

ABSTRACT

Public Memory, Tourism, and Galveston's Selective Heritage: A Rhetorical Analysis of the *Elissa*

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This study explores the rhetorical construction of 1877 iron barque *Elissa* as a tourist attraction on the island of Galveston, Texas. Focusing on a localized construction of public memory, this study asks questions centered on the presentation and privileging of narratives purposefully aimed at creating a consumable attraction. Since her rescue and decade-long restoration in the late 1970s, the *Elissa* has been rhetorically constructed as a tourist attraction, redirecting attention from Galveston's realities of poverty in favor of a memory capable of being sold. Privileging a specific interpretation of race, class, and selecting an era as representative of Galveston as a whole, the *Elissa* enacts culture via consumable memory. In other words, instead of teaching patriotism or engaging in memorialization, the *Elissa* enacts a memory to be visited, experienced, and consumed.

Public Memory, Tourism, and Galveston's Selective Heritage:
A Rhetorical Analysis of the *Elissa*

by

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I can safely say: this has been a learning experience. I have gained an immense amount of knowledge about the intertwined nature of rhetorical studies, the tangential rabbit holes that present themselves, and the political balancing act in which scholars must participate. Most of all, I learned a lot about myself and the kind of scholar I want to become. This thesis articulates my interest in the study of public memory, but it also expresses the possibilities for a career of productive scholarship.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The storied history of Galveston, Texas is closely intertwined with efforts of revitalization.¹ The most recent effort at revitalizing the Island City has been a thirty-year narrative aimed at attracting tourists to experience all the city has to offer. Founded in 1836 with the organization of the Galveston City Company, today Galveston constantly struggles to remain historically relevant and economically viable.² One attempt to reconcile a modern tourism-driven economy with Galveston's former prosperity is the *Elissa*, a restored 1877 square-rigged, barque. Moored adjacent to the Historic Strand District, the *Elissa* is a construct of Galveston's authentic past, as a consumer-friendly, accessible tourist attraction. The narrative of her adventures from cargo ship to museum-piece is constructed to provide visitors an experience of the island's heritage as a destination. Despite only two calls on the port of Galveston, the *Elissa* was selected for restoration by the Galveston Historical Foundation (GHF) because of her "local connection" and other key features, such as the "authenticity of her iron hull."³ Consequently, the *Elissa* enacts a specific narrative of Galveston's heritage as a vibrant, nineteenth century port city, while obscuring other interpretations of the past. At every turn, the *Elissa's* narrative has been rhetorically constructed to appeal to a touristic audience. Therefore, more than her official status as "museum" suggests, the rhetorical construction of the *Elissa* over time positions her as a consumable form of memory.

Sites like the *Elissa* enact various identities and make visible the reliance of a local economy on the market for public memories. Sites which have some local, historical significance may be developed to display a public memory, ultimately saving physical markers of heritage while simultaneously creating an economic incentive for the city.⁴ Independently erected memorials or monuments rely, whether in whole or in part, on physical location to ground a memory differently than other sites. Authority is drawn from location, and just as the collection of presidential monuments on the National Mall signify importance, so too does the *Elissa* draw from the port city of Galveston's sense of significance. The preservation of heritage can embody many forms. In the case of the *Elissa*, she enacts a cultural narrative constructed by the GHF to bring tourists to Galveston as a destination to experience its "heritage."⁵ This study explores the rhetorical dimensions of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction, as conceived and maintained by the GHF.

Memory as Social "Experience"

Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott begin their recent volume on place with the assertion that "memory is rhetorical."⁶ Memory is inherently shown, shared, and is ultimately collective. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs articulates this in his work by stipulating that memory is only accessible in social frameworks.⁷ In other words, memory is rhetorical at many different levels; or to borrow Bradford Vivian's paraphrase: "Even individual memory... is collectively shaped and expressed."⁸ Although we often associate memory with individual action, we are only capable of recollection in a social framework, or as a group. Public memory is thus a social experience, constructed of "cultural artifacts explicitly and self-consciously designed to preserve memories."⁹

Public memory is at once controlled and influenced by institutions constructing memory and the audience experiencing and sharing it. When representations of the past are used to fulfill a persuasive end, or to showcase a particular perspective, we find that memory is indeed rhetorical. For the purposes of this study, memory must first be constructed before then fulfilling its epideictic function of display. This study engages the rhetorical construction of the *Elissa* in order to trace the ways in which she has been constructed and continually disseminated as a tourist attraction.

The rhetoricity of memory sites is at once, two things. Relying on both the physicality and the visuality of a text, the rhetorical study of sites of public memory requires an understanding of that which constructs the “experience.” As Carole Blair, William Balthrop, and Neil Michel, note: “Rhetorical studies of places and/or objects, such as quilts, gravestones, coffee houses, markets, parks, cityscapes, museums, and monuments, have made the claim repeatedly that objects and built environments may be just as rhetorical as words.”¹⁰ But, the authors continue, such texts cannot be reduced to simply the visual. Instead, studies must engage a text on both the visual level and the physical presence or location. Time and space are complicated, of course, by the continued presentation and adaptation at any one particular site. This thesis is informed by Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki’s “experiential landscape” and thusly engages both physical and visual aspects of the *Elissa* as she is constructed for a touristic experience.

Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki conceptualize museums as “experiential landscapes,” based on three principles.¹¹ By reading a museum as a text which does not begin or end with the built space, the authors first identify the “texture of larger landscapes” and the

surrounding environment in support of or at issue with the particular site.¹² Secondly, they recognize that the visitor brings a “full range of memorized images” to the experience, which may enhance or supersede the tangible markers of the site.¹³ Finally, Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki address a site’s ability to render visitors into particular subject positions via the location of the body in time and space. When read as an experience, rather than just a place or a visual text, museums occupy a complex intersection of rhetorical inquiry and public memory study.

To further the concept of experience, when dealing with a site that is constructed for a tourist audience, this study must address location and visibility, as well as sensory encounters. Each is crucial to understanding the nature of the “attraction,” and the way in which public memory is at work at sites of touristic experiences. Similarly, the social experience of memory, as conceived by philosopher Edward S. Casey, “derives from a basis in shared experience” at “a common place in which... history was enacted.”¹⁴ Thus, from all aspects, exploration of the rhetorical dimensions of experience – the combination of visibility and location – is necessary to determining the ways in which an attraction is constructed to be consumed.

Theorizing Public Memory

Central to the rhetorical study of public memory is the manner in which events or performances are constructed to be persuasive. Stephen H. Browne writes that the “text as a site of symbolic action, a place of cultural performance,” is defined in part “by its public and persuasive functions.”¹⁵ A text’s persuasive function, however, can be enacted in many different ways. “Public memorials are powerful rhetorical artifacts,” asserts Jennifer L. Jones Barbour, “where complicated questions of authorship, audience,

and context emerge.” Public memory studies draw from interdisciplinary thought and cover a large area of inquiry with relative ease. As both visual scholar Cara Finnegan and philosopher Casey remind us, although the label of “public memory” signals a potentially “monolithic” interpretation it is not “one kind of thing,” merely “waiting to be discovered.”¹⁶ Therefore, in an attempt to avoid the trap of monolithic interpretations, Blair, Dickinson, and Ott forward six assumptions in their recent volume concerning memory places. Fear of a monolithic interpretation is the same reason Kendall Phillips addresses as the “failure of memory,” suggesting instead three categorical distinctions to draw from: “fluidity of memory,” “stability of remembrance,” and “struggles over recollection.”¹⁷

Blair, Dickinson, and Ott’s six assumptions equip scholars with a methodological approach to addressing the processes by which memory is created for audience consumption. The first three assumptions engage the way public memory operates in its environment. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott assert that “(1) memory is activated by present concerns, issues, or anxieties; (2) memory narrates shared identities...” and “(3) memory is animated by affect.”¹⁸ When taken together, these reveal the public’s relation to the past. The second set of assumptions concerns public memory’s context: “(4) memory is partial, partisan, and thus often contested; (5) memory relies on material and/or symbolic supports; (6) memory has a history.”¹⁹ While none of these postulates assumes construction and dissemination of memory follows one path, together, they do provide a cohesive foundation from which to assume a level of definition.

Because these assumptions provide scholars the categories to determine the different ways memory can be operationalized, they are useful in ascertaining the

rhetorical construction of the restored sailing ship *Elissa* as a tourist attraction. To take the first three assumptions together, memory is at once concerned with the present, influenced by the collective audience, and animated by its potential affect. When the project to restore the *Elissa* first began, the concerns and anxieties included the need for tourism growth on the island. Galvestonian business elites conceived of a destination to highlight Galveston's maritime heritage, as opposed to the heavily marketed recreational activities, such as the island's beaches. As that destination, the *Elissa* was rhetorically constructed to herald a new identity for Galveston, one centered on the contributions of trade and shipping. As Blair, Dickinson, and Ott contend, the issues of the present require the authorial body to make choices regarding the presentation of the public memory. In this case, the Galveston Historical Foundation stands in as the decision-making body. Similarly, the constructed narrative relies heavily on "shared identities," drawing upon prominent or previously understood notions of heritage. This process, in turn, privileges the presentation of specific narratives, making smaller realms of experienced social memory commonplace.²⁰

The final assumption about the way memory operates addresses affect at a site of memory. As cultural scholar Christine Harold reveals it, "affect describes the response we have to things before we label that response with feelings or emotion."²¹ As this concept relates to sites of public memory, the *Elissa* is an object "worthy of preservation" because of the affect it may produce – its experiential potential.²² It is this "emotional attachment" to the object that signifies the audience's experience. In this case, the audience is a touristic one, a label that consequently dictates a set of shared values. As the restoration narrative of the *Elissa* will elucidate, her rescue presented the GHF with

an exigency, from which they could animate a public – a captive, admission-paying public.

Context is also an important part of public memory; hence, the second set of Blair, Dickinson, and Ott's assumptions deal with the situation in which memory operates. In discovering contextual factors, Blair, Dickinson, and Ott assert memory as a partial endeavor. Barbie Zelizer similarly posits memory as partial when she argues "no single memory contains all that we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue. Rather, memories are often pieced together like a mosaic."²³

Blair, Dickinson, and Ott identify the progression this idea has followed in rhetorical memory studies, emphasizing that memory is "most commonly... operationalized by forgetting."²⁴ The context of public memory also relies on material supports. Evidenced by the preoccupation with place, public memory is predicated on a shared identity as much as it is concerned with the *what*, or the "proof." *Elissa* herself is this material object; however, her location is also a material support to the memory she enacts. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott also articulate that the material is linked to an understanding of memory as history, for as important as materiality is to presenting public memory so too is a situated and grounded past.

The *Elissa* demonstrates this understanding of memory as a partial. As an organizing and supporting body, the GHF's interpretation of the *Elissa* shields other representations: race, class, etc. Here, the "structure of power" privileges a pre-determined representation of Galveston, that of an economically viable, Victorian-centered port city.²⁵ All five senses are engaged by the *Elissa*. The lull of the sea, the call of the gulls, the smell of the salty air, the textured feel of her railings and steering

wheel, the image that her three masts provide in contrast to the modern wharf all suggest to the tourist a destination to be experienced.

The successful construction of a public memory does not occur in a vacuum, but rather requires at least a partial historical anchor – something a ship does well. The rhetorical construction of the *Elissa* stemmed from an economic need for a tourist attraction to bring people to the historic bay area of the island. Consequently, the constructed narrative harkened to the Victorian-era, the last time during which the harbor experienced a successful boom. The surrounding district supplies architecture of the same era, updated to be commercially viable in a modern economy, but maintaining the illusion of “historic Galveston.” Because the selected era deliberately rests itself on the economic boom of the port and its trade of cotton and other goods, the sailing ship *Elissa* occupies a new life as a tourist attraction, simultaneously reminding visitors of the last time she docked at a Galveston pier.

Sites of public memory invite scholarly inquiry for a variety of reasons, including controversy, strikingly unique visual elements, and/or potential pedagogical – or even patriotic – contributions to culture. These inquiries are based in part on the understanding that “history is a representation of the past” while “memory, being a phenomenon of emotion and magic, accommodates only those facts that suit it.”²⁶ While an attempt to separate history and memory may be noble, it generally proves a fool’s errand. Instead, recognizing the invention of public memory requires an entanglement of history and memory, this study seeks to discover the GHF’s representation of the island. The *Elissa*, as a tourist attraction, engages both a pedagogical function as well as an epideictic one. Heralding a particular representation of Galveston, she has been

rhetorically constructed to provide a specific narrative of the island's history to the public. In addition to representing a selective past, the *Elissa* is used as a visual envoy for the Galveston marketed by the GHF. As Blair, Dickinson, and Ott contend:

Most of what passes for public memory bears at least some arguable resemblance to or some trace of a "real" past event. Most public memory is not purely or deliberately fictitious, in other words. But we must acknowledge public memory to be "invented," not in the large sense of a fabrication, but in the more limited sense that public memories are constructed of rhetorical resources.²⁷

Therefore, the invention of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction is born of the GHF's selective presentation of history, as well as of public memory.

Differing Constructions of Publics

A glimpse of the field of public memory finds Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp concerned with the tragic sinking of the *Titanic*, and Casey interested in the memorialization of September 11, 2001 and President Kennedy's assassination.²⁸ Both focus on tragic events, but in very different ways. Jorgensen-Earp analyzes the use of metaphors in her study of the salvage of the *Titanic*. Identifying the "conflict between sacralizing and secularizing metaphorical" representation of salvaged artifacts, Jorgensen-Earp addresses the tension in representations of the *Titanic*.²⁹ Ultimately engaging two narratives "about the way public memory is properly constructed" surrounding the presentation of the *Titanic*, Jorgensen-Earp's study offers an example of an inquiry into the rhetorical dimensions of public memory via competing metaphors and supporting narratives.³⁰

By contrast, Casey employs examples of widely experienced historical events, such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 or the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to illustrate his theoretical approach to levels of public memory. Delineating which levels of memory rely on particular physical, or in some cases temporal, supports,

Casey uses his position as a philosopher to produce an entirely different piece of scholarship – even as it is still memory-centric. Because Casey theorizes boundaries for place, time, and forms of memory, he must use visible, traumatic events to enable a clear picture of his schematic levels of individual, social, collective, and public memory. Similarly, because his essay is structured around multiple examples of textual occurrences, not merely one event in time, Casey’s contributions differ dramatically from Jorgensen-Earp’s. Both authors, however, engage the rhetoricity of memory and the way public remembering is enacted culturally, for the audience.

There are, of course, other ways of constructing an audience as evidenced by the public addressed in Carole Blair and Neil Michel’s examination of the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama as “an ensemble of interrelated” rhetorical performances.³¹ Exploring the ways in which the “black body” of the memorial “disrupts and infringes on public space,” Blair and Michel exhibit another perspective by which the rhetorical dimensions of public memory are analyzed in scholarship.³² By engaging the artistic aspects of the memorial, in conjunction with its geographical location on the sidewalk in Montgomery, the authors demonstrate the experience an “ordinary person” has with the memorial; or in the authors’ words, is “summoned as the audience.”³³

These studies are good examples of both prominent international, national and regional public memories, warranting scholarly attention for a variety of reasons. Because each study engages the experiences at the site differently (narrative, myth, performance studies, artistic qualities), sites of public memory contribute to literature in a variety of ways. This study argues, however, that local sites also deserve scholarly inquiry. As museum scholar Amy K. Levin posits, “no matter how quirky, or dusty, or

unprofessional they might seem,” local sites of public memory deserve scholarly attention because they also explore the same display of public memory that any Smithsonian museum or national park does.³⁴ This is not to suggest that previous texts in public memory scholarship have been chosen for their prominence, per se, but instead to address the reasons that local and regional memories have not been as widely studied.

Tourist as Scholar

This thesis employs a text with which I am familiar and that I am in relatively close proximity to, similar to the efforts of Stephen A. King, a professor at Delta State University, when he engages the regionally significant Mississippi Delta Blues Museum. The *Elissa* was something I was in awe of as a child. My brother and I would carefully climb the spiral stairwell out of the Captain’s quarters below deck, into the heat of a Texas summer sun. Aboard, you could smell the salty air, hear the wind whipping at the sails, and pretend you were at sea instead of quietly bobbing in the harbor. My personal memories of the *Elissa* prompted me to explore the intersection of rhetorical inquiry and touristic texts in an effort to reconcile the scholarship on memory with the experiences of a tourist.

Strong scholarship often draws upon that which the author is passionate about. In the case of Andrew F. Wood, this brings him back time and again to Route 66, “a reinvented tourist attraction.”³⁵ Wood labels himself an “interested participant-observer,” and thus his inquiry begins from his status as a lover of the road, and “of its people and places.”³⁶ I employ Wood’s candor and his respect for Route 66 as I engage the *Elissa* from the perspective of a tourist, who has grown into a scholar. As such, I seek to

reconcile what constitutes a tourist's experience with the rhetorical scholars' experiential landscape.

Engaging Physicality at Sites of Public Memory

Experience, as stated earlier, is combined of physical and visual aspects. This study begins by examining the physicality of memory to better understand a seemingly mundane tourist attraction in the context of public memory and rhetorical studies. Therefore, this section surveys the existing body of literature which engages the physicality of sites of public memory, including monuments, memorials, and museums. Physicality can be conceptualized both by location and function.

A focus on physically located constructions of memory has moved the field toward questions of experience and art. Rhetorical inquiry of public memory thus focuses on texts that are designed to display and preserve culture in specific ways. As Phillips explains, "The ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical."³⁷ Halbwachs notes that collectively, memories are "recalled...externally" and it is the social groups to which we belong that provide the "means to reconstruct" memories.³⁸ Ultimately, it is the physical markers of memory which are perpetually publically accessible. In this sense, sites of public memory are all accessible to the public, and rhetoric "organizes itself around the relationship of... events, objects, and practices to ideas about what it means to be 'public.'"³⁹

The Vietnam Veterans War Memorial stirred scholars in the 1980s to closely attend to the processes involved in installing the site of public memory from start to finish. In this particular case, the early 1990s saw a veritable explosion of scholarship on

this particular memorial because of the contentious dimensions at play in its conception, design, and installation on the National Mall.⁴⁰ Marita Sturken characterized such explosion in scholarship as an “obsession with memory” in a “time of unprecedented national focus on cultural memory and nationally sanctioned remembrance.”⁴¹ Notably, the Vietnam Memorial, due to both its purpose as well as its geographical location, is a text that became a touchstone for scholars to examine a memorial’s rhetorical implications. The Vietnam Memorial’s prominence, contentious subject matter, and transparent design process, made it a natural object of inquiry for public memory scholars. A few years after the first rhetorical studies of the Vietnam Memorial were published, Browne broadly identified the biggest hindrance to public memory scholarship as the search for “a basis upon which we can speak of a discourse of public memory.”⁴² Here, a return to ancient Greek treatises on memory, combined with contemporary memory theory, provided scholars a vocabulary on which to build a healthy body of scholarship.

Monuments, memorials, and museums are all physically located sites. By studying these rhetorical functions of memory *in situ*, scholars are able to better explore the connections between past, present, and future experiences that are so integral to the very function of memory work itself. Casey reminds us that “the monument does not merely embody or represent an event (or person, or group of persons), but it strives to preserve its memory in times to come – at the limit, times beyond measure.”⁴³ He goes on: “Public memory is not a nebulous pursuit that can occur anywhere; it always occurs in some particular place,” and the place is what possesses the power to draw out “the appropriate memories *in that location*.”⁴⁴ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott observe that the place

positions itself as “an object of attention because of its status as a place, recognizable and set apart from undifferentiated space.”⁴⁵

It is difficult to conceptualize the difference between types of public memory places, but there are a few available generic assertions. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott generalize that memorials (and other memory places) usually incorporate “words, inscribed and/or spoken, as part of an interpretive program. . . . Museums are often even more complicated in terms of their mix of multiple mediated forms.”⁴⁶ Although monuments, memorials, and museums differ in function, each site relies on a specific context, specific choices, and specific representations. One might draw lines along the apparent function of the site’s specific public memory – commemoration, memorialization, permanence, pedagogy, etc. – but these lines quickly become blurred. James E. Young’s work with Holocaust memorials finds that sites, even as they remember the same larger event “remember the past according to a variety of national myths, ideals, and political needs.”⁴⁷ Detailing monuments, memorials, counter-monuments, and countless other manifestations of the Holocaust and its victims, Young’s book exemplifies the difficulty with theorizing one type of physical marker of memory over another because they ultimately overlap.

It is possible for scholars to begin to initiate identification of sites of public memory by their own self-narratives, i.e. the *Elissa* is billed by the Galveston Historical Foundation as a museum. This characterization of the *Elissa*, however, proves problematic. Museums, of course, do more than present information; they also research, preserve artifacts, document history, and communicate.⁴⁸ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki categorize three rhetorical practices of the history museum as “collecting, exhibiting, and

(re)presenting.”⁴⁹ Acknowledging these practices, the authors address the new era of museums, where their days as the sole interpreter of historical and cultural events have passed.⁵⁰ Whereas the *Elissa* has a minimal collection, the ship herself is the primary object of the collection. She is constantly on exhibit, although there are other exhibits which complement the artifact. Finally, the GHF’s practice of (re)presenting, or shaping the meaning of the exhibition, relies on the constructed authenticity artifact to support her own interpretation.⁵¹ Focused almost entirely on the restoration, the *Elissa* is constructed to provide an authentic encounter aboard a nineteenth century cargo ship, obscuring other interpretations of Galveston’s past, simultaneously encouraging visitors to experience and connect with the Victorian-era past.

Visual rhetoric scholar Finnegan uses the potential study of a museum exhibit as an example of a site of public memory. “A study of images displayed in a museum exhibit,” she posits, “might investigate the history of the museum, discover who made decision about exhibits, and locate archival materials related to how the exhibit was assembled.”⁵² Sites of public memory, in Casey’s words, fulfill the need for “a common place in which history was enacted and experienced,” or communicates to a public the event as an experience.⁵³ Each site enacts a specific and deliberate experience. As such, King, Bernard J. Armada, and others have argued, “museum exhibits can only cue us in to segments of history – they can never represent ‘the’ past in all of its social, cultural, and political complexity.”⁵⁴ Exhibits are, after all, the products of their creators. As King notes:

A museum’s exhibit inevitably reflects the organization’s financial resources, accessibility of artifacts, space availability, the personal tastes of its curator(s), and other seemingly invisible, yet highly important factors, including satisfying the museum’s target market/visitors.⁵⁵

I contend that in the world of monuments, museums, and various sites of public memory, the *Elissa* operates not primarily as a museum, but as a tourist attraction. Although her ostensible function is to teach visitors of Galveston's past, her environment dictates the rhetorical dimensions of her display. Jones Barbour identified this as the “push and pull of commemorative and consumer impulses” which impact physical sites of public memory. It is King's turn to the “important role” of visitors in “reinterpreting the meanings of artifacts” in an exhibit that is indicative of the way this thesis engages the rhetoricity of memory at the site of a tourist attraction.

Exploring Visuality at Sites of Public Memory

Earlier, I outlined the pillars which create the phenomenon of experience at sites of public memory, physicality and visuality. Olson, Finnegan, and Hope assert that “visual rhetoric helps constitute the ways we know, think, and behave.”⁵⁶ Similarly, these authors illustrate an audience's role in relation to visuality, stating that “spectators are hardly passive: they co-create meaning along with the artifacts themselves.”⁵⁷ Sites of public memory, apart from being physically located, incorporate visuals. The visual markers of the site include symbolism, presence, and aesthetics. Sites can stand out symbolically, signifying a connection to other things, or they can blend in – depending entirely on the specific rhetorical choices employed at the site itself.

Functionally, visual rhetorics create images for an audience via associations with familiar symbols. “Situated in specific historical times, places, and contexts,” such symbols illustrate differing relationships between publics and experiences.⁵⁸ For example, Blair and Michel discuss the performative aspects of the Civil Rights Museum in Montgomery, concluding that the memorial's “rhetorical gestures” indicate that “racial

issues remain symbolically unresolved.”⁵⁹ By reading the erected memorial as symbolic, enacting the “black body,” and visually demanding a connection to shared understandings of history, Blair and Michel demonstrate one of the ways that the symbols of a site of public memory affect the experience of the visitor.⁶⁰

The *Elissa*, a technologically outdated cargo ship, boasts three masts and miles of rigging. She is instantly recognizable as a sailing ship and projects herself to be of another era. As a symbol, then, she invites a relationship with her audience that is remarkably different than the other vessels in the vicinity. In fact, in the words of former restoration director Walter Rybka, her image evokes a symbolism akin to that of one of the great man-made wonders of the modern world:

See her with her masts in, yards crossed and rigging set up, making a strong and delicate sculpture of line and space.
This is one of the very special objects on the face of the earth. The men who built her never heard of planned obsolescence...She represents an artistry that goes far beyond just making do.⁶¹

Visually, then, symbolism is an important characteristic of experience, and therefore, promotes connections the visitor may make with a site of public memory. These constructed images are integral to the relationship the audience is able to form with the specific representation.

Another support of visuality at a site of public memory is the presence it maintains in the (again, borrowing Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki’s concept) established experiential landscape. Sites may be isolated, as John Lynch describes the Creation Museum in Lexington, Kentucky to be: around a “sharp curve in the road,” and absent any competing physical site.⁶² Or, like the *Elissa*, they may be located in a busy section of commerce, bustling with trade, and tourists, and traffic. As a part of the experience at

the site, these physical markers also contribute to the influence of the visual. In his exploration of Civil War Monuments, Kirk Savage writes that “monuments embodied and legitimated the very notion of a common memory” because of their public presence.⁶³ It is this presence with which we are concerned as the visual part that contributes to the social experience on the part of the visitor.

