III. HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC LANDINGS AT MEMPHIS

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The literature and records search addressed specific research objectives: 1) documenting the history of building episodes at the Landing; 2) documenting ethnicity and socioeconomic status of the population in the vicinity of the site; 3) documenting nineteenth century settlement patterning in the project area and its relationship to the larger settlement system of Memphis; and 4) identifying buildings and other types of features that existed at the Landing.

Historical investigations included archival research of primary records such as newspaper accounts, city directories, government documents, deed and tax records, and census reports. Sources at the Memphis and Shelby County Library and Information Center (Memphis Room) included biographical data on owners, census records, minutes of the County Court, map sources, and published secondary historical accounts. Records at the Shelby County Archives and the Cossitt Branch Library in Memphis were also reviewed. In addition, Garrow & Associates in Memphis maintains an extensive corporate library of contract reports from around the nation, historical accounts and maps from the region, information on the history of technology, and theoretical works.

HISTORY OF THE MEMPHIS LANDING

Even though the Mississippi River was still a minor transportation artery in 1819, the original proprietors of Memphis, through William Lawrence, the surveyor of the original town plan, reserved a sweeping public space at the edge of the Fourth Chickasaw bluff. The "Public Promenade" stretched across the entire river frontage of the new town, from the mouth of Bayou Gayoso on the north to the south line of the Rice Tract, the location of today's Beale Street. The Promenade was roughly divided into three parts. From Union Avenue south to the south line of the Rice tract, the Promenade extended west to the river's edge from the line of what became Clinton Street (approximately Wagner Street today). From Union Avenue north to Auction Avenue, the line of the Promenade jogged east one block to the west line of "Mississippi Row," later named "Front Row" and known today as Front Street. Exchange Square was in this part of the Promenade between Exchange and Poplar avenues, the site of the Ellis Auditorium today. North from Auction Avenue, the eastern edge of the Promenade again jogged one block closer to the Mississippi River. The riverfront extending north to the bayou was set aside as the "Public Landing." Approximately half of the Public Landing was on the Wolf River, upstream from its confluence with the Mississippi (Harkins 1982:34).

Only the part of the Promenade set aside as the "Public Landing" was intended for that purpose. Instead, the proprietors saw the promenade as a park-like space, intended for walking and other leisure activities to "contribute very much to the health and comfort of the place, as well as to its security and ornament" (Overton 1820, in Harkins 1982:34). Although the Promenade was included on the original 1819 city plan, the property was not officially transferred to the city until 1828 (Sigafoos 1979:8).

Over the course of the nineteenth century, four distinctly different public landings were developed on the Memphis river frontage. These landings were the original Public Landing (1819; between Auction and Winchester avenues), the Center Landing (ca. 1844--1845; between roughly Adams/Washington and Poplar avenues), the so-called "Cobblestone Landing" (ca.

1850; between Jefferson and Union avenues), and the South Memphis, or Beale Street, Landing (ca. 1838; between Union Avenue and Beale Street). All were within the area designated by the proprietors as public space, but only the original landing, a small part of the city's entire frontage, was originally envisioned for landing purposes. Parts of the Promenade were never developed for landing uses but still remain in the public domain. Front Street Station (former U.S. Customs House), Cossit Library, Confederate Park, Fire Station No. 1, the Pyramid area, and the Ellis Auditorium all occupy the Promenade, as do the Mud Island Terminal and Parking Garage, the Shoppers' Parking Garage, and the Lowenstein Parking Garage.

The Original Memphis Landing (ca. 1819)

The earliest development of Memphis was concentrated at the northern end of the city plan, largely north of Poplar Avenue. The development of the city in this locale was largely due to its proximity to the original river landing, immediately west of the settlement. The "Public Landing" provided for in the 1819 plan was an ideal landing for flatboats because its slope was relatively flat and its harbor was sheltered from the currents of the Mississippi River. Flatboats could maneuver in the relatively slack waters of the Wolf River, and the shallow drafts of the flatboats allowed them to ground directly on the landing itself. The same was apparently not true for steamboats, whose deeper drafts hampered their use of the landing. However, a wharfboat could provide enough distance from the landing for the steamboats to remain afloat while discharging passengers and freight (Davis 1873:114–115). The privilege of operating the wharfboat was licensed by the mayor and board of aldermen for the City of Memphis. Fees for its use were collected and shared by the wharfboat operator and the City.

The significance of the Public Landing in the Wolf River Harbor began to wane in the early 1830s with the accretion of a sandbar across the west and southwest frontages of the landing. The bar greatly increased the distance freight must be hauled from the water's edge across a surface that was only solid during the driest months of the year. A wooden walkway and wharf were built across the bar in 1837 at the end of Winchester Street, but the sandbar's continued growth rendered the wharf useless by 1838 (Davis 1873:114–115).

Development of Center Landing (ca. 1844–ca. 1886)

The now-infamous sandbar on the Memphis riverfront, called the "Batture" in nineteenth century accounts, is the topographical ancestor of today's Mud Island. As at many cities and towns along the Mississippi River, the delineation of the river's edge at Memphis was as fluid as the waters of the river itself. The Mississippi would periodically—sometimes annually—change its course, and its currents would build up land in one place and remove it from others. The growth of the Batture exemplified the river's fickle nature. The Batture did not exist in 1819, but by 1858 it had grown into an elongated triangle roughly a mile long at its base and nearly a quarter mile wide at its apex, stretching from the mouth of the Bayou Gayoso south to Jefferson Street (Rucker 1858). More than 18 formal city blocks were eventually developed on this new land once it had been raised above flood stage by paring down the bluffs to the east and depositing the fill on the Batture (Davis 1873:166).

One result of the Batture was that the original flatboat and steamboat landing became unusable. The movement of the landing to the south became a reality in 1838 when:

> . . . owing to a great extension of the bar . . . it became too shoal at low water for the steamboats to land at; in consequence of which Captain William W. Hart, the owner of the wharfboat *Orleans* dropped her temporarily some three or four hundred yards

> below the wharf [then located at Winchester Street], where the bar was more bluff . . . . [Davis 1873:115–116]

When the mayor and board of aldermen ordered Hart to return to the site of the original landing at Winchester Street, Hart refused and "drop(ped) his boat below the corporation line" at Union Avenue (Davis 1873:115–116). He reestablished the wharfboat at the foot of what was to become Hotel Street, as noted on land surveys from the early 1840s (SCDB M:246–247). Apart from his duties as wharfmaster, Hart was also general mail agent for Memphis; his relocation meant that mail was no longer delivered directly into Memphis by boat. Early historian James Davis relates, "taking advantage of this, the denizens of South Memphis conceived of the idea of laying off another town" (Davis 1873:116), an effort begun ca. 1840–1841 (see below).

Though Hart's wharf was attractive to the steamboat trade, the focus of the flatboat trade remained near the southern end of the Batture. Again, this was likely due to the shallow slope of the landing, but also to its proximity to the edge of the bluff. In ca. 1841, the flatboats "lay above Adams [Street], and the best stands [business houses] were found in that vicinity. The consequence was that businesses, which had strung out along Front Row, began to concentrate in that locality" (Davis 1873:117–118).

During the early development of Memphis, ca. 1820–1840, the river trade was dominated by the flatboatmen. By all accounts, the flatboatmen were rough, crude, and thoroughly contemptuous of local authority. Apart from their lawlessness, the flatboatmen largely refused to pay their wharfage fees, and the civil authorities were ill-equipped to back the wharfmaster in collecting them (Harkins 1982:49–51). Hart may have moved his wharfboat to South Memphis because he could not make money from the flatboatmen and decided to cater to the growing steamboat trade instead.

The City, under Mayor William Spickernagle, moved to instill authority over the flatboatmen in 1841. A new wharfmaster was hired, and his commission on wharf fees was increased to 25 percent as an incentive to their collection (Harkins 1982:49–51). Local militias were also formed to back the authority of law. Although the boatmen first acquiesced to this new authority, the following spring 2,000 of them revolted against the wharf fees in an event called the "Flatboatmen's War." It was quickly put down by a combined force of militia and citizens, ending the flatboatmen's hold on river commerce at Memphis.

In 1844, the City formalized the development of the Batture, whose ownership had been contested by several land claims since the 1830s (Watkins 1899:9). The major component of the Batture's development was the Memphis Naval Yard, north of Market Street on the site of the present Pyramid Arena. West of Front Street between Market and Adams streets, 18 city blocks were laid out and divided by new roads named Cypress, Vine, Locust, Walnut, Dock, Fulton, Clinton, and Water streets. Warehouses, stores, taverns, small manufacturing facilities, and even a hotel were established on the Batture in the middle 1840s. At the center of this development, between the extensions of Poplar and Washington streets, was Center Landing, the second formal landing place developed by the city in its history. A "public levee" extended along the river frontage on both sides of Center Landing.

Center Landing developed as the focal point of antebellum river traffic, largely due to the commercial enterprises developed in close proximity to the landing well west of Front Street. Commerce at this landing was quite diverse. There were business houses dealing in hay, grains, meats, ice, coal, and groceries, as well as manufacturing concerns fabricating boilers, castings, and other services tailored to the river market (Rainey 1855). After ca. 1850, the Great Memphis Landing, also known as the Cobblestone Landing, began to take over the business of

the cotton factors and wholesale grocers of Front Street, along with most of the passenger arrivals and departures for Memphis.

