Early Lumber Trade Associations and the Lone Star State

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Texas has long been known as a land of rugged individualism and nowhere in its economic past have these tendencies been more evident than in the East Texas lumber industry. Southern, and particularly Texas, lumbering has been described as one of the last pioneering manifestations in our national development, and the landscape and historical annals of East Texas abound with the names of prominent lumbermen who were willing to get down into the pit and scrap all of the resources they could command in order to gain an advantage over their competitors. In their struggles no quarter was asked or given.

Yet, from this region and environment emerged figures who helped ensure the development of truly effective trade associations in the chaotic southern lumber industry. Forced by the harmful results of unbridled competition and the pressures of outside competitors and forces, these hardy individualists found it necessary to unite and cooperate in order to weed out abuses in their industry and present a united front. In so doing Texas lumber manufacturers provided a tremendous boost for cooperation on a large regional scale in the South.

Trade association development was part of the lumber industry's maturation process. As lumbering grew and marketing became national, the need for organizations to deal with problems of scale became obvious. However, the conditions which produced organizations often served to undermine their existence. For example, lumbering has been one of the few large American industries approximating the classical concept of competition. It has numerous firms and entry into the industry, particularly for the small producer, is relatively easy. Furthermore, those engaged in the lumber business have often been extreme individualists, men whose families followed the industry's migration and succeeded because of sheer hard work, ingenuity, and often ruthlessness. This extreme individualism and the predominance of local markets meant that in the industry's early days each mill-owner produced lumber according to his own taste. There was no real attempt at standardization.

However, as the mills grew in size and began to serve wider markets and as transportation and communications improved they found themselves competing with companies in distant locations. Consumers began to demand uniform standards as distribution through wholesalers and retail lumber yards became more common. Out of this background came attempts to bring order into the industry through establishing manufacturing or grading standards and to eliminate cutthroat competition by agreements on production and prices. The early stages of this effort were hampered by the producers' extreme individualism and mutual distrust. Frequently they would not abide by their agreements, and lumber organizations tended to be extremely loose and unstable.

Efforts to organize associations in the lumber industry date back to the 1850's, but most of the early endeavors were failures. Numerous cooperative efforts in the 1870's blossomed and quickly withered away. The National Association of Lumbermen, created in 1874 to control production and fight the post-Panic of 1873 price decline, proved powerless because of limited support. In 1881 a trade journal editorial discussed the association under the heading "Another Association Fiasco," saying "the lumber trade is rapidly building..."
for itself a national reputation as the parent of commercial organizations that never amount to anything . . . There seems to be a fatality about lumber organizations that insures for them an early and ignominious dissolution.12

Passage of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890 was a watershed in lumber trade association development. The Sherman Act clearly prohibited practices which characterized many early associations and channeled them toward refining at least their external objectives and activities. While not regarded as effective, the Sherman Act coincided with forces within the trade association movement itself. As a result, associations became more businesslike with paid staffs, permanent facilities, and a more dignified and professional demeanor.8 Many of the discredited attempts at production control and price fixing were continued, but the new organizations attempted to create a more favorable image for their industry. By the end of the 1890's the various lumber areas were organized into regional associations. The process was capped by the formation of the National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, an organization of affiliated regional groups, in 1902.9

The first relatively successful lumber trade association was organized in the Great Lakes region in the 1880's and the first truly effective regional organization was formed in that section in 1891. Regional organization in the South began about the same time. Over the years there was a good deal of cross-fertilization between the two areas. Frequently the same interests were active in both regions and many who became influential in southern organizations received their associational baptism in the Great Lakes industry. The background and motives of associations in both areas were virtually identical.