This presence also extends to the manner in which a site situates the presentation of public memory. In the Plains Indian Museum in Cody, Wyoming, Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki describe the “journey” down a passageway that a visitor must traverse, separating the Plains Indian from the other representations of U.S. national identity that share a space at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.⁶⁴ The internal exhibits at this particular museum create a cultural distance between the Anglo-centric narratives at the Center and the Native American ones.

In contrast to the presence created by the distance at the Plains Indian Museum, the Odell Illinois Standard Oil gas station (and others like it), located on the present-day Route 66 enacts the past via a recorded narration. Wood details the experience this way:

To sit at the bench, listening... one attempts a form of time travel by willingly projecting the self into the past, away from the present.... Yet these places, and the kind and helpful folks who run them, seem to represent continual reminders of the same place, each simulating a meditation upon the same ritualistic consumption of gas, food, and lodging. One no longer visits Odell or Mount Olive or Baxter Springs... by way of Route 66. Instead, one visits Route 66 by way of these places.⁶⁵

Because each site on Route 66 positions the lore of the road in the same manner, Wood argues that the sites along the route instead point to an experience, which does not require the visitor to physically orient him or herself to the gas stations and diners on the renewed

Route 66, but rather that their visual presence situates the sites together – to be the experience of the nostalgic Route 66.

Finally, visibility is also marked by aesthetics. Sites of public memory are designed in varying styles, materials, and placed according to different needs, desired functions, and tastes. Maya Lin’s abstract Vietnam Veteran’s War Memorial is perhaps the most documented instance of the broad battle between figural and abstract interpretations of memory.⁶⁶ “Public art,” as Victoria J. Gallagher and Margaret R. LaWare caution, is rhetorical “at the nexus between critical urban studies and aesthetics... within the framework... of public space.”⁶⁷ Artistic aspects of public memorials, by virtue of their presence in public space, invite judgment.⁶⁸ As Gallagher and LaWare engage the *Monument to Joe Louis* and the controversy over representation of race in downtown Detroit, they conclude that the “aesthetic qualities and surrounding [rhetorical] context” of the monument circulate around meanings of art and interpretation in various publics. Thus, we find that the rhetorical dimensions of construction and display on artistic levels, as well as in a site’s situated presence and the symbolism it evokes affect an audience’s potential relationship, ultimately shaping the social experience they may share at the site of a public memory.

Rhetorical Dimensions of Tourism

This study engages the economic constraints of “selling” memory, wherein rhetorical choices are made from a marketing perspective to maintain the visibility of the display, while potentially obscuring other aspects of reality for the sake of the pleasing, consumable memory. When remembering becomes a public activity – as Hallwachs contends it always does – the rhetorical dimensions of a tourist attraction become

clearer.⁶⁹ Thus, as part of the study of the rhetorical construction of a site of public memory, it is necessary to ascertain how the public interacts with the site itself.

When considered primarily as a tourist destination, a site of public memory may appeal to a different public than typically associated with a monument or museum. The *Elissa*, as a site of memory, is constructed as a consumable tourist attraction. The genre of “heritage tourism” dictates a site where a representation of history becomes the destination, capable of attracting interested visitors. International tourism scholars Mariana Gómez Schettini and Claudia Alejandra Troncoso of Argentina articulate the rhetorical construction of sites of heritage tourism as the “valorization of certain cultural products and events considered unique, exceptional and highly valuable from a tourist point of view.”⁷⁰ Using the transformation of Buenos Aires, Argentina as their example, Schettini and Troncoso detail the ways in which the city incorporated heritage into its tourism destinations during the late 1990s. Buenos Aires, the authors explain, utilized “heritage as a resource to boost economic activities” helping “transform the city into... [a] destination.”⁷¹

Sites of public memory are often categorized as destinations, because they require travel on the part of the visiting public.⁷² Blair, Dickinson, and Ott state that, at least in the United States, sites such as “museums, preservation sites, battlefields, [and] memorials... enjoy a significance seemingly unmatched by other material supports of public memory.”⁷³ The authors base this assumption in part on the study conducted by historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, which investigated the ways Americans remember the past. Rosenzweig and Thelen conclude, “Americans put more trust in history museums and historic sites than in any other source for exploring the past.”⁷⁴

Identifying the “unique context for understanding the past” that travel creates, the authors articulate the subsequent “touristic practices” which follow from the act of traversing to a place to experience public memory.⁷⁵ Building upon the work of these pioneers, this thesis asserts that tourists readily *participate* in places of public memory. Therefore, tourism acts a constraint on the processes by which public memory operates. This happens at many levels, including the rhetorical choices made in the conception of the exhibit, as well as throughout the practice of maintaining and “selling” the site of public memory.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, heritage is the “lived experience” linking the past, the present, and the future.⁷⁶ It is the concept of a lived, social experience of heritage which brings us full circle to the rhetorical understanding of places of public memory as social experience. Casey reminds us that public memory is “both attached to the past... *and* acts to ensure a future of further remembering.”⁷⁷ When public memory is designed to attract tourists, “heritage, culture, local identity, and tourism are intimately interrelated” to aide in rediscovering and redeveloping a city.⁷⁸ Schettini and Trancoso discuss the need for localities “to define their own identity to fulfil [*sic*] tourist expectations” in order to translate into a successful economic endeavor.⁷⁹ Therefore, heritage tourism can be produced to be “virtually anything that anyone wants it to be,” given that the result is economic viability and the ultimate visibility of public memory.⁸⁰ Again, this recognition of invention speaks to the rhetorical nature of heritage. In fact, heritage is simply a rhetorical construction of identity. Dickinson, Blair, and Ott argue public memory does more than construct

identity: it also attracts publics who embrace or distance themselves from the representation.⁸¹

Tourism is predicated on some basic conditions: the economic mobility required for travel, the search for an experience, and the interaction with a physical site, to name but a few. Not all tourists are interested in engaging a historical site or memory place; however, museums and monuments are counted among traditional sites to visit, and they comprise a large portion of tourist sites in many cities around the globe.⁸² In these environments, the museum is in competition with “leisure industries” like movies, shopping, and professional sporting events and must rely on its presumed “cultural capital” for survival.⁸³ Although tourism is still closely identified with those with the financial means to travel, modern “distinctions are usually based on *where* or *how* one travels,” making participation in the act of tourism a common experience.⁸⁴

Heritage sites have become a significant area in the tourism sector worldwide.⁸⁵ On both global and national scales, sites that have been reinterpreted to represent an understanding of the past are popular destinations for a variety of tourists. More powerfully, perhaps, heritage tourism is a different way to designate public spaces, such as “monuments, emblematic buildings, cafés, theatres, museums, streets, etc.,” as markedly separate from their surrounding environments.⁸⁶ The existing body of public memory literature points to a way to delve deeper into local displays of public memory, while providing space to pause and account for the economic interest tourism practices represent. Treating “heritage as an economic strategy” has become a mainstay of local redevelopment interests.⁸⁷

Constructed Authenticity in Tourism

Sites of heritage tourism, then, are approached as authorities on the locality, the region, the culture, and even the commerce of the area. As the gate-keepers of historical understandings and culture, heritage tourism sites are responsible for the narrative presented, and they subvert certain historical interpretations in favor of others. Although favoring one memory over another may seem indicative of official forms of remembering, even the individually produced, vernacular AIDS Quilt has been called “a representative failure.”⁸⁸ Kevin Michael DeLuca, Christine Harold, and Kenneth Rufo’s assertion about the AIDS Quilt as “a representative failure” serves as a reminder that not every attempt at public memory successfully accomplishes all it sets out to, much like the tensions between heritage tourism sites and their aspirations of museology. DeLuca, Harold, and Rufo identify the “expectations produced by our epistemological” understanding of representation as a barrier to the AIDS Quilt’s ability to *represent* the crisis.⁸⁹ Heritage tourism sites, like the *Elissa*, are also subject to expectations of representation, which they fall short of or exceed, depending on the constitutive public.

Such expectations include authenticity, which is both necessary and impossible. Here, I refer to constitutive authenticity, accepting the assumption that authenticity is rhetorically constructed. However, it is important to acknowledge authenticity because it plays a major role in understanding the marketing success of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction. Oral history professor and memory scholar Martha K. Norkunas blends tourism literature with memory work in her book, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California*. There, she posits, “The tourist seeks to see life as it really is, to get in touch with the natives, to enter the intimate space

of the other in order to have an experience of real life, an authentic experience.”⁹⁰ The *Elissa* engages this implicit desire, reinforcing the assertion that she is a historical artifact, targeted at a tourist audience.

As a tourist attraction, a significant aspect of the production of *Elissa*’s public memory relies on perceived authenticity. In his article on the Delta Blues Museum, King illustrates the construction of authenticity in the “construction of institutionalized, authority-driven narratives.”⁹¹ King also cautions that “efforts to construct an authentic heritage site” can “privilege” cultural memories, altering the audience’s understanding of the event irreplaceably.⁹² The GHF participates in the authority-driven narrative via the restoration process, and sustains a constitutive authenticity of Galveston’s significant past of only Victorian-era heritage, obscuring other representations of Galveston’s history.

King identifies the audience at sites where tourism and memory intersect as a “new generation of consumers.”⁹³ Recognizing that the enactment of culture at the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi presents the history of the “birthplace of the blues” as a memory constructed to appeal to “consumers” of culture, King rightly locates a touristic public.⁹⁴ This audience is quite different from the vernacular/official interplay that concerned John Bodnar in his study, *Remaking America*.⁹⁵ The memories constructed for the touristic audience are not concerned with enactments of patriotism, nor always an authentic understanding of place as often billed. Instead, the focus of such a site becomes an attractive narrative capable of being easily consumed, again failing the pedagogical function typically associated with museums.

Tourism affords a unique exigency. Not every rhetorical situation provides a dedicated audience, and certainly not one that pays for the opportunity to participate.

And although there are generalities to be drawn from tourist sites as a collective, each must be examined fairly on a local level. In the case of both the Delta Blues museum and the *Elissa*, marketing to an audience is a deliberate step in the construction of memory – obscuring raced and classed representations of history. Selling (or marketing) these memories relies on the interest of the audience as well as the appeal of the memory— concepts which are complexly intertwined. Capitalizing on local memory and cultural authenticity increases both of these factors while incorporating marketing opportunities. King identifies the Mississippi Delta Blues Museum as indicative of “new blues tourism,” which he goes on to explain “is an example of niche tourism, a relatively new development that capitalizes on the increasing efforts of whole communities to accentuate their cultural heritage, ‘partly in bids to increase their tourism potential.’”⁹⁶

Expanding on his classification of “niche tourism,” King employs the term borrowed from tourism studies, “constructive authenticity.”⁹⁷ To “satisfy the expectations of (White) tourists” King determines the staff and curators involved in the construction of exhibits for the Delta Blues museum utilized the rhetorical strategy of myth to play upon their shared cultural memories of the blues.⁹⁸ By identifying two narratives King also defines the economic and racial motives that, in his words, “entice tourists to visit the region, and thus fulfill the state’s economic aspirations,” while simultaneously reinforcing racial norms dictating particular aspects of African American culture.⁹⁹ It is King’s observation of regional tourism and economic interests which perhaps best lends insight to the analysis of Galveston and the *Elissa*. Much like the Delta Blues Museum, the *Elissa* is employed to represent the regional history, dictating

which public memory should be displayed, and therefore, remembered. While the two differ between public and private control, there are a variety of similarities worth noting.

Initially, the Delta Blues Museum implores its visitors to remember regional significance in a particular light. In the same way the *Elissa* is constructed to help visitors remember the historic, nineteenth century Galveston Island, the Delta Blues Museum capitalizes on the fact that many famous blues artists were raised in the Mississippi Delta, even if the dignity of these artists did not come from their experience growing up in the Delta. As another point of comparison, both the sites serve financial interests for their respective geographical regions. King does not deny that the perspective at the Mississippi Delta Blues museum serves the state's financial end, but instead focuses in and claims that in doing so, the state subverts competing and contradictory perspectives. The Galveston Historical Foundation, although not the "state," exercises a similar domination of the public memory in Galveston's historic districts, coordinating memories to correspond to the same era – portrayed as the most significant era to remember in Galveston's history. Lastly, the two museums offer a critique of authenticity as a construct.

Authenticity is a rhetorical construction that in the case of these two museums relies almost entirely on materiality. King gives his readers a poignant example of this need for materiality, when it further serves the previously dictated purpose of the memory. Quoting biographer Robert Gordon, King writes:

Interestingly, while [Muddy] Water's cabin is safe, protected within the confines of museum exhibit, his house in Chicago – the same house where the singer wrote many of his greatest songs – stands vacant today, a boarded-up relic forgotten by blues curators and blue fans alike.¹⁰⁰

Because the Chicago house did “not meet the standards of authenticity” for reifying the Mississippi Blues culture of primitiveness, King asserts it goes unpreserved.¹⁰¹ While King’s assertion is a valid one, I would add that the geographical location of the house contributes to its absence from the Blues museum, slightly raising the barriers for preservation. The Chicago house does not fall into the primitive narrative displayed by the Delta Blues museum, nor does it belong regionally. Therefore, even if it only further supports King’s identified narratives of pure blues culture and primitive African American bodies, Muddy Waters’ Chicago house has no place in the Mississippi Delta Blues museum, based on the curatorial prowess and collections scope of the existing museum.

In contrast to Muddy Waters’ Chicago house, the *Elissa* was physically brought from Greece to Galveston. Painstakingly restored and installed in Galveston’s harbor as a tourist attraction by the GHF, the *Elissa* approaches the literal construction of authenticity from an equally materialistic standpoint. The artifact supplies the only real material supports to the installation of the memory; hence, why she was removed from the place she was found. Further evidenced by the expense of the restoration project in reconstructing her based on authenticated historical methods, the *Elissa* represents a constructed authenticity to which visitors must orient themselves. This authenticity is supported by the GHF in the placards and textual information provided at the site, emphasizing the success of the restoration and the beauty of the artifact. Unlike the Delta Blues Museum, the *Elissa* is not a collection of material objects, but instead constitutes almost the

entirety of the collection herself. Therefore, although similarly constructed narratives of the past emerge, they rely on materiality in different ways.

The Elissa

As a British merchant ship in her initial twenty years sailing cargo all over the globe, *Elissa* visited each of the continents – save for Antarctica – on multiple occasions. Although she made regular passage to South America following her visit to the port of Galveston, she traveled to other ports in the United States. From New York, her four month passage to Brisbane, Australia marked the beginning of a longer, more involved trip, which also included her first voyage around the southern tip of Africa, finally completing a circumnavigation when she returned to Queenstown, Ireland with a cargo of rice.¹⁰²

After a devastating encounter with stormy weather in 1895, Henry Fowler Watt was forced to sell the *Elissa* to the Norwegian shipping company Bugge & Olsen.¹⁰³ Free from British shipping regulations, the *Fjeld* (as she was renamed) held the potential for increased profits. Although she again sailed routes to South America, carrying whatever cargo would prove viable, at the turn of the century it was becoming increasingly clear that sail would no longer be able to compete with steam. The barque was sold to Swedish owners, transferred to Sweden, and retitled *Gustaf* in 1912.¹⁰⁴ Confined to the Baltic and North Seas during World War I, her rigging was altered, removing her square sails in the winter of 1914-1915.¹⁰⁵ Still sailing as *Gustaf*, she was fitted with an auxiliary engine by 1918. After she was sold to Finnish businessman Erik Nylund in 1929, *Gustaf's* famous Aberdeen bow was altered and her engine updated. Although little is known of her sailing routes during World War II, she was again sold, this time to Greek owners who

again renamed her. The *Christophoros*, now almost completely stripped of her rigging met 1959 with the sounds of a motor-ship, with “only her hull shape” to indicate “a previous life.”¹⁰⁶

Having been stripped of her masts, clipper bow, and ultimately equipped with an engine, her hull had continued to earn money through trade of cargo and eventually illicit enterprises when she found herself in the grips of smugglers by 1960. Infamous and under siege by the Italian government, she was destined for the scrap heap when she was discovered to be the very same *Elissa* of lore by Karl Kortum of the San Francisco Maritime Museum and Peter Throckmorton, who was well-versed enough a sailor to recognize “the converted motor ship” as something more.¹⁰⁷ Through ships logs, newspaper clippings, rediscovered paintings, and what information still existed in the records of the Alexander Hall Co., *Elissa*’s restoration plans were cemented together utilizing knowledge of square riggers, similar sailing ships, and sailing technology of her time. Hopes for obtaining her original plans were lost when it was learned that the Alexander Hall Company had been bombed during World War II and lost documents to fires.¹⁰⁸ They were, however, able to locate “documents from similar vessels” which were used as reference during the restoration phase.¹⁰⁹ Nearly three years after she first reentered the Galveston harbor, she was open to the public on July 4, 1982. To date, her restoration bill amounts to millions and due to damage sustained during Hurricane Ike in 2008, her next repairs will end up in the neighborhood of another three million.¹¹⁰ But as high priced as her installation in the harbor has proven to be since the 1970s, her “mundane commercial calls in 1883 and 1886 laid the groundwork for her” serendipitous rescue.¹¹¹

Defining the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction requires differentiating aspects of her function from those of museums. However, she still employs all the markers of an exhibition of an artifact, meaning that ultimately much of what is written about the rhetorical dimensions of museums and their display still pertains to the *Elissa*. As noted previously, Finnegan states that studying exhibit displays requires context. As such, a scholar “might investigate the history of the museum, discover who made decision about exhibits, and locate archival materials related to how the exhibit was assembled.”¹¹² “Shaped by its architecture,” an exhibition can draw attention to the pathos evoked by the space, as do those in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, or it can redirect visitors’ focus to the artifacts on display in the space.¹¹³ The *Elissa* is no exception.

Docked at Pier 21 in the Galveston harbor, *Elissa* occupies a commercial port starkly different than the vessels around her, but reminiscent of the fact that at one time, the harbor was filled with ships just like her. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott address the invention of sites such as the *Elissa*, explaining that:

Because of their material form, modes of visibility, rarity, and seeming permanence, places of memory are positioned perpetually as *the* sites of civic importance and their subject matters as *the* stories of their society. The stories they tell are thus favored by being made, quite literally, to matter in the lives of the collective. They are intractably present.¹¹⁴

The implication, then, for the *Elissa* is that her very presence in the harbor enacts a specific public memory. Institutionally, the GHF crafted this memory to echo the heritage of the island, before the Great Storm of 1900.¹¹⁵ The permanence of the *Elissa* as a museum-piece speaks to her created civic importance and larger cultural influence. This in turn translates to the cultural influence of the GHF. And since the *Elissa*’s

primary function is to be a destination for the heritage tourist, the memory that should “matter in the lives of the collective” is that of nineteenth century Galveston.¹¹⁶

Chapter two examines the invention of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction via the narrative of her restoration. Through surveys of newspapers, first-hand accounts, and the Galveston Historical Foundation’s public face of the restoration effort, the *Elissa* was invented as a tourist attraction. As such, she is constructed to represent Galveston’s prosperity as a definitive reconstruction of her own, original identity as a method of commerce. Detailing her restoration, Chapter Two analyses the *Elissa*’s constructed identity as authentic and sets the stage for her future rhetorical functions.

As an example of the efforts to display Galveston’s new identity, Chapter Three will productively analyze the rhetorical dimensions of the *Elissa* through an examination of her Texas Proud voyage as a bounded display campaign. A summer sailing trip conceived to drum up publicity, exhibit her sailing prowess, and display the *Elissa* as a symbol of the island’s heritage; the Texas Proud voyage depicts a period of time in which the GHF solidifies the *Elissa* as their investment to recruit tourists to Galveston’s shores. To analyze this rhetorical campaign put together by the GHF, this study will engage the campaign’s persuasive function resituating Galveston Island as a definitive maritime and preservation destination. Using the visual icon of a nineteenth century sailing ship, the Texas Proud voyage labels itself, and the *Elissa*, as a notable endeavor virtuous by its historical foundations, and impressive both at home and at sea by its features. Undertaken in the summer of 1989, the Texas Proud voyage indicated the GHF’s goals for display of the *Elissa*, in addition to solidifying her place as an ambassador for Galveston’s tourism industry.

Chapter Four encompasses more recent attempts to market the *Elissa* as a tourist destination. The way in which a memory is “sold” to a present-day audience is considerably different than her restoration was billed, but still contributes significantly to the way the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction has evolved over time. As audiences have evolved since the 1970s, so too has the GHF struggled to accommodate changing tastes, new technologies, and reinterpretations of history and memory. In this chapter, I engage with the ways in which they have attempted to do this since the Texas Proud voyage, identifying both successes and failures. Engaging the marketing of the *Elissa* since this 1989 tour includes revealing the raced and classed representations that are otherwise concealed. Ultimately, the landfall of Hurricane Ike (the natural shift at which this analysis ends) has forced another paradigm in the life of the *Elissa*, marking a natural end to the scope of this study.

In sum, this study is concerned with the processes which create, sustain, and market sites of public memory. More specifically, this study engages a single site of public memory, the *Elissa*, for her contributions to the rhetoricity of public memory *vis a vis* the processes which facilitated her restoration and continued operation as a tourist attraction. Ultimately, economics have an effect at all levels of public memory, including invention, authorship, and a continued place of relevance in public spaces. The *Elissa* can be productively analyzed as a tourist attraction, for it was the sole purpose of increasing heritage tourism on Galveston Island that saved her from the scrapyards. In the case of the *Elissa*, the GHF sought her to solidify the public memory of the turn of the nineteenth century on the isle, rhetorically constructing the *Elissa* (and other historic

properties) to reify this memory, while obscuring other interpretations of the past and its participants.

Notes

¹ “Revitalizing Galveston” is a common theme throughout newspaper articles, foundations in the area, and even an architecture program at the University of Texas, San Antonio. For examples, see Guest Writer, “Revitalizing Galveston, Texas Through Preservation Partnerships,” *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, September 28, 2011, <http://blog.preservationnation.org/2011/09/28/revitalizing-galveston-texas-through-preservation-partnerships/>; “What We Do,” Galveston Historical Foundation, 2012, http://www.galvestonhistory.org/about_us.asp; “Revitalizing Historic Galveston,” University of Texas, San Antonio CoA Newsletter, n.d., <http://architecture.utsa.edu/images/uploads/1005.pdf>.

² Texas State Historical Association, “Galveston Island,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rrg02>.; See also Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau, “Marketing Plan, 2011-12,” [http://www.galvestonparkboard.org/meetings/pdf/GICVB%20Marketing%20Plan%202011-12\(2\).pdf](http://www.galvestonparkboard.org/meetings/pdf/GICVB%20Marketing%20Plan%202011-12(2).pdf): 1-48 (Accessed January 11, 2013); HDR Engineering, Inc., “City of Galveston Comprehensive Plan,” October 6, 2011, http://www.progressgalveston.com/sites/default/files/documents/11_1006_GALV_CompPlan_Pub_Hearing_Draft.pdf: 1-208 (Accessed January 11, 2013).

³ “Seamanship Training On Board 1877 Tall Ship *Elissa*,” *Galveston Historical Foundation*, http://www.galvestonhistory.org/Adult_Seamanship_Training_Program2.asp

⁴ HDR Engineering, Inc., “Comprehensive Plan,” 25-28.

⁵ Heritage, here, is understood as constructed; a select interpretation of history. Additionally, this commodification of heritage is referred to in this study as heritage tourism to avoid association with Karl Marx’s “commodity.”

⁶ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2010), 2.

⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁸ Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 12-3.

⁹ Michael Schudson, “Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory,” in Daniel L. Schacter ed., *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995): 346-7.

¹⁰ Carole Blair, V. William Balthrop, and Neil Michel, "The Arguments of the Tombs of the Unknown: Relationality and National Legitimation," *Argumentation* 25(2011): 450.

¹¹ Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3(2006): 29.

¹² Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering," 29.

¹³ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering," 30.

¹⁴ Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," ed. Kendall Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 22-3.

¹⁵ Stephen H. Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81(1995): 237.

¹⁶ Cara Finnegan, "Studying Visual Modes of Public Address: Lewis Hine's Progressive Era Child Labor Rhetoric," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric & Public Address*, ed. Shawn Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 257; Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 17.

¹⁷ Kendall Phillips, "The Failure of Memory: Reflections on Rhetoric and Public Remembrance," *Western Journal of Communication* 74(2010): 221.

¹⁸ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 6.

¹⁹ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 6

²⁰ This borrows from Casey's four levels of memory. In essence, Casey's essay theorizes that there are levels of memory, coalesced around the publics that experience a particular event or moment. Beginning with individual memory, Casey follows with the larger, concentric circles of social, collective, and public memories. Most notably, this provides a vocabulary from which scholars may identify *who* experienced *what*, and *how*. In this case, I am building upon his four levels from a minimal understanding of Galveston's past to the broad, by making the claim that the historical understanding of the shipping and trade of Galveston's port belonged to an elite, schooled group but when it is operationalized at the *Elissa*, this understanding becomes one of public memory. For further explanation of the four levels of memory, see Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 17-44.

²¹ Christine Harold, "On Target: Aura, Affect, and the Rhetoric of 'Design Democracy,'" *Public Culture* 21 (2009): 613.

²² Rather than attempt to fully document a past, "public memory embraces events, people, objects, and places," signifying and marking some places differently than others. This, of course, is an arbitrary decision based on situational factors. See Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 7.

²³ Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 224.

²⁴ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 9.

²⁵ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 10.

²⁶ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 8.

²⁷ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 13.

²⁸ Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp, "Satisfaction of Metaphorical Expectations through Visual Display: The *Titanic* Exhibition," ed. Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2006), 41-65.

²⁹ Jorgensen-Earp, "Satisfaction of Metaphorical Expectations," 49.