Center Landing remained a prominent part of the Memphis waterfront until ca. 1865, when changes in the currents of the Mississippi slowly began to erode the Batture (Watkins 1899:10). In the late 1870s, a new levee was built at the Batture to stem the erosion, but these efforts proved futile (*Memphis Daily Appeal [MDA]*, 9 April 1881:4). By 1886, the paved frontage flanking the open square of the landing had slipped into the river. In the same year, the river began to accrete a sandbar once more in this location, adding as much as 77 acres to the Batture by 1894 (Watkins 1899:11–12). By the turn of the twentieth century, Center Landing was largely a memory, although businesses such as the St. Louis & New Orleans Anchor Line Elevator (ca. 1880–ca. 1898) remained to serve river traffic. Today, the Lonestar Industries concrete plant is all that remains of this once significant business place.

Development of the Great Memphis Landing (ca. 1850–Present)

During the 1840s, Memphis began to mature as a significant river port, fueled by the vast trade in the export of the region's cotton and the import of finished goods and materials upriver from New Orleans and downriver from Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and the cities of the East. Memphis was one of the important "jumping off" points for the settlement of the West, and the city's population exploded with new residents, many of them recent immigrants.

Memphis grew south along the established street grid until it met the boundary of the independent city of South Memphis at Union Street. South Memphis had begun as a speculative land venture in the 1830s and grew to rival its older neighbor by the early 1840s. South Memphis developed its own busy landing at the foot of Beale Street. The construction of the Gayoso House hotel in 1841 on Shelby Street in South Memphis was proof of the rival town's wealth and determination. The two cities were unified in 1849.

The sense of rapid growth in the Memphis area at this time is summed up in the introduction to the 1849 Memphis City Directory:

> In 1841, Memphis extended very little below Poplar street, there being at that time but one brick house south of that street. In fact, as late as that year, the land upon which the Gayoso House now stands was an old field, surrounded by open wood, where the youth of the city, who have yet but sparsely cultivated beards, were in the habit of shooting squirrels and other game (Twyman 1849:109).

The growth of Memphis to the south extended primarily along Front Street (called Shelby Street south of Union Street) and Main Street. Main Street became the primary retail corridor for the growing city; Front Street became the primary corridor for the business houses of its cotton factors and wholesale grocery brokers. Center Landing, which had been paved with rubble stone before 1859, was still the city's center for river trade (Watkins 1899:9). However, the rapid growth of steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River and the need for greater convenience for the cotton factors of southern Front Street necessitated the expansion of the city's landing area. In short, as Memphis grew south towards Union Avenue, the need for convenient proximity to the landing moved with it.

Views of the Memphis waterfront from the 1840s through the 1870s show the Landing at the Public Promenade as a broad, smooth, steeply sloping embankment in front of a steep bluff-edge (Henry Lewis ca. 1840, in Harkins 1982:54; Anonymous 1861). The eroded edge of the bluff extended farther west than it does now, and lateral roadway cuts were aligned with

Union Street, Monroe Street, and Whiskey Chute (the east-west alley between Court and Madison streets) to connect Front Street with the Landing (Boyle & Chapman 1872).

Though the Landing is pictured as smooth-surfaced in these early views, this condition probably was not natural. Other images of the Chickasaw Bluffs north of Jefferson Street in the ca. 1830s reveal an eroded bluff above a roughly scarred river embankment, perhaps the result of the combination of bluff sloughage and river accretions over time (Anonymous ca. 1830, in Harkins 1982:48). If the images from the 1840s are accurate and the area of the Promenade was regularly sloping and smooth, this character likely resulted from the leveling and fill-work in the early 1840s to make the Promenade a more efficient landing. The limited time available for this study did not allow for further research on this issue.

The Memphis riverfront teemed during the 1840s and 1850s, as steamboats and flatboats continuously came and went from the Landing. A sample of the activity on the Landing is indicated by a report of the wharfmaster to the mayor and board of aldermen of Memphis in September 1859. The report notes that during August, 102 "steamers" had arrived at the Landing along with seven flatboats (*MDA*, 7 September 1859). Even though in this era August would have been a slow month for shipping (compared to the spring months or the autumn after harvest), an average of four river vessels arrived every day at the Memphis Landing. It is not known if the wharfmaster's report included the arrivals of Memphis-based packet lines, which held annual leases for their use of the Landing.

Even though the Memphis & Charleston Railroad had begun regular service in 1857, the river landing was at least as important to the city and its commercial well-being as the Memphis International Airport is now. The wharf fees, averaging $20.72 per flatboat and $10.37 per steamboat, were an important, regular source of revenue that allowed the city to prosper (*MDA*, 7 September 1859).

The explosion of river traffic at the Memphis riverfront in the 1850s made the expansion of landing areas a critical priority. It is unclear exactly when steamboats began tying up to the area of the Public Promenade between Jefferson and Union avenues rather than Center Landing or the South Memphis Landing. It is entirely possible that this area of the promenade was simply always considered available for use. Except for a roadway cut that led up the bluff to the level of Front Street, the steamboats required little more in the way of improvements in the landing, as long as the grade of the bank permitted the boats to move close to shore without grounding. Since the promenade was city property, the wharfmaster would still collect fees, whether a boat landed at Center Landing or a muddy stretch of shore a quarter-mile away.

Center Landing was no longer able to meet the demands of the traffic on the Memphis riverfront by ca. 1850; the riverfront between Jefferson and Union avenues was its "safety valve." However, the lack of an easily maintained surface on the Landing caused great difficulties for the stevedores who loaded and unloaded the boats, as well as for the draymen who hauled the goods up and down the grade of the Landing. Wet clay and sand churned by the iron wagon tires and hoofs of oxen and mules made the Landing virtually impassable in rainy weather. The problem was compounded by the exposure of the Landing to the river's current, which would have made it unstable at the water's edge.

Paving of what was to become the Great Memphis Landing became a priority of the city government in the late months of 1858. After all, the steamboat captains had only to deliver the freight on their boat to the Landing, but the Front Street merchants had to see that the freight, whether groceries or cotton bales, was removed from the Landing to the business houses of the city, or vice-versa. In addition, a sense of civic responsibility and public appearance had emerged by the 1850s.

Though some accounts indicate that Center Landing had been paved with "rubble stone" before 1859, that would have been a small project compared to paving the landing between Jefferson and Union avenues. The original proposal enumerated the scope of the project:

> Alderman Douglass, from the Committee on Improving the Wharf, introduced a plan for paving the wharf with limestone or granite, of not less than four nor more than eight inches in surface, to be laid on gravel not less than five nor more than eight inches in depth; the width of the pavement to be 100 feet, the length 3300; the total expense [estimated to be] $83,333.00." [*MDA*, 16 March 1859]

After the plan was amended by calling for the paving to be 12 inches deep and have a uniform grade, the board voted to adopt the report and contract the project with the lowest bidder.

This massive paving project was arguably the largest public works project conceived by the City of Memphis during the antebellum era. The completed revetment would stretch from the north end of Jefferson Street to the south line of Union Street at Howard's Row. The east end of the paving line ended at about the level of present-day Riverside Drive and stretched down the embankment to a level about equal to the 0.0 mark of the river gauge at Memphis.

The low bid for the paving project was submitted by John Loudon (often spelled Lowden and Lowdon) of Cincinnati, Ohio, and a contract for the project was approved in May 1859 (CM 1859a; *MDA*, 4 May 1859). Work on the project awaited the arrival of low water in the late summer of that year. The local newspapers reported with enthusiasm that "the first stone of the pavement at the city wharf was put down by Mr. John Lowdon, the contractor, Friday evening [September 2] and will be pushed forward to rapid completion" (*MDA*, 4 September 1859).

John Loudon (1800–1884) is an intriguing figure of the antebellum period. Born in Loudon County, Virginia, and raised in Kentucky and Ohio, Loudon took up residence in Cincinnati after his marriage to Narcissa Boyd in ca. 1825. In Cincinnati, Loudon became a stonemason and stone paving contractor and was responsible for the construction of the stone Front Street bridge over the Miami River Canal. He also completed the paving of Broadway, the first stone paving project for that city (Mathes 1897–1899:138).

Loudon moved to Memphis from Cincinnati in ca. 1859 and won the contract for the paving work of the new Memphis Landing. What seemingly set him apart from his peers in the Memphis project was his ownership of the steamboat *Granite State*, along with a series of barges used to haul stone for his contracting projects from quarries on the Ohio River (Mathes 1897–1899:138–140). The *Granite State* was commanded by Loudon's son Milton B. Loudon (ca. 1838–1873), who with his brother Hopkins Loudon coordinated the shipping of materials for his father's contracting projects (Mathes 1897–1899:258–259). That Loudon owned his own small shipping company suggests that his influence on building projects in the 1840s and 1850s could have extended well beyond that of his few known projects in Memphis and Cincinnati.

It is a popular misconception that the stone materials employed in the paving of the Great Memphis Landing originated as ship ballast, deposited in New Orleans by English or Irish sailing ships delivering baled cotton back to Liverpool (*Commercial Appeal [CA]*, 10 January and 16 May 1957). Such stories are common in riverside and coastal towns, but in the case of Memphis it is clearly no more than a charming myth. The actual source of the original stone paving was noted in city documents and newspaper accounts, which reported, "the towboat *Granite State* arrived from Cave-In-Rock yesterday, with another heavy tow of stone for paving purposes at the Landing" (*MDA*, 25 September 1859). Although the stone for Loudon's paving of the Cincinnati landing probably came from the limestone hills above that city, the limestone

used for his initial project in Memphis was probably quarried on the lower reaches of the Ohio River in Hardin County, Illinois, near the tiny port town of Cave-In-Rock.