One of the earliest southern organizations was the Missouri and Arkansas Lumber Association which developed out of a meeting in June, 1883, at Poplar Bluff, Missouri. During the same period East Texas and Louisiana manufacturers began to organize trade associations through which they "exchanged data, comparative price lists, and privately circulated lists of malcontent or undesirable workmen. The operators also cooperated on political and legislative action and agreed on common labor and wage policies." During the 1880's ten manufacturers from the Sabine River area organized the Texas and Louisiana Lumbermen's Association. By 1883 twenty-six mills in the Sabine area were making reports and the association eventually expanded to cover all of Texas and Louisiana.3 The organization finally became known as The Texas and Louisiana Lumber Manufacturers' Association. Headquarters were in Beaumont and R. E. Kelley served as secretary. The organization solicited reports from its members giving their monthly production and stocks on hand. It circulated tables showing this information, listing the mills covered, and making comparisons with the same period for the preceding year.12

Two of the organization's primary activities were the establishment of price lists and curtailing output during periods of over-production. The lists were reasonably effective. A circular from the secretary in 1895 found it "pleasant to state that not a single writer attempts to explain the small demand in the old way, namely, by charging that A, B or C had undersold the list. No charge of this nature appears in any letter, and the fact that I am able to make this statement after reading twenty-seven letters from manufacturers, each acknowledging dull business, is testimony to the loyal observance of the list . . . ."13
The association attempted to keep members in line, and they were requested to report all cases of price cutting to the secretary for investigation.\textsuperscript{14}

The lumbermen apparently took this matter seriously for in June, 1897, Secretary Kelley wrote a prominent subscriber to investigate "a report...to the effect that since the adoption of the list of May 25th you have sold an opening order...at a cut of $1.00 per M on the general bill..." The secretary continued that he was "disposed to think the party making the report is in error, for the manufacturers present when the list was adopted were too emphatic in their expressions to permit me to believe any one would willfully and knowingly violate the agreement." However, Kelley said he would "be pleased to hear an explanation from you that I may straighten the matter out to the satisfaction of the complainant and all others..."\textsuperscript{15}

The Texas and Louisiana Lumber Manufacturers' Association tried with varying success to curtail output in the industry. In these endeavors it attempted to enlist the support of non-member mills. In May, 1896, Secretary Kelley reported that at a Houston meeting the manufacturers "agreed that as soon as 85 per cent of the capacity of yellow pine mills in Texas and Louisiana assent to a curtailment of output...the price list...would again become effective and adhered to..."\textsuperscript{16} Evidence that such endeavors were generally not successful was revealed in Kelley's statement that "millmen should not become hopeless because of comparative failures in the past to effect permanent and lasting improvement."\textsuperscript{17}

The problems of Texas and Louisiana manufacturers were shared by their counterparts in other parts of the southern piney woods who also joined together in local and sub-regional organizations to correct what one Mississippian termed a system "that allowed the ignorant customer to fix the price of a commodity."\textsuperscript{18} In 1890 representatives of several local and sub-regional associations united to form the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association. This was the first truly pan-regional southern lumber trade association.

The nucleus of the SLMA was the old Missouri and Arkansas Lumber Association which had developed into the Missouri, Arkansas and Texas Association. The organization admitted manufacturers of all lumber species although producers of yellow or southern pine dominated. Its membership came from practically the entire South except the Atlantic Coast states. Separate organizations in the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Florida were later absorbed into pan-regional organizations. Producers catering to the export market and hardwood manufacturers took little part in the association.\textsuperscript{19} In the beginning members of the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association came principally from Missouri, Arkansas, and Mississippi.

The SLMA immediately adopted grading rules in 1890, but the grades differed from those of The Texas and Louisiana Lumber Manufacturers' Association. Manufacturers from the two organizations reached a compromise in 1899 and the Texas and Louisiana producers affiliated with the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association.\textsuperscript{20} A major trade paper praised the compromise and joyfully noted the addition of longleaf territory with an estimated three hundred million feet of annual capacity to the SLMA fold. It stated that the main tasks now confronting the organization were "attainment of uniform grading all over the South, and the establishment of a statistical department which shall
be complete and accurate.""21 This was an indirect way of saying that the association should now gather accurate materials upon which comprehensive price-fixing and curtailment agreements could be based. In fact the organization began cranking out price lists and suggestions at the time of its formation. From headquarters in St. Louis an estimated fifty-two price lists were issued from 1890 until 1905.22