³⁰ Jorgensen-Earp, "Satisfaction of Metaphorical Expectations," 49.

³¹ Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial," ed. Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), 140.

³² Blair and Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights," 144.

³³ Blair and Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights," 146.

³⁴ Amy K. Levin, *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 25.

³⁵ Andrew F. Wood, "Two Roads Diverge: Route 66, 'Route 66,' and the Mediation of American Ruin," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27(2010): 68.

³⁶ Wood, "Two Roads Diverge," 69.

³⁷ Kendall R. Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* (University of Alabama Press, 2004), 2-3.

³⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

³⁹ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 2-3.

⁴⁰ See Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr., "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77(1991): 263-88; John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); See also, Marita Sturken, "The wall, the screen, and the image: The Vietnam veterans memorial," *Representations*, 35(1991): 118-42; Martia Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 13.

⁴² Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," 237.

⁴³ Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 18.

⁴⁴ Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 32.

⁴⁵ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 25.

⁴⁶ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 29-30.

⁴⁷ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.

⁴⁸ Louise J. Ravelli, "Genre and the Museum Exhibition," *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 2(2006): 300.

⁴⁹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum," *Western Journal of Communication* 69(2005): 89.

⁵⁰ Stephen A. King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject," *Southern Journal of Communication*, 71 (2006): 238-9.

⁵¹ Because the *Elissa* is an artifact on permanent exhibition, rarely reinterpreted by official means, I maintain she should be primarily classified as a tourist attraction, instead of a museum. Aside from the official label of "museum," subsequent actions on

the part of the GHF support this claim to a tourist attraction. This assertion is based on the GHF's rhetorical focus on the "selling" of her memory and the linkage to Galveston's past for an economic benefit, as opposed to the pedagogical and collecting functions of the typical museum. I do not dispute, however, that the *Elissa* exhibits, that is to say she offers a representation of Galveston's past. Based on her public visibility, she wholly employs the function of exhibition, even as she fails to meet the other thresholds of the definition of museum. This is not to say that the GHF does not engage in preservation, collecting, or education functions overall; but instead to call attention to the way in which the *Elissa* is rhetorically constructed for a viewing public, as an exhibition for tourists.

⁵² Cara Finnegan, "Studying Visual Modes of Public Address," 256-7.

⁵³ Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 23.

⁵⁴ Bernard J. Armada, "Memorial Agon: An Interpretive Tour of the National Civil Rights Museum," *Southern Communication Journal* 63(1998): 236.

⁵⁵ King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 239.

⁵⁶ Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), 3.

⁵⁷ Olson, Finnegan, and Hope, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader*, 3.

⁵⁸ Olson, Finnegan, and Hope, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader*, 3.

⁵⁹ Blair and Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights," 146.

⁶⁰ Blair and Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights:" 139-55.

⁶¹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 39.

⁶² John Lynch, "Creation Museum???", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 16(2013): 1-27.

⁶³ Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument," ed. John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 130.

⁶⁴ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting," 33.

⁶⁵ Wood, "Two Roads Diverge," 71-2.

⁶⁶ The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has a plethora of literature written, employing it as the text. For a variety of approaches to the memorial as a text of cultural memory see Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-20; Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci, Jr., "Public Memorializing;" Sonja K. Foss, "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Communication Quarterly* 34(1986): 326-40; Kristen Anne Hass, *Carried to the Wall* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); George N. Dionisopoulos and Steven R. Goldzwig, "'The Meaning of Vietnam: Political Rhetoric as Revisionist Cultural History,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78(1992): 61-79.

⁶⁷ Victoria J. Gallagher and Margaret R. LaWare, "Sparring with Public Memory: The Rhetorical Embodiment of Race, Power, and Conflict in the *Monument to Joe Louis*," ed. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 89.

⁶⁸ Gallagher and LaWare, "Sparring with Public Memory," 89.

⁶⁹ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 5-6.

⁷⁰ Mariana Gómez Schettini and Claudia Alejandra Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity: Promoting Buenos Aires as the Cultural Capital of Latin America," *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies* 3(2011): 199.

⁷¹ Schettini and Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity," 197.

⁷² The authors highlight the practice of travel to help define the distinction of "destination." See Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 26.

⁷³ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 24.

⁷⁴ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 105.

⁷⁵ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 26.

⁷⁶ Jafar Jafari, *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 275.

⁷⁷ Although this study does not deal with temporal shifts directly, it is understood that there is a past, linked to the present, and eventually the future wherever public memory is enacted. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," 17. For more on temporal shifts, see Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time" and Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 30.

⁷⁸ Schettini and Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity," 199.

- ⁷⁹ Schettini and Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity," 198.
- ⁸⁰ Jafari, *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, 275.
- ⁸¹ Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 22.
- ⁸² Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 24-7.
- ⁸³ Kylie Message, "The New Museum," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 23 (2006): 603.
- ⁸⁴ Michael S. Bowman, "Performing Southern History for the Tourist Gaze," ed. Della Pollack, *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 142.
- ⁸⁵ Jafari, *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, 276.
- ⁸⁶ Schettini and Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity," 199.
- ⁸⁷ Schettini and Trancoso, "Tourism and Cultural Identity," 199.
- ⁸⁸ The assertion here is that sites that focus on vernacular interpretations of public memory often include a variety of perspectives, rather than a singular "official" model. This is, of course, an overgeneralization for the sake of argument; hence, the contradicting example offered to hint at exceptions to the rule. Kevin Michael DeLuca, Christine Harold, and Kenneth Rufo, "Q.U.I.L.T.: A Patchwork of Reflections," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10(2007): 636.
- ⁸⁹ DeLuca, Harold, and Rufo, "Q.U.I.L.T.," 636.
- ⁹⁰ Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 2.
- ⁹¹ Stephen A. King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 235.
- ⁹² King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 235.
- ⁹³ King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 236.
- ⁹⁴ King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 236.
- ⁹⁵ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-22.

- ⁹⁶ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 236.
- ⁹⁷ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 237.
- ⁹⁸ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 237.
- ⁹⁹ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 237.
- ¹⁰⁰ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 246-7.
- ¹⁰¹ King, “Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums,” 247.
- ¹⁰² Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 18.
- ¹⁰³ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 20.
- ¹⁰⁴ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 22.
- ¹⁰⁵ Voss, *Galveston’s The Elissa*, 27.
- ¹⁰⁶ Voss, *Galveston’s The Elissa*, 34; Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 24.
- ¹⁰⁷ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 24.
- ¹⁰⁸ Voss, *Galveston’s The Elissa*, 66.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 41.
- ¹¹⁰ Information obtained in interview with Texas Seaport Museum and *Elissa* Director, Jamie White, a square rigging expert.
- ¹¹¹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 33.
- ¹¹² Cara Finnegan, “Studying Visual Modes of Public Address: Lewis Hine’s Progressive Era Child Labor Rhetoric,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric & Public Address*, ed. Shawn Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 256-7.
- ¹¹³ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 30.
- ¹¹⁴ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 28.
- ¹¹⁵ “The 1900 Storm, Galveston, Texas,” *Galveston Newspapers, Inc and the City of Galveston 1900 Storm Committee*, <http://www.1900storm.com>.

¹¹⁶ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 28.

CHAPTER TWO

Restoring the *Elissa*

Revitalization in the Island City

Galveston Island is a barrier island off the coast of Texas, located about 50 miles south of Houston. From port-city, to gambling haven, to vacation spot, Galveston has been a center for economic growth since the 1880s when the now Historic Strand was dubbed “The Wall Street of the South” because of its important role for commerce in Texas.¹ Although only twenty-seven miles long and no more than three miles across, the island has a storied history which is woven into the modern day businesses and identities of the islanders themselves. A popular character in the narration of Galveston’s past is Jean Lafitte, the purported French pirate who made the island his base in the early decades of the 1800s.²

Galveston is linked to the past by more than tales about notorious pirates, however. Perhaps a more concrete way the past is present in modern life on Galveston Island is the seawall, which was built after the Great Storm of 1900. To save the city from future destruction, a seventeen foot tall concave wall was erected and the entire city, building by building, was raised to slope away from the seawall. Ultimately, parts of the island were raised nearly 16.5 feet, and the shore facing the Gulf of Mexico boasts what is now a 10.4 mile wall to protect from the wrath of hurricane force storms.³ As a prominent part of the island’s geographical feature for more than a century now, it is

hailed in museums and in conventional wisdom as an engineering feat that has saved the island from further disaster.⁴

For all its success, though, the Island City has suffered setbacks, as evidenced by the many attempts at revitalization over the years. Even before the city was officially founded in 1836, the first efforts to restore Galveston came in 1821 after pirate Jean Lafitte was run off by the U.S. Navy, and after burning Campechy – his pirate fortress – he sailed off into the Caribbean.⁵ Free from buccaneer rule, Galveston Bay rebounded to open as the port of entry for the Republic of Texas in 1825.⁶ The barrier island quickly became a leading city of enterprise, inspiring historian David McComb to refer to nineteenth-century Galveston as “the most advanced and sophisticated in Texas.”⁷ In fact, Galveston was the first city in Texas with telephones and electricity, built the state’s first post office, boasted the state’s first country club, and was home to some of the wealthiest individuals and most lavish architecture of the region.⁸ After suffering greatly in the Storm of 1900, the island was rebuilt, adding the previously described Seawall designed to lessen loss in future natural disasters, raising the city an average of eight feet.⁹

Although once a tremendously successful cotton port and hub of immigration, Galveston would further suffer as neighboring Houston invested in a deeper shipping channel in 1917, bypassing Galveston as the port entry to Texas.¹⁰ Revitalizing the city would take on a new meaning into the prohibition-era as the city “exploited” liquor, prostitution, and gambling – led by the infamous Balinese Room.¹¹ In the late 1950s, its citizens took pride in being “the free state of Galveston,” but in 1957 when the Texas

Rangers raided the island destroying gambling and prostitution rings, Galveston would languish for decades without a distinctive niche to draw in tourism dollars.¹²

George Mitchell, a native-born oilman, campaigned to revitalize Galveston's historic district leading up to the 1980s, renewing the efforts of the Galveston Historical Foundation (GHF), which had begun in 1954.¹³ Acting as a "steward and operator" for many of the historically preserved properties on the island, the GHF has helped to establish a standard of preservation on the island. Consequently, Galveston has more than 2000 properties on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁴ The GHF can trace the formation of their organization to the Galveston Historical Society in 1871. Although preservation efforts did not begin until 1954 when the Galveston Historical Foundation was incorporated as a non-profit, "for the new purpose of preserving historic homes," the organization's focus has been preserving pieces of the island's heritage since the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ The GHF is influential in the community participating in "restoration efforts, house painting programs, commercial redevelopment, neighborhood revitalization, and crime prevention programs."¹⁶ Simultaneously, however, the GHF's interpretation and representation of the island's heritage situates the organization as a cultural producer. The 1980s phase of revitalization began a wave of preservation expressly aimed at bringing tourists back to the island.

Situated Heritage and the Galveston Historical Foundation

This chapter examines the *Elissa* and the manner in which the Galveston Historical Foundation rhetorically constructed her to be a tourist attraction. This requires an understanding of the exigency to which the *Elissa* was the calculated response. As early as 1965, business elites on Galveston Island were in search of a new identity.

Specifically, the powers-that-be were in search of an identity that would bring economic development and tourists back to the island's shores. By the mid-1980s, the rich nineteenth century past as a cotton port, immigration hub, and wealthy oasis had become the prevailing narrative of the island. Such a narrative, though, came from the concerted effort at preserving and marketing, notably by the GHF.

Anthropologist Terri Castaneda describes Galveston's search for identity as an extension of the tourist destinations' typical "internal discourse about itself as the cultural other," wrestling with which identity might be best bought and sold, while attempting to accurately portray the heritage of the place.¹⁷ According to observations acquired during Castaneda's ethnographical field-work inside the GHF, Galveston was "in the throes of historic preservation" during the last part of the twentieth century.¹⁸ This study benefits from Castaneda's research, for it affords a better understanding of the culture on the island, as well as the dynamic political scene *inside* the GHF.

As Galvestonian business leaders and residents alike struggled for the path to viable economic growth in the 1980s, there was already a movement underway to reassert the island as a destination. Prior to organized and visible preservation campaigns by the Galveston Historical Foundation, individual business leaders with a particular interest in the continued development of the island's tourism industry were in search of destination-quality material. In 1965, real estate developer Jack Wilson endeavored, and by all accounts quickly abandoned, an attempt to bring a high quality tourist attraction to Galveston's waterfront. Wilson contacted Karl Kortum, then at the San Francisco Maritime Museum (now San Francisco National Park), seeking a ship that could be altered to resemble the Texas Navy flagship, *Austin*.¹⁹ Originally named the *Texas*, the

Austin was a storied ship that sailed the Gulf of Mexico, engaging the Mexican navy on multiple occasions from 1840 to 1843.²⁰ After the state of Texas was annexed in 1845, the *Austin* was added to the United States fleet, alongside the other remaining ships in the Texas Navy; however, she was the only one ever commissioned into service.²¹ Later run aground, damaged, and deemed “unworthy of repairs,” the *Austin* ended her days in Pensacola, Florida. Regardless of the actual circumstances concerning her demise, the *Austin* was the remaining source of pride for Texans and represented their ability to defend their territory and the Republic.

With Galveston as her original home port, Wilson understood the potential a replica of the *Austin* could have on tourism for the island. Kortum had a different perspective as a maritime preservationist. Former GHF director Patricia Bellis Bixel’s account of the exchange between the two reports the response from Kortum concluded that “projects like this [replicas] are unconvincing to the public.”²² He did reaffirm the general idea of a maritime addition to the harbor, commenting that Galveston “could do no better than [to] establish a large, beautiful square rigger” as a floating museum.²³ Although Wilson never followed through on Kortum’s advice, a similar plan was hatched nearly a decade later, with a similar outcome in mind.

A chance meeting set the island’s new identity in motion, bringing east coast and west coast maritime efforts together in the Gulf of Mexico. New York City’s South Street Seaport model shop manager Michael Creamer encountered Galvestonian restaurateur John Paul Gaido while on a trip to Galveston.²⁴ First opened in 1911, Gaido’s Seafood had been a mainstay on the island for decades – and the Gaido family had a substantial stake in the island’s economy.²⁵ Stemming from this interest in the

health of Galveston's economy, John Paul Gaido expressed interest in building a replica of a pirate ship to draw in visitors while highlighting the island's heritage. Again, the maritime preservation community surprised the businessman with the answer: why build a replica when one can obtain a "real" ship instead?

The businessman answered the preservationist frankly: "I didn't know there were any real ones left."²⁶ Following this exchange, Gaido recruited volunteers and began to pursue the possibility of adding a restored sailing ship to Galveston's offerings – unlike Wilson before him. Gaido, at the time president of the GHF's board, and Creamer learned of the *Elissa* through contacts at the South Street Seaport.²⁷ Although wary of her "rusted, dilapidated" state, *Elissa*'s "mundane commercial calls in 1883 and 1886 laid the groundwork for her twentieth-century salvation."²⁸

Meanwhile, *Elissa*'s story had been a series of ups and downs. Recognized as a ship from a by-gone era by maritime preservationist Peter Throckmorton in Greece, the *Elissa*'s path to restoration did not begin smoothly. Running cigarettes across the Mediterranean and re-named *Christophoros*, she had been altered drastically from the silhouette of the ship she once was. As Throckmorton wrote, "It was pretty clear that she was an old sailing ship.... The gangs of chainplates which had been necessary when she was a sailing ship were still there... [it was likely] she had been a square rigger."²⁹ Because she had been smuggling, the ship was in danger of being seized and scrapped. In search of a financial backer to help save the antiquated *Elissa* from the fate of a scrapyard, Throckmorton and Kortum independently tried a variety of avenues, including whiskey distilleries and other waterfronts, like Portland, Oregon, looking for tourist draws.³⁰ Although each was able to drum up cursory interest, it ultimately seemed a

doomed endeavor. After yet another name change and some cosmetic alterations – in an effort to disappear from authorities – Throckmorton and Kortum feared losing the *Elissa* was inevitable. Throckmorton personally borrowed \$10,000 and successfully negotiated the sale of the *Elissa* (at the time, renamed the *Achaeos*) in 1970 without revealing his true intention of preservation in America, to avoid a potential price point increase.³¹

However, it is not until February 1974 that intersection of preservation and the tourist economy of Galveston intertwine. Then director of the GHF, Peter Brink, had overseen a campaign to “preserve and restore the spectacular blocks of iron-fronted buildings lining the Strand,” the main commercial street near the harbor.³² Brink backed the addition of a square-rigged ship, believing it would “be a natural draw for tourists and the perfect exemplar” of the heritage of the region.³³ However, Brink would only support the acquisition of a ship that had *actual* ties to Galveston. “Routine” and “mundane,” *Elissa’s* “commercial calls in 1883 and 1886 laid the groundwork” for the restoration efforts and berth provided by the GHF.³⁴ Officially purchased in 1975, the *Elissa* became the greatest preservation task for the GHF to date, and by far its greatest feat.

Redevelopment of the Urban Waterfront

The Galveston Historical Foundation is not alone in its mission to harness local heritage for redevelopment and tourism purposes. Public and private partnership in cities across the United States have joined to provide support to business redevelopment, social leisure and meeting spaces, as well as preserve historic buildings. Galveston, in particular, has consistently relied on its waterfront commercial districts over time, not just the beach and recreational areas. Ann Breen and Dick Rigby, co-directors of the Waterfront Center, identify urban waterfront areas as helping to define cities as “dynamic

places, undergoing profound change.”³⁵ As such, the waterfront provides a seemingly natural focal point for urban renewal and a tourism industry committed to representation of the past. Beginning with a search for a new touristic identity, Galveston’s leaders have sought such change for almost 50 years now.

Breen and Rigby address a community’s commitment to waterfront revitalization, which is a factor readily important in the restoration narrative of the *Elissa*. From the initiative and commitment from influential business leaders on the island, the GHF was reinvigorated during the 1980s to recommit itself to the preservation of the island’s historic districts, while seeking to improve Galveston’s tourism industry overall. Throughout the restoration process and into sailing the *Elissa* as a living ship, the GHF has relied heavily on volunteer involvement.

Breen and Rigby offer other examples of urban waterfront projects such as the Centennial Bridge in Davenport, Iowa and the opposition effort to the New Orleans expressway to draw attention to community involvement.³⁶ In each effort, a commitment of the community and a “pride” in the waterfront area translates to the success of a project.³⁷ The Centennial Bridge was erected to connect the two sides of the river; the New Orleans expressway proposal opposed because it would bifurcate the French Quarter and cut-off waterfront access. Dickinson, Blair, and Ott find a similar approach from an inquiry into the spatial orientation of the area. They indicate that the orientation for a space, much like its physical location, can “value and legitimate some views and voices, while ignoring or diminishing others.”³⁸ By privileging access to the waterfront, and consequently an era when the water equated prosperity, the GHF’s focus on the bay,

the Strand, and the *Elissa* comprises an effort to display the island as the prosperous port of entry it was, instead of a small port, secondary to the Port of Houston.

Breen and Rigby do not directly address the organizing factors in the urban waterfronts they detail. Unfortunately, the scope of the authors' volume does not permit them space to deal with organizing factors, which have enormous influence over the volunteers and public information.³⁹ In the case of the restoration of the *Elissa*, as well as her expected contribution to Galveston's commercial waterfront, we see the guiding organization quite clearly – the Galveston Historic Foundation. Because institutions exert important influence, determining the organizing factors present at a site of public memory can help address questions of authorship and issues of representation.

Breen and Rigby rightly identify the need to harness volunteer power, and it is this volunteer affinity for waterfront projects that figuratively kept the *Elissa* restoration project afloat.⁴⁰ Along with the recognition of volunteer efforts and community pride, Breen and Rigby identify a new appreciation for urban values as a common thread in waterfront renewal projects. Diversity, a concentration of resources, an appeal to a wide audience, pedestrian access, and a “strong sense of place” characterize these projects in cities and communities where waterfronts represent a key part of the culture.⁴¹ It is clear that the rhetoricity of a place, in the words of Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, “is not limited to the readable or visible.”⁴² Breen and Rigby theorize that cities are not shrinking, as was oft-proclaimed in the 1980s, but in fact many cities were actually growing.⁴³ American culture supports the development of space for public socialization, and it is this culture that Breen and Rigby identify as integral to the watering hole – in this case a river, lake, bay, or urban waterfront. Of course, not all cities conform to this trend. But Breen and

Rigby base their theory on the values present in localized culture and provide the situational logic that affords cities large and small the possibility for urban waterfront renewal projects. As the authors argue, “downtown-waterfront revivals are not just a big-city phenomenon.”⁴⁴

These urban values play directly into the GHF’s presentation of historic Galveston. Built on a strong sense of place, the GHF grounded Galveston’s identity in a narrative of prosperity through trade as a foundation for the city. This conception of heritage provided for a consistent message boasting new businesses, creating festivals that appealed to all ages, and coordinating historic properties’ availability to the tourist. By constructing a family-friendly image of Galveston, the GHF maintained a monopoly on the island’s representation, ensuring that both residents and tourists feel safe – a quality that Breen and Rigby deem as encouraging to socialization.⁴⁵

The historic area of Galveston operates on the rhetorical construction of a wealthy city at the turn of the century, dependent on flourishing trade. The *Elissa* occupies this same public memory, lending visibility to the representation of the harbor circa 1900. Using the waterfront area to interpret the memory of historic Galveston, the GHF and other influential development forces on the island enacted the revitalization and tourism opportunities described by Breen and Rigby. Galveston’s heritage tourism industry is a construction of the GHF and other business leaders with a stake in the island’s economy, not a community’s commitment – like some of the projects outlined in Breen and Rigby’s volume. The Galveston waterfront begs attention from rhetorical scholars as a distinct area where heritage tourism dictates the public memory of a place, while reinterpreting the memory to best support economic interests.

Finally, Breen and Rigby's study also emphasizes the importance of context in historic preservation work. The authors refer to "cultural tourism" as the "celebration of a community's heritage."⁴⁶ Although this thesis refers to the same phenomenon of "cultural tourism" by a different label, the presentation of history can draw tourism interest, and in turn economic viability into an otherwise failing area of a city. The availability of waterfront areas is just one way to redevelop cities, of course, but for Galveston and dozens of smaller cities like it, capitalizing on history creates a new demand and consequently a growing tourism industry. As Breen and Rigby state, "For many cities, downtown restoration and waterfront redevelopment were one and the same."⁴⁷ This was certainly the case for Galveston. Although also uniquely equipped with beaches, grasslands, and plenty of undeveloped land, business owners on the island of Galveston searched desperately for an identity to jointly display its beautiful resources, and commercial districts.

Construction of Elissa's Identity During Restoration

The GHF seized upon this search for an identity as an opportunity to begin marketing a historic tourist's Galveston, complete with tourist destinations and quality, family-friendly experiences. Incorporating historic representations alongside present-day, working shrimp fleets and shipping barges in the harbor served to solidify Galveston's present as wholly reliant on the past. Furthermore, the *Elissa's* visual disconnect from the modern vessels around her supplies the tourist with a particular invocation of memory that she physically represents both then and now. Her three masts, miles of rigging, and rounded silhouette stand out amongst the tankers and shrimp boats; visually challenging viewers to orient themselves to either the past or the present. Breen

and Rigby, in accord with rhetorical scholars, assert that context is necessary for assessing representations of public memory. The GHF, also aware of the importance of context, successfully created the perfect berth for their tall ship tucked in among yesterday's prosperity and today's imagination.

Effective construction of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction necessitated specific actions by the GHF. To solidify Galveston's new identity for the future audience, the GHF engaged in three calculated, rhetorical efforts during the restoration process: (1) maintaining a public presence, (2) creating a relationship with the selected past, and (3) emphasizing materiality as authority. The GHF's publicity efforts, combined with a rhetorically constructed connection to the Victorian-era, worked to situate the *Elissa* as a destination, building a relationship with future touristic audiences.

Rhetorically, redirecting attention can be done by many different methods. Lawrence J. Prelli observes that "narratives direct attention to whatever purportedly is significant."⁴⁸ When "an ordinary lump of metal" is identified as "a musket ball used during the American Revolution," its significance changes status.⁴⁹ When "a rusty white hull" is hand-picked for preservation efforts as "one of the very special objects on the face of the earth," its significance is altered.⁵⁰ The *Elissa* is presented as an authentic, historical artifact that, when read as a site of public memory, must take the audience into consideration as a constraint on the order of the space. Geared specifically for entertainment, the *Elissa* is a tourist attraction that enacts a selective, historical narrative of late nineteenth century Galveston. Why invest the resources to preserve the *Elissa* as Galveston's tourist treasure? She sailed under six different registered names, five nationalities, and was discovered stripped of her masts, smuggling cigarettes into Italy,

with no apparent signs of a connection to Galveston. But in the words of Marjorie Lyle, the granddaughter of the *Elissa*'s commissioner, "Luckily," the *Elissa* "twice visited Galveston – and the rest is history."⁵¹ The *Elissa* was selected for her ties to the community, the "authenticity of her iron hull," and her material connection to the past.⁵² With the mark of preservation, the *Elissa*'s significance is altered from one of thousands of ships to visit Galveston to a representative marker of Galveston's glorious past.