Loudon's work in paving the wharf was not easy. It was beset immediately by problems with his labor force:

> Notwithstanding the strike among laborers in the employ of Mr. Lowdon at the Landing on Friday [September 9, 1859], a full force was engaged yesterday upon the grade and pavement, and the work of paving the Landing will be pushed forward with vigor. [*MDA*, 11 September 1859]

The ethnic composition of Loudon's work force is unknown in spite of the great attention the local press focused on the project. It may have been composed of slave labor, free labor, or a combination of both. The strike incident suggests that at least part of the work force was free laborers, perhaps immigrant masons who had found previous employment on railroad projects.

The strike was not Loudon's only difficulty; his task was immediately complicated by problems with the site:

> The new grade at the river, near the new wharfboat, does not seem to be permanent, as it has been caving in constantly since it was made by the contractor for paving the city wharf. A large area of earth disappeared from the foot of Court Street into the river Monday night [September 12, 1859], and a considerable portion of the grade yet in sight bids fair to 'go the way of the Earth' on the banks of the Mississippi. [*MDA*, 14 September 1859]

In response to the problem, the mayor and board of aldermen called a special meeting on September 13, 1859, where "there was some discussion of the mode of paving at the landing, adopted by Contractor Lowdon" (CM 1859b). The mayor was authorized "to employ an Engineer to superintend the work of paving the wharf" (*MDA*, 14 September 1859). The cause of the problem was not reported in contemporary newspapers but may have been that "certain sewers were not built according to contract," as suggested by Mayor R. B. Baugh in the special board meeting of September 13. It is equally likely, however, that the grade was being undermined at its lowest edge by the scouring of the river current, as the contract made no mention of installing riprap to protect the Landing from undercut erosion.

It is also unclear how the undermining problem was corrected; its resolution was not discussed in succeeding news accounts or mayor and board meetings. No evidence was found during the preparation of this report to indicate that the city ever retained the engineer approved by the board of aldermen. However, the paving project clearly was not finished in 1859 or 1860. Minutes of the mayor and board of aldermen provide some explanation for the length of time incurred in the project. For example, they changed the contract to require "that the Engineer be instructed to so change the grade of the wharf as to have at least six hundred feet of such grade as to give the large class of boats free and convenient access to the same" (CM Minutes June 21, 1860:738).

The same source shows that Loudon was paid for various work on the Landing as late as September 1861 (CM Minutes September 4, 1861:535). Loudon's biographers strongly suggest that he did not finish his contract before the arrival of Federal forces in Memphis in June 1862. It is clear, however, that most of the paving project was completed well before then. Indeed, according to an "audit" of the project by the City in August 1860, the paving portion of Loudon's contract was already largely done. In this audit, the City Engineer found that the work "by John Lowdon, contractor, during the years of 1859 and 1860 to be charged under the contract" included:

12,428.88 sq. yards paving between Adams and Jefferson Streets at $2 20/100 per yard	$27,343.50
7,129.39 sq. yards paving between Union and Beale Streets at $2 20/100 per yard	$15,684.66
1,784 6/10 lineal feet stone curb at $0.25 per foot	$446.15
14 anchors @ $12.00	$168.50
Total Due Lowdon	$43,642.34

The audit also noted, "Mr. Lowdon has on the wharf unused some 3000 purch [sic] of stone," estimated at a value of $9,000.00. A perch is a measure of stone equal to 5.5 cubic yards (Smith 1831:285), making the amount of unused stone on the Landing in August 1860 equal to 16,500 cubic yards.

The audit appears to contain a significant mistake—no pavement between Jefferson and Union streets is accounted for. A previous review of the project by the mayor and board of aldermen and the City Engineer inspected the quality of the "work done above Union and below Adams Street" and approved this portion for payment (CM Minutes July 27, 1860:59–61). It appears that the audit accounting of the pavement between "Adams and Jefferson" was a simple error and should have read "Adams and Union."

The audit also noted an unfinished part of Loudon's contract that required him to "grade from the wharf" some 40,000 cubic yards of earth at no charge. Grading work in addition to the stated amount would be charged to the City at $0.20 per yard (CM Minutes August 10, 1860:88–89).

Though Loudon's contract was largely completed, repair work was already needed: "that portion of the nine inch pavement between Union and Beale Streets which has given way and sunk [must] be taken up and relaid by said Lowdon" (CM Minutes August 10, 1860:88). The settling of the grade was attributed to the lack of "sewers or drains underneath said pavement necessary to conduct all water beneath it to the river." Correction of the problem was agreed to be the responsibility of the City (CM Minutes, August 10, 1860:88–89).

A colorful and somewhat ominous story contained in a biographical sketch of John Loudon suggests one other possibility for the delay. In this story, Loudon was still working on the Memphis Landing project when the Civil War erupted in 1861:

> He was returning with his steamboat and barges loaded with stone from the Ohio river to complete the work, when on his arrival in Cairo, where Gen. U.S. Grant was already posted with a strong force of Federal soldiers, he was quickly made aware of their presence by a cannonball being fired across the bow of his tow, which compelled him to round to. Gen. Grant, who knew Captain Loudon, inquired of him whether the stone on the barges was intended for Southern forts and breastworks, and on being assured that it was intended only for paving the wharf at Memphis, and not contraband for war, he allowed the fleet to proceed, but remarked, 'Captain, tell the people down there that they need not trouble themselves to lay those stones on their wharf, as we will be there before long and have need of them.' The stone reached Memphis safely, being unloaded on the wharf, where needed, but was destined never to go into the pavement, as, true to his promise, General Grant, when making his move against Vicksburg, had the same stone and a great deal more which Mr. Loudon had on hand for paving purposes,

> reloaded onto Loudon's model barges and taken to Vicksburg and thrown into the river for the purposes of changing the channel there. [Mathes 1897–1899:139]

City records confirm that Loudon was still at work on the Memphis Landing and other projects in September 1861. At the same time, Ulysses S. Grant was staging the start of the Tennessee River Campaign at Cairo, so it is possible that Loudon might have encountered Grant during one of his trips to Cave-In-Rock to quarry stone for last phase of his Landing contract. The story related above by J. Harvey Mathes continues that after the war, Loudon "returned to Memphis and completed his wharf contract, which is a lasting memorial of his usefulness" (Mathes 1897–1899:140). That work on the Landing continued after the war is confirmed by the following news report:

> Ground was broken yesterday for the new paving on the levee, which is to extend from Jefferson to Monroe Street, and to be one hundred feet in width, composed of square blocks of stone. About twenty laborers were at work this morning. We hope that the contractor will push this matter through, so that those who have business on the levee will never more have to wade ankle deep in slush. [*Public Ledger [PL]*, 19 June 1866]

The work underway in July 1866 was being carried out by John Loudon under contract with the City of Memphis (CM Minutes June 16, 1866:5). However, the mayor and board of aldermen's minutes for the period 1862–1866 have been lost or misplaced, and the details of Loudon's contract authorizing this work would be contained in that volume. The area of the project described in the 1866 news account (from Jefferson to Monroe) appears to overlap part of the project completed by 1860–1861 (Jefferson to Union). Since there is no corroborative evidence available at this time to detail the scope of Loudon's new contract or its conditions, several possibilities are suggested.

First, the river's edge in the area of the Batture north of Jefferson was prone to erosion from ca. 1859 to ca. 1884 (Watkins 1899:9–10). The erosion was already underway in 1861 when the mayor and board received proposals "for the sinking of a barge or other river craft with sufficient stone or other material to hold it in place at the landing below Poplar Street where the bank is now being washed away" (CM Minutes August 21, 1861:533). It is possible, therefore, that the new 1866 contract with Loudon was needed to repair damage in the area immediately downriver from the area being washed away in 1861.

Second, it is possible that Grant did remove stone work from the Memphis Landing, perhaps not only the supply piles of loose stone collected on the Landing by Loudon, which were in existence in 1860, but also the pavement laid by Loudon between 1859 and 1861. If so, Grant's intent apparently would have been to employ the stone in the construction of Grant's Canal on Young's Point, Louisiana, in his attempt to divert the Mississippi away from the cannon batteries of Vicksburg. However, no known news reports, city records, or secondary historical accounts support or suggest Loudon's story as reported by Mathes.

Third, and most likely, is the possibility that Loudon's original work on the Landing survived the war at least somewhat intact, and the 1866 project extended the earlier pavement. The completed strip of 1859–1861 paving is known to have been 100 feet wide, as stated in the original contract (*MDA*, 16 March 1859), but where this paving was laid within the elevation of the bluff grade itself is unnown. Was the bottom edge of this strip laid near the existing 0.0 foot mark on the Memphis gauge, or at the 10.0 foot or 20.0 foot mark? It is much more likely that the new work begun in 1866 was to extend the east-west width of the paving, as opposed to replacing part of the paving lost between 1861 and 1866.

Memphis and its river commerce recovered with surprising speed from the Civil War. Evidently, the Landing was completed from Monroe Street south to Union Street sometime

between 1866 and 1872. The city council minutes of August 1, 1868, include the following passage:

> John Lowdon calls attention to caving conditions of public landing Northward from Jefferson Street, a strip 700 x 100 already having disappeared carrying away $20,000 work of paving; that caving could be stopped by sinking of two or three old barges loaded with gravel opposite the head of "Old Hen."