The association's emphasis upon price and production controls was evident throughout its entire existence. During its formative period in the early 1890's the SLMA urged members to curtail production and adhere closely to the price lists promulgated by its Committee on Values. As late as June, 1904, near the end of its existence under the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association name it held an extraordinary meeting of seventy to eighty percent of the southern pine manufacturers in Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. These operators, with a combined production of almost three billion board feet, agreed to reduce output by one-third of normal production for a two-month period. This was to be accomplished through eliminating night operations, shortening the work week, or reducing the working day. These drastic measures were undertaken to fight the over-production and decreased demand brought about by steadily rising prices which had prompted owners to over-expand their mill capacities. The measures were credited with drastically curtailing production. R. A. Long, a dominant industry figure, said they arrested the downward price spiral and started a trend toward increasing values. However, the turnaround was probably due to increased construction in major cities and a rising price level in the overseas market rather than production curtailment.23

Despite a wide variety of other activities the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association continued to stress production controls and price regulation. The public blamed generally rising lumber prices from 1899 to 1906 on trade associations rather than general economic conditions, and by the end of 1905 antitrust sentiment in parts of the South was fairly strong. As a result in 1906 the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association faced possible investigation and prosecution for issuing price lists and engaging in other questionable activities. Possibly because of the climate of public opinion the operators decided to drop the Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association name in favor of a new label.24 It was also true that some members simply wanted to adopt a name that would "indicate the fact that we represent Southern Pine and not all Southern lumber."25 The association's annual meeting on January 23 and 24, 1906, changed the name to Yellow Pine Manufacturers' Association although the organization remained essentially the same in membership and functions.26

Although the South had a functioning regional association by the early part of the twentieth century this did not mean at all producers or sections had been brought into the fold. Many organizations existed before and concurrently with the Yellow Pine Manufacturers' Association and they fall into three general categories. There are associations of a local nature which operated outside the areas of the Yellow Pine and later Southern Pine Association's main strength and early interests. They competed in fringe areas for members and over matters of local importance such as freight rates, but nevertheless generally cooperated with the YPMA and the SPA. These were eventually absorbed into the Southern Pine Association.
The second category includes local or sub-regional organizations within the main areas of YPMA and SPA strength which competed head-on with the bigger groups for membership and loyalties. These associations were frequently created by one man or a small group who hoped to build an empire. None of their challenges were successful. However, they cropped up periodically and occasionally proved embarrassing or annoying to the larger organizations because of their attempts to seduce members and their charges that the bigger associations were fronts for control of the entire industry by the large operators.

A third group includes organizations within the YPMA and SPA region which were generally organized on a local or sub-regional basis with objectives complementary to those of the larger associations. The YPMA and SPA worked closely with these bodies which dealt primarily with limited problems. Typical of these groups were mill managers’ associations concerned with production and local management matters and organizations centered around specific general problems such as transportation, advertising, or labor. The only really significant challenges to the hegemony of the larger general associations came from these supposedly cooperating and complementary organizations.

Organizations in the first category, those eventually absorbed into the Southern Pine Association, had their origins primarily in the desire to establish grading rules. There were numerous small associations in the second category which although organized basically on a local level tried on occasion to sap the strength of the larger groups. The general characteristics of these smaller bodies were exhibited by the Texas and Louisiana Saw Mill Association which was organized in February, 1908, with a paid secretary and offices in Houston. This group stemmed from a meeting of "prominent mill men of East Texas" in Houston in November, 1907, which was the result of a "long felt need, among the manufacturers, of an organization which would be thoroughly representative of the saw mill interests of this section," and which could "unite forces as a unit in dealing with matters affecting the industry as a whole, especially with reference to the relations of mill men with transportation companies . . . ." The meeting established a committee to draft a constitution and by-laws and another session was held in Beaumont on November 30, with additional recruits coming into the fold. Finally a session was scheduled for February 8, 1908, and in the meantime a number of manufacturers from Louisiana expressed their desire to join the new organization. Invitations to the February meeting were issued to all mill men in the two states. The secretary felt that "our first duty is to increase our membership list . . . in order that the association may represent to the fullest, the lumber industry of Louisiana and Texas."27

The secretary's desire to expand his membership was understandable, and he was quite willing for expansion to come at the expense of other organizations. In fact the Texas and Louisiana Saw Mill Association, like many other smaller groups, found it difficult to justify its existence to members belonging to the larger associations as well. In 1908, for example, a prominent Texas manufacturer in resigning from the Texas and Louisiana Association wrote that the basic reason for his firm's withdrawal was the fact that "we feel that our membership in the Yellow Pine Manufacturers' Association is rendering us practically all of the benefits that we could secure from your Association."28