An expensive labor of love on the part of the GHF, the *Elissa*'s preservation was aimed at restoring tourism to the island, while connecting visitors to a particularized interpretation of the island's history. First launched in 1877 as a construction of the Alexander Hall Co. of Aberdeen, Scotland, *Elissa* was commissioned by Henry Fowler Watt and she began her days as a cargo ship, hauling whatever load was available. At times unable to afford a captain, and by all accounts having made a poorly timed investment in the dying technology of wind power, Watt twice captained his own glorious ship on worldwide voyages, carrying "niches" in trade and struggling to make *Elissa* a viable means to a financial end.⁵³ Watt was forced to sell her in 1897 after "a ruinous voyage," after which she would continue to sail under a Norwegian flag.⁵⁴ However, for the struggles she experienced in vocation, her restoration is hailed as "the finest...of an active sailing ship," and one that required "uncommon courage and determination, traits still exhibited by" the GHF today.⁵⁵

Public Presence of the Elissa

A strong, positive public presence was necessary during the restoration process to enhance the *Elissa*'s identity as a tourist attraction. Enacted primarily via newspaper articles and official statements from the GHF, the *Elissa* benefitted from a variety of

publicity seeking maneuvers beginning in the early spring of 1975. Broadcasting the benefits of a maritime restoration project via the *Galveston Daily News*, articles like “Restored Sailing Vessel Great For Tourism, Consultant Says,” begin appearing on the front page of the paper as early as February 1975, nearly eight months before the GHF actually acquired the ship.⁵⁶

This particular newspaper article identifies Creamer, the maritime preservationist whom Gaido sought advice from previously, as a consultant to the GHF. The newspaper relays the message he delivered to the Galveston Chapter of the Texas Restaurant Association to the general public. While suggesting the restored ship would be beneficial to tourism on the island, and subsequently to restaurants on the island, Creamer outlined the investment necessary to complete a successful restoration. Referencing a similar successful project in San Diego, Creamer assures his audience the *Elissa* is in fine shape for her age, and that her iron hull and original wood cabins are in “excellent condition.”⁵⁷ The article ends by mentioning the ship’s log – which is still intact – and her two visits to Galveston, as if to definitively end any concerns about the temporal and fiscal challenges posed by such a restoration effort.

This article is an example of the way the GHF continually constructed the public presence of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction throughout, and even before, the restoration process. Aware of the need for public support (as well as significant sources of funding), the GHF meticulously constructed the restoration project as well-worth the investment and ultimately good for the city and its businesses. Public financial support for the purchase and restoration of the *Elissa* first came in the form of a fundraiser at local restaurant, Tuffy’s Seafood Restaurant. A month after the *Elissa* project first appeared

by name in the paper, the *Galveston Daily News* reported that George Youmans, the proprietor of Tuffy's, would donate the proceeds from one night of sales toward the growth of the tourism industry. Following the Galveston Park Board's decision to invest \$50,000 to build a dock for the *Elissa*, Youmans announced that proceeds would help begin the support of a new tourist industry on the island and encourage "tourist businesses and attractions to work together" in the future.⁵⁸

Similar to the community commitment outlined by Breen and Rigby, the restoration of the *Elissa* required the community's support – and especially the community's financing. Early reports about the *Elissa* routinely mention her potential for large sums in gate-fees and the excitement her presence would incite, despite the caution that the project might require almost 10-years of restoration. As the *Galveston Daily News* continued reporting on the plans for the *Elissa*'s restoration, their news coverage included details of various fundraising efforts such as the donation of proceeds from Tuffy's Seafood and a barbecue held jointly by the Galveston Chamber of Commerce and the GHF.⁵⁹

Information was made readily available to the community via the *Galveston Daily News* in a variety of ways, including short blurbs and longer, more detail-filled stories. In August 1975, the *Galveston Daily News* ran an article outlining *Elissa*'s year-long search and rescue effort, while she was still docked in Piraeus, Greece. Hailed as the "best existing example of Mid-Victorian naval architecture," the publicized narrative highlighted the selective past even before the *Elissa* officially arrived on the scene.⁶⁰ The restoration was consistently presented to the public as "the only authentic ship restoration between Baltimore and San Diego." Moreover, GHF officials sought to continually

reassure the public of the financial wisdom of the project by explaining their belief that “income from the public admissions to the *Elissa* and her on-board historical maritime exhibits will retire the indebtedness incurred in purchase and restoration rapidly.”⁶¹

Even as the timetable was extended from her original arrival in the fall of 1976, the campaign for the *Elissa* maintained consistent appeals for support and fundraising efforts. Although focused on a large donation and continued support of the restoration project, a *Galveston Daily News* article on November 13, 1976 acknowledges that “with... continuing support *Elissa* will return [to Galveston] next year.”⁶² Here, the restoration is framed to suggest that without continued donations, the restoration of the *Elissa* would prove unsuccessful. However, the calculated publicity efforts leave no room for such threats; instead, the organization positively positions fundraising details to include donations “totalling [*sic*] more than \$100,000” while highlighting particular donors and their commitments to the city’s well-being.⁶³ Ultimately, this public approach displays the restoration of the *Elissa* as a communal effort, based on a commitment to see the “day when *Elissa*’s sails will appear on the horizon as she makes her way to Galveston.”⁶⁴

Maintaining a public presence for the *Elissa* and her restoration process was important for the GHF, and integral to the success of the project overall. In February of 1977, captions in the *Galveston Daily News* read: “Hopefully, next year the restored vessel will be sailed back to Galveston.”⁶⁵ A year later, headlines such as: “Restoration of *Elissa* Vigorously Under Way: Ship To Sail Here In Late Fall” were still appearing.⁶⁶ Particularly, this story reads, “At long last after four years of fund raising and planning, restoration is vigorously underway on the 100-year-old square-rigged sailing vessel.”⁶⁷

This article publicly acknowledges the long journey planning and fundraising efforts had traveled, having begun as the brainchild of Paul Gaido, the 1974 special committee on the feasibility of adding a maritime tourist attraction.⁶⁸ Membership drives for the GHF were also an important tool in maintaining public interest and a visibility for the project over the years.

The Elissa's Relationship with the Selective Past

The second concentrated effort to rhetorically construct the *Elissa's* identity relied on a representation of a *selective* past. *Elissa*, when viewed through the lens of nineteenth century progress, was a fairly unremarkable ship. Although one of the first ships built with the now infamous Aberdeen bow, characteristic of clipper ships, she was commissioned in an era where steam power would soon overtake wind.⁶⁹ Her connection to the selected maritime heritage on Galveston Island, however, was apparent in the explicit relationship that was often vocalized by the GHF:

When restored, the *Elissa* is expected to be a major attraction, forming the nucleus for a Gulf Coast Maritime Museum, the revenue from which will be used to support the work of [the] GHF in preserving historic homes and buildings, as well as save other vessels and artifacts. *Elissa* is the only survivor of the thousands of sail and stem ships which helped to build Texas and the Southwest.⁷⁰

In other words, the *Elissa* was once *one* of thousands, but was now the *only* one left. In the early spring of 1976, local businessman Bill Fullen told the *Galveston Daily News* that “few people... have had the depth to recognize” the potential of a “new tourist industry in historically significant buildings” that Galveston was blessed enough to have, “to compliment [sic] our other natural attractions.”⁷¹ The *Elissa*, Fullen postured, could do more “than anyone could ever imagine” for tourism on the island.⁷²

Fullen's remarks are indicative of the perspective of the business elite, capable of launching a full-scale renovation to highlight the city's "heritage." Galveston's historic buildings, concentrated in the Historic Strand District, offered logical support for the decision to privilege the late nineteenth century, and consequently, the *Elissa*. Large sums of money were necessary for the *Elissa* project, however, business leaders like Fullen acknowledged the potential for increased revenues that would accompany the future of the project. In an effort to allay concerns about the additional time and cost of the restoration, project director Walter Rybka repeatedly incorporated the selective past as justification for the efforts.

Progress reports often invoked measures of authenticity and connectivity to Galveston's particularized past. Exemplified by Rybka's reference to "the last chance" to acquire an authentic "19th century square rigger which was *actually* a part of *our* history," the *Elissa* was framed by the restoration team as uniquely tied to the city, and therefore the two were bound together.⁷³ In a letter to the GHF, maritime consultant Michael Creamer's calls attention to her authentic structure and explicitly to her Galvestonian past, echoing Rybka's previous statements:

Certainly one of the few if not the only one of her size in the world, *Elissa* will enjoy other benefits as an operational cargo ship. Besides offering an excellent and authentic experience for possible future use as a training ship, she may very well pay her own way home.... After rebuilding in Greece and her restoration in Galveston, the Auxiliary Barque *Elissa* should be beautiful to behold, safe to sail and good for another hundred years.⁷⁴

Both men successfully reference the past, the present, and the future without lessening her role in any stage of her life. These statements build upon the public identity of the

Elissa and serve to solidify the project's relationship with the *Elissa* – and Galveston's Victorian-era past.

The connection to the nineteenth century relies on both visual and narrative supports. When the *Elissa* was finally set to arrive in Galveston during the summer of 1979, her identity had been linked to that of “Galveston's sailing history” and a permanent reminder of the city's prosperous former life.⁷⁵ Although no longer front page news, the restoration project's efforts were detailed deeper in the paper via three differing articles about the ship's return.⁷⁶ After her arrival in Galveston, news coverage shifted to the funds necessary to complete the next phase of the restoration, highlighting what Bixel characterizes as stunned and disappointed donors.⁷⁷ Still without masts, rigging, sails, decking, and virtually anything above the hull, the *Elissa* was becoming harder and harder for the GHF to present to the community as a good investment. Large national grants eventually helped the cause, and rhetorically the GHF turned to position the *Elissa* as a permanent connection to a selected past: the visible and material witness to the “restoration of The Strand National Historical Landmark District,” enhancing links between its buildings and the waterfront area.⁷⁸ The restoration effort was hailed as providing a “unique and fascinating link with the past” to “enrich the lives of all who board her.”⁷⁹

Likewise, in her dissertation on the Galveston's cultural otherness, anthropologist Castaneda identifies the past as rhetorically constructed by the GHF:

It was at this developmental juncture in Galveston's preservation movement that the work of the GHF began to evolve into something more akin to the production of culture than the preservation of history. The self-conscious forging of "Historic Galveston" as a contemporary cultural entity and commercially viable experience had become paramount and requisite to the further restoration and continued maintenance of the material culture of the historical past.⁸⁰

Referring to the *Elissa* as part of the “Age of Sail,” the GHF began to concentrate the entirety of their public efforts on solidifying the *Elissa*’s connection to Galveston’s past. In fact, references to the “Age of Sail” do not begin to appear in the *Galveston Daily News* until the summer of 1982 when the *Elissa* was set to officially open.⁸¹

Rhetorically, this suggests the need to more readily associate the *Elissa* as connected to a particular piece of Galveston’s history – ultimately selecting her as the era worth remembering. When at long last the museum opened in July of 1982, the public coverage again switched to focus on her upcoming fall sailing trials, and the “picturesque glimpse at the Golden Age of Sail.”⁸² Still positioned as a job yet to be completed, the GHF promoted the *Elissa*, her gift shop, and her status as a living ship ever connected to the historic Galveston of “nautical precision.”⁸³

In the words of Castaneda, this connectivity to a particular era relies on material supports “skillfully designed to give contemporary expression to Galveston’s historic past.”⁸⁴ The GHF effectively invokes historically romanticized interpretations of the Victorian-era of merchant ships in order to position the *Elissa* as an authentic experience built on a labor of love. A thriving relationship with the selected past provided continued support of the ultimately seven-year restoration project. Although an ordinary cargo ship from a by-gone technological phase, the construction of the *Elissa* as an experience for tourists was enhanced by the relationship grounding her in a selected sliver of Galveston’s past.

Authenticity and Materiality

The GHF emphasized authenticity and materiality as the final authority to historical interpretation in constructing the *Elissa*’s identity as a tourist attraction. By

virtue of her distinct visual presence in the harbor, the *Elissa* anchors the present to the past with nothing more than a glance. Her three masts cut into the sky, against a backdrop of barges, oil tankers, shrimp boats, and cruise ships. Published photographs and drawings show the ship with her sails set, riding the wind with a freedom unattainable for modern cargo ships. Visually, she symbolizes a different era. Using visual cues as a foundation, the GHF constructed a narrative of the restoration and worked to maintain the *Elissa*'s public presence. This encouraged the audience's familiarity with her history and an understanding of her actual anchor in the past. Unlike the replicas that were initially proposed as tourist attractions, the *Elissa* embodied the past differently than a replica could. The restoration was a long, expensive, and difficult process. Throughout the restoration, the *Galveston Daily News* would repeat the *Elissa*'s pedigree, reminding readers she was a nineteenth century sailing ship, discovered in a shipyard in Greece.⁸⁵ The newspaper also frequently included the *Elissa*'s visits to Galveston in 1883 and 1886 as the definitive justification for the restoration project.⁸⁶ Thus, the *Elissa* was constructed as authentic and her identity supported by the visual and material presence in the harbor. In turn, this provided community support and funding for the restoration project, even as it dragged beyond the original timeline and budget.

Overall, the restoration project concentrated entirely on rebuilding the ship to original specifications. In fact, the *Elissa*'s restoration was characterized by one newspaper writer as the "future of the past."⁸⁷ After utilizing existing records of similar ships to determine a plan of action that would "contribute to the restoration's authenticity," the GHF began running help-wanted advertisements in order to staff their restoration team, building their labor force from scratch.⁸⁸ With descriptions of the

Elissa directed toward her “original beauty” reimagined through restoration, detailing her “Teak and Douglas fir” decks, and depicting her place in the harbor among “her more modern sisters,” the public image of the project remained focused on her material presence.⁸⁹ With public focus directed toward the materiality of the restoration, the GHF was able to rhetorically construct the *Elissa*’s identity as an authentic artifact, despite the fact she was, at best, an approximate restoration of her original self. Because the GHF successfully created a public awareness that the *Elissa* was restored to available specifications, the organization was able to rhetorically construct a notion of authenticity for the artifact, making her a more valuable tourist attraction to potential visitors. Based on the social experience of memory discussed in Chapter One, authenticity is viewed by the public as worth travelling to and paying for – a quality not afforded to replicas or attractions perceived as inauthentic.

It is important to remember that “authenticity” is a rhetorical strategy which can be employed to “conjure up specific cultural memories.”⁹⁰ The GHF’s rhetorical strategy constructed these cultural memories by providing the artifact as material evidence to board, explore, and experience Galveston’s past. Thus, as Stephen A. King observes, authenticity is a rhetorical strategy for creating authority.⁹¹ Cultural anthropologist Castaneda identifies the GHF’s as the “most prolific producer of cultural knowledge and tradition,” privileging some histories and suppressing others.⁹² Virtually unchallenged, then, the GHF and its supporters were able to successfully connect the *Elissa* and other historic buildings on the island to the Victorian era, while simultaneously using their position to set these landmarks as the authority for Galveston’s heritage. The *Elissa* in particular was ostensibly restored to her original beauty, making her not only the

“maritime prize” of the island, but also the visual representation of the past.⁹³ Even as the price tag increased, at no point is the restoration hailed as anything but a benefit for the city. Citing reactions by large donors and a welcoming enthusiasm by the general public, executive director of the GHF Peter Brink reported the visitors’ delighted reactions to the “quality of the ship.”⁹⁴

The *Elissa* enacts a public memory of Galveston through a visual reminder of an era when commerce and trade flourished. Touted in the *Galveston Daily News* as the “long tradition of partnership between the industry and the sea,” the *Elissa* bobs in the harbor as an ever-present site, influencing the way “visitors remember the past.”⁹⁵ The irony here is that although Galveston’s modern economy relies primarily on tourism dollars, the shipping industry is not defunct. Although trade dollars have long since been eclipsed by the Port of Houston, which is the largest port in the United States based on foreign tonnage, Galveston Bay still provides one-third of Texas’ commercial fishing industry and adds more than \$4.2 billion dollars to the Texas economy each year.⁹⁶ Regionally, Galveston is important in many ways, and heritage has been constructed to be a consumable experience to aid in the island’s contribution to the state. The success of the *Elissa*’s restoration positioned the GHF as an authority, granting the organization status as a preeminent cultural influence.

The restoration of the *Elissa* proved to be a tremendously successful project for the Galveston Historical Foundation. Because the GHF carefully managed information during the course of restoration, they constructed a historically grounded, authentic image of the *Elissa* for the public. Navigating an extended timetable for restoration work, a cost more than three times the originally proposed amount, and the nuanced release of

information to the public, the GHF was able to maintain an authoritative role in producing cultural memories, tourist experience, and, ultimately, control of the project. Based on these successes, the organization handily created a narrative of the restoration that was both favorable and future-oriented, positioning the *Elissa* as a successful tourist attraction.

Although much of the media coverage at the time obscured the difficult work and disappointments during the restoration phases, the concealment of the details proved valuable for the restoration project overall because it supported the GHF's narrative of an authentic vessel, not one that had been rebuilt from the inside out. Once complete, onboard information focused on the historic past, not the restoration, and evoked the romanticized nineteenth-century, educating tourists to the experience of the sailor both above and below deck.

Rhetorically, the GHF constructed an identity of beauty, not work; an original, not recreated. Although there is truth to both representations, the full story of the restoration was not released until it was expedient to maintain interest in the barque and extend her history into life *after* restoration.

Notes

¹ Denise Alexander, *Galveston's Historic Downtown and Strand District* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 36.

² Brief examples include rental businesses like Lafitte's Retreat, located on the southern end of Galveston Island, where buccaneer/pirate Jean Lafitte was said to have operated from. See "Lafitte's Retreat," *Cottage by the Gulf*, <http://www.patsyann.com/bev/galveston/gulf/retreat.htm>. Likewise, one of the newest tourist attractions on the island is *Pirates! Legends of the Gulf Coast*, "a pirate-themed family experience," featuring "the deck of a pirate ship, a captain's cabin, and actors portraying the notorious Jean Lafitte and his brother Pierre." At the same site, visitors can also experience the Haunted Mayfield Manor, which details the good Dr. Horace Mayfield's journey into insanity, driven by the loss of his love, his family, and his research in the Great Storm of 1900. See "Amusements: Pirates!," *Galveston.com*, <http://www.galveston.com/pirates> (accessed February 5, 2013). Even the Galveston Historical Foundation has incorporated the lore of Galveston's pirates into their attractions, screening "The Pirate Island of Jean Lafitte: A Film Based on the Life of the Notorious Buccaneer" at the Pier 21 theater, nearby the *Elissa*. See "Pier 21 Theater: The Pirate Island of Jean Lafitte," *Galveston Historical Foundation*, http://www.galvestonhistory.org/The_Pirate_Island_of_Jean_Lafitte.asp.

³ Mary G. Ramos, "Galveston's Response to the Hurricane of 1900," *Texas Almanac*, <http://www.texasalmanac.com/topics/history/galvestons-response-hurricane-1900> (accessed February 8, 2013).

⁴ See "The 1900 Storm, Galveston, Texas," *Galveston Newspapers, Inc and the City of Galveston 1900 Storm Committee*, <http://www.1900storm.com>.

⁵ David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 9.

⁶ Texas State Historical Association, "Galveston Island," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rrg02.>; See also Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau, "Marketing Plan, 2011-12," [http://www.galvestonparkboard.org/meetings/pdf/GICVB%20Marketing%20Plan%202011-12\(2\).pdf](http://www.galvestonparkboard.org/meetings/pdf/GICVB%20Marketing%20Plan%202011-12(2).pdf): 1-48 (Accessed January 11, 2013); HDR Engineering, Inc., "City of Galveston Comprehensive Plan," October 6, 2011, http://www.progressgalveston.com/sites/default/files/documents/11_1006_GALV_CompPlan_Pub_Hearing_Draft.pdf: 1-208 (Accessed January 11, 2013).

⁷ McComb, *Galveston*, 118.

⁸ McComb, *Galveston*, 118; Galveston.com & Company, Inc., “Island History,” *Galveston.com*, <http://www.galveston.com/history>.

⁹ Galveston.com, “Island History.”

¹⁰ Texas State Historical Association, “Galveston, Texas,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdg01>; Galveston.com, “Island History.”

¹¹ The Balinese Room was a room at the end of a 75-foot pier, located on Seawall Boulevard. Notorious for gambling and famous clientele, such as Frank Sinatra and the Marx brothers, stories of the Balinese Room speak to Galveston’s pride as a destination city. Having withstood multiple hurricanes and fires, the Balinese Room was ultimately destroyed during Hurricane Ike in September 2008. It remains, though, legendary for its contribution to the nightlife and lore of the island. Galveston.com, “Island History.”

¹² TSHA, “Galveston, Texas.”

¹³ Galveston.com, “Island History”; “About Us,” Galveston Historic Foundation, 2012, http://www.galvestonhistory.org/about_us.asp.

¹⁴ Galveston.com, “Island History.”

¹⁵ Anne A. Brindley, “Galveston Historical Foundation,” *Handbook of Texas Online* (Accessed January 11, 2013) <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vrg01>

¹⁶ Brindley, “Galveston Historical Foundation.”

¹⁷ Terri Alford Castaneda, “Preservation and the Cultural Politics of the Past on Historic Galveston Island” (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1993), abstract, *emphasis original*.

¹⁸ Castaneda, “Preservation and the Cultural Politics,” ix.

¹⁹ Patricia Bellis Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 32.

²⁰ Thomas W. Cutter, “Austin,” *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qta02> (Accessed January 7, 2013).

²¹ “Epilogue,” Texas State Library and Archives Commission, August 30, 2011, <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/navy/epilogue.html> (Accessed January 7, 2013); Cutter, “Austin.”

²² Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32.

²³ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32.

²⁴ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32-3.

²⁵ “About Us,” *Gaido’s of Galveston*, <http://www.gaidos.com/AboutUs.aspx> (Accessed January 7, 2013).

²⁶ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32.

²⁷ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32-3.

²⁸ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 33.

²⁹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 24-5.

³⁰ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 26.

³¹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 29.

³² Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32.

³³ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 32.

³⁴ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 33.

³⁵ The Waterfront Center, “About the Waterfront Center,” 2007, <http://www.waterfrontcenter.org/about/aboutindex.html> (Accessed January 3, 2013).

³⁶ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 4-5.

³⁷ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 5.

³⁸ Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 29.

³⁹ Between the two volumes, the authors explore 204 domestic and international waterfront sites. Even though the write-ups are highly researched from material provided to their Waterfront Center’s award process, such a format does not afford space for the authors to explore each and every facet. Their interest lies more in the final product than it does in the rhetorical choices made during the restoration project. It is here that this thesis differs vastly from the published volumes, however, the investigative principle is the same – even if directed at different aspects of the waterfront projects. See The Waterfront Center, “About the Waterfront Center Co-directors,” http://www.waterfrontcenter.org/about/Breen_Rigby.htm (Accessed on January 3, 2013).

⁴⁰ As a point of irony, Breen and Rigby mention the Galveston Historical Foundation only twice in the *Elissa* project and they mention volunteers only in regard to the ships' crew – not during her renovation. Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 81-4.

⁴¹ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 5.

⁴² Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory*, 29.

⁴³ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 2-5.

⁴⁴ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 3.

⁴⁵ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 5.

⁴⁶ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 7.

⁴⁷ Breen and Rigby, *Waterfronts*, 15.

⁴⁸ Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2006), 13.

⁴⁹ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 13.

⁵⁰ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 39.

⁵¹ Kurt D. Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa: The Tall Ship of Texas* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 6.

⁵² "Seamanship Training On Board 1877 Tall Ship *Elissa*," *Galveston Historical Foundation*, http://www.galvestonhistory.org/Adult_Seamanship_Training_Program2.asp

⁵³ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 6.

⁵⁴ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 6.

⁵⁵ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 6.

⁵⁶ Dick Bryant, "Restored Sailing Vessel Great For Tourism, Consultant Says," *Galveston Daily News*, February 27, 1975, 1A. The GHF purchased the *Elissa* for \$39,000 on October 2, 1975; Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 33.

⁵⁷ Bryant, "Restored Sailing Vessel Great For Tourism," 1A.

⁵⁸ “Restaurant To Give Proceeds To Ship Fund,” *Galveston Daily News*, 2A.

⁵⁹ “Tuffy’s Seafood Restaurant,” *Galveston Daily News*, April 16, 1975, 2A; “The *Elissa* Fund,” *Galveston Daily News*, August 7, 1975, 15B.

⁶⁰ “Historical Foundation’s *Elissa* Project History, Future,” *Galveston Daily News*, August 17, 1975, 3A.

⁶¹ The promise of recouped investment was based on the then revenue for the submarine at Seawolf Park, where the *Elissa* was originally to be docked, grossing \$84,000 in 1974-75. A restored ship similar to the *Elissa*, the *Star of India* in San Diego, is utilized as evidence for the support of *Elissa* because the *Star of India* brought in \$120,000 a year at the gate. See “Historical Foundation’s *Elissa* Project History, Future,” 3A; Bryant, “Restored Sailing Vessel Great For Tourism,” 1A.

⁶² “GHF Receives \$25,000 Gift From Houston Foundation,” *Galveston Daily News*, November 13, 1976, 2A.

⁶³ “GHF Receives \$25,000 Gift,” 2A.

⁶⁴ “GHF Receives \$25,000 Gift,” 2A.

⁶⁵ “Michael Creamer,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 18, 1977, 1A.

⁶⁶ “Restoration of *Elissa* Vigorously Under Way,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 13, 1978, 4A.

⁶⁷ “Restoration of *Elissa*,” 4A.

⁶⁸ “Restoration of *Elissa*,” 4A.

⁶⁹ According to commander and author Arthur H. Clark, the Clipper Ship Era began in 1843, when demand necessitated bring supplies across the seas faster. Clark writes, “After countless generations of evolution, this era witnessed the highest development of the wooden sailing ship in construction, speed, and beauty.” Arthur H. Clark, *The Clipper Ship Era: An Epitome of Famous American and British Clipper Ships, Their Owners, Builders, Commanders, and Crew* (New York: G. Putnam and Sons, 1910), v. See also Richard Woodman, *The History of Ship: The Comprehensive Story of Seafaring from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1997), 151. For information about the restoration of her “distinctive Aberdeen bow,” see Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 36; Marsha Walker, “Foundation Works Toward Renewing Square-Rigger,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 25, 1979, 7A.