On October 7, 1968, the city council minutes state: "Resolution presented to permit the contract of M. & J. Lowden to be extended to include unpaved portion of city wharf from Court to Union, work to be done within 60 days." In 1869, the City Engineer instructed J. & M. Loudon to pave the Landing at the foot of Union Street.

The local press began to clamor for the extension of the levee in 1872, when it was expected that "the City of Memphis, in all probability, will be forced to buy Howard's Row and all of the property bounded by Union, Shelby [South Front] and Beale Streets, so that space can be used to enlarge the city's levee and give more wharfage room to steamboats" (*CA*, 1 February and 19 February 1947).

Since then, periodic repairs and routine maintenance have been needed to reverse the effects of occasional erosion (CM Minutes, May 27, 1879) or, in much more recent times, the spalling of the older limestone blocks (*CA*, 13 October 1978). In turn, occasional removal of the pavement was necessary to carry out other public projects, as evidenced by the 1879 ordinance of the City of Memphis that requires "parties laying sewers to the River to use Iron pipe under the Landing" (CM Minutes, April 22, 1879).

The uppermost (eastern) edge of the Landing pavement was altered between 1881 and 1882 during the construction of the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad. During the same period, stone blocks were used to pave many city streets, and paved roadways finally connected Front Street with the Landing (*MDA*, 31 July 1880; CM Minutes, December 9, 1880). These efforts also required the removal of "all of the bluffs out of their line between Beale and Jefferson (save that between Union and Monroe), amounting to over fifty thousand cubic yards" (Engineer's Report, in CM Minutes, December 31, 1881).

The South Memphis Landing (ca. 1838–Present)

The part of the Memphis Landing between Union Avenue and Beale Street possesses a unique history over for a forty-year period during the nineteenth century, after which it becomes an extension of the Great Memphis Landing. The South Memphis Landing, also known as Hart's Landing and the Beale Street Landing, was established several years before Center Landing, making it the second oldest of the four landings at Memphis and the older of the two surviving landings. Its importance to the history of Memphis is due to its association with the rise of the rival city of South Memphis and with its service to the famed Gayoso House hotel, immediately above the Landing on the river bluff.

The earliest references to the South Memphis Landing can be traced to 1838, when the wharfboat *Orleans* was removed by its captain, William W. Hart, from its moorings at the original Public Landing of Memphis at Winchester Street and relocated "below the corporation line" (Davis 1873:115–116). The location of Hart's new steamboat landing is confirmed by two 1841 plats prepared to establish a formal street grid, subdivision pattern, and riverfront of lands held by the South Memphis Company (SCDB M:242–247). The plats were necessary to formalize a complex real estate transaction that led to the development of the Gayoso House hotel by Robertson Topp, George McCall, and William Vance, principals in the South Memphis

Company, and Thomas Haralson, a neighboring property owner. Notations on the plats give every indication that their purpose was to formalize several existing lots, roadways, and land boundaries in this area of South Memphis (Figure 9).

The arrival of Hart's wharfboat proprietors apparently influenced the South Memphis Company to take action on the establishment of a new town, intended to rival its neighbor to the north (Davis 1873:115–116). Although the original plan of Memphis extended south of Union Avenue to the line of what would become Beale Street, the corporate line for the city established in 1827 ended at Union Avenue. The land south of Union Street was considered an annexation reserve area, and the lots sold by the Memphis proprietors in the area were termed "county lots." It is suggested that the partners of the South Memphis Company intended to force annexation of their property by making significant improvements to the land, with the Gayoso House hotel as their cornerstone. When the City of Memphis did not respond with annexation following the opening of the Gayoso House in 1844, the South Memphis Company partners turned to formal incorporation of the City of South Memphis in 1846–1847. The City of Memphis was forced to recapitulate in 1850 after a public call to unify the two cities (Harkins 1982:62).

With the relocation of Hart's wharfboat in 1838 came new access to the river landing. The 1841 plats identify "Hart's Landing" at the foot of Hotel Street, more or less aligned with the temple-front facade of the Gayoso House. The bluff west of Shelby (Front) Street between Beale Street and Union Avenue was much steeper than that north of Union Avenue, as revealed in the 1870 "Bird's Eye View of Memphis" (Anonymous 1921). Roadways connecting Front Street with the river landing were few due to the deep grade cuts necessary to traverse the steep bluff edge. As a result, roadways were only at McCall and Beale streets, according to the 1870 "Bird's Eye View" and other contemporary maps.

The 1841 plats are the last known references to "Hart's Landing" or William Hart. Assuming that Hart were still alive in 1850, when South Memphis formally merged with Memphis, his steamboat wharf would have been rendered obsolete, with his control of the landings and the collection of wharf fees superseded by the jurisdiction of the Memphis wharfmaster. This does not mean that the South Memphis Landing ceased to be a viable landing for the commercial interests of the southern part of the city. Memphis was made the Naval Station for the Mississippi River Squadron after Federal occupation in 1862, and the Landing was the harbor for its fleet (Sigafoos 1979:43). The South Memphis Landing probably was the major landing for troops stationed at Fort Pickering during this period. In a ca. 1866 illustration from *Harper's Weekly* (in Harkins 1982:8), a line of soldiers is depicted marching up the Landing. The shortest route from the Landing to Fort Pickering would have been along Tennessee Street, shown in the illustration at the crest of the bluff south of the Landing (Figure 10).

Improvement of the South Memphis Landing was first attempted in 1859–1861 as part of John Loudon's paving contract for the Landing above Union Street (CM Minutes, August 10, 1860:88–89). The South Memphis portion of the contract was made with 9-inch-deep stones (as opposed to the 12-inch-deep material to the north). Almost as soon as the paving work on the South Memphis Landing was completed, the subsurface base of the paving had "given way and sunk" (CM Minutes July 27, 1860:59–61), apparently due to the lack of drains beneath the paving. Loudon and the City agreed to work together to take up the paving and to re-lay it once drains were installed, but there is no evidence to confirm that this revision of the project was completed. The work probably was put off by the onset of the Civil War.

The 1870 *Bird's Eye View of Memphis* (Anonymous, 1921) reveals a landscape much different from that indicated by the ca. 1866 *Harper's Weekly* print. In 1870, the South Memphis Landing area is depicted as a rugged terrain with only a narrow band of low, flat ground at the river's edge, which could have been covered by high water during much of the year (Figure 11). From

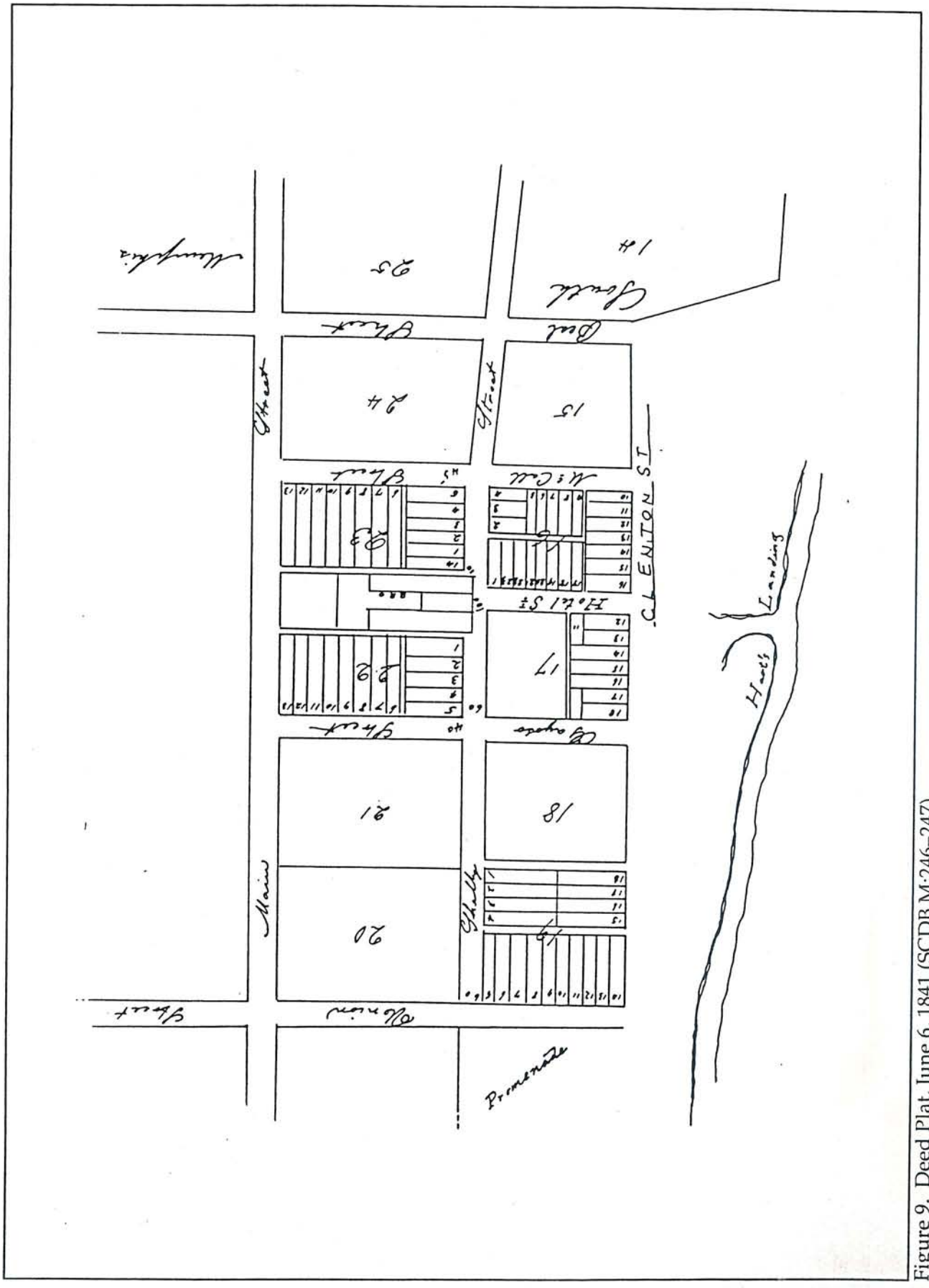

Figure 9. Deed Plat, June 6, 1841 (SCDB M:246–247).

