 for working Evelyn Wells and Thelma Nelson above the maximum hours they could legally work.²⁴¹ The investigation also uncovered that white women worked "in close proximity with half-clothed negro workmen," something Myers found completely objectionable.²⁴²

²³⁸ "Millinery Truce," *Dallas Morning News*, September 10, 1937.

²³⁹ See *Women in Texas Industries* for a more complete explanation of the law.

²⁴⁰ McArthur, *Texas Through Women's Eyes*, 6.

²⁴¹ "Fines of \$223 Follow Action by State Men," *Dallas Morning News*, September 21, 1937.

²⁴² "Hatters' Strike Ends, Everyone Blames Others," *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

Myer's fixation on the proximity of black male workers to white female workers is puzzling as many Dallas workplaces experienced racial segregation at the time. It is well-documented that Dallas textile mills segregated their workers based on race.²⁴³ There is little evidence to suggest millinery factories operated any differently. U.S. census records do not provide statistics on the number of black men employed in the millinery trade in Texas, or Dallas more specifically. It is plausible that the numbers were too low to be statistically relevant. However, it is more likely that these workers were classified as another occupation entirely. In many instances, black men would have worked, not in the production of hats at all, but rather as manual laborers, such as porters. In the NLRB case against Bierner & Son, testimony from one of the workers indicates the presence of black men working in the factory as porters.²⁴⁴ The 1930 census records identify 755 black men who worked in Dallas as "laborers, porters, and helpers in stores."²⁴⁵ While it is impossible to discern how many of the 755 men worked specifically in Dallas's millinery factories, it is unlikely the few that did walked around millinery factories "half-clothed," as Myers claimed. Myers' statement may be reflective of his own white supremacist logic. While there is no evidence to suggest that Myers was involved with the KKK, as a lifelong Texan, Myers would have been all too familiar with KKK ideology.

Furthermore, millinery factories often exhibited occupational segregation.

Designated spaces for certain occupations within millinery production often grouped

²⁴³ Stephen Amberg, "Varieties of Capitalist Development: Worker-Manager Relations in the Texas Apparel Industry, 1935-1975," *Social Science History* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 246.

²⁴⁴ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 4: Gainful Workers 10 Years Old and Over by Occupation and Sex, for the State and Cities of 100,000 or More," 1930 Census: Vol. 4, Chapter 12, accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-4/41129482v4ch12.pdf>.

workers based on tasks, thus separating them from other workers engaged in different aspects of hat production. In the past, when small, independent shops created bespoke hats, all the workers sat around tables making one hat at a time. The trimmer would be just as likely to be seated next to the designer as to the person making a hat frame. However, with technological achievements and the introduction of scientific management, millinery production became subdivided into a series of tasks. Incorporating new machinery, such as hydraulic presses, required a reconfiguration of the workplace, and therefore the workforce.²⁴⁶ As a result, millinery factories experienced occupational and gendered, segregation. The operators of the new presses, typically men, occupied the lower floors of the factory, while workers using sewing machines, or doing handwork, such as trimmers, occupied the upper floors.²⁴⁷ It is unlikely, therefore, that white women would have had much interaction with any male worker, the exception being supervisors or upper-level managers, during their day-to-day work.

As with the Texas Industrial Commission, Myers had no success working through arbitration. Within a matter of days, he packed up his belongings and headed to Austin. All attempts at negotiation between the workers and the manufacturers proved futile. He expressed frustration that he would not be able to pursue his five-point agenda, stating, “I regret very much having to leave without having obtained arbitration. This whole matter could have been settled very easily if the manufacturers had accepted the offer made by Zaritsky for a conciliation.”²⁴⁸ In much the same way as certain members of the Texas

²⁴⁶ Stewart, *American Milliners*, 61-62.

²⁴⁷ During the NLRB hearing against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., Fox mentioned that a notice was placed only on the fifth and sixth floors of the factory because the majority of the trimmers, the intended audience of the notice, worked on those floors, indicating the presence of an occupationally segregated workplace. Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1940).

²⁴⁸ “Hatters’ Strike Ends, Everyone Blames Others,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1937.

Industrial Commission stated, Myers laid the failure of the strike squarely at the feet of the manufacturers.

One Last Hope: The National Labor Relations Board Hearings:

A few months prior to the start of the strike, the Union filed charges with the NLRB against several of the city's millinery manufacturers.²⁴⁹ By mid-August, the charges finally made their way to the NLRB offices in Washington, D.C. After the failures of both the state commission and the U.S. Conciliation Service to secure a peaceful resolution between the millinery workers and employers, the NLRB represented the last hope of the milliners to see some positive improvements regarding their strike demands. Max Zaritsky urged the NLRB to swiftly pursue these cases and come to a definitive ruling in favor of the millinery workers. From September through November, the NLRB heard the cases against each manufacturer separately. However, given the relationship between all the cases, the NLRB requested they be "consolidated for the purposes of hearing with certain other cases involving other milliner manufacturers in Dallas, Texas."²⁵⁰ The NLRB released its final decisions in February of 1940.

The Manufacturers

Each of the manufacturers were well established in the Dallas industry. Many had been in business for more than five years.²⁵¹ The only manufacturer involved in the NLRB hearings whose time in operation is not revealed in the case report is that of

²⁴⁹ The manufacturing firms were: M. Bierner & Son, the Block-Friedman Company, the Fox-Coffey-Edge Company, and Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company, Inc. Another charge against Gold-Claire Hat Company reached a settlement in 1937 and the charges were dropped.