⁷⁰ “Sale to Aid *Elissa*,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 25, 1976, 1A.

⁷¹ “Old Strand Emporium Offers Many Features,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 29, 1976, 3C.

⁷² “Old Strand Emporium,” 3C.

⁷³ Walker, “Foundation Works,” 7A. Emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Michael Creamer, “Greetings From Sunny Greece,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 28, 1978, 2H.

⁷⁵ “*Elissa* Finally to Settle in Her Texas Home,” *Galveston Daily News*, July 29, 1979, 10A.

⁷⁶ “*Elissa* Finally to Settle,” 10A; “City-wide Celebration Set for *Elissa*’s Arrival,” *Galveston Daily News*, July 29, 1979, 10A; “Restoration a Tremendous Task,” *Galveston Daily News*, July 29, 1979, 10A, 13A.

⁷⁷ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 39.

⁷⁸ “*Elissa* Scores Two Federal Grants,” September 19, 1979, 9A.

⁷⁹ Karen Lord, “*Elissa* Comes Home!,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 28, 1982, 10I.

⁸⁰ Castaneda, “Preservation and the Cultural Politics,” 88.

⁸¹ References to the “age of sail” begin with the description of a benefit concert, which will evoke the “long arduous journeys around the globe during the glorious age of sail.” “Opera House Site of Musical Fund Raiser for *Elissa* Restoration,” *Galveston Daily News*, June 6, 1982, 2D. Similarly, another article on the chronology of the restoration states that she “occasionally will sail to preserve the tradition of the age of sail.” “*Elissa* History,” *Galveston Daily News*, June 27, 1982, 2D. These references continue through 1985 “as a living ship of the Golden Age of Sail.” “*Elissa* Races Home Ahead of Storm,” *Galveston Daily News*, November 20, 1985.

⁸² “*Elissa* About to Set Sail in the Gulf,” *Galveston Daily News*, August 8, 1982, 3B.

⁸³ “*Elissa* About to Set Sail,” 3B.

⁸⁴ Castaneda, “Preservation and the Cultural Politics,” 17.

⁸⁵ For typical newspaper references to the *Elissa*'s historical age and discovery, see "Historical Foundation's *Elissa* Project History, Future Explained," *Galveston Daily News*, August 17, 1975, 3A; "Villa, *Elissa* Grant Given," *Galveston Daily News*, December 18, 1975, 8A; "GHF Receives \$25,000 Gift," 2A.

⁸⁶ For typical newspaper references to the *Elissa*'s earlier dockings in Galveston in the late 1800s, see "Restaurant to Give Proceeds to Ship Fund," 2A; "GHF Working to Restore '*Elissa*,'" *Galveston Daily News*, February 15, 1978, 4D; "Restoration of *Elissa*," 4A.

⁸⁷ Lord, "*Elissa* Comes Home!," 10I.

⁸⁸ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 39; For an example of one such advertisement see "Carpenter's Needed," *Galveston Daily News*, April 18, 1982, 10C.

⁸⁹ Laura Geis Olafson, "*Elissa* Figurehead Salutes Grand Dame of Galveston," *Galveston Daily News*, May 30, 1982, 12C; "GHF Presents Projects From Dicken's to *Elissa*," *Galveston Daily News*, February 28, 5I; "Horizons 1983: Industry," *Galveston Daily News*, February 27, 1983, 1I.

⁹⁰ Stephen A. King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject," *Southern Journal of Communication*, 71 (2006): 240.

⁹¹ King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 240.

⁹² Castaneda, "Preservation and the Cultural Politics," x.

⁹³ "*Elissa* Figurehead Salutes," 12C.

⁹⁴ "*Elissa* Excursions to be Tribute to Backers of Ship's Restoration," *Galveston Daily News*, August 22, 1982, 2D.

⁹⁵ "Horizon's 1983," 1I; King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums," 247.

⁹⁶ "Economics," *Galveston Bay Estuary Program*, 2004, <http://www.gbep.state.tx.us/about-galveston-bay/economics.asp> (accessed January 4, 2013); Galveston Bay Information Center, "Bay Facts," *Texas A&M University at Galveston*, http://gbic.tamug.edu/gbayfastfacts/gbff_menu.html (accessed January 4, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

Fulfilling the Rhetorical Function of Display

The Elissa's Function Shifts

After the lengthy process of restoring the *Elissa*, the Galveston Historical Foundation faced a difficult decision regarding the future of their prized artifact. Although she opened to the public for deck tours on July 4, 1982, the ship would not be operational to sail until nearly two months later. From the beginning, plans had always included sailing her in the Gulf of Mexico, maintaining her as a living ship – not simply as a museum piece. Walter Rybka, who was at the helm of the restoration explained that the *Elissa* “had been viewed as a living ship” throughout the process.¹ In comparison to “dead” ships, living ships stood at the ready and were kept in ship-shape. Rybka described dead ships as those “arrested at a point in time,” unable to fulfill a working function.² As part of an effort to maintain the sailing tradition she represented, the GHF began looking for ways to display her as a working vessel not merely as an outdated relic.

It is important to understand Rybka’s distinction between living vessels and dead ones, as it designates the *Elissa* as in need of constant work and restoration – contradicting the separation made in this analysis which depicts a time *after* the restoration. However, as the function of the ship changed over time from an artifact in the process of being reclaimed to one maintained in top condition, there must be a differentiation between phases for the purposes of clear boundaries of analysis. In one of the articles he wrote for *Sea History* magazine, Rybka explained that “if a ship is around

long enough, all of its fabric will sooner or later be renewed.”³ The *Elissa* was no exception, but quality maintenance came at a cost. It was an expensive undertaking to keep the *Elissa* sailing and it required donated resources and time. Because the *Elissa* belonged to an organization with numerous other properties also in need of maintenance funds, the late 1980s saw a renewed effort to find additional methods of funding her upkeep and repair.

Their search for economic viability led the GHF to seek different methods to display their restored vessel. Prelli reminds us that any display contains a rhetorical dimension; thus, “whatever is revealed through display simultaneously conceals alternative possibilities.”⁴ Tracing display back to the concept of *deiktikos* – Greek for “exhibit” – Prelli describes the ceremonial basis integral to our contemporary understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of display.⁵ With the epideictic form of rhetoric rooted in the concept of *deiktikos*, Prelli details Aristotle’s modification of *deiktikos*, distinguishing the demonstrative function from that of display, or epideictic rhetoric.⁶ Prelli asserts that “display is manifested in the screening or attention.” In other words, display directs function.⁷ Thus, Prelli identifies the new purpose the GHF discovered in displaying their ship for various publics. Most notably, epideictic “does not *argue* the ideas or ideals that bind people into community so much as it *displays* them to a witnessing public,” creating space for the public to “share the common experience” of memory.⁸

The rhetorical dimensions of display, though, may be approached from a variety of angles. Diane S. Hope, however, gives rhetorical scholars room for pause when contemplating Prelli’s boundaries of display, stating the ambiguity of the term

“simultaneously confounds and intrigues the rhetorical imagination.”⁹ The necessarily rhetorical display applies this notion of a rhetorical imagination to many different circumstances. For the *Elissa*, display of the vessel directs attention *to* the Victorian-era past, effectively concealing the parts of Galveston that do not meld with the memory. Similarly, this study extends this notion of display by employing Bradford Vivian’s characterization of epideictic form as “ritual performances...intended to symbolically preserve cultural tradition, collective memory, and political order.”¹⁰ Grounded in her restored identity and positioned to preserve a particular understanding of culture on the island, her role shifted to the “performance” of the epideictic, a new role supported by Vivian’s argument of the neoliberal epideictic function. As the GHF emerged from its role as restorer, the *Elissa* too assumed a new role: as ambassador of Texas and the era of nineteenth century trade, set to both “reveal and conceal” aspects of the past.¹¹

The success of the restoration, the volunteer crew, and the first day sails in 1982 prompted the GHF to seek more ambitious goals. Day sails kept the ship close to shore, but in 1985 the *Elissa* made her first trip offshore and sailed to the southern tip of Texas, docking in Corpus Christi. There, she participated in the “Art and Sea” fundraising gala for The Art Museum of South Texas.¹² According to Kurt Voss, who worked with the *Elissa* project in many capacities – including directing the Texas Seaport Museum and the *Elissa* from 1994 to 2007 – the voyage to Corpus Christi “generated much-needed funds and paved the way for the *Elissa*’s participation in OpSail during 1986.”¹³ The Corpus Christi trip illuminated the possibility that there was a financial benefit to displaying their ship in various capacities.

This chapter, then, explores an example of how the GHF displayed the *Elissa* using the Texas Proud voyage. Engaging the rhetorical dimensions of her extended tour throughout the Gulf of Mexico, the elements of display come together positioning the *Elissa* in a dual role as attraction and ambassador. After rhetorically constructing the *Elissa* via her restoration process, the GHF's actions during the period of the Texas Proud voyage continually supported their star attraction in an effort to enhance Galveston's tourism industry. The *Elissa* both garnered attention for the island and redirected the audience toward a selective representation of Galveston's heritage.

Elissa Visits Other Ports

The “*Elissa* Salutes Liberty” trip in 1986 marked a successful maiden voyage for the newly restored ship. David and Peter Brink, with the assistance of the GHF board, budgeted and raised more than \$800,000 for the trip, the culmination of a massive fundraising campaign.¹⁴ On her way to New York to sail in the tall ship parade, *Elissa* visited numerous ports on her way: Miami, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; Annapolis and Baltimore, Maryland; Norfolk, Virginia; and Washington, D.C.¹⁵ Participation in the rededication of the Statue of Liberty was sure to bring attention to Galveston, the GHF, and supply publicity for years to come. As Bixel points out, “On a foggy, cold July day, two great, old ladies” met “for the first time.”¹⁶ Although *Elissa* had called on the Port of New York before, it was in 1884, before Lady Liberty had been added to the harbor. After sustaining minor damage in a storm off of Bermuda on the voyage home, the *Elissa* returned to Galveston to “hundreds of supporters crowded” on the piers and an escort of a “flotilla” of local boats.¹⁷ “Bands played and television cameras rolled,” writes Bixel, “people cheered and laughed and cried” as the *Elissa* sailed

back into the harbor.¹⁸ “Galveston had sent her pride and joy to New York,” Bixel continues, “and the barque and its crew” had returned with the attention of a nation, marking “a watershed in her modern career.”¹⁹

Not only was the “*Elissa* Salutes Liberty” a true test of the restoration effort, but it shone a national spotlight on the small island of Galveston, highlighting it as a beacon for maritime and preservation success. A full page in the *USA Today*, a feature in *People* magazine, time spent with both NBC and ABC on board, and the constant attention from local Texas media carved the *Elissa* a place in the homes and hearts of millions of people.²⁰ To accommodate the uptick in visitors to the *Elissa* and provide more information to the thousands visiting the Historic Strand District annually, the GHF devised the Texas Seaport Museum as a complement to their star attraction.²¹ Originally, the Texas Seaport Museum was designed to provide better context for the *Elissa*’s century-long saga, as well as inform visitors about Galveston’s selected past of shipping trade – mostly cotton and bananas – and immigration. The aim of the site was “to broaden the mission – and its public appeal – beyond what could be accomplished with the ship alone.”²²

Capitalizing on the success of the Liberty trip, the GHF expanded their museum complex, necessitating an extended tour of nearby ports for the *Elissa*. The Texas Seaport Museum was added to the existing site in 1991. However, the construction of the museum was ultimately a contributing factor in the decision to send the *Elissa* to sea for an extended period of time.²³ Likewise, “remembering the increase in gate receipts after the New York voyage in 1986,” the GHF concluded it would be ultimately beneficial to embark on a ten-port tour, rather than leave the *Elissa* amid the dust and noise of the

construction zone. Searching for a way to continue sailing, maintain publicity, and direct attention to Victorian-era Galveston (instead of the struggling port city of the late twentieth century), the GHF sent its gloriously restored ship out into the Gulf of Mexico to visit nearby ports.

Dubbed the Texas Proud voyage, the *Elissa* sailed to ten ports in the Gulf in 1989, including ports in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida.²⁴ The voyage would take three months, as the *Elissa* covered 3,000 miles.²⁵ In the words of Peter Brink, then executive director of the GHF, the Texas Proud voyage presented “another opportunity for *Elissa* to carry her message of Texas and Galveston history and hospitality to thousands of persons.”²⁶ Not only was the Texas Proud voyage a way to exhibit the *Elissa*’s prowess, it was a money making endeavor for the GHF. One of the main motivations for the voyage was the fear that with the noisy construction of the Texas Seaport Museum affecting the atmosphere for visitors, the GHF would see a decline in admissions for the time-being. In an effort to solve this problem, the *Elissa* was taken elsewhere, where eager tourists could access her without traveling to Galveston. Overall, the voyage was viewed as successful and it allowed the *Elissa* to maintain financial solvency until the museum was finished and operations could return to normal.

The Texas Proud voyage simultaneously improved the image of Galveston itself and afforded the GHF the opportunity to expand the rhetorical import of the *Elissa* to Galveston. Upon its approval, Brink told the *Galveston Daily News* he believed the publicity value would be close to \$1 million.²⁷ However, it was not just the GHF who recognized the positive benefits of the Texas Proud voyage. In an editorial, the

Galveston Daily News called the voyage one of “great value” and “incalculable” in its gain. The editorial goes on:

Oh, one might count the column inches given the *Elissa* in newspapers along the route of its voyage. And it probably is easy to pretty accurately estimate the air time given the voyage by radio and television stations. Those measurements can then be translated into dollar figures. But how could anyone ever measure the value of the voyage to those who are privilege to walk the *Elissa*'s [*sic*] historic decks and for whom those decks will magically bring the past to life. And, because the *Elissa* is a part of Galveston, the magic it shares with those who visit it always will be associated with our city. Indeed, the Texas Proud Voyage will enrich the lives of thousands and, in doing so, will create in them good feeling toward our island city.²⁸

In a previous trip in 1987, “more than 36,000 people visited Texas’ tall ship in two weeks.”²⁹ By the time the *Elissa* returned to Galveston on June 17, an astounding 70,000 visitors had been aboard to experience the living ship.³⁰ The *Elissa* manifested a particular view of Galveston and had consequently broadened the sphere of influence of the GHF in the region throughout her voyage. Accompanied by a narrative of triumph, she displayed the new Galveston – the heritage destination. Perhaps it was an editorial in the *Daily News* that phrased this concept best. The voyage, the paper declared, was “good for Galveston. It means those same people, when it is time for them to select a vacation destination, will think of Galveston and will think of the island favorably.”³¹

The manner in which the *Elissa* was displayed during the Texas Proud voyage marked a rhetorical shift, altering her function as attraction to incorporate a larger connectivity to Galveston’s particularized past. Visitors who came out to view the *Elissa* while she was on her Texas Proud tour experienced a Galveston committed to heritage, to a clean and powerful image of the wonders of Victorian-era technology, and to a maritime interpretation of the island over a recreational one. The Texas Proud voyage was a rhetorical success for the GHF, announcing Galveston as a leading site for heritage

tourism. Furthermore, the Texas Proud tour presented the *Elissa* as an ambassador for the Galveston's heritage throughout the rest of the Gulf of Mexico, promoting the selected narrative of the past. The remaining sections in this chapter explore the methods by which the Texas Proud voyage rhetorically enacted the dual roles of ambassador and attraction.

Elissa, Ambassador and Attraction

During the spring of 1989, the *Elissa* sailed from port to port in the Gulf of Mexico, displaying Galveston's heritage to large crowds of tourists. Though previous voyages had earned the *Elissa* attention, this study focuses on the "Texas Proud" voyage because it offers a bounded campaign that might be productively analyzed to better understand the rhetorical dimensions of the *Elissa*'s meaning as an ambassador and tourist attraction. During this campaign, the GHF expanded the scope of the audience which might participate in the construction of Galveston's public memory, with the *Elissa* as its ambassador. The Texas Proud voyage enacts a privileged representation of Galveston's past for a variety of audiences in various locations. The Texas Proud campaign stands as a unique attempt on the part of the GHF to disseminate information, maintain publicity, bolster their economic situation, and connect the *Elissa*'s past, present, and future.

The Texas Proud campaign successfully enacted the public memory of Galveston (and by proxy, Texas) in three distinct ways. First, the journey mobilized the public memory of Galveston's past, literally moving her memory from place to place. Rhetorically, mobilizing the *Elissa* challenged her identity as a place of public memory. Similarly, the "Texas Proud" voyage positioned the *Elissa* as an ambassador for

something larger than just Galveston, or just Galveston's public memory. Throughout her restoration, the GHF had carefully constructed an identity for the *Elissa* which evoked a connection with Galveston's selective past. With the advent of the Texas Proud voyage, the GHF expanded this narrative to build a relationship to nineteenth century commerce in the Gulf, not just Galveston harbor. Finally, the *Elissa*'s status as a tourist attraction was reified as she was displayed throughout the Gulf Coast, highlighting Galveston's and Texas' commitment to restoration and preservation. Expanding on the GHF's interpretation of the past as a socially shared experience, the voyage built a foundation on which the *Elissa* is able to be continually consumed as a tourist attraction.

Memory Mobilized

During the Texas Proud voyage the *Elissa* sailed from port to port, challenging her identity as a "place" of public memory. The voyage removed the artifact from Galveston Bay, where her reconstructed identity had been grounded to represent the Island City's heritage. Her ability to move throughout the Gulf made the *Elissa* a unique tourist attraction, more akin to a traveling display (such as a national exhibit that journeys from museum to museum) than a fixed site of public memory. The complex nature of *Elissa*'s mobility alters the context of the public memory because it modifies the environment, travel patterns of tourists, and the available associations with the past. The mobilization of memory, then, defines place and temporality differently. Because the Texas Proud tour repositions the *Elissa*, engaging the rhetorical constraints of place and temporality differently than a fixed site of public memory, it may be more productive to categorize her as an object on exhibition, instead of a place or a site. Marita Sturken notes in *Tourists of History*, her examination of kitsch, consumerism, and potential effect

on rhetorical markers of public memory, that any purchased souvenir might be labeled as a mobilized memory. The *Elissa*'s mobility, however, is unique because although she is an object capable of changing locations, she is primarily thought of as a "place" in the Galveston wharf.

While she is docked in Galveston, tourists travel *to* her; they visit Galveston to tread her decks, explore her cabins, and *physically* climb aboard a piece of the past. Because she is located in Galveston and supported by the GHF, the *Elissa* is presented as an artifact of the island's past. But, as a part of the Texas Proud voyage she sailed to other ports, allowing people to access the public memory of Galveston without the act of traversing *to* Galveston. Here, the mobility of the object serves as a reminder that her memory is not inextricably assigned to any particular place, but instead rhetorically constructed so that visitors attached Galveston to the *Elissa*.

Sturken explores the ways in which memory and consumerism interact with one another. In relation to the understanding of place and tourism, Sturken's book poses the question: "What aspects of American culture specifically encourage a 'tourist' relationship to history?"³² As an extension of this question, Sturken also wonders how instances of mourning and loss in the United States gets "caught up in practices of consumerism."³³ To answer these musings, Sturken engages with tragedy – something this thesis does not. However, Sturken also explores the meanings of souvenirs, curios, and photographs in relation to sites of public memory. In other words, her book focuses on the "activity of taking *things* away from *places* we have visited."³⁴

Using snow globes from Ground Zero and the Oklahoma City bombing as examples, Sturken contends that the things taken from the sites of public memory aid in

the remembrance of an experience. Souvenirs, by their very composition, are mobilized versions of memories. From this observation, this study considers movement as an aspect of an object's rhetoricity. However, the *Elissa* enacts this mobility of memory in a nearly contradictory way. Though she moves from place to place, the *Elissa* herself is not a souvenir to be pocketed and taken with the visitor, even if replicas of her can be.³⁵ Thus, because she is not in the possession of the tourist, the *Elissa*'s movement is enacted differently than the souvenirs with which Sturken concerns a large portion of her analysis. Sturken's observations at the intersection of memory and consumerism are explored at greater length with the discussion of "selling" the *Elissa* in Chapter Four; however, the physical movement of memory is important to the Texas Proud Voyage and relevant to Sturken's theories on memories that are mobilized by objects.

The *Elissa*, then, enacts memory both as a place and as an object. The tourist still boards the ship at a dock, still treads the decks, still climbs the steep, winding staircase which leads to the cabin, and still steadies herself with the smooth, restored wood railings. But, as an ambassador for Galveston's past, the *Elissa* asserts a Texan heritage over a shared identity, an elite population over a common one. Her strong sense of place was complicated as she was mobilized to other ports, but the Texas Proud voyage designates a commitment to her constructed roots, her parent organization, and her explicit purpose of increasing Galveston's tourism industry.

Representing the Region

The Texas Proud voyage positioned the *Elissa* as an ambassador for the state by virtue of the tour's label and the rhetorical positioning of the *Elissa* while she was in other ports and other states. By labeling the voyage "Texas Proud," the GHF suggested

to visitors and local supporters that she was not just the pride of Galveston, but that the whole of the state of Texas was behind her exhibition. Positioned for the rest of the Gulf to envy, the *Elissa* was presented throughout the tour as an ambassador from Texas, representing the state's history – instead of just Galveston's. Closer to home, members of the GHF recognized the voyage as “an opportunity to spread the good word about the Texas economy.”³⁶ Speaking on behalf of the entire state of Texas, however, is not necessarily a function afforded to a private historical foundation in one of its smaller cities.

The rhetoric of the GHF articulated the Texas Proud trip as something more important than themselves, nobler than the historical implications, and bigger than Galveston Island. “It will give us,” spokesperson Gloria Meyer told the *Daily News*, “a chance to talk about how Texas is coming back from bad times and how Texans have handled the recession.”³⁷ This same emotion is present in the label claimed by the *Elissa*: “The Official Tall Ship of Texas.” By naming the tour “Texas Proud,” the GHF makes a rhetorical move, successfully diverting attention away from the financial motivations for the trip, and instead focuses on showcasing the awe of their investment. In other words, the label suggests the voyage is solely to share the experience of the restored square-rigger with other cities along the Gulf of Mexico.

Of course, the Texas Proud voyage did more than promote Texas pride and the restoration of the *Elissa*. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, the *Elissa* was constructed to promote a certain representation of Galveston's past. The Texas Proud tour displayed the *Elissa* throughout the region, furthering the representation of the island's maritime heritage and connecting it to the Gulf cities she visited. Throughout the

Texas Proud voyage, the *Elissa* was given opportunities to unite the past and the present, drawing upon economic considerations common to port cities along the Gulf Coast. While moored at the trip's various ports, the *Elissa* was framed in such a way as to connect her to the locality's heritage – in effect concealing her constructed ties to Galveston.

As the public back home followed the *Elissa*'s voyage in the papers and television coverage, credit was frequently awarded to the men and women who volunteered their time to sail the *Elissa* and ensure she could continue her role as ambassador throughout the Gulf. In editorials like the one on March 29, 1989, the *Galveston Daily News* hailed the *Elissa*'s local volunteers. Exemplifying them as the best of Galveston, the paper writes that the “mighty tall ship *Elissa*... is Galveston's ambassador to the world.”³⁸ Emboldened by larger crowds than expected, the captive audience back home continued to proclaim that Galveston holds “a rich heritage and [is] adorned with a long and interesting history.”³⁹ And what had made Galveston's heritage so great?

The editorial considers the impact of its people on the representation of the island's history. “It was the people who endured yellow fever... a Civil War... It was the strong back and minds of Galvestonians the rebuilt the city following the 1900 Storm.”⁴⁰ Linking the present voyage with Galveston's past struggles and triumphs, the *Galveston Daily News* went on to assert that the “same indomitable human spirit” brought the *Elissa* back to life via her restoration and was bringing her spirit to other ports in and around the Gulf of Mexico. The volunteers of the *Elissa* represented the best of their city, as well as “a love of the past and a willingness to sacrifice for the future.”⁴¹

One of the ways local Galvestonians were able to follow the *Elissa* on her voyage was the dedicated coverage on the front page of the *Galveston Daily News*. Although some days only mentioned cursory details about the time she would set sail from her current port, the blurbs often included updates on the trip from spokesperson Meyer, as well as information about what was being done aboard the ship while she was docked. Accompanied by a pen-drawing of the *Elissa* with her sails set and the title, “Texas Proud Voyage,” the paper’s updates of the journey bore headlines such as, “Ship Draws Big Crowds,” “*Elissa* Crew Ties Knots on Visit,” “Bad Weather Delays *Elissa* in Freeport,” and “Ship’s Visit to Palacios Considered a Success.”⁴² Connected via the media attention the voyage drew, the *Elissa* and her island community kept their stakes high in the trip, ensuring that she was still relevant both at sea and at home.

The ports she visited also capitalized on the chance for additional exposure. Drawing additional visitors to their existing waterfronts, areas like Gulfport, Mississippi and Baton Rouge, Louisiana worked to emphasize the mutual connection and love of maritime heritage with Galveston as their counterpart. In Baton Rouge it was reported that the *Elissa* received heavy media exposure, full color photos in the newspaper, and television interviews with the crew and captain.⁴³ Record crowds visited the *Elissa* while she was docked in Baton Rouge, boosting the attendance at U.S.S Kidd, a World War II vessel also moored along the city’s waterfront.⁴⁴ In conjunction with one of Louisiana’s largest festivals, the *Elissa* provided an opportunity for Baton Rouge to celebrate, bringing additional audience attention to both cities during the course of the stay. Although perhaps one of the bigger stops on the Texas Proud voyage, Baton Rouge was representative of the typical reaction the *Elissa* experienced while on tour in the Gulf.⁴⁵

As ambassador, the *Elissa* was positioned in a more influential role than her restoration had previously provided. Instead of being rescued and hailed as a window to the past, she was continually portrayed as a living embodiment. Emphasizing her capabilities at sea and Galveston's booming tourism prowess, the *Elissa* was no longer the rusted out hull in need of monies and love – she had grown into a visually brilliant artifact, offering the social experience of public memory to distant ports and visiting throngs. She was no longer frail and old, but bold and beautiful, and the message she spread throughout the Gulf was one of co-opted Texas pride, obscuring the basic origins of the ship's past, and instead focusing entirely on the rebirth of the Gulf's economy so grounded in the past.