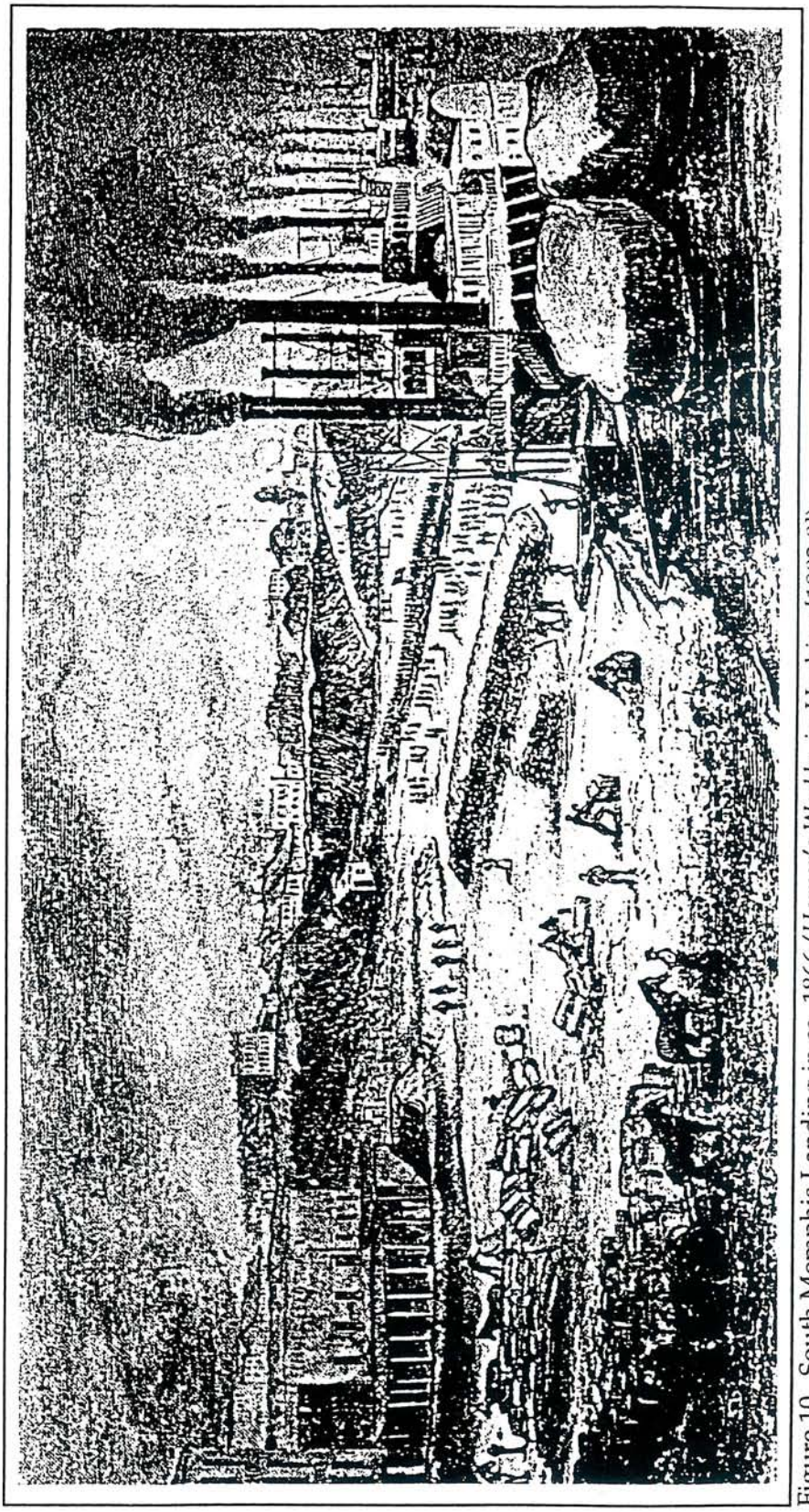

Figure 10. South Memphis Landing in ca. 1866 (*Harper's Weekly*, in Harkins [1982:8]).

Missing page 28
(probably drawings)

its upper edge along Shelby Street, the Memphis bluff descended to the Mississippi River in a series of rough terraces. South of Beale Street, the steep edge of the bluff meets the river, making Beale Street Landing the southernmost landing in the city. Steamboats and barges were tied up to small docks north of Beale Street supported and secured by wooden pilings. The conditions of the South Memphis Landing documented in the 1870 "Bird's Eye View" were little changed from its appearance in 1841 and may have been similar to the appearance of the Memphis Landing before early grading work in the 1840s.

The differences between the landing terrain shown in the ca. 1866 *Harper's Weekly* print (in Harkins 1982:8) and the 1870 "Bird's Eye View of Memphis" are substantial. Given descriptions of the later grading work needed to pave the South Memphis Landing, the view of the terrain in the "Bird's Eye View" is more likely correct, though it shows no evidence of the paving strip laid down by John Loudon in 1859–1861. It is entirely possible that this paving had previously collapsed into the river or been covered by the collapse of the bluff terraces above the Landing at South Memphis indicated in the "Bird's Eye View."

In spite of these difficult conditions, the landing at South Memphis was extremely active in serving large river-related enterprises nearby. Large antebellum concerns such as the Duval, Algeo & Company "Mammoth Ice House" on Beale Street depended on access to the Landing both to unload the tons of ice delivered annually to their ice house from Illinois and to service the shipping companies and passenger boats that plied the river (Williams 1860:72). Apart from freight traffic, the Landing was also where passengers disembarked for their stay at the Gayoso House, the city's premier hotel in the antebellum era.

The significance of the South Memphis Landing to the city's river commerce changed dramatically in 1871 with the start of construction on the Vicksburg & St. Louis Anchor Line's massive freight elevator at the foot of Beale Street, which was completed July 17, 1872, at a cost of approximately $125,000 (*MDA*, 3 July 1878). Maps indicate that the footprint of the building stretched more than a city block, from the north side of McCall Street to the south side of Beale Street (Boyle & Chapman 1872) (Figure 12), "covering nearly an acre of ground" (*MDA*, 3 July 1878). Like a grain elevator, this facility was built as a storage and transfer building on the river landing that could handle material cooperatively among many owners. Unlike a grain elevator, this facility was built to handle "packaged" goods in crates or barrels in both large and small quantities, ready to be loaded onto packet boats from its riverside floating dock.

The scant descriptions of this facility suggest that the elevator stood three or four "stories" high and open to the elements except for the top floor, which was enclosed for offices and other facilities (*PL*, 4 July 1878; *CA*, 15 January 1941). The structure was built so that rising river waters might inundate one floor, leaving the next higher floor operational for the storage and distribution of the material to the floating dock. Though undocumented, the movement of freight up or down inside the building was likely assisted by a rudimentary freight elevator.

There are no known contemporary photographs or drawings of the elevator. However, descriptions of it and a conceptual drawing of the facility are contained in the "Steamboats on the Lower Mississippi River" Manuscript Collection by William H. Tippett, ca. 1967, housed in the History Department of the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library and Information Service. According to these materials and contemporary descriptions in local newspapers, the elevator was stepped into the embankment of the bluff, with its entrance in the uppermost floor near the high water mark. Freight entering the building at the upper floor could be stored for weeks, if necessary, before being lowered to the appropriate floor for loading onto steamboats.