²⁵⁰ Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁵¹ Most millinery establishments fail to reach the five-year mark. That all of these manufacturers surpassed that time frame indicates they were managed by successful businessmen.

Bierner & Son. However, Bierner & Son did not appear in the Dallas City Directory until 1936, leading to the conclusion that the firm had not been in operation very long.²⁵² Bierner & Son claimed to manufacture between 100 and 200 dozen hats daily. The sole owner, Mike Bierner, also stated that the company “does some jobbing of hats manufactured by others.”²⁵³ Taking into account seasonal variations in employment, Bierner & Son typically employed between forty-five and seventy-five workers. Like many other millinery manufacturers in Dallas, Bierner & Son purchased the majority of raw materials needed to construct and decorate the hats outside the state. According to the hearing, during the first eight months of 1937, Bierner & Son’s sales exceeded \$295,000, with over \$170,000 coming from sales made outside the state.

The Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company began in Dallas around 1921 with just one employee, Samuel Goldstein.²⁵⁴ Over fifteen years later, the company grew to employ over one hundred employees. According to the NLRB hearing, in 1936, the Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company earned between \$300,000 and \$500,000 in sales per year.

At the time the charges were filed, the Block-Friedman Company had been in business in Texas since the early 1930s and employed approximately twenty-five employees.²⁵⁵ According to the hearing, from January until the end of August 1937, the Block-Friedman Company purchased about \$35,000 in raw materials, such as feathers, ribbons, and fabric, to construct their hats. They purchased most of the materials outside

²⁵² *1936 Dallas City Directory*, Dallas City Directory Collection, Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

²⁵³ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁵⁴ “Millinery One Of City’s Big Manufacturers,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 1927.

²⁵⁵ The hearing is not clear when the company was officially chartered. The hearing records indicate it was sometime between 1931 and 1932. The number of employees is an approximation because millinery firms often hired additional help during the busy seasons and laid off workers during the slow seasons.

Texas and had them shipped to the factory in Dallas. On the other end of the millinery process, during the same period, the company generated a profit, through sales, between \$50,000 and \$60,000 annually. Nearly one-third to one-half of the sales came from hats purchased outside the state of Texas.²⁵⁶

Charles Fox, president of the Dallas Millinery Council, played an active role in the NLRB board hearing and served as the sole mouthpiece for the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., even though he only claimed partial ownership. Mr. Coffey and Mr. Edge do not appear anywhere in the court proceedings. The firm began in Dallas around 1920 with about fifteen employees. By 1927, it expanded into a 4500 square foot factory, employing one hundred workers. At that time, about 750 people worked in the industry in Dallas, meaning the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc. employed almost fifteen percent of the city's entire millinery workforce. According to the NLRB hearing, by the late 1930s, the firm only averaged about ninety workers, indicating the Dallas millinery trade had already reached its zenith and was on the decline.

During the fiscal year of 1936, the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc. brought in more than \$300,000 in sales, at least a third of which came from sales outside the state.²⁵⁷ However, Mr. Fox appears to have exaggerated the success of his firm because the *Dallas Morning News* printed a claim made by him that the firm did approximately twenty percent of the wholesale millinery business in Dallas, which would amount to approximately \$400,000.²⁵⁸ Additionally, the NLRB hearing revealed that the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., purchased more than ninety percent of the raw

²⁵⁶ Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁵⁷ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁵⁸ The article states that the Dallas millinery industry brought in about \$2,000,000 annually in wholesale revenue. "Hearing Started on Hat Strike by Federal Examiner," *Dallas Morning News*, October 1, 1937.

materials needed to manufacture the hats from outside the state, predominantly from New York City and abroad.

All four of the manufacturing firms involved in the NLRB hearings conducted extensive business outside the state of Texas. Because they purchased large quantities of raw materials from distributors on the East Coast and sold their hats across state lines, the NLRB concluded the charges filed by the Union, claiming unfair labor practices, had a direct result on interstate commerce as defined in the National Labor Relations Act.²⁵⁹

Union Elections

The NLRB hearing against the Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company centered around which millinery occupations constituted “a unit appropriate for the purposes of collective bargaining.”²⁶⁰ After a period of investigation, the NLRB determined that all workers directly involved in the physical production and manufacture of hats, did constitute such a unit.²⁶¹ Designers were excluded from the bargaining unit because they worked on the conceptual design rather than physical construction.

The Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company refused to bargain with the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers’ International Union unless the Union could prove representation by them was the desire of the majority of the employees. In response, the NLRB ordered a secret ballot election to be held. The employees would have the opportunity to vote directly on if they wanted to be represented by the Union or not.²⁶² Under the supervision of a regional director, the NLRB held the election on November

²⁵⁹ *National Labor Relations Act, U.S. Code 29 (1935), Section 2 (6) and (7), <https://www.nlr.gov/guidance/key-reference-materials/national-labor-relations-act>.*

²⁶⁰ Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Co., 4 N.L.R.B. 125 (N.L.R.B-BD 1937).

²⁶¹ The occupations in question were: blockers, apprentice blockers, operators, apprentice operators, trimmers, apprentice trimmers, foreman, forelady, assistant foreladies, cutters, inspectors, preparers, helpers, order filler, and shipping clerks.