The secretary could only reply that "It is quite true that we have not accomplished what we have set out to perform — not all — but we have not
been idle by any means and we think that with the limited support which we have been permitted to enjoy, that we have accomplished much that is of substantial benefit to our members and the lumber fraternity in general." The secretary felt the primary gains had been made in working for favorable freight rates, and he said that "No other Association or any other individual, outside of this Association can claim any share of the credit for what has been done." The Texas and Louisiana Saw Mill Association’s experiences were typical of those of other small organizations struggling to survive in the southern pine region.

The third category, cooperating specialized groups, included a number of state and sub-regional associations among which was the Lumbermen’s Association of Texas, which was composed of both manufacturers and retail dealers. A number of similar organizations were formed periodically, but perhaps the most colorful and significant of the specialized groups sprang into existence in 1906 almost simultaneously with the evolution of the SLMA into the Yellow Pine Manufacturers’ Association. Its interests and activities influenced the development of both the YPMA and the Southern Pine Association.

The new organization, the Southern Lumber Operators’ Association, in a sense simply worked together with the YPMA from a different side of the same battle. In fact, it is quite obvious that the two organizations were closely related. Both were headquartered in St. Louis, both pulled members from virtually the same sources, at times one man served simultaneously on the paid staffs of both associations, and surviving records indicate that the two organizations consciously worked together. The Operators’ Association outlived the YPMA and its relationship with the Southern Pine Association was not as open, but then it seems clear that both groups cooperated in certain areas.

The Operators’ Association performed an understood and valuable service for both of its companion organizations — it allowed them to keep their skirts relatively clean from the carnage which is often involved in labor conflicts. Therefore they could remain effective and respectable voices in the community and with the government while their members attained their objectives in the labor field through the less-respectable Operators’ Association. In fact the SLOA was an employers’ association in the purest and simplest meaning of the term. The only reason for its birth and continued existence was to act as a vehicle for the opposition of southern lumber operators to unionization. Unlike trade associations which develop relatively well-rounded and diverse programs, the SLOA never wavered from its single obsessive purpose — the elimination of organized labor in the southern lumber region.

The birth of the Operators’ Association came as the lumber industry suffered from over-production and great price fluctuations. The usual manufacturer’s response to the situation was to reduce his hours of operation, thus cutting down the amount of employment and employee wages. Employee unrest because of these tactics and generally poor laboring conditions erupted into spontaneous outbreaks which were leaderless and easily overcome. In 1906 and 1907 there were uprisings in the piney woods of East Texas and Louisiana centering around the Lake Charles area. These outbreaks although easily subdued by the operators left a lasting heritage of bitterness among the workers that made the area a hotbed of unionism when later major clashes came.
Written in this environment, the Operators' Association's constitution concentrated upon a single goal, "to resist any encroachment of organized labor," and by the time of the "Louisiana-Texas Lumber War" in 1911-1912 the organization had grown to include eighty-seven companies with mills in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, Oklahoma, Florida, and Mississippi. The SLOA's strength was concentrated in East Texas and Louisiana, and despite the leading role of others in its organization there is no question that as the Operators' Association developed the leading figure became the "Prince of the Pines," John Henry Kirby of the Kirby Lumber Company in Houston.

John Henry Kirby had long avoided direct involvement in association or cooperative work and in fact during the latter part of 1906 he was listed by the treasurer of the Operators' Association among the "manufacturers in Texas who have not yet joined us . . . " Physically cast in the stereotype of the old southern politician — large, ruddy-faced, "a magnificent looking Texan" who "wore the frock coat" and spoke in a "very resonant voice," Kirby accomplished his rise to eminence in true Horatio Alger fashion. His later activities reflected Kirby's humble origins and his belief that he had risen to the top through sheer individual effort under the beneficient eye of the Almighty.