On July 1, 1878, the steamer *Capitol City* caught fire while tied to the dock of the elevator, and the strong western winds that evening quickly spread the fire to the elevator building itself (*PL*, 2 July 1878). The structure was totally destroyed. At the time, the elevator was holding an

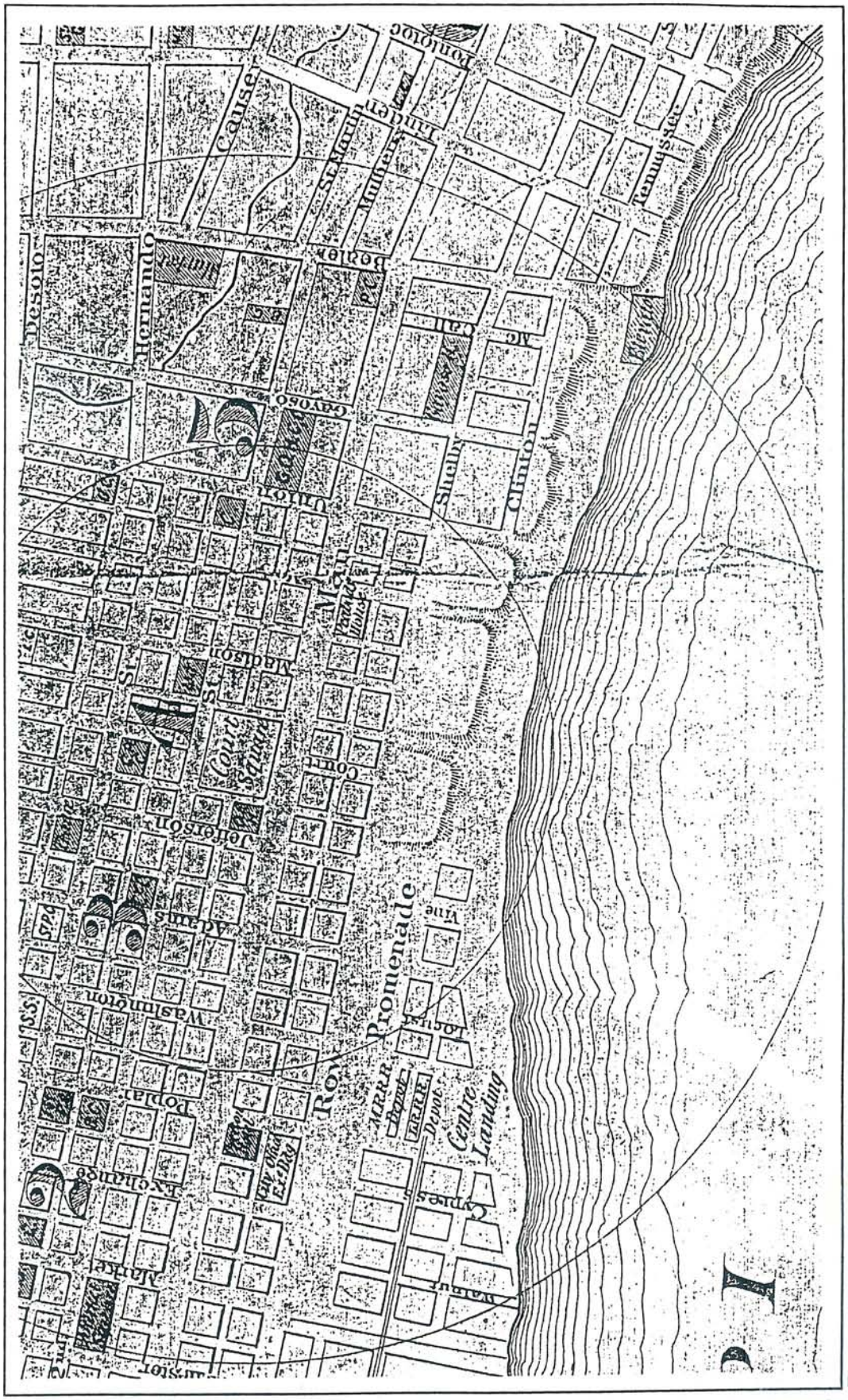

Figure 12. Map of Memphis, Tennessee (Boyle & Chapman 1872).

estimated 2,500 barrels of flour, cornmeal, and tar, 600 sacks of oats, bran, and cornmeal, and 700 barrels of cottonseed oil, among other sundry freight, representing the goods of 20 or more local firms (*PL*, 3 July 1878). Two persons on board the *Capitol City* died in the blaze. The total loss was variously estimated at between $125,000 and $200,000. The pilings at the second floor level were all that remained of the great building by mid-afternoon the next day (*PL*, 3 July 1878).

The loss of the freight elevator was a great blow to the City of Memphis. The Anchor Line did not respond to the calls to rebuild the facility and abandoned the site instead. A similar facility, known as the Memphis Package Elevator, was built by another company in the early 1880s on the north end of the levee in the vicinity of the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad Depot at Jefferson and Chickasaw streets (Sholes 1882:273).

The fire at the Anchor Line elevator apparently led the city government to realize that improvements to the South Memphis Landing were well overdue. Earlier efforts to enlarge and pave this part of the riverfront were probably sidetracked by larger problems such as the financial Panic of 1873 and, of more local significance, the onset of the second yellow fever epidemic in the same year. Although there is no direct historical evidence, part of the motivation to pave the South Memphis Landing may have been provided by recommendations of the National Board of Health in the wake of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878. In any case, in March 1879 the legislative council of the Memphis Taxing District of Shelby County received a communication from its city engineer, recommending "completion of the levee south of Union Street" (CM Minutes, March 20, 1879).

Earlier, in February or early March 1879, the legislative council had adopted the concept of using the former freight elevator site for a public dump. Bids for the proposed project were opened on March 18, 1879. At the same meeting, the council received:

> a communication from Jno. A. Scudder [?], Prest of the Elevator Co. to Ad Storm, Supt (of the Elevator Co.) notifying him that the Elevator Co. was willing to abandon the old elevator site—On motion of Mr. Goyer the elevator site was accepted from the Elevator Co. in its present condition. [CM Minutes, March 18, 1879]

In March 1879, T. C. Betts was awarded the contract for constructing the dump (CM Minutes, March 28, 1879), which was to be operated in conjunction with a "dump or dredge boat" from the elevator site (CM Minutes, April 10, 1879). Though outraged citizens succeeded in having Betts's contract annulled less than three weeks later because of its potential as "a Great nuisance &c." (CM Minutes, April 28, 1879), the project was completed and was in use during the winter months of 1879, when it was reported that the sanitary condition of the city was "aggravated by the location of the present public 'dump boat' at the foot of Beale Street, a decided nuisance at this time" (National Board of Health 1879:249). The use of the site for the loading of a dump boat is known to have continued beyond 1882 (CM Minutes, June 28, 1882).

Apart from the use of the elevator site for the mooring of a dump boat, the legislative council did continue with its plan to pave the landing, which was awarded to "M. Larkin & Co." (CM Minutes, April 28, 1879). Material for the paving project was provided under a separate contract:

> awarded to J. A. Loudon upon executing a satisfactory bond for three to five thousand yards of dimension stone to be delivered on the landing at such points as may be designated. All stone to be delivered by the 15th October next. [CM Minutes, July 17, 1879]

James A. Loudon was one of the three sons of John Loudon, the contractor for the original paving of the Memphis Landing in 1859 (Mathes 1897–1899:140). He apparently continued the family's shipping business after his brother Milton's death of yellow fever in 1873.

Unfortunately for the city and its citizens, on the same day that the paving contract was announced, the evening newspapers brought news of a new outbreak of yellow fever (*PL*, 17 July 1879). This was the last of the great epidemics of the 1870s. The legislative council effectively disbanded until November 12, when frosts had removed further threat of fever for the year (CM Minutes, November 12, 1879).

When the local government returned to its normal functions, it once again took up the business of paving the southern part of the levee. Evidently, Larkin & Company had finished part of the original work before the epidemic; a renewed contract included "paving of the wharf & Landing from the north edge of the elevator to the south edge of Beale Street a distance of about 400 feet by 200" (CM Minutes, July 8, 1880).

The records of this new 1880 paving contract are somewhat confusing. The project was awarded once again to Larkin & Company (CM Minutes, February 24, 1880), although there is no record of a bid being let for the 1880 phase of the project. It appears that Larkin & Company was unable to carry out the project, perhaps from an inability to post the required bond. The next found reference to the paving work is in June 1880, when it was reported that "Contractor Grider will go to work on his levee paving contract this morning. He will break ground at the lower end of the old elevator and work up to Beale Street" (*MDA*, 22 June 1880). Again, the minutes of the legislative council do not seem to contain information on changes in the contract or the bidding for the work.

Adding to the confusion over this matter, the legislative council then directed the City Engineer, Niles Meriweather, to design new specifications and advertise for bids to pave the area of the wharf from the elevator to Beale Street (CM Minutes, July 8, 1880). In the same meeting, the council also directed that "the F & P Comm [Fire and Police Commissioners] be and are hearby [sic] authorized to take such steps as may be necessary to insure more rapid progress on the part of W. H. Grider & Co. under their contract on the Levy [sic]" (CM Minutes, July 8, 1880). Bids for the paving work requested on July 8 were opened on July 19, and the contract for "paving the wharf from N. side of old elevator to S. side of Beale Street [with] the district reserving the right to do any or all of the grading" was awarded to O. H. P. Piper. Once again, in the same meeting, the council considered the previous contract of W. H. Grider and continued it, with the admonishment that Grider "push the work of paving the Levee" (*MDA*, 20 July 1880).

No further reference to O. H. P. Piper's contract was found in the records of the council after August 7, 1880, when the council moved that "the reservation of the district to do the grading was stricken out of O. H. P. Piper's contract for the levee work and the time extended to January 15, 1881 instead of Dec. 1st 1880" (CM Minutes, August 7, 1880). There was no mention of increasing the amount of Piper's contract to accomplish the additional work, which may have caused him to cancel the obligation.

In August 1880, local newspapers reported, "the burned piling at the old St. Louis Packet Company elevator, at the foot of Beale Street, is being cut away at the bottom of the river by a submarine diver. This portion of the landing can then be utilized by steamboats" (*MDA*, 17 August 1880). Three weeks later, it reported that the "submarine diver is blowing up with dynamite the old elevator piles at the foot of Beale Street" (*MDA*, 8 September 1880). Though not mentioned by name, it is believed that this was done by Grider as part of his larger contract for the levee work, which included "paving of certain parts of the wharf & landing and for certain rip rap work and repairing on the landing" (CM Minutes, October 1, 1881).