²⁶² See Appendix 1 for a full roster of employees who participated in the election.

23, 1937. The results constituted a severe blow to the Union.²⁶³ Of the 111 employees eligible to cast a ballot, only ninety-five did so. The majority (seventy-seven percent) voted against the Union becoming their sole agent for collective bargaining. Because the election results proved that the Union did not have the support of the majority of the employees at the firm, the NLRB dismissed the hearing. Thus, the Union lost its first case. Such an outcome must have bolstered the confidence of the other manufacturers as they awaited the results of their own cases.

*Table 4: Results of Secret Ballot Election, Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Co.
Source: Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Co., 4 N.L.R.B. 125 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1937).*

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of eligible | 111 |
| Total number of ballots counted | 95 |
| Total number of votes for United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, Local 57 | 22 |
| Total number of votes against United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, Local 57 | 73 |
| Total number of blank ballots | 0 |
| Total number of void ballots | 0 |
| Total number of challenged votes | 0 |

The Union also filed charges against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., for refusing to recognize the Union as the sole collective bargaining agent for the millinery workers as stipulated in the NLRA. The firm stated that the terms of the Act did not apply to the company because “its business did not come within the terms ‘commerce’ and ‘affecting commerce’ as defined in the Act.”²⁶⁴ Given that ninety percent of the raw materials needed to manufacture the firm’s hats came from out of state and more than one-third of their sales also came from out-of-state transactions, the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., clearly engaged in commerce as defined in the

²⁶³ See Table 3.

²⁶⁴ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1940).

National Labor Relations Act and the NLRB easily dismissed the firm's assertions otherwise.²⁶⁵

However, the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union failed to provide suitable documentation that they possessed the majority membership needed to be the designated collective bargaining agent. As such, the NLRB ruled that the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., did not violate the Act regarding the failure to bargain because the Union was not in the position to bargain with the manufacturer to begin with. The NLRB dismissed those charges against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company Inc. However, the hearing did bring to light a question about which employees constituted an appropriate unit to bargain. As with the Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company case, the NLRB examiner and the manufacturer's representative (Fox) went back and forth over terminology before settling on a specific set of employees who would constitute an appropriate bargaining unit. The NLRB ordered a secret ballot election to be held at a later date to determine if the bargaining unit wished to pursue union representation.

Just over one year later, on April 25, 1941, the NLRB determined that the secret ballot election should be held. The ruling stipulated that the election must occur within thirty days. However, on May 10, 1941, the petition to have the election was rescinded, and the NLRB officially closed the case against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc.²⁶⁶ No evidence is given in the NLRB decision that indicates why the election was rescinded, nor was it reported in the newspapers. As previously stated, the

²⁶⁵ *National Labor Relations Act, U.S. Code 29 (1935), Section 2 (6) and (7), <https://www.nlr.gov/guidance/key-reference-materials/national-labor-relations-act>.*

²⁶⁶ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 31 N.L.R.B. 357 (N.L.R.B-BD 1941).

manufacturers may have sought to drag out negotiations in attempts to force the strikers and the Union into economic precarity. The NLRB's decision to rescind the election may indicate that the Union had run out of time and decided to no longer pursue the election.

Whereas the Union lost the election in the case against the Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company, in this instance, the Union failed to even secure an election to determine if they would become the sole collective bargaining agent for the millinery workers at the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc. The firm won the battle and effectively stopped the Union from organizing its worker force.

Dismissal of Millinery Workers

The cases involving the Block-Friedman, Bierner & Son, and Fox-Coffey-Edge manufacturers each involved the dismissal of workers, which the Union claimed was a result of the workers' union status. Because of the similarities in the cases, the NLRB did not issue a formal decision as each hearing went forward. Instead, they waited for all cases to be heard and then released all the decisions on the same day. By the end, everyone was fatigued, especially the manufacturers who waited diligently for the results of the hearings.²⁶⁷

The case against the Block-Friedman Company revolved around one specific charge of unfair labor practices regarding the dismissal of Mrs. W.M. Turner. She had worked at the Block-Friedman Company since 1933 as a machine operator. She worked in the millinery industry for about seven years before joining the company. According to the NLRB hearing, Mrs. Turner joined the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union on November 9, 1936, and afterwards became increasingly active in

²⁶⁷ "Millions of Words at Hearing Cost 44 Cents a Sheet," *Dallas Morning News*, October 17, 1937.

getting her fellow milliners to join.²⁶⁸ In February of 1937, Mr. Block, part owner of the firm, dismissed Mrs. Turner, claiming her work was not up to par. At the time, she earned \$22.50 per week in addition to overtime. Seeking an explanation, Mrs. Turner inquired of Mr. Friedman, the other owner, whether her union membership played a role in her dismissal. Mrs. Turner testified that Mr. Friedman told her that her dismissal “[couldn’t] be helped. It is not only you, but it is going to be all over town. There are changes that have got to be made and we are going to make them.”²⁶⁹ The NLRB concluded that the Block-Friedman Company dismissed Mrs. W.M. Turner solely because of her union membership. They found such action to be in direct violation of the National Labor Relations Act, Sections 7 and 8, which states, “It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of their rights” to “self-organize, to form, join, or assist labor organizations.”²⁷⁰ At the time of the hearing, Mrs. Turner had found employment elsewhere but at a lower wage. She expressed a desire to return to the Block-Friedman Company at her previous pay. The NLRB agreed and ordered Mrs. Turner to be reinstated and issued back pay for wages lost because of her dismissal.