Success and Growth as a Tourist Attraction

Continually motivated by the growth of a tourism industry on the island of Galveston, the GHF and its backers sought ways of translating campaigns like the Texas Proud trip to extended tourism successes. Based on the epideictic function of display, the Texas Proud voyage concentrated attention, while simultaneously building a foundation from which to promote the *Elissa*'s memory to future visitors. A representation of the past in tandem with a future-oriented display indicates that the *Elissa* is a permanent site of memory, or at least has been positioned as such. Promoting the public memory of Galveston required homage to the city's happier, more prosperous past, while concealing the potential difficulties of the present. Bradford Vivian employs a similar understanding of epideictic rhetoric when he posits that “whether in somber elegies or celebratory tributes, epideictic organizes the terms of public remembrance in order to shape perceptions of shared values and commitments serviceable to future deliberative

agendas.”⁴⁶ In this organization of public remembrance, it becomes clear that the past, present, and future are inextricably combined in the function of display, but not one can be perfectly separated from the others. The Texas Proud voyage positioned the vessel as a premier experience of the past for visitors to the Gulf Coast, but it is the future application of that function that defines the final rhetorical aspect of the *Elissa* as tourist attraction.

Recall that part of the justification for sending the *Elissa* on such an extended voyage stemmed from the construction of the Texas Seaport Museum, the “extended maritime museum” meant to better contextualize the *Elissa*, her restoration, and Texas’ own shipping and maritime history for tourists to explore.⁴⁷ Rededicated to her museum function and designed to bolster the experience for visitors, the *Elissa* paired with the Texas Seaport Museum signaled a triumph for the GHF. With more than four million dollars spent on repair, hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours, and several major voyages completed, the GHF again shifted to market their attraction. Re-establishing their original goal of increasing tourism on the island, the GHF shifted from presenting the *Elissa* as a miracle of preservation, and instead focused attention on the *Elissa*’s many successes. These included the restoration process, her renewed life as a sailing ship, the support the GHF had received from the community, and the overwhelming impact of the Liberty trip and the Texas Proud tour.

From the beginning, the *Elissa* proved to be an ambitious project for the GHF, but one with a high-rate of return. Voss characterized the GHF as an organization for which “ambitious ventures have long been a hallmark.”⁴⁸ The *Elissa* was perhaps the most complex undertaking to date and one that required planning for the long term. By

expanding the site to include the onshore component of the Texas Seaport Museum, the GHF aimed to better interpret “Galveston’s role in the maritime history of Texas,” again positioning the *Elissa* as the sole representation of the selected past, the Victorian-era.⁴⁹ Voss also alludes to the fact that the Texas Proud voyage kept the *Elissa*’s public presence high and served as a massive fundraising effort, extending the *Elissa*’s (and consequently the GHF’s) influence on interpretations of the city’s public memory. Like her triumphant return from the New York trip in 1986, successfully translating the expanded exposure and publicity required calculated efforts on the part of the GHF. After the Texas Proud tour, the GHF was faced with the challenge of positioning the *Elissa* and the new Texas Seaport Museum for growth and success, rather than a familiar object already seen and experienced. The following year saw tremendous growth for the GHF, setting records for the Historic Homes tour, their Dickens on the Strand Christmas festival, and “extremely successful” fundraising.⁵⁰ Emboldened by the successful execution of multiple voyages and increased numbers of tourists, the GHF asserted that Galveston’s “wealth” of historic offerings created an “ambiance... unsurpassed in Texas.”⁵¹ Advocating steady growth for local businesses with increased tourist presence, the GHF also publicly committed its efforts to further developing the island into “a first class resort.”⁵²

Even the *Galveston Daily News* invited locals to become tourists for a weekend and explore the top-notch attractions the island provided.⁵³ In the late 1980s and early 1990s the focus in Galveston’s tourism industry switched to reveling the city’s successes, rather than the efforts to restore and renew. After the *Elissa* had returned from the Texas Proud trip, it was important for the GHF to make the rhetorical turn positioning the *Elissa*

as a permanent fixture of Galveston's (now) thriving tourism industry. Maintaining a positive presence in the local media was important. That media attention came both solicited and organically. Obligatory GHF commentary shared newspaper space with more natural expressions of Galveston's past and the *Elissa*'s future. The fall after the *Elissa* returned from her Texas Proud voyage, columnist Cleta Sireno (a Galveston transplant from West Texas) asked:

What if a few farsighted people such as Paul Gaido, president of the Galveston Historical Foundation back in 1975, hadn't wanted a "ship" to tell the story of Galveston? And what if there hadn't been others, such as Peter Brink...the Moody and Kempner Foundations and many, many more who weren't afraid to dream great dreams and decide that ship should sail again and be shared with others? ...Galveston would not exist as it is today, if it had not been for its port and the shipping industry. The dream grew and we're glad it did.⁵⁴

Her column touches on the rhetorical moves necessary to maintain the *Elissa*'s relevance for future visitors while simultaneously continuing to acknowledge the *Elissa*'s past life, her restoration, and the ways in which she fit into the islanders' local pride. As the island entered the 1990s, historical tourism was becoming a more solidified, more prolific way to sell the island to the general touristic public. Merging discourses of recreation and education, the GHF, Chamber of Commerce, and Galveston's business communities collaborated to take on selling the island as a whole experience, the "first class resort" the GHF was striving for during the late 1980s.

The GHF rhetorically displayed the *Elissa* as a cultural ambassador during the Texas Proud tour, obscuring the financial motivations undergirding her restoration and new function as an attraction. Display, even as it "highlights, points out, or shows forth... diminishes, ignores, or conceals."⁵⁵ However unintentional concealment in this type of display may be, memory is a rhetorical construction and this carries over into the

elements of display. Originally framed as a restoration project to symbolize Galveston's rebirth as city by remembering its majestic roots, the Texas Proud voyage reframed the *Elissa* as a reliable symbol of Galveston as a mature tourist destination. Considered together, the rhetorical actions of the GHF constructed a campaign that shifted attention from the restoration to its success as an attraction. The Texas Proud voyage displayed the *Elissa* to a tourist audience by employing the mobilization of memory, representation of the region, and potential growth of Galveston's tourism industry, heralded by the *Elissa*.

Notes

¹ Patricia Bellis Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 55.

² Walter Rybka writing for *Sea History Magazine*, a publication of the National Maritime Historical Society, as quoted in Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 55.

³ Walter Rybka writing for *Sea History Magazine*, a publication of the National Maritime Historical Society, as quoted in Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 55.

⁴ Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

⁵ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 2.

⁶ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 2.

⁷ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 8.

⁸ S. Michael Halloran and Gregory Clark, "National Park Landscapes and the Rhetorical Display of Civic Religion," ed. Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 141, 143. Emphasis original.

⁹ Diane S. Hope, "Rhetoric as Visual Display," *The Review of Communication* 7(2007): 207-8.

¹⁰ Bradford Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92(2006): 5.

¹¹ Hope, "Rhetoric as Visual Display," 211.

¹² Kurt D. Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa: The Tall Ship of Texas* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 95.

¹³ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 95.

¹⁴ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 59.

¹⁵ Voss, *Galveston's Elissa*, 96.

¹⁶ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 62.

¹⁷ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 66.

¹⁸ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 66.

¹⁹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 66.

²⁰ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 67.

²¹ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 70.

²² Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 107.

²³ This study focuses almost entirely on the *Elissa*, as opposed to the Texas Seaport Museum, her on-shore counterpart. The original production of the *Elissa*'s memory focused entirely on the materiality of the ship herself, so although the TSM became an important factor on the site, it does not have much bearing on the *Elissa*'s tourist attraction status. Partially for the sake of maintaining a limited scope, and partially because the museum is currently failing and slated for a major overhaul, this thesis focuses on the authenticity of the restored artifact – not the addition built to accommodate what was (at the time), a growing number of visitors. The *Elissa* is spatially significant. The *Elissa* is historical. The TSM accompanies and supports the public memory enacted at the site of the *Elissa*. She can, and for some time did, stand alone as a heritage destination. Therefore, although this study would be remiss not to address the TSM in passing, it is by no means the focus.

²⁴ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 71.

²⁵ “*Elissa* to Tour 10 Ports,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 16, 1989, 16A.

²⁶ “*Elissa* to Tour 10 Ports,” 16A.

²⁷ “*Elissa* Plans 10-port Trip,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 16, 1989, 14A.

²⁸ “Voyage of Great Value to Galveston,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 17, 1989, 6C.

²⁹ “*Elissa* Plans 10-port Trip,” 14A.

³⁰ “Texas-Style Welcome Scheduled for *Elissa*,” *Galveston Daily News*, June 15, 1989, 20A.

³¹ “Galveston’s *Elissa* Good Ambassador,” *Galveston Daily News*, June 16, 1989, 6A.

³² Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.

³³ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 4.

³⁴ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 12. Emphasis added.

³⁵ The GHF does sell *Elissa* souvenirs and did take a supply to set up a tent gift shop at each of the destinations on the tour; however, that is not the focus of this analysis.

³⁶ Victor Galvan, “*Elissa* Begins 90-day Gulf Voyage,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 21, 1989, 1A.

³⁷ Galvan, “*Elissa* Begins,” 1A.

³⁸ “*Elissa* Volunteers Exemplify Our City,” March 29, 1989, 6C.

³⁹ “*Elissa* Volunteers Exemplify,” 6C; *Galveston Daily News* had recently reported that the ship had received about 50 percent more visitors than they were anticipating in Freeport. See “Palacios Next Stop for *Elissa*,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 28, 1989, 10A.

⁴⁰ “*Elissa* Volunteers Exemplify,” 6C.

⁴¹ “*Elissa* Volunteers Exemplify,” 6C.

⁴² “Ship Draws Big Crowds,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 27, 1989, 1A; “*Elissa* Crew Ties Knots on Visit,” *Galveston Daily News*, 1A; “Hundreds Tour *Elissa*,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 25, 1989, 1A; “Ship’s Visit to Palacios Considered a Success,” April 3, 1989, 8A.

⁴³ “Weather Doesn’t Daunt Visitors,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 19, 1989, 11A; Further media coverage on the trip was also documented in the daily update in the local Galveston paper. When the *Elissa* was docked in New Orleans, her final call on the tour, spokesperson Gloria Meyer remarked that they had “received excellent coverage on television and in the newspapers, and everywhere we go people have already heard of the *Elissa*.” See “Captain, First Mate Appear on TV Show,” *Galveston Daily News*, June 9, 1989, 15A.

⁴⁴ “11,000 Visit *Elissa*,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 22, 1989, 10A.

⁴⁵ In fact, her stay in Baton Rouge was so successful, it prompted the addition of an extra day in New Orleans later on the tour. See “*Elissa* Continues to Draw Record Crowds in Baton Rouge,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 23, 1989, 10A.

⁴⁶ Vivian, “Neoliberal Epideictic,” 2.

⁴⁷ Bixel, *Sailing Ship Elissa*, 70.

⁴⁸ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 107.

⁴⁹ Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 107.

⁵⁰ "GHF Continues to Grow," *Galveston Daily News*, March 4, 1990, 5C.

⁵¹ "GHF Continues to Grow," 5C.

⁵² "GHF Continues to Grow," 5C.

⁵³ "Gift Ideas: Buy Great Gifts in County," *Galveston Daily News*, December 15, 1989, 6A.

⁵⁴ Clela Sireno, "Tall Ship Evokes Memories," *Galveston Daily News*, November 12, 1989, 1B.

⁵⁵ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 8.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Selling” the *Elissa* and its Costs

In a delicate balance of our modern era, *Elissa* bobs in the harbor, reliant on the ebb and flow of the tides, and dependent on the continued donations of benefactors and the interest of a tourist audience. She is a tourist attraction, catering to an audience interested in connecting themselves with the past. The neighboring cruise ship port, nearby Starbucks, and upscale seafood restaurants call attention to her status as tourist attraction. Similarly, her visitors might be drawn to see her traditional admission tickets and museum placards as indicative of her status as attraction. When aboard, though, the tourist in awe of her original 1877 specifications and miles of rigging may become overwhelmed by the call of the seagulls, the smell of the ocean, and the gentle sway of the ship, rendering themselves ignorant to the signs that mark the experience as highly constructed as a tourist attraction. For the *Elissa*, authenticity is a negotiated balance between acknowledging her status a National Historic Landmark and her purpose as a tourist attraction. Rhetorically constructed to offer her audience an authentic experience, the *Elissa* is positioned as a tourist attraction, capable of grounding the preferred historical narrative to the present. She is a museum, a living ship, and a memory to be consumed by the public.

The Elissa's Identity as Attraction

Sites of public memories, depending on their rhetorical construction, serve differing functions. Patriotism can be learned in the patterns of national memorials;

counter-monuments might support a subversive reading of the past; and museums frequently embody pedagogy and rhetorics of display. These sites enact culture in distinctive ways from one another, and as Vivian's perspective suggests, such sites aim for differing future agendas. As this analysis has argued, it is clear that the *Elissa* is neither memorializing loss nor commemorating a tragedy, as some epideictic exigencies often do. Instead, the *Elissa* triumphantly celebrates the determination of modern humans to recapture otherwise forgotten advances in technology. With no less than millions of dollars' worth of hubris, the GHF restored the *Elissa*, cast her in the golden light of the revered past, and sailed her up the Atlantic and around the Gulf of Mexico as a testament to the project's success. Ultimately, however, this constructed authenticity obscures large portions of Galveston's past (as noted in the discussion on the selected past in Chapter One) and its people, which the GHF relied on for support. Once the *Elissa* had returned home from the Texas Proud voyage, the question became how the GHF could maintain the public's interest while continuing to position her as an easily consumed representation of the past. The *Elissa*, through her construction as a tourist attraction, exists to be consumed, to be experienced, and to be sold.

Financial Motivations

Noting the competition between tourist attractions on the island is important because it better contextualizes the environment in which the GHF markets their star attraction. Constantly in search of funding to support necessary repairs and maintenance, as well as general operations costs, the viability of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction is constantly under threat. As explained previously in the analysis of the Texas Proud voyage, the search for ways to keep the *Elissa* financially solvent and publicly relevant is

not new. This chapter examines the ways in which the GHF has engaged the marketplace to keep the *Elissa* and her counterpart, the Texas Seaport Museum, fiscally viable. The GHF manages dozens of other historic properties across the island; therefore it is necessary that the *Elissa*, upon which they have spent millions of dollars restoring and untold hours sustaining, maintain her status of tourist attraction – not a tired, old relic.

There are differences in the size, scope, and resources available to sites of public memories. Museums in particular offer a diverse snapshot of financial means. Some museums are tax-payer supported; others are run by non-profits or rely on large private endowments.¹ Similarly, regional and local museums operate under different constraints than larger, more prominent museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art on New York's Central Park or the Smithsonian on the National Mall, which support millions of visitors a year.² Admission, says Ford Bell of the American Association for Museums, "doesn't provide a big chunk of the income," so the burden of funding falls on donations, grants, and public funds.³ Clarifying the distinction between profit-seeking tourist sites and historical memory places visited by tourists is important because it helps to distinguish funding sources and institutional missions.⁴ Because they share the same environment, private and public museums alike are constrained by tourist sites that do seek to turn a profit. Not only is the *Elissa* subject to this competition but her environment, the Galveston economy, is fiercely reliant on tourism dollars. From the earlier introduction to Galveston's brief history, recall that the last phase of revitalization brought in tourist attractions, one of which was the *Elissa*. Hotels, miniature golf, and chain-restaurants also reclaimed space alongside historical artifacts and buildings as the tourism industry on the island returned in the late 1980s.

This chapter explores the ways in which the GHF has engaged the “selling” of memory building upon the success of the Texas Proud voyage, undertaken in the early summer of 1989. Hurricane Ike, which made landfall in September 2008, marks a natural boundary to this analysis because the damage the ship suffered changed the daily operating procedure and the fundraising efforts (necessary to repair the ship from electrolytic corrosion) were begun anew. By examining the technologies utilized by the GHF for marketing and consumption, in coordination with their continued media engagement, this chapter analyzes the rhetorical efforts of the GHF in this 20-year period of selling the *Elissa*. Inquiry into the consumption of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction, however, also necessitates engaging that which may be concealed or altered to offer a more pleasant experience to a touristic audience. Thus, this chapter also explores representations of Galveston’s past and present which are concealed in the GHF’s display and marketing of the *Elissa*’s memory.

Tourism and Consumption

Recall from Chapter Two that revitalization of Galveston’s tourism industry was a driving factor in the *Elissa*’s restoration, as well as key in finding her a permanent home among other historic structures in the Historic Strand district. Touristic practices constrain the rhetorical dimensions the GHF is able draw upon to “sell” the memory of the *Elissa*. Tourism also informs *Elissa*’s function as both a public memory place and her constructed status as authentic.⁵ Finally, as producers of culture, the GHF supports Galveston’s tourism industry through calculated, rhetorical actions promoting a selective interpretation of the island’s history.

As Browne observes, public memory has become the study of how memory is “embedded in the available structures of lived experience.”⁶ This is of import particularly when sites of public memory are understood as shared experiences supported by physical and visual markers. Memory sites that operate under the economic constraints of sustainable business models must explicitly relate this “lived experience” to the visitor in order to maintain an interested touristic audience. Tourist sites are often billed as authentic representations expressly for a viewing public. Notions of constructed authenticity complicate the examination of tourism, but are necessary because tourism is often found in tension with questions of authenticity and inauthenticity.⁷ Whether for posterity or for profitability, tourist sites contribute significantly to the way in which the past, present, and future are understood as bite-sized chunks of history for the modern traveler.

Experiencing “Authenticity”

Broadly defined, tourism consists of the capitalistic exchange between experience and the traveler. In other words, the practice of tourism is comprised of the experience for which the tourist is willing to travel to (and then pay for). The aim of the tourist is to experience and to participate at the memory site. The discourse of tourism “is overtly aimed at the outsider, who, for a number of reasons has come to involve him or herself” with the memory place.⁸ However, the tourist is in fact a constructed audience understood in literature to be the mass mediated version of the typical traveler. Although polarized as either “vulgar” or democratizing, the tourist accesses memory places as “familiar and unthreatening” in search of experiences that are also “familiar and unthreatening.”⁹ Far different from “adventure travel,” exploring the remote regions of

the globe, the discourse of tourism centers on a pleasurable experience for the audience, pleasure being familiar and marked as authentic. Tourism sees authenticity “as a feeling you can experience in relation to place.”¹⁰ And when no longer assumed to be objective, authenticity is at the agency of the tourist and understood to be indicative of the way in which places of memory operate.

Chapter Three briefly engages Marita Sturken’s *Tourists of History* for its contributions to the movement of memory, but this chapter further expands on her study by extending it to the intersection of memory, consumption, and tourism. Although Sturken’s study focuses entirely on the tragedies of the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing and the terrorists attacks on September 11, 2001, her study lends insight to the consumption of other memory functions as well. Even as Sturken’s book concentrates on tragedy and the culture of comfort, she explores the larger context of an American practice of tourism and the ways in which visitors are encouraged to engage particular histories. What Sturken identifies can be read as “a particular mode through which the American public is encouraged to experience itself as the subject to of history through consumerism.”¹¹

Subjectivity and Touristic Gaze

Rhetorical scholars have previously engaged venues constructed for entertainment purposes such as Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village, Colonial Williamsburg, and Walt Disney’s Celebration, U.S.A.¹² Sturken asserts that she is not interested in the contexts in which people visit such sites, but rather the “*subjectivity* of the tourist of history, for whom history is an experience once or twice removed, a mediated and reenacted experience, yet an experience nevertheless.”¹³ This analysis is comprised of both the

contexts and the experience of the tourist, primarily because entertainment *is* a factor with the presentation of the *Elissa*. Whereas Sturken reads memorials which are tasked with representing innocence lost, the *Elissa* is situated in an environment which necessitates selling memory alongside water parks and cruise ships. Where, then, does the analysis of these sites intersect? The answer is simply, the tourist.

In defining a “tourist,” John Urry draws up a Foucauldian understanding of “the subject,” designating the tourist gaze as that which acts upon the traveler’s experience.¹⁴ Expanding on Urry’s notion of the gaze, Dean MacCannell identifies a secondary gaze present in a tourist’s environment.¹⁵ Agency, in MacCannell’s version of the tourist gaze, is attributed to a range of agents including travel brokers, locals, and tourists themselves. MacCannell is critical of Urry’s Foucauldian subjects because they are treated as mere sheep, left to believe their experience is authentic while guided according to a time-table and shielded from unpleasant conditions. Instead, he assigns more agency to the tourist, expressing the tourist’s ability to decide on their own how the object of tourism relates to the whole picture, and reminding us that “the tourist is an actual person, or real people are actually tourists.”¹⁶ The tourist’s authentic experience can be argued to be everything but authentic; however, it is also where rhetorical scholars may locate the importance of incorporating the discourse of tourism into the discipline of public memory. Another way of looking at the experience of the tourist is the way it affects the local – or natural – culture. Dean MacCannell refers to the practice of preservation as “artificial” and reproduced for the benefit of the consumer, the tourist.¹⁷ In Sturken’s words, “artificial settings...allow the histories of those cultures’...to be obscured.”¹⁸ Tourist attractions operate on the relationship between the site and the tourists themselves. MacCannell

offers examples of the “*typical* native house,” or the “*very* place the leader fell” as the type of attraction which relates its authenticity as authority, creating an “image” of the society it represents.¹⁹

Tourist as Consumer

Whether memorial or museum, the tourist is interested in traveling to and then experiencing the site. Although this experience manifests itself in different ways, the touristic practice encourages an attachment, or as Sturken suggests acquiring “a trace of authenticity” via a connection with the place.²⁰ Again, Sturken’s interests lie in the accessibility of national grief; however, the consumer practices she explores are highly applicable in the case of the *Elissa*, even though she is a regional tourist attraction. One such consumer practice operationalized in both cases of tourist experience is the concept of kitsch, which comes from the German root *verkitschen*: “to cheapen.”²¹

Sturken explores the many ways in which kitsch is employed in remembering experience, theorizing that although society frequently associates kitsch with a high/low quality of taste or value, kitsch can operate as “a particular kind of prepackaged sentiment” that suggests it’s sentiment “is universally shared.”²² Utilizing shared values to launch her discussion of comfort culture, Sturken explores the ways kitsch objects signify loss and closure in American culture, starkly different than the way in which shared values enact the culture of celebration at the *Elissa*. In contrast to the comfort culture that follows national grief, the celebratory nature of the purely entertaining tourist attraction ensures the *Elissa* receives acknowledgment for her rescue and restoration. Instead of being positioned to be remembered per se, she is placed to be consumed.

When approached through the lens of tourism, sites of public memory are produced for the benefit of a “mythicized consumer.”²³ From this understanding, this chapter concludes that by its very nature tourism’s approach to public memory necessitates the creation of an “idealized sanitized world,” but that idealism varies from site to site.²⁴ In their inquiries into consumption and tourist, sociologists Kevin Meethan, Alison Anderson, and Steven Miles argue that “no one place is subject to the same...market pressure,” requiring serious inquiry into sites via their individual contexts, not their genre.²⁵ The tourist is exposed, via the exhibited attraction, to memory as a shared social experience. This experience orients him or her to a particular understanding of the selected past, as produced by the institution – in the case of the *Elissa*, the Galveston Historical Foundation. Presented from this vantage point, consumption becomes the result of interchanges between tourists and historical representation, over time altering the ways in which local communities may relate to the memories.

Consumption is also comprised of the act of consuming – or the economic exchange of goods or services. As Mika Toyota of the Asia Research Institute argues, the touristic exchange includes consuming “time and images,” as well as services.²⁶ When understood as the exchange between the site and the tourist in what is presumed to be exchange of monies in return for a whole experience, the tourist practice becomes complicated. In this new relationship to consumption, tourists’ are exposed to an experience that they seek out and purchase. Likewise in this exchange, the tourist reforms and reconstructs the local culture. Toyota posits that “tourist images and experiences are not shaped by just the producer,” but have an impact on the experience produced.²⁷ Remember that the *Elissa* operates in an environment which not only

requires direct competition with entertainment attractions, but the GHF has rhetorically constructed her over a twenty-year (and even before) period of time to be “sold” to the public. Therefore, even as this study recognizes the subjectivity of the tourist and the touristic role of consumer, the focus remains the GHF and the cultural memories they produce.

The *Elissa*, as a public memory to be consumed by the tourist, has been constructed over time by the GHF for optimum allure. As the tourist approaches the ship, he or she must purchase their ticket, select from printed brochures explaining the features of the restored tall ship, and stride up the gangplank to the deck. Once onboard the ship, tourists can meander, taking their own path across the deck, peering over the smooth railings at the bay below. Looking up, the view changes to miles and miles of square-rigging and large cuts of sailcloth which dwarf any individual. Climbing the narrow steps into the hull, the visitor is met by the dank, short spaces below deck and a brief glimpse into the living conditions and captain’s quarters as they would have been in 1877. The experience aboard harkens to a nineteenth century, lavish merchant ship; from the time the visitor boards, to the time they disembark, the *Elissa* is constructed to be experienced, and thus consumed. Consumption of tourism, however, is a “continual, cyclical, and multidimensional process.”²⁸ Thus, consumption of tourism requires a continual repositioning in successfully selling the *Elissa*.