Like the experiences of John Loudon a generation before him, W. H. Grider also had difficulties caused by the sediments at the base of the bluff. "A communication from Contractor W.H. Grider, as to the danger of landslides where pavement is being put down by him, was received and filed [by the legislative council]" (*MDA*, 24 August 1880). Whether because of the "danger of landslides," the costs of the "submarine diver" removing the old pilings of the elevator, or some other complication, Grider filed a petition with the legislative council "for compensation for extra work under his contract on Levee" (CM Minutes, February 10, 1881). The issue of the additional compensation was contested among the members of the legislative council for four months, and though the matter was settled with the authorization for payment of an additional $1,000, the decision was far from unanimous and was highly disputed (CM Minutes, May 19, 1881).

The bitterness over this matter conveyed by the minutes of the legislative council may reflect other political problems afoot at the time, but it was Grider's work for the City that attracted political scrutiny. When high water apparently prevented Grider from completing his contract on time, the majority of the legislative council took the opportunity to cancel the contract, whether deserved or not:

> The following resolution by Mr. Galloway was adopted—Whereas on February 21, 1880 the district entered into contract with W. H. Grider & Co. for the paving of certain parts of the wharf & landing and for certain rip rap work and repairing on the landing & whereas the said Grider & Co. having done the paving & not the rip rap & repairing, caused by the stage of water & other reasons satisfactory to this Council; therefore be it resolved, that said Contract is hereby declared annulled & Canceled without damage to either party. [CM Minutes, October 1, 1881]

In 1881, soon after the cancellation of Grider's contract, the council requested a report on the status of all city projects from the City Engineer, which in part reads:

> Considering the difficulties and drawbacks encountered, a large amount of work has been done in the past three years in grading and extending the wharf and landing southward from Union street and to the south side of Beale. About thirty thousand square yards of new pavement has been laid, making the new levee front some eleven hundred feet, by two hundred and fifty feet with the slope. Two-thirds of this work is of first-class block stone and the remainder first-class rubble-range work. About four thousand cubic yards of stone rip-rap has been placed at this levee as a protection against washing and undermining of same. The total expenditure for wharf improvements to the present will approximate $54,000. [CM Minutes, December 31, 1881]

The reference above suggests that the paving of the South Memphis Landing was finally completed, which is confirmed by an extensive earlier article on the entire scope of riverfront improvements (*MDA*, 9 April 1881). However, recent archaeological excavations of the Beale Street Landing site (40SY352) suggest yet another paving episode south of the 1881 work. The archaeological evidence at this site suggests that the paving was installed quite late in the nineteenth century, if not in the early twentieth century (Weaver et al. 1994; see below). No historical records have been found that document this phase of paving work on the Landing.

The Memphis Landing in the Modern Era (ca. 1881–Present)

The paving of most of the South Memphis Landing in ca. 1881 effectively ended the period of Memphis's history in which areas of the city were served by their own individual river landings. With the completed South Memphis Landing, the city's paved landing surface extended

unbroken from Beale Street north to Jefferson Street, a distance of more than one-half mile, averaging 225 feet in width (*MDA*, 9 April 1881).

Photographs of the unified Memphis Landing show that, in section, the paving extended up the gentle and continuous slope to a narrow terrace, approximately beneath today's Riverside Drive (Figures 13 and 14). The terrace appears to have been a north-south driveway for the Landing, providing the opportunity to move goods across the length of the Landing without remaining on its somewhat aggressive slope (an average of 1 foot in rise for every 6 feet of run). Adjacent to this terrace was the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad line, which was built into the pavement of the Landing from Union Avenue north to Jefferson Street. South of Union Avenue, the rail line rose on an embankment to bring it to the top of the river bluff south of Beale Street. From this point, the east-west streets of the city connected the levee with Front Street, effecting a seamless flow of stone paving from the water's edge to Front Street.

Over the next five decades, the Memphis Landing changed little from its appearance in 1881. Occasional construction projects involved lifting the paving stones for the placement of storm sewers, such as the ca. 1915–1920 construction of the massive Memphis Siphon storm water sewer, which exits beneath the Landing at Gayoso Avenue.

A natural process set in motion in ca. 1890 did cause a most significant and lasting effect to the use of the Memphis Landing. Changes in the course of the Mississippi River caused a sandbar that spread from the mouth of the Wolf River, creating the feature known as Mud Island. Once again, the Mississippi River proved its unpredictability. The sandbar began to accrete near the mouth of the Wolf River and spread quickly south, trapping the Wolf River between the sandbar and the bluff. Historians continue to debate the cause of its creation. Some attribute it to a sandbar that grew in the lee of a boat that grounded above the Wolf River in 1918; others attribute it to a change in the Mississippi currents as a result of the floods of 1912–1913, which changed the main channel of the river from the Hopefield Chute, west of Island 40, to the existing channel east of Island 40.

No matter the cause of Mud Island, the effect was that Memphis Landing was no longer seen by the city as its principal port to sustain open river commerce. In ca. 1935, Wolf River was diverted into the Loosahatchie Chute on the north side of Memphis, and the three-mile reach at the Wolf River's mouth became a slack-water harbor (Bragg 1977:77). One result has been the rapid accumulation of silt in the channel, and the Wolf River Harbor at the Memphis Landing has on occasion actually run dry. Annual dredging by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was and still is needed to keep the channel open to navigation. Even more important, the development of barge lines and diesel towboats made the Landing obsolete. In 1946, the Corps of Engineers adopted a project for a new industrial channel and harbor at Tennessee Chute on President's Island.

The formation of Mud Island on the city's river doorstep appears to have had a psychological as well as physical effect on the people of Memphis. Mud Island changed the city's view of its riverfront, even before the general collapse in the viability of river transportation in the 1940s and 1950s. As early as the 1920s, urban planners and city officials began to wonder about the future role of the riverfront and its service to the city. The evolution of various proposals for the treatment of the riverfront over the next five decades reflects the degradation of the Landing as a port facility as well as the city's desire to adapt the Landing for some new role.

The first of the grand proposals to redevelop the Memphis Landing was put forward by Harland Bartholomew in his city plan of 1924, which first initiated the concept of the Landing as a place more for automobiles than riverboats (Harland Bartholomew & Associates 1924). Bartholomew's concept transformed the Landing into a City Beautiful setting of grand manufacturing and port facilities, dominated by wharfs elevated above high water in the area

Figure 13. Memphis Riverfront and the Lee Line Headquarters at the Foot of Beale Street (View to the North) (no date).

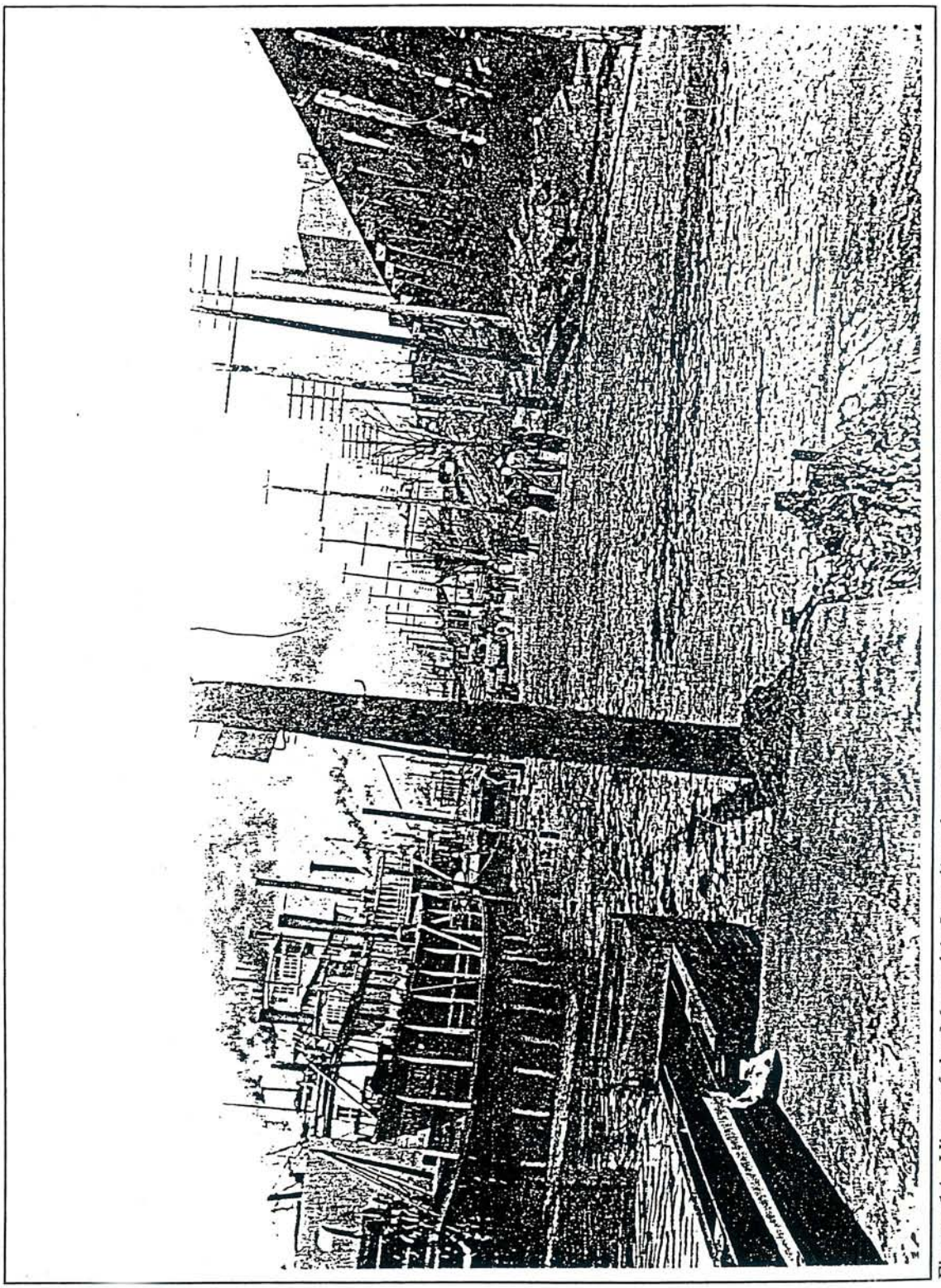

Figure 14. View of the Memphis Landing from Beale Street during High Water, ca. 1903.