Similar to the Block-Friedman case, the Bierner & Son case addressed the dismissal of numerous employees. The Union argued that between September 1936 and May 1937, Bierner & Son dismissed Audice Ballard, Juanita Hyman, Doris McCormick, Mrs. W.H. McCormick, C.C. Stamps, Ola Ethetton, and C.C. Samuels because of their

²⁶⁸ Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1940).

²⁶⁹ Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B.-BD 1940).

²⁷⁰ *National Labor Relations Act, U.S. Code* 29 (1935), Section 8 (1) and Section 7, <https://www.nlr.gov/guidance/key-reference-materials/national-labor-relations-act>.

union membership.²⁷¹ During the millinery strike in August, the Union added a supplemental charge, claiming Bierner & Son refused to reinstate Grace T. Reed, Louise Reed, and Emma Lee Sperling on account of their actions on behalf of the Union.²⁷²

Over the course of the hearing, Louise Reed and Audice Ballard withdrew their charges. Mr. Bierner also offered to reinstate four of the women during his testimony. It is possible Bierner believed the case would not end in his favor, so he voluntarily reinstated them, hoping he could avoid paying any fines.

The majority of the women Bierner dismissed worked in the millinery industry for five years or more. Because of their experience, some of the women avoided being laid off during the slow seasons. Therefore, when Bierner testified that they were laid off because of lack of work, the NLRB trial examiner found his statement insincere. Instead, all evidence pointed to their dismissal being a direct result of their union membership.

Shortly after the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union chartered Local 57 in September 1936, Cleo Barnett, a supervisor at Bierner & Son, cautioned workers about affiliating with the union, claiming it would only get them in trouble. Workers testified that Barnett told them, "if they knew what was good for them, they would have nothing to do with the Union."²⁷³ Over the course of the hearing, Barnett displayed a strong anti-union bias. Because of her power and authority over the workers, the NLRB concluded she participated in interference, restraint, and coercion as identified in the NLRA. However, because she reported to Bierner, he assumed responsibility for Barnett's actions.

²⁷¹ C.C. Stamps was the only male employee referenced in this case. The rest of the dismissed workers were female.

²⁷² Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁷³ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

During the course of the hearing, it became apparent that Bierner also harbored strong anti-union attitudes. According to testimony, Juanita Hyman confronted Bierner about her dismissal. She accused him of firing her because of her union membership, to which Bierner replied, “You are damn right, I am letting you go because of the Union and everybody else who had anything to do with it. What do you think I am going to do, let you ruin me?”²⁷⁴

The NLRB ruled in favor of the four dismissed women, Juanita Hyman, Mrs. W.H. McCormick, Doris McCormick, and Ola Ethetton, believing evidence supported the claim that Bierner & Son dismissed them primarily because of their union membership. Even though he volunteered to reinstate the women, the Board sought recompense and ordered Bierner to pay them back pay from the time of their dismissal to the present. Lastly, the NLRB ruled in favor of Bierner, determining that he had not discriminated against C.C. Samuels, Grace Reed, and C.C. Stamps.²⁷⁵

The United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers’ International Union filed charges against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., on May 22, 1937, before the start of the strike. The Union alleged the firm engaged in unfair labor practices, including the interference, restraint, coercion, and discrimination against employees. The charges specifically state that the firm dismissed and subsequently refused to rehire Mingo Scott, O.L. Cantrell, Thelda Sledge, Mossie Crofford, Naomi Courtney, Billie Roberts, and Mildred Crofford because of their union membership.²⁷⁶ During the course

²⁷⁴ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁷⁵ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁷⁶ Mingo Scott and O.L. Cantrell are the only males who were discharged. The rest of the dismissed workers were female.

of the hearing, the NLRB dropped the charges regarding the dismissal of Mildred Crofford because she failed to appear at the hearing despite being notified.²⁷⁷

As witnessed in the *Bierner & Son* case, anti-union management tactics played a central role in the case against the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc. as well. Charles Fox made no effort to hide his disdain for the union, even going so far as to make the thinly-veiled threat that he “had a pretty fair knowledge of who belonged to the Union” and “could have put my hand on everyone of them’s head. They knew it too.”²⁷⁸ Without stating it outright, Fox’s statement implies that he equated union membership with disloyalty to him or the company and that continued membership could have serious consequences for the employees if he wanted it to.

According to Fox, he posted a notice on the floors of the factory where the majority of the trimmers worked, expressing the company’s position on dealing with the Union:

It has come to my attention that certain people who are attempting to organize a union in this city have called upon employees of this firm and have told them it would be necessary to join this Union in order to hold their positions. [...] This is to inform every employee that the above is a false statement and should be ignored by all employees. Furthermore this is to advise that this firm will under no circumstances sign a contract with any union and will continue to operate as an “Open Shop.” As in the past all employees who properly conduct themselves and are loyal to this institution will be given every consideration and protection within our power.²⁷⁹

The language of the notice made it clear that the firm would not engage with the Union.

The NLRB ruled that in addition to discharging employees who were active in the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers’ International Union, placing notices like this one in

²⁷⁷ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁷⁸ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁷⁹ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

the factory constituted intimidation, restraint, and coercion. Consequently, NLRB ordered the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc., to reinstate the employees listed in the hearing and to provide them with the suitable amount of backpay.