Selling the Elissa

Over the period of twenty years or so between the *Elissa*’s return from the Texas Proud voyage and the landfall of Hurricane Ike, the GHF employed three main themes in order to market the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction. This study contends that the marketing

of the *Elissa* is akin to selling public memory, which in turn incorporates an audience of consumers outlined in the previous section. Because technology during the relevant twenty-year period was essentially a moving target, this section operates via three major themes employed to sell the *Elissa* to an audience, instead of ordering itself by the multiple mediums at the disposal of the GHF.

The three themes used to market the *Elissa* to a touristic audience address the rhetorical dimensions of a selected past, display, and the ways in which touristic consumption alters community and identity. The first theme the GHF employed to sell their attraction was to rhetorically construct the *Elissa* as a synecdoche, an object that stands in for the whole. This encouraged the audience to read the ship as representative of the entirety of Galveston's past. The second theme the GHF utilized to sell the *Elissa* during this period was its physical location, as a part of a historical network of sites to visit on the island. Reliant on their other properties and tourist-aimed business on the island the GHF worked to expand upon the strong foundation of historic tourism on the Island. Finally, the GHF created the opportunity for local support and participation. Together, these themes constitute the ways in which the GHF sells the *Elissa* to a tourist audience.

Elissa as Synecdoche

One of the ways the GHF marketed the *Elissa* was to present her memory to the audience as a synecdoche for Galveston's past. She is an artifact, a way of transportation and commerce, and representative of Galveston's glory days. Kenneth Burke tells us that as a major trope, synecdoche can be substituted with the concept of *representation*.²⁹

Burke applies the example of a part of the social body as representative for the whole

society to illustrate synecdochic form. As a synecdoche for the city of Galveston as a thriving port, the *Elissa* exemplifies a living museum for visitors to gain an authentic experience. The *Elissa* is a museum piece, but she serves primarily as a tourist attraction to entertain and inform the public of Galveston's history. She is the process by which economies along the Gulf Coast were built; the mode of transportation of the time she represents. She is more than a ship; she is a connection to ordinary life long forgotten. The *Elissa* stands in the Galveston harbor as the "Official Tall Ship of Texas," but she also stands representative of the turn of the nineteenth century.³⁰

Ships "did not just carry goods across the seas, they carried with them ideas and the abilities to open doors to new worlds of understanding."³¹ It is the recollection of these boundary-pushing ideas and new opportunities for the future that *Elissa* stands for today. Even while she was still a working ship, she had outlived the era for which she was built, without her masts and with the addition of a motor. Permanently moored in Galveston's harbor, she has been rhetorically constructed to fulfill the role of synecdoche: a square rigger, from the nineteenth century to stand in for Galveston's history. Now, restored to her former artistically visual beauty and boasting of the many places she has made port, *Elissa* is a towering reminder of the Victorian-era.

This theme manifests itself in the different mediums used by the GHF to attract attention from potential visitors. Although by no means an extensive account of all the allusions the GHF makes to the *Elissa* as synecdoche, this section offers a few examples which craft the theme of representation. Printed tourist brochures (from the late 1980s) available to visitors prompted them to "Share her spirit. Share her history... [and] Share the dream that began with the Galveston Historical Foundation's rescuing *ELISSA* from a

Greek scrapyard” to renew the past.³² Monica Reeves of the *Dallas Morning News* identifies the synecdochal connection early on, when she states “Galveston was the Queen City of the Gulf, and the 150-foot Scottish bark was just one of 59 schooners, brigs, and other tall ships docked at the flourishing port....The *Elissa*, like Galveston, was in its prime.”³³ Another newspaper writer describes the *Elissa*’s representation of the past as “the part of the human spirit that has wings to soar.”³⁴ The GHF explicitly markets the *Elissa* and their other historic properties to “heritage tourists,” bringing “history to life.”³⁵ Characterizing the *Elissa* as representative of the island’s past has been a consistent message – one that has extended into the digital age, specifically the organization’s website, from paper brochures. Together, examples such as these position the *Elissa* as a synecdoche for the island’s storied past.

Selling the *Elissa* as representative of Galveston’s entire past is problematic, however, because it eclipses both the city’s history since the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the other businesses the island offers to a touristic audience. The *Elissa* is connected to a period of time before the Great Storm of 1900, before the era of the Sin City, and the infamous Balinese Room, and before the economy on the island shifted to focus on tourism dollars.

Since the Texas Proud voyage, the *Elissa* has been consistently presented to the public as the “jewel in the crown of Galveston’s historical endeavors.”³⁶ The public image of the *Elissa* equates her to an understanding of Galveston’s history, suggesting that they are both “a most rare and precious gem,” and that she was “living sculpture from the Victorian age.”³⁷ These representations, however, fail to take into account the other parts of Galveston which contribute to its history. Therefore, whereas the GHF has

successfully portrayed the *Elissa* as a synecdoche for Galveston's past, she somewhat problematically stands in for a mere slice of that history.

Network of Tourism

The second way the GHF marketed the memory of the *Elissa* to the public was by locating her in the context of the entire island's tourism network. As explained previously, the GHF, along with local business leaders like Paul Gaido, carefully calculated the kind of impact an attraction like the *Elissa* could have on the local tourism industry, and consequently local businesses on the island. Docking on the success of the Texas Proud voyage, which "promoted Galveston as a tourist destination," local businesses and the GHF's historic properties alike reinforced the desirability of the island by highlighting the network of heritage sites and areas for recreation.³⁸

From her ethnographic research conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where this chapter picks up the GHF's selling of the *Elissa*, Castaneda asserts that Galveston as a whole displayed history as a "commodity for sale in stores and on street corners."³⁹ It is not, however, the only way the island was marketed to the tourist public in the late twentieth century. Although Castaneda describes Galveston as "in the throes of historic preservation" during this time, she also details an encounter with an advertising campaign intended to marry the historic Galveston with the natural geography. Castaneda explains that while thumbing through an in-flight magazine one trip, she came across an advertisement, rich with palm trees, which read: "Imagine a Romantic Island: Kissed by the centuries... a rare and magical place. A turn-of-the-century seaport island in renaissance."⁴⁰ Not only does this type of image resonate with would be tourists – history in a relaxing, tropical atmosphere – but it suggests that to visit

Galveston is to step back in time. This is the same experience the *Elissa* provides visitors, but it is the city in its entirety which is marketed here to be romanticized, Victorian, and splendid. Castaneda identifies her anthropological reading of the Galvestonian culture as in conflict with this “consumer-driven,” culturally produced image of the island.⁴¹ This conflict, however, speaks directly to the “targeted market audience... in favor of a romantic image,” as opposed to the more grounded interpretations of the past and the present on the island.⁴² Furthermore, Castaneda identifies this conflict as the paradox of self-representation on Galveston Island. She suggests the GHF, while carrying out preservation goals and consequently contributing to the representations of historic Galveston Island, obscures its contemporary culture.⁴³

Building a network of historic tourism offerings on the island required commitment on the part of the GHF. Competing with other entertainment sourced tourist attractions required a concerted effort to link their properties and attractions together, promoting them as a packaged experience. The GHF’s website states their expanded mission includes “community redevelopment, public education, historic preservation advocacy, maritime preservation and stewardship of historic properties.”⁴⁴ This mission is made manifest in the events like Dickens on the Strand and the Historic Homes Tour which are sponsored each year by the GHF.

In the company of other historic properties, the *Elissa* becomes a part of the network of heritage tourism, signaling to touristic audiences that Galveston is committed to more than one single experience, but instead is more akin to the romanticized image from the late 1980s campaign. “Graceful, iron-fronted buildings” line the Historic Strand, “whose banks and commission houses were the financial center of Texas” have

been transformed into kitschy shops, local businesses, and restaurants.⁴⁵ Relying on the heritage tourism industry as a whole, the GHF and company sought “to further expand its economic base... [and] turned to its past, restored its collection of 19th century buildings and turned them into a major tourist attraction.”⁴⁶ This collection of historic structures, which includes financial buildings and factories, the *Elissa*, and the historic homes throughout the island, provides a context for the tourist to experience, not one single site.

Membership and Participation

Finally, the GHF sells the *Elissa*'s memory via recruitment of organizational members and private donations. By attempting to maintain local, public support for the *Elissa*, the GHF positioned the attraction as an economic savior and a source of pride for the city. This section offers examples of membership campaigns for both the GHF writ large, and the *Elissa* in particular. Similarly, the GHF sold the *Elissa* utilizing an offer of participation, to both individual residents and local businesses. But this section also engages the ways in which the GHF's rhetorical construction of the *Elissa* as economic savior is troublesome and unable to reflect the ills of the island.

One longstanding effort at participation is the *Elissa* Plankowners Syndicate, which was started in 1978 to help raise money to bring the *Elissa* on the passage from Greece to Galveston.⁴⁷ Presently, Plankowners' parties are still being held annually on *Elissa*'s decks as a selected way to bring local supporters into connection with the ship and thank them for their continued donations.⁴⁸ The idea of participation has been a hallmark of the GHF's fundraising efforts since the 1970s when they began membership drives, seeking to democratize the organization's appearance, even if in name only.

Although membership drives predate the *Elissa*'s rescue and restoration, the GHF continued to rely on membership drives to securing funding and the interest of volunteers.⁴⁹ Viewing themselves as the agency to take a leadership role for preservation efforts on the island, the GHF held annual membership drives and publicized them in the local paper. By 1973, the organization had reached almost 900 members, and labeled itself the oldest historical organization in Texas laying claim to 1871 as its founding date.⁵⁰ Publicly, there had been no direct mention of plans to incorporating Galveston's maritime history into the organization's preservation efforts. Hindsight, however, provides the knowledge that the *Elissa* would be acquired within the next few years. Described in the *Galveston Daily News* as the organization's "major effort... to obtain support for the preservation and revitalization of historical areas," the GHF's annual membership drive continued to gain momentum as they gathered community support. At the start of the 1976 membership campaign, the organization reported membership had jumped to nearly 1500 members and was seeking more numerous and larger projects, including the *Elissa*.⁵¹

A decade later, the GHF continues their annual membership drives emphasizing an expansion of preservation efforts. Following the *Elissa* restoration project, the GHF is able to point to concrete examples of their success. Highlighting Galveston's notoriety "throughout the country for its preservation and redevelopment activities," Membership Vice President Frances St. John invited participation stating that only through "a strong and active membership" could the GHF "finish the work so many people have started all over town."⁵² Encouraging partnerships with the GHF, Mrs. St. John used "the growth in the job market... the strengthening of the tax base, the importance of community growth

and civic improvements, expanded tourism, the publicity generated for the Island” to stress the benefits the new “historic ambiance” provides businesses and residents alike.⁵³ This particular article on the annual membership drive is indicative of the shift the GHF makes in talking about preservation on the island. Citing individual members who volunteered at the *Elissa* or in other organizational capacities, this approach to selling the *Elissa*’s memory relied on the “increase [in] local participation,” fostering a greater local appreciation for heritage while improving the city’s tourism offerings.⁵⁴

As the GHF became more intent on expanding their cultural influence, the information in the newspapers on the membership events and drives became more explicit as well. In an article on the recruitment of local businesses, through an event called the “Business Blitz,” the GHF printed their business membership levels with their contribution levels – one of the first instances where actual dollar amounts appear publicly. Revealing the four commitment levels for local businesses, the “economic benefit of supporting historic preservation” is framed in such a way as to encourage participation among both businesses and volunteers.⁵⁵ However, even in this article on the “Business Blitz,” focus belongs to the *Elissa*, who at this point had just reached Galveston from her New York/Lady Liberty trip. Sharing column space with the business drive, the “109 year old veteran traveler... [had] just chalked up 4,000 miles on her historic voyage” and was back home, open for tours. Adding information about the *Elissa* to the story on recruiting local businesses serves to highlight the victories of the GHF, in the same breath with which they seek future funding. By including the *Elissa*, the GHF evokes local sentiments of pride, in their search for ways to remind the

community of their successes in preservation efforts, and consequently priming the local public as future members of the GHF.

The Texas Proud voyage gave the GHF a different type of monetary support; however, their annual membership drives continued to provide a chance to connect to the local community and offer a means of participation in the overall message. Citing a feeling a shared satisfaction in a letter to the editor, the GHF praises the “sense of accomplishment” after the success of their 1990 Dickens on the Strand event, while thanking the paper for their considerable and valuable coverage of the event itself. The GHF identifies the events impact on the “whole Galveston community,” and emphasizes the local commitment to their cause – a “historic ambiance” for the Island City.⁵⁶ As the 1990s progressed, the explicit and detailed articles concerning membership in the GHF disappear altogether. Research revealed no evidence that the organization still held annual membership drives, although each iteration of GHF events in the paper included information about how to join.

The next GHF membership campaign does not appear in the *Galveston Daily News* until April of 1999 under the title “GHF Does Plenty for Island Community.”⁵⁷ Suggesting the GHF had come under fire during the 1990s, the paper encourages readers to join the some 4,600 members “to do something for your community.”⁵⁸ Even this blurb, however, does not compare to the extensive coverage the membership drives had received during the peak of the restoration efforts. Instead, the article focuses on the size and former activities of the organization. Explaining that the GHF “played a huge role in saving the Strand” and “resurrected the *Elissa*,” the article treats all GHF operations in the past-tense.⁵⁹ Because the individual membership fees are printed, the blurb strikes

the same cord as the “Business Blitz” article a decade earlier; but the article goes into little extra detail.

Also of note is a guest column printed a month later in May 1999. Written from the perspective of restaurateur John Smecca, the column lays claim to ensuring the “future success of Galveston.”⁶⁰ Smecca writes:

It is important to note that while we do not always share the same ideas on how to achieve our goals, our goals are the same – we both want Galveston to prosper well into the next century. That is one of the reasons why I chose to become involved with the GHF.... I understand the importance preservation and GHF projects have had on the tourism industry in Galveston and, in turn, the significant role tourism has in our local economy.... I want to be able to come close to the middle on some of the big issues... It was, in fact, a group of businessmen who founded the Galveston Historical Society in 1871.⁶¹

Smecca’s column alludes to potentially major disagreements between the business community and the GHF – a stark difference from the cozy, beneficial relationship which brought the *Elissa* and other preservation projects to life. The disagreements Smecca refers to remain a mystery, although Castaneda’s study identifies fears expressed by “smaller businessmen and wage workers employed in the hospitality industry” in the early 1990s about the GHF’s actions to undercut beach-related tourism because their “livelihoods depended upon the promotion of Galveston as a party island and tropical paradise.”

In her study, Castaneda also concludes that “Galvestonians draw on the gambling era to bolster their islander sense-of-self.”⁶² The Otherness of these islanders is in direct contrast to the “GHF’s official narrative history of the Island... since it [their narrative] not only privileges the Victorian-era experience of Galveston, but purges or purifies the past of popular cultural experience represented by more than three decades” of alternative economic activities.⁶³ One example of the “purification” of official history is relayed by

Castaneda in a story from one member of the GHF board. Following his suggestion that the organization locate and restore one of the city's "shotgun" houses (a traditionally African American or working class home), this member sat through "dead silence."⁶⁴ Silence, in this instance, expressed fear that such a move would conflict with the selected past of Galveston's "cosmopolitan culture of the Victorian era, wherein the oppressed social conditions and experiences of women, members of the working class, and Blacks (i.e. slaves) are... highly glossed," or unrepresented altogether.⁶⁵ In reactionary terms, the islanders worked to subvert the GHF's cultural hegemony in the early 1990s, leading perhaps to a distancing of the business community and the cultural institution. Castaneda phrases this distance as a "political scene" for "competing histories and cultural identities," which created differing ideas for the future of Galveston's tourism industry.

Revealing Galveston

As the Smecca column and anecdote from the GHF board meeting bring to light, in its role as cultural producer the GHF has created systemic opportunities to redirect attention to the *Elissa*, and consequently away from societal ills. From the outset of the search for a ship to rebuild, the GHF was determined to engage the economic woes of the city by boosting tourism dollars on the island. However, in doing so, the organization made choices that functionally forgot parts of the past and pieces of the city in the rhetorical construction of its supposed history. Obscuring classed and raced readings of the island's communities, the GHF focused all efforts on resurrecting the Victorian-elite hey-day of Galveston's lore, privileging white, business owners in the process. Although successful in its mission to bring a shift in tourism to the Island City, this section examines the rhetorical turn the GHF employed to maintain focus on the consumable

memory, instead of engaging with other aspects of economics on the island, such as poverty.

In their search for local support and participation, the GHF's rhetorical construction of the *Elissa* becomes problematic when read in context with the economic conditions across the entire Island City. Beyond obscuring raced and classed interpretations of Galveston's heritage, the GHF also worked to paper over the reality of poverty in the city. David McComb illustrates the other, masked side of Galveston this way:

Galveston was left with a declining port, a growing medical school (which paid no city taxes), paint-weathered Victorian houses, an abandoned downtown...and good weather...Galveston was still a different sort of place, like an old lady rocking on a porch with tales to tell and a twinkle in her eye, but no longer important in the mainstream of life. The problem for the city in the second half of the twentieth century was to find a reason for being.⁶⁶

The GHF restored and reconstructed Galveston's heritage because they believed it to be profitable.⁶⁷ McComb refers to the *Elissa* as the GHF's most "dramatic example of restoration."⁶⁸ As this study detailed in Chapter Two, the restoration itself required tremendous resources and overhauled the *Elissa* from the rusted-out hull she was in 1974 to the maritime prize of the city she became. However, another way to read McComb's characterization of the "dramatic" restoration is its direct opposition to impoverished elements of the modern city. By favoring the thriving port of the nineteenth-century over the city's modern day struggles, the GHF blurs the lines between present poverty and past prosperity. The *Elissa* was positioned by the GHF to represent a period of time in which the port was prosperous, highlighting the beauty of work and the well-oiled machine of industry.

Contextualized by the Historic Strand district, the Elissa heralds the days when the port was flush with cotton and important to commerce in Texas. This interpretation, however, obscures where the cotton came from, the character of the laborers (first as raced slaves, later as raced and classed sharecroppers and dockworkers) who toiled to produce it, and the largely white businessmen who profited from the cotton industry as a whole.⁶⁹ As a cultural producer, however, the GHF has worked in the recent past to contribute to the way that African American culture is reified in the city, producing pamphlets like the 2006, “Galveston’s African American Historic Places and Pioneers” which provides information on local black churches, areas designated as important to their story, and African American individuals who are or were connected to the island in some form or fashion.⁷⁰

The pamphlet, which is printed with color images, reads as a balance between shameful truth and boastful firsts. For example, the pamphlet highlights the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation on June 19, 1866 in front of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Similarly, it draws attention to Galveston’s role as the “first city in Texas to provide a secondary school education and public library” for its African American residents. The inclusion of these facts continues the GHF’s portrayal of Galveston as above the other cities in Texas – a place ahead of its time. With a slightly louder battle cry than the silence that met the gentlemen who suggested restoring a shotgun house in the late 1980s, the GHF’s African American Heritage Committee is an attempt to reflect all of Galveston’s past in the preservation work of the GHF.

One starkly obvious difference, however, is that the pamphlet is distilled to a walking tour with none of the properties under the purview of the GHF. In 2007, the year

following the first printing of the “African American Historic Places and Pioneers” pamphlet, the GHF was given the land for the Rosewood cemetery – a little more than an acre with 411 graves. Planning began almost immediately after the land was received, but little more than a fence has been added to the physical site in the years since. The organization has catalogued and photographed the various marked graves. Also, the GHF’s possession of the land ensures it will never be developed over; however, because the site cannot be marketed in the same ways that the *Elissa* can, it will likely never receive comparable attention or funding.

The Rosewood cemetery preservation project attempts to display public memories that have previously been concealed. By incorporating raced interpretations of history and memory on the island, the GHF works to reveal areas of memory that have been buried in the nineteenth century focused presentation of the island’s heritage. The existing demographics of present day Galveston, which will be discussed in more depth shortly, also exert some influence on the GHF’s decision to widen their scope to include public memories from differing perspectives, embracing race and class. The GHF’s attempts to include marginalized representations of the past via the Rosewood Cemetery and the African American Heritage Committee actually works to help define the ways the *Elissa*’s representation is problematic when contextualized in the terms of the island’s past and present demographics.

With both an eye to the future and a nod to the past, the GHF rhetorically constructed the *Elissa* and similar properties to enact the Victorian-era as the dominant public memory of Galveston. In both the realms of architecture and commerce, there are certainly traces of the Victorian era intact on the island. Lavish homes, iron-fronted

buildings, and the port have all survived – even if their functions have changed a bit over the years. Although African American residents on the island were former slaves, who had shifted into the roles of sharecroppers, dockworkers, and cotton jammers (jamming being the “art of screwing cotton bales tightly into place), their history has been erased from the waterfront, even in its mid-1980s urban renewal. In the GHF’s presentation of Galveston’s memory there is only nominal room for the wage-enslaved, segregated populations. In explaining the segregated beaches, the pamphlet reads, “Most of the activities for African Americans on the beach front, in the early years, were confined to a one-block area.”⁷¹ It goes on: “However, in this one block many great memories were formed,” as if to seemingly justify that the segregated area of the seawall made up in quality what it lacked for in quantity.

Present-day representation enacted by the *Elissa* elide the economic conditions on the island in much the same way as the GHF’s characterizations of the nineteenth century function to forget the raced and classed economic factors of Galveston’s prosperity. Constructing the *Elissa* as an authentic ambassador for Galveston’s heritage proves controversial when one digs a little deeper into the island’s demographics. Social justice advocate John Henneberger argues that Galveston and New Orleans share more than a Mardi Gras tradition. Henneberger uses Galveston’s 22 percent poverty rate in contrast to New Orleans 23 percent rate to draw conclusions about “problems of income inequality, class and race” shared between the two cities.⁷² Demographically, Galveston’s population is 74 percent White, 18 percent African American.⁷³ Only 61.1 percent of the population over 18 is estimated to be in the labor force, with 38.9 percent attributed to being outside the work force. Nearly 80 percent of the labor force holds

occupations in business, service, or sales, with 24.9 percent in the service category. In Texas, 17 percent of individuals reside below the poverty line; in Galveston that number is estimated to be as high as 22.6 percent.⁷⁴ Even though statistics can be molded to fit differing arguments, these demographics suggest that at present, Galveston's population is roughly more impoverished than its Texan counterparts.

Understanding the makeup of the population is important to better comprehension of the rhetorical dimensions of selling the *Elissa* because it informs the analysis in raced and classed terms. As evidenced by these demographics, Galveston is not quite the booming economy presented by the GHF. Though the *Elissa* and the GHF are ultimately silent on questions of the historical dimensions of racial and class pitfalls in Galveston, the presentation of the *Elissa* functions to redirect attention to a memory tourists can happily consume, secure in the belief that their presence ensures economic growth to the island as a whole. But even as specific areas, predominantly the historic districts, may thrive from the boosted revenues, there are other sectors that do not fare as well.

First-hand accounts of residents and former residents reinforce Henneberger's claims of economic disparity and racial inequity on the island. On the website BestPlaces.net, the brainchild of Bert Sperling helping people find their best place to live, user comments include characterizations of Galveston as "one of the world's greatest cities in the late 1800s, now a somewhat worn and in places shabby beachfront town." Further, cautionary statements from Galvestonians such as, "unless you can afford to live out past 61st street...the rest of the island has been left to fend for itself," illustrate the stark disparities between those areas benefitting from tourist dollars, and those parts of the island "fending for itself."⁷⁵

Even recent accounts of island demonstrate the continued difficulties facing young Galvestonians. The *New York Times* ran an article with similar suggestions of impoverished Galvestonians with large obstacles to hurdle in December 2012. The article followed three college-bound high school graduates and their attempts to “escape the prospect of dead-end lives in luckless Galveston.”⁷⁶ This article builds on the demographic evidence that shows whereas 80.6 percent of residents on the island have a high school degree and some college hours, only 26.4 percent have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher.⁷⁷ When considered with the demographics outlined previously, the article on students not finishing college points to systemic economic difficulties facing residents of the island community. Even when the *Elissa* and other GHF efforts actually do economically benefit Galveston, many of its residents remain relegated to lower wage service industry jobs and retail positions.

This description of Galveston is a far cry from the *New York Times*’ “Journeys: 36 Hours, Galveston, Tex.” feature run in 2003, highlighting the city’s “an island bathed in sunlight and a salty sea breeze” that “these days resembles a club-hopping teenager more than a bitter old woman...bulging with tourists and...almost impossible to book a good hotel room for a weekend on short notice.”⁷⁸ The two different Galvestons that made the pages of the *New York Times* highlight two different aspects of the island. The visitors guide includes “Symbols of a Grandeur Past” and “Heritage á la Port” as sites to see to help understand present-day Galveston – what the GHF has worked to do.⁷⁹ In contrast, the more recent *Times* feature on the college-bound students portrays a very different Galveston. “I don’t want to work at Walmart,” one student wrote to a school counselor, reflecting the desire to avoid the best job her mother was able to find in Galveston.⁸⁰

Returning to Smecca's column, his public cooperation with the GHF can be seen in a whole new light. The years lost over the decade of the 1990s marks a failure on the part of the GHF to continue to successfully market the *Elissa* and her historic counterparts as internally good for the island – as was so prevalent in the early years of the fundraising for the restoration monies. Smecca focuses on the beneficial actions the GHF has taken over the years, such as the “vision and determination of the GHF that helped transform the Strand area from a desolate collection of abandoned buildings into a thriving commercial district.”⁸¹ Conflating the efforts of the two groups, Smecca reminds his business community counterparts that they “have a treasure on this island,” one they should all “be interested in preserving,” which is why he has chosen “to work *with* the GHF in whatever way” possible.⁸²

In the decade or so that has passed since the tense relationship of the 1990s, the GHF has taken to updating their members online and via emails, instead of through the newspapers. Still billed as an opportunity for participation, the GHF solicits locals and non-locals alike to “continue to give children and adults a chance to touch this extraordinary history we hold on Galveston Island.”⁸³ Presently, most information on the GHF can be found on their website, although members can receive separate correspondence from the organization. Touting the opportunity to “Get Involved,” the GHF describes itself as an “organization driven by active and devoted members.”⁸⁴ As ever, the GHF promotes themselves as stewards of Galveston's past, and offers others a chance to join them in their mission of preservation, revitalization, and celebration. As their star tourist attraction, the *Elissa* embodies a project which encompasses the successes and the failures of the GHF over the last six decades. It is in the promotion,

display, and history of the *Elissa* that this study finds her rhetorical construction as a public memory designed to be consumed by the tourist. To ensure the consumable memory is found palatable to Galveston's visitors, however, the *Elissa* necessarily papers over the less attractive aspects of Galveston.