west of Riverside Drive and north of Adams Street (Figure 15). Between Union Avenue and Adams in the area between Front Street and Riverside, a structure four blocks long was proposed to create a gigantic terrace, retained by a continuous arcade on its western side. Bartholomew proposed transforming half of the paved Landing into a parking lot by changing the grade of the Landing to a level surface. The remaining half was still to be used as a landing for river traffic.

Though none of Bartholomew's grand vision was ever enacted, the formal adoption of the entire plan by the City of Memphis in 1924 demonstrates that the city itself had come to realize that the Landing's role was changing. More than any other, the fundamental change was the alteration of the Landing from its original role in primarily serving the river, to a role of serving the land, i.e., to "largely solve the automobile parking problem" (Harland Bartholomew & Associates 1924:n.p.). At this point, the Landing likely was perceived by city dwellers as a place for unrestricted parking for the downtown area, a condition that continues today.

The next major project proposed for the Landing was actually built; it began a perceptional shift by the city that has had lasting consequences. During the 1920s and 1930s, the currents of the Mississippi River succeeded in undermining the face of the river bluff south of the Landing at Beale Street and extending roughly to Calhoun Street. The Landing itself was saved from damage by the shield of Mud Island. Erosion of the base of the bluff caused several catastrophic collapses. Over time, whole block-long lengths of streets, buildings, and even an Illinois Central Railroad train disappeared as the bluff gave way and tumbled toward the river (*Commercial Appeal*, July 29, 1934). The resulting "moonscape" of eroded ground at the bluff edge became a dumping ground, whether by design (to stem further erosion) or by neglect.

Under the advocacy of Mayor Watkins Overton, a plan was put forward in 1933–1934 to complete Riverside Drive along the foot of the bluff south of the Landing and to extend the roadway across the brow of the Landing to Jefferson Street (*Commercial Appeal*, July 29, 1934). The plan for Riverside Drive had been first envisioned by George Kessler, landscape architect of the Memphis Park and Parkway System, and proposed in 1908. The drive would connect downtown with Riverside Park and the west end of South Parkway.

Riverside Drive was completed in 1937 with funding from the Public Works Administration. It elevated the grade of Riverside Drive and the Illinois Central Railroad tracks to a level at least 15 feet above the pavement of the Landing. The current system of automobile ramps was then installed, along with most of the culverts, walkways, and stairs that connect Riverside with the Landing surface. On the north end of the Landing, the block between Jefferson and Court avenues was raised to the level of Riverside Drive to create Jefferson Davis Park.

The construction of Riverside Drive and Jefferson Davis Park represents another era in the Landing's service to the city. The Landing no longer was connected to Front Street by a seamless transition of paving up the face of the bluff. The Landing was still being used for river-related traffic, including the Lee Steamship Line, but the influence of the river interests over the city was now clearly broken. From this point on, downtown Memphis "turned its back" on the river as a resource to seek its future elsewhere.

From this point in the 1930s until only quite recently, urban planners employed by the City of Memphis saw the Landing as a nuisance rather than an asset. Harland Bartholomew revisited the Wolf River Harbor in his comprehensive city plan of 1955, but this time recommending eliminating the harbor altogether by diverting the Wolf River and filling the harbor from Beale Street to Poplar. A level plane would be established from Riverside Drive to the west edge of Mud Island, to be developed with an expressway, a large park, a "Heliport" west of Jefferson Davis Park, a small boat basin, and seven massive surface parking lots large enough to accommodate about 2,700 cars (Harland Bartholomew & Associates 1955:Plate 39).

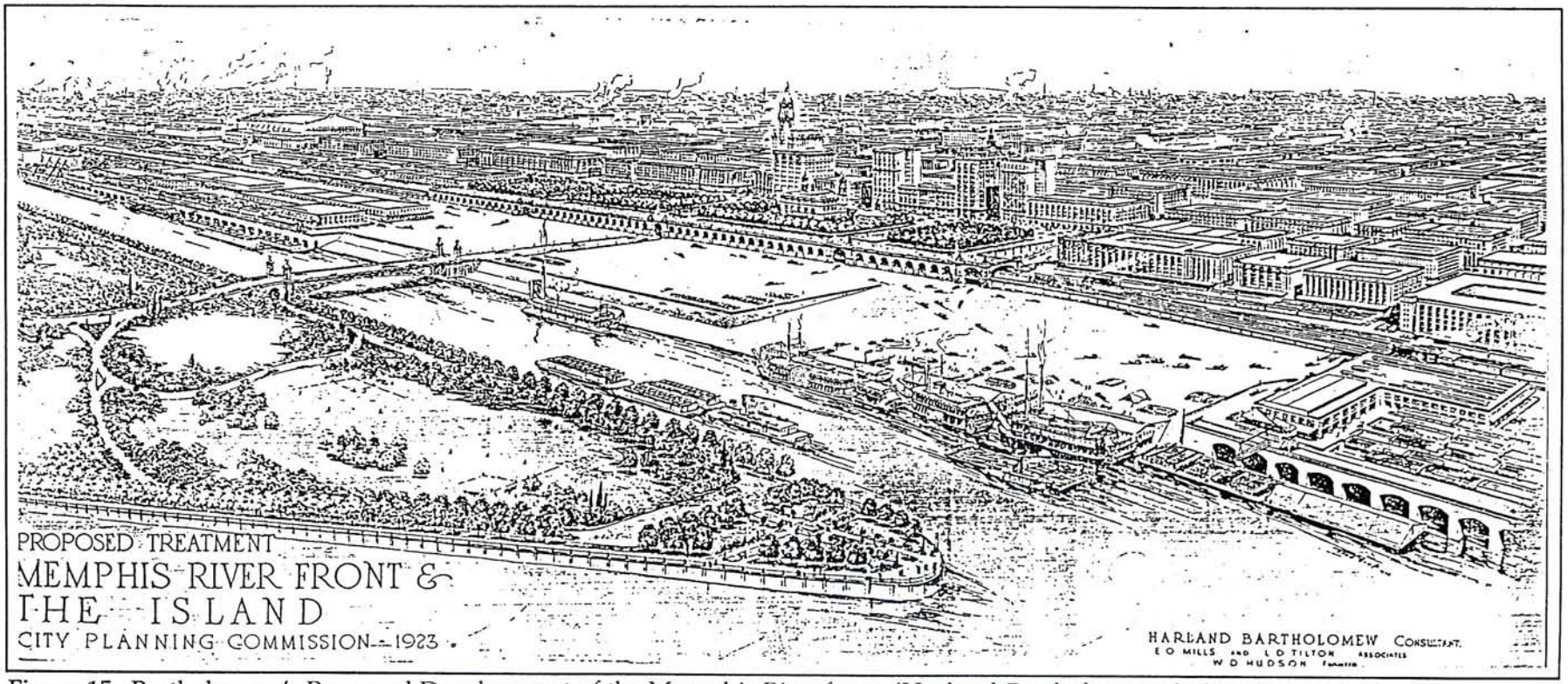

Figure 15. Bartholomew's Proposed Development of the Memphis Riverfront (Harland Bartholomew & Associates 1924).

In 1970, Bartholomew revised his vision of the riverfront by proposing a riverfront expressway over the Landing, one with 12–17 lanes (*Commercial Appeal*, October 12, 1970). Four years later, the Marcou, O'Leary & Associates "Downtown Memphis Plan and Program," less ambitious than Bartholomew's plan, proposed to cover the face of the bluff from Front Street to the plane of Riverside Drive with a massive terraced structure for apartment use, built over Riverside Drive stretching from McCall to Poplar. The Landing was to be destroyed in order to create a revetment to support the foundations of the apartment mega-structure (Marcou, O'Leary & Associates 1974).

The fact that most of the ambitious plans for the Memphis riverfront proposed after ca. 1920 were never built suggests that the city has never been willing (or financially able) to discard its river heritage entirely. This is fortunate, since the survival of this nationally significant historical resource now provides a great opportunity to contribute to our downtown redevelopment by returning to what it always has been—a commercial landing on the Mississippi River. The flatboatmen and the grand steamboat palaces of the nineteenth century may be long gone, but the Landing remains one of the few places in America where one may actually touch that heritage. Preservation and restoration of the Landing is a worthy investment in our future.