Blacklisting

While considering the claims of interference, restraint, and coercion, the Union also sought to prove that the Dallas millinery manufacturers participated in numerous Dallas-based civic organizations and used their influence in such organizations to intimidate and blacklist milliners affiliated with the Union. The NLRB investigated the manufacturers' activities within the Dallas Open Shop Association, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and the Dallas Millinery Council.

In all cases, the NLRB found insufficient evidence, or no evidence at all, that the manufacturers influenced the Dallas Open Shop Association or the Dallas Chamber of Commerce to extend their unfair labor practices beyond the factories themselves. Because of the lack of evidence, the NLRB dismissed charges that the manufacturers directly "induc[ed] certain persons in the city of Dallas to interfere with, restrain, and coerce employees" in violation of the NLRA.²⁸⁰

While the NLRB found no evidence of collusion with the Dallas Open Shop Association and the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the same could not be said about the Dallas Millinery Council, of which Charles Fox served as President when the Union filed the charges. According to the NLRB, the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc. used its influence over the Dallas Millinery Council to blacklist milliners the firm had dismissed.

²⁸⁰ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940); Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940); Block-Friedman Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 625 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

According to the bylaws of the Dallas Millinery Council:

It shall be the duty of members, when any person leaves their employ to immediately give the name of such employee to a central office which the Council shall establish for the assistance of other employers who may be in need of their services and for the assistance of employees in their search for work.²⁸¹

It appears the Dallas Millinery Council set up something similar to the Open Shop Association's employment bureau, where out-of-work milliners could put their names down for work and manufacturers could begin their search for necessary laborers. But this monitoring of workers also empowered the Dallas Millinery Council to effectively blacklist troublesome workers.

After hearing from many dismissed workers that they sought employment at other establishments run by millinery council members, but did not succeed in gaining employment, the NLRB concluded that this specific bylaw "was in fact utilized as a 'blacklisting' device" by the Dallas Millinery Council.²⁸² Mingo Scott, Thelda Sledge, and Mossie Crofford all testified to seeking employment with other wholesale millinery firms in Dallas. They could not find employment even though these firms "seemed to indicate that there were positions available" until the workers revealed that they had previously worked for the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc.²⁸³ Mr. Fox also threatened O.L. Cantrell with blacklisting when he stated that Cantrell would not be able to find another millinery job in Dallas. The NLRB believed Charles Fox abused his position as president of the Dallas Millinery Council to intimidate, coerce, and blacklist millinery workers affiliated with the Union, preventing them from seeking gainful

²⁸¹ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁸² Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

²⁸³ Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Co., Inc., 20 N.L.R.B. 637 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

employment in the city. These actions represented a clear violation of the National Labor Relations Act, and the NLRB ordered Fox to immediately cease and desist from any further actions on behalf of the Dallas Millinery Council.

The George Baer Affair Continues

As previously stated, when the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union filed their charges against the millinery manufacturers, they assumed someone within the Dallas millinery industry orchestrated the attack on George Baer. During the course of the hearings, it became readily apparent that both Mike Bierner and Charles Fox harbored resentment and anger towards the Union. Neither wanted their workers to have anything to do with the Union, especially not the union's organizer, George Baer. The sooner he left town, the better. In a conversation with Mrs. C.C. Samuels, Bierner expressed his distaste for George Baer, stating that he "wasn't going to have a gorilla from New York ... telling him how to run his business,' and that the union would be a 'tragedy to Dallas' and would drive the wholesale milliners out of Dallas."²⁸⁴ It is also worth remembering that George Baer's attack happened just moments after he left Mike Bierner's office following a failed attempt to get the city's millinery manufacturers to agree to a meeting with the Union. Bierner voiced his dislike of Baer and was also the last person to see him before the attack. Yet, the Union did not file charges against Mike Bierner for the assault. Instead, they filed them against Charles Fox and the Fox-Coffey-Edge Millinery Company, Inc. Perhaps the Union believed the Dallas Millinery Council arranged the attack, and so the Union filed charges against its president. Whatever the motivation, the NLRB found insufficient evidence to link Fox

²⁸⁴ Bierner & Son, 20 N.L.R.B. 673 (N.L.R.B-BD 1940).

and the Dallas Millinery Council to the attack and dismissed those charges. The real masterminds behind the attack, the Ford Motor Company, were not revealed until the Ford Motor Company faced its own NLRB hearing. By that point, the statute of limitations on the crime had expired, and George Baer and the Union could not file charges against the Ford Motor Company. Although the timing was suspicious, no one from the Dallas millinery industry played a role in planning or carrying out the attack on George Baer. For George Baer, he was just a Union man in Dallas at precisely the wrong time.

Conclusion:

Unfortunately for the Dallas millinery workers, the NLRB hearings did not go in their favor. They did not have sufficient numbers to become the sole collective bargaining agent for the Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company, and the election to determine if they had the numbers regarding the Fox-Coffey-Edge Manufacturing Company never came to fruition. These failures presented serious setbacks for the Union in the hopes of organizing Dallas millinery workers.

The hearings did result in the reinstatement of several workers. However, they represented such a small percentage of the city's total millinery workforce that it had little to no impact on the industry, even though it must have had a significant impact on the reinstated workers.