The "Prince of the Pines" shared the feelings of the operator who stated that "I like my men but will never submit to have any Committee or anybody else dictate how long my mill should run or what wages I shall pay," but he went farther than simple disputes over wages and hours in his opposition to union organization. Kirby's interests were broader and he was firmly attached to the theories of the gospel of wealth. He was opposed to "radicalism" in any form if it did not conform to his notions. Kirby was firmly dedicated to the free enterprise system and private property and he was adamant in his opposition to big government, "one worldism," anarchism, socialism, communism, and other "radical" ideologies which he defined according to his own predilections. Kirby's leadership in the fight against the unions was couched in these terms and from the start the Southern Lumber Operators' Association tried to associate the workers' cause with "foreign" and "radical" doctrines.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1906-1907 outbreaks, however, Kirby was not openly associated with the Operators' Association and despite an undercurrent of rumbling discontent the workers flocked back to the mills and camps of East Texas and Louisiana. The Operators' Association, secure and complacent in victory, fell into somnolence and it was not until three years later that the residue of the outbreak stirred by new and effective leaders brought the tinder of the piney woods into flame and John Henry Kirby and the Operators' Association into the field to do battle with new and fiercer dragons.

The lumber workers needed only a catalyst to bring them into open revolt. Rather than one they got two — another downturn in economic conditions which prompted the now-familiar response of shutdowns and wage reductions, and two organizers who led a new union which spread like wildfire through the East Texas and Louisiana piney woods and was finally absorbed into the ranks of the feared "Wobblies." The first local was formed in December, 1910, and the opening year of union activity provoked an immediate response from the operators. By the late spring of 1911 the East Texas-Western Louisiana Lumber War was under full steam with the usual weapons of early industrial disputes
in evidence, culminating on July 7, 1912, in the most violent clash of the entire conflict, the “Graybowl Incident” with three union men and one company guard killed and forty combatants and bystanders injured. 36

In a circus-like atmosphere clouded by the testimony of Pinkerton and Burns detectives employed by the operators, newspaper reports of intolerable prison conditions, the ominous presence of Wobbly hero Big Bill Haywood in New Orleans, vague threats of a general war by the people against all mills in the territory, and persistent rumors of assassination plots against John Henry Kirby and other prominent lumbermen; a trial was held in Lake Charles from October 7 through November 2, 1912, on charges of conspiracy against sixty-two union men.

The workers’ case attracted widespread publicity and at the end of the lengthy trial they were acquitted. The outcome was a tremendous moral victory for the workers, but the trial expenses were so heavy that the final result was the union’s demise as a viable force in the Texas-Louisiana piney woods. Clashes between the now-impoverished union and the Operators’ Association crushed the final vestiges of organization, and by early 1916 even the most dedicated unionists had to admit their organizations were dead. 37 The Southern Lumber Operators’ Association and John Henry Kirby had triumphed over the hated “Ishmaelite organization.” 38 The Operators’ Association, however, continued to keep a close eye on movements among the laborers despite the fact that the labor situation had “cleared up materially...”. 39

The Yellow Pine Manufacturers’ Association was functioning during the height of Operators’ Association activity. Interestingly, however, the Kirby Lumber Company and many other Texas firms were not YPMA members, presumably because they were concerned about the Texas anti-trust statutes. In fact during the early days of the YPMA the secretary-manager was so upset by the Texas situation that he attempted to get a clear legal statement on the matter in order to reassure both present and potential subscribers in the Lone Star State. 40

Although the YPMA developed a well-rounded trade association program, its continued emphasis on the gathering and dissemination of statistical information provided the seeds of its undoing. The YPMA’s difficulties stemmed from alleged attempts to stabilize prices and control production by means of issuing a basic price list which members were urged to follow. Because of these activities the Attorney-General of the State of Missouri brought a writ of quo warranto against forty-one lumber companies on July 30, 1908. On December 24, 1913, in what became known as the Missouri Ouster Case, the Supreme Court of Missouri found twenty-five companies incorporated in Missouri and six foreign corporations guilty of conspiring to limit the output of southern pine and fix prices. The court issued judgements of forfeiture against each of the guilty companies, dissolving those with Missouri charters and ousting all of them from their licenses to operate in Missouri. 41