The *Elissa*, then, works to conceal aspects of Galveston's reality by directing focus on a selective representation of the late nineteenth century, sans mention of race or class. However, this is ultimately the failure of the GHF to the city it claims to be saving. Inequalities in Galveston's actual past as well as the reality of some of its present populations seem to problematize the GHF's dominance of the tourism industry, and thus the production of culture on the island. As evidenced by Smecca's column and the reports of poverty on the island, the *Elissa* redirects attention to the Galveston the GHF believes is most readily consumable, not the reality of life on the island. Further study via a lens of tourism would help to ascertain the ways in which the consumer alters the production of heritage, for as this chapter explored previously, the tourist is an engaged participant in the production of consumed culture. In the most recent decades, each of the three themes employed by the GHF to sell the *Elissa* successfully positioned her as a tourist attraction, but fell short of depicting any well-rounded perspective of Galveston. Thus, as detailed in this chapter, even as the *Elissa* benefitted from her status as tourist attraction, the actual island overall was obscured, not heralded as the GHF would have the visiting public believe.

Notes

¹ Museums receive funding from one of three main sources: endowments, donations, and public dollars. Sometimes, it is a combination of these, as was the case in the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, which until recently received half of its funding from the city of Santa Cruz, California and the other half from a non-profit organization. See Jillian Berman, "Museums' Funding Sources Going Bone Dry," *USA Today*, July 23, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-07-22-museumclosing_N.htm.

² "Facts about the Smithsonian," *Newsroom of the Smithsonian*, <http://newsdesk.si.edu/factsheets/facts-about-smithsonian-institution>.

³ The American Association for Museums has since updated their name to the American Alliance of Museums in an effort to better reflect the large network of various institutional museums they represent. See "Why the Change?," *American Alliance for Museums*, n.d., <http://www.aam-us.org/alliance/why-the-change>.

⁴ There is one more type of museum: the sponsored exhibit. As discussed in part by Davi Johnson Thornton in her book *Brain Culture: Neuroscience and Popular Culture*, the sponsored exhibit aims for notoriety on the sponsors part, but has a more direct aim on the visitor as consumer than the visitor as curious student. In her example, pharmaceutical company Pfizer sponsored an exhibit displaying the brain in an interactive fashion, without a fixed direction or in the style of a post-museum. Thus, "the mission of the post museum blends marketing and education" using the "museum as a medium" with a credible "degree of acceptance." Although this is an area of tourism, museum inquiry, and perhaps even public memory that begs more future attention, it is only an example of yet another economic interest in the intersection of these lines of inquiry. See Davi Johnson Thornton, *Brain Culture: Neuroscience and Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 118, 128.

⁵ Whereas this study is by no means an exhaustive attempt at the body of tourism literature, it does engage the practice and study of tourism as it relates to the construction of the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction, positioned as a rhetorical site of public memory.

⁶ Stephen H. Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81(1995): 247-8.

⁷ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 10.

⁸ Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 96.

⁹ Michael S. Bowman, “Performing Southern History for the Tourist Gaze,” ed. Della Pollack, *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 143.

¹⁰ Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade, “Performative Authenticity in Tourism and Spatial Experience: Rethinking the Relations Between Travel, Place and Emotion,” in *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions*, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), 5.

¹¹ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 9.

¹² For examples of studies on entertainment sites, see Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History: And Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Amy K. Levin, *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities* (Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2007).

¹³ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 9.

¹⁴ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

¹⁵ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

¹⁶ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 1.

¹⁷ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 8.

¹⁸ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 10.

¹⁹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 14-5.

²⁰ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 11.

²¹ Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 19.

²² Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 22.

²³ Kevin Meethan, Alison Anderson, Steven Miles, *Tourism, Consumption, and Representation: Narratives of Place and Self* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 2006), xiv.

- ²⁴ Meethan, Anderson, and Miles, *Tourism, Consumption, and Representation*, xiv.
- ²⁵ Meethan, Anderson, and Miles, *Tourism, Consumption, and Representation*, xv.
- ²⁶ Mika Toyota, "Consuming Images: Young Female Japanese Tourists in Bali, Indonesia," ed. Kevin Meethan, Alison Anderson, and Steven Miles, *Tourism, Consumption, and Representation: Narratives of Place and Self* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 2006), 158.
- ²⁷ Toyota, "Consuming Images," 158.
- ²⁸ Richard Sharpley, "The Consumption of Tourism," ed. Richard Sharpley and David J. Tefler, *Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues* (Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications, 2002), 307.
- ²⁹ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 503.
- ³⁰ "June 8, 2005, Texas Governor Rick Perry signed a resolution naming the *Elissa* the "Official Tall Ship of Texas," See Voss, *Galveston's The Elissa*, 10.
- ³¹ Information obtained in interview with Texas Seaport Museum and *Elissa* Director, Jamie White, a square rigging expert and director of the *Elissa*/Texas Seaport Museum complex, March 26, 2012.
- ³² Galveston Historical Foundation, printed brochure. (approx. 1987) Texas Collection, Carroll Library, Baylor University.
- ³³ Monica Reeves, "Texas' Tall Ships," *Dallas Morning News*, July 11, 1982.
- ³⁴ John T. Davis, "Sail Back a Century," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 30, 1999, D1.
- ³⁵ "About Us," *Galveston Historical Foundation*, http://galvestonhistory.org/about_us.asp#what we do; "1877 Tall Ship *Elissa*," *Galveston Historical Foundation*, http://galvestonhistory.org/1877_Tall_Ship_ELISSA.asp.
- ³⁶ Erin Graham, "Jewel of the Isle," *Galveston Daily News*, March 31, 2002, C1.
- ³⁷ Jamie White, "*ELISSA* – Is it worth it?," September 2, 2011, <http://Elissa1877.blogspot.com/2011/09/Elissa-is-it-worth-it.html>; Jamie White, "*ELISSA* – A French Curve in Iron and Sweat," <http://Elissa1877.blogspot.com/2011/09/Elissa-french-curve-in-iron-and-sweat.html>.

³⁸ Mike Yuen, “*Elissa* Drops Anchor at Galveston after 3-month ‘Texas Proud’ Voyage,” *Houston Post*, June 18, 1989.

³⁹ Terri Alford Castaneda, “Preservation and the Cultural Politics of the Past on Historic Galveston Island” (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1993), xi.

⁴⁰ Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” 1.

⁴¹ Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” 2.

⁴² Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” 2.

⁴³ Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” xii, 1-4.

⁴⁴ “About Us,” *Galveston Historical Foundation*

⁴⁵ Reeves, “Texas’ Tall Ships.”

⁴⁶ Reeves, “Texas’ Tall Ships.”

⁴⁷ “Grant To Help Bear Cost Of *Elissa* Move,” *Galveston Daily News*, August 16, 1978, 1A.

⁴⁸ “Galveston County Community Bulletin Board,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 21, 2007, 5C.

⁴⁹ The first membership drive information was published in the *Galveston Daily News* in 1967. See Kitty Kendall, “City-Wide Architectural Surveys Praised,” *Galveston Daily News*, February 3, 1967, 1.

⁵⁰ “Adler to Speak For GHF Friday,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 12, 1972, 6.

⁵¹ “Galveston Historical Foundation to Kick Off ’76 Membership Drive,” *Galveston Daily News*, November 9, 1975, 2A.

⁵² “GHF Seeks New Members to Increase Program Impact,” *Galveston Daily News*, March 24, 1985, 6B.

⁵³ “GHF Seeks New Members,” 6B.

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⁵⁶ David Bush, “GHF Appreciates Newspaper’s Help,” *Galveston Daily News*, December 12, 1990, 5C; “GHF Seeks New Members,” 6B.

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⁶⁰ John A. Smecca, “Business Should Work With Galveston Historical Foundation,” *Galveston Daily News*, May 9, 1999, 9B.

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⁶² Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” 231.

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⁶⁴ Castaneda, “Preservation and Cultural Politics,” 197n.

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⁶⁶ David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 41.

⁶⁷ McComb, *Galveston: A History*, 46.

⁶⁸ McComb, *Galveston: A History*, 48.

⁶⁹ After the abolishment of slavery, the cotton industry in the South relied on sharecropping practices. Additionally, because Galveston was a port city, there was a large contingency of workers (both black and white) who worked on the docks. In Galveston in particular, this caused tensions between the companies and their laborers, as well as producing antiblack sentiment on the island. For further reading on these practices see Edward L. Ayers, Lewis L. Gould, David M. Oshinsky, and Jean R. Soderlund, *American Passages: A History of the United States* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Centage Learning, 2010), 451-2; Texas State Historical Association, "Farm Tenancy," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/aefmu> (accessed February 27, 2013); Bruce A. Glasrud and James M. Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas: An Anthology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 204.

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⁷⁹ Romero, “Journeys,” 4F.

⁸⁰ DeParle, “For Poor, Leap to College Often Ends in a Hard Fall.”

⁸¹ Smecca, “Business Should Work,” 11B.

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⁸³ W. Dwayne Jones, “Here’s How Your Gift Helps Us Preserve Historic Galveston,” *Galveston Historical Foundation*, 2012, <http://www.galvestonhistory.org/YourGift.asp>.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

When the *Elissa* was launched from Aberdeen, Scotland in 1877, she was a source of pride for her commissioner, her captain, and her crew. She transported goods around the globe, hopping from port to port, and connecting nineteenth century cities to one another. Today, her world is smaller and sailing ships are no longer the only means connecting peoples to each other. Rescued and restored by the Galveston Historical Foundation, the ship has a permanent home in Galveston, where her identity has been rhetorically constructed as a tourist attraction, connecting the island's past to its present. Her presence in Galveston harbor successfully enacts a public memory of Galveston's majestic days as the port of entry to Texas, inviting tourists to engage with the past via a touristic experience aboard the restored tall ship.

The *Elissa* provides an experience to tourists, while promoting a connection to Galveston's heritage. She was restored to bring commerce to Galveston's shores, mirroring her former function of merchant ship. As a tourist attraction, the *Elissa* has been positioned to reveal a dedicated relationship to the Victorian-era of prosperity on the island. Throughout her life as a tourist attraction, she has been displayed in various ports and places as an ambassador for Galveston, as well as a synecdoche for the island's entire heritage. This becomes somewhat problematic as her rhetorical construction conceals certain realities of Galveston's heritage and current economic disparities.

The GHF constructed an identity for their attraction that inextricably linked the ship to Galveston's maritime heritage, displaying her to the surrounding region and to the country as a symbol of the island's former glory. She is instantly recognizable as a nineteenth century sailing ship amongst the hotels, restaurants, barges, and cruise ships. Outstretched toward the sky, her masts and size differentiate the *Elissa* from other vessels in the harbor. She is larger than the shrimp boats but dwarfed by the tankers. Both visually and physically, she is positioned to resonate with tourists and provide a first-hand experience of the past. While aboard, visitors can explore the ship above and below decks, learning about the areas of the ship from placards along the way.

Both the onboard experience and the public image crafted by the GHF over the last 40 years positions the *Elissa* as representative of Galveston's heritage and capitalizes on nostalgia for the nineteenth century. The rhetorical dimensions of the GHF's efforts to present the *Elissa* to a public engage issues of tourism and consumption, extending inquiries into display and the construction of identity into the contemporary operations of the GHF concerning the *Elissa*. From the beginning of the restoration process, the *Elissa* was selected for elements of a narrative that would allow her audience to form a relationship with the ship and the island simultaneously. Having called upon the Port of Galveston twice in the late 1880s, the *Elissa* was rhetorically situated to be understood in the context of the Victorian-era, connected to the public memory of Galveston as a lavish, thriving city, full of cotton and rich with trade. In selling this representation of the *Elissa*, and subsequently Galveston, to the public, the GHF had to successfully dock the ship in history, while obscuring other interpretations of the island's heritage which might prove to undo the socially shared experience of the past as prosperous.

The *Elissa*, then, has been rhetorically constructed by the GHF to evoke the prosperous island of old, while obscuring classed and raced representations of history in favor of a more marketable memory. Ultimately, the GHF consistently presented the *Elissa* to the public as a link to the past, to be experienced and consumed. Rather than engage *all* of Galveston's heritage, though, the *Elissa* focuses attention on a selective vision of the past. This proves troublesome when the *Elissa* is read in context with the island's African American representations of memory and current economic woes of the island.

In rescuing and restoring the *Elissa* to her former glory as a Victorian-era merchant ship, the GHF constructed an artifact that they could employ to enact a specific representation of the island's public memory. Invoking a selective construction of the past, the GHF positioned the *Elissa* as an icon of revitalization for the Island City. In contrast to the current economically depressed status of Galveston's economy, the *Elissa* provided a boost to Galveston's tourism industry, but focused entirely on a narrow representation of the past. This chapter discusses the findings of the study, its contribution to the larger body of scholars, as well as suggestions for future study and final thoughts about the larger project.

Findings

This study examines the intersection of rhetorical inquiries into public memory and theories of tourism. Exploring the rhetorical construction, elements of display, and methods by which the restored 1877 iron barque *Elissa* is positioned for public consumption, this study engages a site of public memory that has been continually constructed as a tourist attraction over the last 40 years. Analyzing the *Elissa*

productively contributes to furthering an understanding of sites of public memory, especially those that are directed towards a touristic audience.

In the case of the *Elissa*, this study finds that the GHF marketed a particular interpretation of Galveston's past through the use of synecdoche, infusing her into an existing network of tourism, and by creating opportunities for community participation. This study also reveals, however, a shift in the relationship between the participants and the organization. Tension between the island's business leaders and the GHF caused during the 1990s, exposes what a marketed selective past heralding prosperity concealed: a reality of economic disparity and an impoverished Galvestonian population. Ultimately, the Galveston Historical Foundation positioned the *Elissa* as an ambassador for the heritage of the island; however, this suppresses raced and classed representations of public memory. The *Elissa* is a successful tourist attraction, an artifact that benefitted tremendously from a careful, dedicated restoration process and continues to receive the necessary maintenance to preserve the living, working ship. More than her role as a successful attraction, though, the *Elissa* is constructed to represent Galveston's past. She is not a perfect representation of that past, nor is she indicative of all remembering that happens on Galveston. This study addresses the problematic aspects of her rhetorical construction, while also highlighting the consistencies which constructed her success as an attraction. Public memory is comprised of the careful dance of remembering and forgetting, revealing and concealing – this analysis of the *Elissa* engages these differing facets of memory.

The study of public memory requires a scholar to elucidate the rhetorical constraints of audience and context in order to better understand the way a particular

memory operates in its environment. Like the performance of the “Black body” at the Civil Rights Memorial or the narratives constructed for the exhibition of the salvaged artifacts from the Titanic, the presentation and environment can affect the way a public understands a memory. Because the *Elissa* offers such a detailed and relatively rich historical narrative, it proved substantial for a text of study, even as it addresses primarily regional interpretations. This study finds that the *Elissa* enacts a cultural memory of Galveston’s heritage, grounded in the nineteenth century supports of bustling ports, the cotton trade, and merchant ships powered by wind. The restored *Elissa*, when read as a tourist attraction, informs the studies of public memory by employing a different approach to the questions of the way memory functions for various audiences.

Beginning with the rescue and restoration of the vessel, chapter two detailed the restoration efforts and construction of the *Elissa*’s authenticity. There, I argued that while the Galveston Historical Foundation sought funding and performed the work, they also positioned the *Elissa* as a tourist attraction aimed at reviving the tourism industry on the island. Carefully managing the rhetorical dimensions of public presence, the ship’s relationship with the selective past, and the materiality of the artifact, the GHF constructed an attraction via the controlled release of information in the newspaper – which at the time was the primary form of mass media available. Employing social experience as a tool for understanding sites of public memory, this study expands upon the theories of reified memory work in the field by defining both visual and physical supports at these sites.

The construction of the *Elissa*’s narrative and restoration also required the constitution of differing publics, in which locals and visitors alike were integral to the

ultimate cohesion of the *Elissa* as a site of public memory. For the *Elissa* to operate as a successful tourist attraction required a cooperation of the local community to sustain fundraising efforts and faith in the future of the project. Anchored to the past, the *Elissa* operated as a site of both remembering and forgetting for the citizens of Galveston during the restoration project. The GHF portrayed the *Elissa* to the public as the solution to their woes, boosting tourism prospects on the island and reminding them of the flourishing business the Galveston port once held. Throughout her restoration, the *Elissa*'s public persona was poised to represent a Galveston of nineteenth-century prosperity. Building upon the foundation of the thriving commerce of the port, the GHF positioned the *Elissa* and her audience in a relationship with the selective past of the Victorian-era.

Moving beyond the restoration phase and shifting into a stage of display, chapter three analyzes the *Elissa* in her voyages outside of the Galveston area, enacting her role as tourist attraction differently. With the triumph of a restoration project which re-established the *Elissa*'s capability to sail, a crew of volunteers embarked on a voyage to New York City to participate in the bicentennial celebration of the Statue of Liberty. Having visited the New York harbor prior to Lady Liberty's installation there, the GHF rhetorically constructed a destiny for the *Elissa* which included the two ladies meeting for the first time – each with their own stories to tell about the past. Following the success of the Liberty trip, which included stops in many ports along the Atlantic, the *Elissa*'s function had been altered to that of display – where her identity was no longer in flux, but stabilized as a tourist attraction, museum, and site of public remembrance for all to experience.

Chapter three explores the Texas Proud voyage, a 10-port tour undertaken in the spring of 1989. Aimed at keeping the *Elissa* financially solvent during the construction of the new Texas Seaport Museum (which now shares the site with the *Elissa*), the Texas Proud voyage exhibited the *Elissa* for audiences beyond Galveston. Simultaneously, the GHF positioned her with dual roles: attraction and ambassador. Building upon the constructed identity that had been effective during the restoration, the GHF used the *Elissa* to spread an understanding of Galveston's memory, as well as the Gulf Coast region and the state of Texas.

By virtue of its focus on the Texas Proud voyage, this chapter engages with the revealing and concealing function of epideictic rhetoric to ascertain the ways in which the *Elissa* was presented to areas outside of her home port of Galveston. While on display in the Gulf of Mexico, the GHF expanded the *Elissa's* narrative by extending her representation of heritage in the region. Following the first restoration phase, I argued the *Elissa's* identity was tied to a selective interpretation of Galveston's past. During the Texas Proud voyage the function of the *Elissa* expanded substantially and stood in as a marker of the whole of the Texas Gulf Coast. Met by large crowds and corresponding publicity, the *Elissa* successfully maintained economic success while her home pier was expanded to include the Texas Seaport Museum, which simultaneously extended her interpreted region, time, and potential audience.

Ultimately, the GHF employed the attraction to act as an ambassador for Texas and the region. This was done in three ways: mobilizing the memory, representing the region, and embodying the growth of Galveston's tourism industry. By drawing attention to the *Elissa's* ability to move from place to place, the GHF complicated tourists'

relationship with the representation of public memory as a *place*. Based on her status as a place, the identity that was so painstakingly constructed to bind her to Galveston was challenged by her mobility. In this case, mobility offers a way to broaden the horizon, refocusing the challenge of a break in the originally constructed narrative into a productive way to increase influence.

The expansion of influence reinforces the GHF's move to position the *Elissa* as an ambassador for Texas and the Gulf Coast's maritime history. The voyage was covered by local and regional media, each echoing the other in their heralding of the *Elissa's* beautiful embodiment of the past. Met with record crowds in cities throughout the Gulf, the *Elissa* returned home to Galveston to dock alongside the nearly finished Texas Seaport Museum. As the crowds boarded the *Elissa* to experience the nineteenth-century method of commerce, the Texas Proud voyage was heralded as a triumph where history and modern means met. The GHF had developed a plan to capitalize on the publicity from the journey, and began to position the *Elissa* for the future. Vivian reminds us that display, an epideictic function, must be future oriented. The Texas Proud tour provided the GHF with a strong foundation for those future plans, and feeds into the next phase of the *Elissa's* life as a tourist attraction. Most notably, however, the Texas Proud tour positioned the GHF to continually present the *Elissa* as a cultural, historical, and authentic authority across into the twenty-first century.

Chapter four draws upon three major themes employed by the GHF following the Texas Proud voyage. These themes explore the ways in which the GHF positioned the *Elissa* in the twenty-years since 1990. Seeking to maintain visibility, authority, and support from the local community, the GHF sold the *Elissa* utilizing the themes of the

ship as synecdoche, networked tourism, and opportunities for participation. Synecdochal presentation of the *Elissa* systematically equated her with Galveston's heritage, encouraging the experience she offered as a definitive link to the past. More than that, however, the GHF positioned the *Elissa* as linked to the whole of Galveston's past – effectively forgetting other eras of the island's history in favor of the nineteenth century representation. As the chapter addresses, the reality of Galveston's present-day ills and heritage are concealed by the presentation of the *Elissa*. Engaging with raced and classed realities of the island's economic misfortunes, the final chapter of analysis speaks to the parts of Galveston's public memory that have been forgotten in the interpretation of the *Elissa*.

Contribution to Scholarship

This study furthers our understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of memory by exploring sites of public memory at the intersection of touristic discourses and epideictic forms of rhetoric. As evidenced in this analysis, engaging a site of memory from the perspective of tourism allows scholars to answer questions considering the rhetorical constraints of audience and context. Tourism invites motivations that differ from nationalistic or patriotic ones, ideas that are often present at sites of remembrance. The *Elissa*, of course, also functions to help a public remember, and simultaneously forget. Because she does not exemplify a nationalistic agenda, commemorate a tragedy, or formalize a particular event, the ship provides a productive space in which scholars may engage memory work differently than the studies that precede it. The *Elissa* has been constructed as a tourist attraction, and as such she offers a unique text for productive analysis of a primarily touristic site of public memory. Because she falls short of the

function of a museum, an analysis of the attraction varies from previously published studies. It also provides a new perspective from which scholars may engage with sites that function as entertainment venues, in addition to enacting public memories.

At such sites, the audience is invited to orient themselves to the past based on the relationships constructed by the presentation of the public memory. Tourism and consumption, then, inform this rhetorical study because the memory is ultimately constrained by the audience. The *Elissa* is constructed to celebrate the preservation of the past; likewise, she is displayed to share the experience of that past with the tourist. Further engagement with questions of tourism and the consumption of memory can continue to productively enhance scholarship, particularly where the concept of a constructed authenticity is concerned.

I argue that the perspective of tourism literature enriches the rhetorical study of public memory because it directly engages a major constraint on work that is both public and subject to economic considerations. This study helps to draw attention to a nexus of consumerism and consumption in memory study, noting that each site will embody these answers differently. Tourism constrains the rhetorical capacity of memory in a variety of ways, but as demonstrated by the *Elissa*, the memory she enacts must be readily consumable and attractive to outsiders. Simultaneously, the same representation of memory must hold veracity at the location and to the supporting community. Tourism assumes a public. The assumed public is constructed by the site itself, and therefore will also differ. Unlike memorials on the National Mall, sites of memory like the *Elissa* (or the Creation Museum in Lexington, Kentucky, which described earlier as in an isolated

area) must rely on marketing and publicity for their success, otherwise they would likely lack a suitable audience.

Suggestions for Future Study

Future research should delve further into the local consumption of collective memory. Similarly, the construction of a touristic audience provides an area in which scholars could expand upon this study. Consumer culture undoubtedly alters public memory and influences those that are constructed. Similarly, there is plenty of room for study at localized sites of public memory. To date, the majority of scholarship engages large, prominent, and highly visible sites of public memory. Naturally, however, there are sites that are more or less invisible – or altogether absent. Future study might productively engage sites that enact memory, whether successfully or not, at the local level. Likewise, more attention could be directed toward the ways that volunteers participate at sites of public memory, as well as the methods by which participants are recruited. Participation can be rhetorically constructed, as it is in the case of the *Elissa*. However, participation can manifest in a variety of ways, in various capacities; this, too, requires future engagement on the part of rhetorical scholars. This may be a new way to look at official and vernacular supports to the conception of public memory, or it could be employed to examine ownership of memory in communities where tourism alters their ways of life.

Most important, however, I believe that continuing the push for interdisciplinary studies in regards to public memory work must continue. This is particularly important in the address of *sites* of public memory because there are so many aspects which could affect the representation of memory. Seeking to understand these intricate interplays

requires patience and careful approach on the part of the scholar, for no other reason than it is easy to overlook aspects at specific sites of public memory. Public memory studies are thickened by the inclusion of archival and first-hand sources, environmental factors, and various areas of literature. At once, this endeavor is overwhelming, but that should not discourage scholars, especially young ones like myself, from the task at hand. Public memory presents itself in many forms, and scholars must rise to meet those forms with an arsenal of interdisciplinary knowledge.

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