The NLRB's ruling on the blacklisting of Dallas milliners on behalf of the Dallas Millinery Council could be considered a success for the Union, one they so desperately needed. While they ordered the Dallas Millinery Council to cease and desist from

blacklisting milliners, the NLRB did not possess the ability to reinforce their ruling for any noticeable length of time.

Overall, the inability of the Union to bring about any lasting improvements to the Dallas milliners through the strike or the subsequent NLRB hearings illustrates how entrenched anti-union sentiment was in the city. Their efforts were doomed from the start. From the beginnings of the Dallas Open Shop Association in 1919 to the decisions handed down by the NLRB in 1940, the power of Dallas business elites to curb efforts at unionizing proved mightier than the power of the United Hatters Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union. In the words of historian Donald Robinson, "Dallas was lost to the union."²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Donald B. Robinson, *Spotlight on a Union: The Story of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union* (New York: The Dial Press, 1948), 222.

V. CONCLUSION

By examining the nature of the millinery industry in Dallas, Texas, and how it positioned itself compared to the rest of the nation, regional differences within the millinery industry became apparent. Identifying these regional differences while also considering the impact of external factors, such as public sentiment towards unions in Dallas, creates a more nuanced understanding of the millinery industry and its position within the greater U.S. economy. The common themes of gender, worker demographic, seasonality, and the difficulty of organizing such a diverse workforce appeared in all areas of the country. However, how each region addressed the challenges associated with these themes, highlights regional differences within the industry.

Looking specifically at how the millinery industry operated in Dallas, Texas allows the realization that millinery was not a homogenous industry and should not be studied as such. Any study of the millinery industry must take into account the broader context into which labor conflict within the millinery industry occurs. Analysis of the prevailing cultural attitudes in a particular city, state, or region is essential to better understanding of the complexities within the millinery industry. The virulent anti-union fervor that gripped the city as a result of the power of DOSA and the Dallas Millinery Council was unique to Dallas and aided those organizations in thwarting any attempt by the milliners to organize.

The period addressed in this research represents a transitional time for the millinery industry. The methods of millinery production and workforce demographics in 1900 look markedly differed than those in 1940. In the early twentieth century, advancements in technology and infrastructure allowed for the rapid westward expansion

of the millinery. Because millinery could be a transient trade, independent milliners sought new opportunities and began to establish businesses in newly accessible towns and cities. Without the railroads to connect towns across the country, the millinery industry would not have taken the form it did. Not only did the railroad shuttle people to far-flung corners of the nation, it became an essential means to transport goods to those areas as well.

As milliners established themselves in Dallas, they sought to emulate the styles and fashions coming from Paris or London, by way of New York City. Without the railroads connecting Dallas to the millinery markets along the eastern seaboard, Dallas millinery would not have developed to the level it did. “The Great Millinery Jobbing Market of the Southwest” might never have existed.²⁸⁶ The millinery industry in Dallas owes its very existence to the railroads.

By the 1910s and 1920s, the millinery industry in Dallas, though still growing, established itself as a thriving, successful market. However, across the nation, millinery production began undergoing a shift that would forever alter the way hats were made, and by whom. Traditionally, white, female, native-born women dominated the millinery workforce. As women both made and wore hats, millinery became characterized by female-to-female business transactions, something unusual at this point in time.²⁸⁷ Additionally, because milliners custom-made each hat, millinery demanded a higher price than other women’s clothing. As such, this female-to-female business transaction had the potential to foster relationships between the milliner and those of a higher social class. As

²⁸⁶ “Dallas Millinery Record,” *The Illustrated Milliner* 7 (November 1906): 39.

²⁸⁷ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 4.

a result, many milliners considered themselves socially superior to women who worked in factories and other needle trades. However, as production methods shifted, such differences in class became less noticeable as the overall worker demographic changed.

As a bespoke craft industry, successful millinery required skill and training. However, as the millinery industry slowly adopted new technologies, such as hydraulic presses, workers could produce more hats quickly. By streamlining the designs, factories could produce thousands of identical hats per day. Before mechanization it would have taken weeks, or even months to make that many hats. The shift towards mass production within the millinery industry not only sped up hat making, it also required less skilled workers. Now workers in the millinery industry were no longer predominantly skilled, white, native born women. Instead, immigrants became the majority of the workforce.

Mass production also required operators to learn new machinery and manufacturing processes. Overwhelmingly, men owned the factories where workers churned out hat after hat. These men often felt women were ill-suited to jobs that required them to operate heavy machinery, such as the new hydraulic presses. To address their labor needs, they began hiring more men to work in their millinery factories. Within a matter of decades, changes in methods of production allowed men and unskilled female workers to insert themselves into milliner's domain. No longer was millinery a trade only for skilled white women.

While the transition from custom-made to mass produced occurred across the country, changes in worker demographic presented differently in Dallas, Texas. Because Texas lagged behind other industrial groups, independent milliners held control of the industry longer in Texas than in other areas. However, they could not escape mass-

production for long. If Dallas-based milliners wanted to remain competitive in the industry, they would be forced to adopt new methods of production or face being left behind.

While more men did work in Dallas millinery than had previously, when compared to larger industrial centers, the male-to-female ratio in Dallas was considerably lower. The female-to-female business transaction would still hold sway in Dallas for just a bit longer. Unlike other parts of the country, Dallas also did not experience an influx of immigrant labor at the volume seen elsewhere. This was due, in part, to certain social and cultural values among Texans, which created an atmosphere unwelcoming to immigrants.