Since all of the companies were members of the YPMA, which was itself headquartered and organized in Missouri, the decision made the association’s demise inevitable. Despite last ditch attempts to alter the organization and bring it into the court’s good graces, on November 10, 1914, the board of directors unanimously recommended the YPMA’s dissolution. 42 During the association’s last days a committee was appointed to devise a reorganization scheme but...
because of the Missouri Ouster decision the plan was never promulgated. However, after conferring with attorneys the committee unveiled plans for a new organization, the Southern Pine Association, which was chartered in Missouri on October 21, 1914.43

From the beginning the organizational committee was in close contact with John Henry Kirby who was considered the key figure in the East Texas-Louisiana region. One of the first steps of Charles S. Keith, the committee's driving force, was to call upon Kirby to attend an organizational meeting in New Orleans in December, 1914, with an open mind.44 If Kirby could be persuaded to affiliate with the SPA this would almost ensure success among the vitally important East Texas-Louisiana producers.

The New Orleans meeting lasted three days and attracted over eighty percent of the southern lumber manufacturing interests. The lumbermen made definite plans to set the Southern Pine Association into operation and chose directors. Kirby attended the meeting and was favorably impressed with its results. However, he hesitated about joining until he had consulted his attorneys and learned "what others who had heretofore stood aloof intended to do." Kirby was happy that firms in his area that had previously abstained from associational activities were favorable toward the new proposition. He was particularly enthusiastic about the possibility of effective joint action in grading, inspection, statistics, advertising, and product research. However, although selected as one of the SPA's directors, Kirby did not attend the directors' sessions in New Orleans.45

The Southern Pine Association began to function early in 1915 and first priority on Secretary-Manager J. E. Rhodes' list was given to securing new members and attempting to bring old YPMA supporters into the fold. In January, 1915, Rhodes sent each SPA director a list of manufacturers in his state showing whether they had been affiliated with the YPMA or had supported its statistical activities and if they had signed SPA subscription contracts. The secretary-manager asked each director to call a manufacturers' meeting in his state to spur the membership drive.46

Organizational meetings were held throughout the southern pine region. In Texas the redoubtable John Henry Kirby summoned a gathering at the Lumbermen's Club in Houston. Representatives of fifteen prominent Texas firms attended. The meeting was carefully scheduled for a Saturday morning because many East Texas lumbermen had taken up golf and by meeting Saturday morning they could spend the afternoon and Sunday on the links.47

In fact Kirby was most responsible for swinging East Texas and Louisiana into the Southern Pine Association. Despite his own fears about legal difficulties and his record of reticence in routine associational activities Kirby was actively recruiting support for the new organization from almost the very beginning. The Texan's efforts were even directed toward convincing other manufacturers of the nascent association's legality. In the pursuit of his goal Kirby first had to overcome his own legal advisors' objections and then in turn to battle the counsels of other companies.48 Lutcher and Moore of Orange, Texas, for example, stayed out of the association for awhile because they received an adverse report on SPA legality from their attorney. Kirby's campaign
brought him into direct negotiations with the Lutcher and Moore counsel to try to convince him of the error of his decision — with the full approval of the firm's general manager! 49

Lutcher and Moore eventually supported the Southern Pine Association and there were others who hesitated and finally joined. These firms could be counted on in the final analysis. However, others consistently refused to join the organization and did not even follow the practice of many who drifted in and out. Some, like J. A. Bentley of Alexandria, Louisiana, were individualists who had fought heated battles with competitors over timber purchases. In the words of a long-time industry figure, "a lot of them just didn't wanta' sit down at the same table with these other fellows . . ." 50

Organizations like the Bentley firm posed a tremendous problem for the fledgling SPA, which hoped to overcome the lumbermen's senseless competition and individualism. In such cases the big guns of the industry and association were trained on the slacker. Secretary-Manager Rhodes tacitly acknowledged personal defeat in the Bentley matter in November, 1915, and called upon John Henry Kirby to intercede as "the only man who can possibly secure his subscription." 51 Kirby's action was quick, heavy-handed, and unsuccessful: "Why don't you join us? We need you and you need the Association . . . There must be a reason why you have not co-operated with us in the past and have not come in for your portion of these necessary expenses. Let me know what the reason is. I want you with us," 52 Bentley remained aloof from the Southern Pine Association.