Coinciding with the transitions occurring in the millinery industry, Dallas experienced a resurgence in xenophobia, racism, and anti-radicalism resulting from the Red Scare, the re-emergence of the KKK, and a strike wave gripping the country. Dallas business elites banded together to form the Dallas Open Shop Association to combat rising interests in organizing among their workers, interests they associated with radical ideas and foreign agitators. Although DOSA distanced itself from the KKK, seeing it as a threat to new business investments in the city, both groups expressed similar pro-business/anti-union ideals. Given the power and influence these two organizations had over city government and the citizens of Dallas, Dallas earned a reputation for being unwelcoming to unions and labor organizers.

As the years progressed, Dallas' anti-union stance only appeared to grow stronger. In 1933, the Dallas Millinery Council formed as a way to address competition within the Dallas millinery industry. Because the number of workers almost always exceeded the number of available millinery jobs, the Dallas millinery manufacturers

could keep costs and wages low, something the Millinery Council did nothing to discourage. Government intervention to prop up failing industries in response to the Great Depression challenged the authority of Dallas millinery manufacturers. The enactment of NIRA allowed the government to set wage standards for workers in certain industries, millinery included. Such legislation undercut Dallas manufacturers abilities to keep wages low. Many businessmen argued against such government intervention into private businesses, but NIRA brought a newfound hope to a struggling industrial workforce. The minimum wages set by the Act often exceeded, in some instances more than doubled, the current wages for millinery workers in Dallas.

Unfortunately, the workers' joy was short lived. In effect for just two years, the Supreme Court ruled NIRA unconstitutional in 1935. The ruling was a devastating blow to both workers and to unions, who had experienced tremendous growth under the National Recovery Administration (NRA). Many workers feared Dallas millinery manufacturers would roll back the wages and hours they could work now that the manufacturers were no longer beholden to the NRA. They had every reason to be concerned because other Dallas industries already experienced a return to pre-NIRA working conditions and wages.

The Wagner Act codified some of the protections offered under NIRA, such as the right to collectively bargain, after the disbandment of the NRA. However, Dallas still remained steadfastly anti-union. In 1935, Dallas dressmakers sought to improve working conditions and wages, seeking a return to the levels they experienced during the NRA. After failing to reach a compromise with manufacturers, the dressmakers decided to go on strike. For ten months, they picketed Dallas manufacturers. As one of the longest

strikes in Dallas history, the dressmakers' strike was characterized by violence and militancy. Frustrated at the lack of progress, the strikers lashed out at law enforcement and strikebreakers. Law enforcement retaliated in kind. In the end, the strike failed to accomplish any of the goals it set out to achieve.

Not long after the dressmakers' strike, Ford Motor Company workers began expressing a desire to organize. Worker organization was not something Ford was prepared to accept. Instead, the company hired certain employees to intimidate, through violence if necessary, anyone in Dallas affiliated with a union. The Ford "good squad" did not discriminate when it came to threatening union organizers and sympathizers. They brutally attacked George Baer, a millinery union organizer in no way connected to Ford. That same day, Ford men also attacked George Lambert and Herbert Harris, two members of the Socialist Party while they were showing pro-labor films in a Dallas park. Such violence against union affiliates helped to further cement Dallas's reputation as a place unwilling to accept the presence of unions.

Despite the fear of violent retribution, either at the hands of the Dallas police force or Ford's men, millinery workers in the city expressed frustration with their own wages and working conditions. In the summer of 1937, the Dallas millinery workforce decided to strike. They hoped their strike would be characterized by less violence and more gains than the dressmakers' strike, which was still fresh in the minds of many milliners. They achieved one of those goals. The strike remained peaceful. Unfortunately, the strike did not bring about any lasting changes to the Dallas millinery industry.

Prior to the strike, the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union brought charges against several Dallas manufactures, claiming unfair labor

practices. Several years after the conclusion of the strike, the NLRB, the authority overseeing the investigation, released their findings and decisions. They concluded that some of the millinery manufacturers had indeed participated in unfair labor practices. Many of the workers listed in the decision had been unfairly dismissed from their positions. The NLRB determined their dismissal was a direct result of their union affiliation and not a product of poor workmanship or attitude, as manufacturers claimed. The NLRB also found, in the case of one manufacturer, that they abused their position as head of the Dallas Millinery Council by blacklisting dismissed employees, preventing them from finding another millinery job in Dallas. The NLRB ordered the manufacturers to “cease and desist” immediately with blacklisting and/or dismissing workers because of their union affiliation. The dismissed workers were to be reinstated and given the appropriate backpay.

However, the most important charge, and the one which could bring the most change to the Dallas millinery industry, related to unionizing. The Union asserted that a number of manufacturers failed to collectively bargain with the Union, who claimed to be the sole collective bargaining agent for the city’s millinery workforce. This represented a direct violation of the Wagner Act. The city’s millinery manufacturers claimed they did not need to bargain with the Union because they doubted the Union had the requisite fifty-one percent membership threshold required to be the sole collective bargaining agent. The Union maintained they did.

Hoping to settle the matter once and for all, the NLRB ordered for elections to be held among the workers of two manufacturing firms. The outcome would determine if the Union had the necessary membership. The Union lost the first election by a staggering

amount. The NLRB rescinded the second election and it never took place. The failure of the Union to prove they had the necessary numbers to represent the Dallas millinery workforce marked the end of the standoff between the Union and the city's manufacturers. Worker organization in the Dallas now seemed impossible.