However, the Bentley experience was not typical. Most organizational efforts were successfully directed toward firms considered of key importance in bringing entire regions into the SPA. In Texas, Kirby's confidants advised him that "with the Lutcher-Moore people, Alexander Gilmer, and the Sabine Tram coming in and becoming subscribers . . . the remaining Manufacturers in Texas would all fall right into line." 53 The emphasis of dealing with these concerns was on the association's benefits and legality.

Kirby also emphasized the SPA's services in the areas of "strict rules for grading . . . settling disputes concerning grades . . . the dissemination of information . . . [and] an intelligent advertising campaign . . ." 54 Appeals to Texas producers stressed the fact that SPA headquarters would be in New Orleans near the center of southern pine production although the corporation was legally domiciled in Missouri. A strident letter to the Lutcher-Moore people reminded them that "You fought so hard years ago to get the headquarters of the Yellow Pine Ass'n. removed from St. Louis to New Orleans. This new organization, the Southern Pine Association will have their headquarters in New Orleans." 55

The decision to incorporate the SPA in Missouri was a deliberate one which as one lumber journal said "makes the Association a ward, so to speak, of a hostile Court and ensures the plan of organization against the possibility of criticism by the courts of any state in which it may seek to do business." 56 The Missouri location, however, frightened many Texans who believed the old YPMA had not been sufficiently responsive to their desires. The president of the Carter-Kelley Lumber Company of Manning, Texas, expressed this point of view:
I am very much opposed to going into an organization of this kind with its headquarters in Kansas City, although there may be something under the chip that I do not know . . . the largest part of the business done by the association would be in the department of inspection of grades and arbitration. This I believe could be handled to very much better advantage with its headquarters located in the south . . . and when trouble comes up such as we had during the I.W.W., the men on the ground behind the guns are the fellows who have to take care of the situation, and I feel in this we should have the association organized in some of the southern states where it can be close to the manufacturing points, and where we can attend meetings conveniently.57

Kirby fought this objection by again emphasizing that headquarters were to be in New Orleans. He allayed another common fear by stating that "I have not found any disposition among the Missouri lumbermen to run things. They are willing that others shall have all the honors and take all the responsi­bilities if they will but recognize that some character of vigorous organization is indispensable to the success of the industry.58

Kirby was successful in the Kelley case. Kelley replied that:

... if the association is put in motion under the right kind of management located in New Orleans I see no reason why it should not succeed. Heretofore the members knew but very little about the inside working of the association . . . I know you are familiar with all of the workings of the new association and if you think we will get value received for the money we put into the new organization, then I will be heartily in favor of it, and will give it all of my support.59

Most Southern Pine Association efforts during its first year of existence were in fact directed toward the life-giving job of securing members, and the assistance of leaders like Kirby was greatly appreciated by the staff and Secretary-Manager Rhodes.60 Indeed Kirby and his Texas cohorts emerged as some of the Southern Pine Association's strongest supporters and they later contributed significantly to the SPA's rise as it developed into one of the nation's leading trade associations. Maturing from a background of spotty support for associational activities Texas lumbermen became a source of strength to the South's first truly successful pan-regional lumber trade association.
NOTES


Copies in the Kurth Papers, Forest History Archives, Stephen F. Austin State University, Box 2.

R. E. Kelley to The Texas and Louisiana Lumber Manufacturers' Association members, November 30, 1895, Kurth Papers, Box 2.

Kelley to Members, December 12, 1895, Kurth Papers, Box 2.

Kelley to Angelina County Lumber Company, June 25, 1897, Kurth Papers, Box 6.

Kelley to Yellow Pine Manufacturers in Texas and Louisiana, May 14, 1896, Kurth Papers, Box 2.
Kelley to Lumber Manufacturers of Texas and Louisiana, April 29, 1896, Kurth Papers, Box 2.

Nollie Hickman, *Mississippi Harvest, Lumbering in the Longleaf Pine Belt*, 1840-1915 (University, Mississippi: The University of Mississippi, 1962), 199.

G. K. Smith to Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association members, December 23, 1905, Kurth Papers, Box 84.