Looking at Dallas businesses and their views, it appears obvious that the strike and the efforts of the Union were doomed from the start. Since the 1910s, Dallas was entrenched in anti-union fervor. It only grew stronger as the decades passed. The millinery strike, like the dressmakers' strike a few years prior, had no chance of success in such an uncompromising city.

The 1937 Dallas millinery strike represents a significant moment in Dallas labor history. The industry experienced numerous changes and developments during the first quarter of the twentieth century, as did the city of Dallas. By studying the strike, historians gain a better understanding of the conditions under which these workers labored and how the city's view towards labor organizing impacted the workers' ability to demand better wages and working conditions. Understanding the nature of the millinery industry, and the way the industry operated in Dallas, it becomes apparent that the strike was a futile effort from the start. The prevailing attitudes of Dallas business elites, and their influence over the city, made successful agitation impossible. It is probable Dallas milliners understood their strike had little hope of success. However, despite the memories of the dressmakers' strike and the violence that accompanied it, the intimidation and threats made by the Ford Motor Company, and the power of DOSA and Dallas Millinery Council, the milliners still decided to strike and publicly air their grievances. Some historians may consider the milliners' actions foolhardy, but one would

be remiss, in this instance, to equate futility with foolhardiness. The Dallas milliners faced insurmountable odds for a very small glimmer of hope. Futile, yes, but also undeniably brave.

The millinery strike may have marked a significant moment in Dallas labor history, but its significance to the national millinery industry was miniscule. As we have seen, the millinery industry underwent noticeable changes between 1900 and 1937, but more changes were to come. The millinery industry struggled to remain relevant through the 1930s and into the 1940s. It was able to maintain its hold only because women's fashion dictated that all women wear hats. As fashion trends shifted away from wearing hats altogether, the millinery industry was in jeopardy of collapse. In this context, the 1937 Dallas milliners' strike can be seen as one last attempt by the Union to protect workers employed in an industry destined for extinction.

World War II marked the end of millinery as a desirable trade for women. As we have seen, poor working conditions and low wages, in Dallas in particular, characterized the industry. As war production ramped up, women who worked in garment factories and needle trades, like milliners, could find better paying jobs in war manufacturing. New opportunities for women in manufacturing and changing fashions in the 1940s marked the end of the millinery era.

APPENDIX 1

Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Company Employee Roster

| | | |
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| <p>BLOCKERS :</p> <p>Richard Morris Arvil Inge James Clark Alvin Holman Arthur Da Mommio Bill Murray Ralph Smith Eugene Peters A. J. Ethetton Asa Benningfield Deugar Russell L. W. Cadmus Dawson McMichael Crockett McKay Doyle Inge J. D. Camp Gans Smith Hubert Stamps Jonas Clark Milo Benningfield George Day</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPRENTICE BLOCKERS :</p> <p>Harvey Huse Harold Hill Delmar McKinley C. R. McMillan Mayo Roper J. C. Williams, Jr.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OPERATORS :</p> <p>Margaret Trussell Annie Lou Spencer Marie Inge Jettie Brashear Susie Bates Jewell Freeman Evie Price Morris Fink Seymour Goldstein</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPRENTICE OPERATORS :</p> <p>Sylvia Strube</p> | <p>TRIMMERS :</p> <p>Adelle Ballard De Alva Cayce Evelyn Allen Dora Buffington Helen Williams Louise Wright Eunice Jarvis Katherine Sloan Lila Ribble Armme Sams Willie Mae Watson Bess Pendergrass Irene Bowden Ted Kennedy Opal McKay Ruby Retherford Geitie McIntosh Mattie McCallum Helen Carroll Florence Hardin Maray Phillips Sibbie Kerbow Lena Ballard Viana Tibbitts Lena Latimer Emily Turnipseed Bertha Toungate Rosa Lee Nichols Clemmie Mann Rosa Lee Jordon Ina Wilson Muriel Yates Louise Weston Jane Moss Iva Maris Irene Kinnard Edith Henrie Alice Couch Alma Baker Ada Graves Clara Ward Mittie McCown</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPRENTICE TRIMMERS :</p> <p>Hallie Trushel Ethel Doty Lois Crane Mozelle Spurgeon Allie Scott Tempest Riedel Ethel Goodwin Margaret Platt Edythe Harden Katherine Meachum</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">FOREMAN :</p> <p>Ned Smith</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FORELADY :</p> <p>Grace Emery</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ASSISTANT FORELADIES :</p> <p>Sue Shields Ada Ragsdale</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CUTTERS :</p> <p>Jewell Small Ollie Bell Paskett Genevieve Swain Floyette Waller Winnie Thedoford</p> <p style="text-align: center;">INSPECTORS :</p> <p>Olis Davis Elizabeth Davis Loette Beets</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PREPARERS :</p> <p>Louise Harrell Lucille Rogers Gladys Wallace</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HELPERS :</p> <p>Gene Handley Robert Bristow Jack Bristow Olden Phillips</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ORDER FILLER :</p> <p>Lorraine Handley</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SHIPPING CLERKS :</p> <p>Geo. Starling Geo. Scallon</p> |
|--|--|---|

Source: Goldstein Hat Manufacturing Co., 4 N.L.R.B. 125 (N.L.R.B-BD 1937).

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