Hickman, *Mississippi Harvest*, 200. Numerous copies of these price lists may be seen in several boxes of the Kurth Papers.

Ibid., 202.

George K. Smith to Southern Lumber Manufacturers' Association members, December 20, 1905, Kurth Papers, Box 84.


Oscar S. Tam to Louisiana and Texas Lumber operators, February 17, 1908, Kurth Papers, Box 127.

Angelina County Lumber Company to Tam, June 8, 1908, Kurth Papers, Box 140.

Tam to Angelina County Lumber Company, June 12, 1908, Kurth Papers, Box 140.


My account of the origins and early period of the Operators' Association is taken from scattered materials in the Kurth Papers, Box 102, and from a paper by Professor George T. Morgan of the University of Houston entitled "'No Compromise—No Recognition: John Henry Kirby, the Southern Lumber Operators' Association, and Unionism in the Piney Woods, 1906-1916,'" which was first presented at the Spring, 1967, meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association in Dallas and which will appear in a shorter form in *Labor History*. Several authors cite the formation of the Operators' Association in 1907, but materials in the Kurth Papers show conclusively that it was organized in 1906.

George K. Smith to Angelina Co. Lumber Co., November 3, 1906, Kurth Papers, Box 102. Kirby's firm is included on an enclosed list.


Kirby’s feelings on these matters are scattered widely throughout his correspondence and speeches. His foundations were simply upon the United States Constitution and the Holy Bible, again interpreted according to his own particular interests.

Covington Hall, “‘Labor Struggles in the Deep South,’” (Unpublished manuscript, Special Collections Division, Howard Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University of Louisiana), 155-156.


Hall, “‘Labor Struggles in the Deep South,’” 134.

Southern Lumber Operators’ Association to All Members, June 18, 1913, Kurth Papers, Box 298. The Operators’ Association continued to keep close tabs on all “agitators” moving into the South. For an example see Southern Lumber Operators’ Association to All Members, October 29, 1913, Kurth Papers, Box 312.

H. M. Garwood to George K. Smith, September 28, 1907, Kurth Papers, Box 118. Smith to Members in Texas, December 9, 1907, Kurth Papers, Box 118.

The State ex inf., Elliott W. Major, Attorney-General, v. Arkansas Lumber Company et al., 260 Mo. 212 (1914); Missouri, Revised Statutes (1909), ch. 98, secs. 10298-10301.

J. E. Rhodes to Gentlemen, November 24, 1914, Kurth Papers, Box 339.

Charles S. Keith to John Henry Kirby, November 27, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, University of Houston, Box 222; “Prospectus; Incorporation, By-Laws, Departments” (Pamphlet published by the Southern Pine Association in 1925, Southern Pine Association Records, Collection Prospectus, Louisiana State University Department of Archives and Manuscripts), 8.

Keith to Kirby, November 27, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

Kirby to F. H. Farwell, December 17, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

J. E. Rhodes to Board of Directors, January 28, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

B. F. Bonner to John Henry Kirby, February 5, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

Kirby’s lawyers advised him to stay out of the Southern Pine Association in a five-page letter that was summed up in the warning that “we regard it as unwise that the Kirby Lumber Company participate in the Southern Pine Association . . .” Andrews, Streetman, Burns and Logue to Kirby, December 23, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

George E. Holland to Edwin B. Parker, February 15, 1915; F. H. Farwell to John Henry Kirby, February 17, 1915; Kirby to Parker, February 22, 1915; and Kirby to J. Lewis Thompson, February 22, 1915, all in John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

51J. E. Rhodes to John Henry Kirby, November 9, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

52Kirby to Joe A. Bentley, November 19, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

53J. Lewis Thompson to Kirby, February 17, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

54Kirby to W. H. Stark, December 23, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

55J. Lewis Thompson to F. H. Farwell, February 16, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

56Collier, The First Fifty Years of the Southern Pine Association, 42.

57G. A. Kelley to John Henry Kirby, December 24, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

58Kirby to Kelley, December 28, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

59Kelley to Kirby, December 30, 1914, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.

60J. E. Rhodes to Kirby, November 9, 1915, John Henry Kirby Papers, Box 222.