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**ON THE COVER:**  
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
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“The Best of Bonds”
*How Methodist Circuit Riders Created Community in Antebellum Illinois, 1800-1850*

Stephen Kissel

When Methodist circuit rider Jesse Walker arrived at the log cabin of John Hendrix and family one wintry night in 1824, he was completely paralyzed from the cold. After carrying the preacher into their cabin and thawing him by the fire, the Hendrixes learned why their unexpected guest came to be caught out in an Illinois blizzard on the fringes of American settlement. As John Hendrix’s wife Jane later recalled, the preacher’s introduction was simple and direct: “My name is Jesse Walker. I am a Methodist minister, I live in St. Louis. Having heard of a white family living up here among the Indians, I have come all this way to bring you the gospel.” In its most basic form, this was the mission of any Methodist circuit rider who rode the religious circuits of antebellum Illinois. These itinerant ministers journeyed year round in order to share the message of Christ’s salvation and to extend an open invitation to embrace the doctrine and fellowship of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Despite his steadfast vigor, Walker had no assurance, beyond that of a rumor, that the cabin’s occupants would be receptive to his evangelical message. This night, Walker proved successful in his labors, for the Hendrix family offered the preacher both shelter from the snow as well as their firm and active commitment to the Methodist faith. Soon after, Walker appointed John Hendrix a regional class leader, a lay exhorter who would aid Walker in preaching the Gospel to the surrounding settlements. The sparsely populated area offered no formal building for devotion, so the Hendrix cabin, at the behest of the family, became a central gathering site for Methodist worship, prayer, and fellowship in northern Illinois, a service Jane Hendrix maintained for decades to come.¹

This story highlights an intertwined relationship between two infant communities: the physical settlement where the Hendrix family resided and the spiritual community of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In many ways, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the state of Illinois grew and
evolved together. The former offered a community built upon religious faith, while the latter was built upon political, social, and familial bonds. The spread of Methodism provided avenues through which isolated individuals and households could seek communal fellowship, social connections, and spiritual nourishment. In turn, fresh waves of antebellum migration presented fertile ground for the growth of Methodism in Illinois. The hospitality of infant settlements allowed circuit riders to oversee a community’s growth, and to shape that growth in the Methodist faith, virtually from the earliest years of United States expansion into the Northwest Territory. Questionable moral behavior and popular
entertainments on the Illinois frontier did not always coincide with Methodist visions for an ideal community, and preachers encountered stubborn and even hostile opposition from both settlers and preachers of other faiths. Yet Methodist preachers and the residents of Illinois sowed common bonds necessary for building complementary and interconnected communities that grew out of regional hospitality and a common embrace of a diligent work ethic, as well as Methodist morality, education, prayer groups, and camp meetings.

In contrast to the more definite qualities that bound many antebellum polities such as geographic boundaries, a localized government, and even ethnicity, the circuit riders’ vision of a fully-realized Methodist community embodied a more expansive and fluid definition. It did not resemble the comparatively homogenous Calvinist townships typical of colonial Puritans, and it bore no specific agenda beyond that of unconditionally converting souls to the Methodist faith. While utopian societies, such as the Mormons and Shakers, sought to establish religiously exclusive communities, Methodists joined the majority of American faiths in building bonds of religious unity that could ideally, though not always realistically, exist harmoniously within the diverse infrastructures of the new American republic. Often traveling well beyond the reach of an established Methodist church—or even an established town—one of the greatest barriers to a circuit rider’s success was isolation. To ensure that neither preacher nor layman would be totally bereft of links to the larger Methodist society, circuit riders used itinerant preaching to provide a constant mode of communication and spiritual leadership. A network of regional prayer groups, conferences, schools, and camp meetings reinforced bonds of a common religious identity among Methodist believers across the region and ultimately across the country. When this communal conduit was carried to the thinly populated settlements of antebellum Illinois, Methodist modes of evangelizing proved instrumental in strengthening the young state’s moral stability, civic unity, and rural refinement, contributions that far surpass the quantitative success of Methodist conversion.

Previous Methodist revival efforts had often been attempted within areas which already possessed a firmly rooted social, political, and economic infrastructure. Historians including Stephen Aron, Dee Andrews, and Cynthia Lynn Lyerley have observed that the racial, domestic, and economic hierarchies of such settings, especially those found in the plantation societies of the southern states, often impaired the harmonious advancement of Methodism. Antislavery sentiments among Methodist preachers had to be toned down or repressed altogether, and patriarchs of southern households did not readily welcome a religion that promoted greater spiritual autonomy among women, blacks, and poorer white families. However, as historian James Simeone reminds his readers, many southern migrants to antebellum Illinois came to escape this elitist planter hierarchy, choosing to preserve Illinois for the “white folk.” Most Methodist
preachers who migrated to the Northwest Territory belonged to this same stock, and it is among this demographic of rural Illinois that circuit riders enjoyed their greatest success. Although the correlation between Methodist preachers’ social background and their appeal among non-elitist Americans is not a new one, it reinforces the reality that these itinerant preachers operated as part of the regional population of Illinois, not apart from it. Preserved through diaries, letters, and personal papers, the voices of Methodist circuit riders illustrate how the civic communities of antebellum Illinois and the religious community of the Methodist Episcopal Church fused more effectively in Illinois than they ever had south of the Ohio River.  

*Circuit Riding in a New Nation*

Methodism, a branch of the Anglican Church, first appeared in America in the early 1770s when missionary preachers were dispatched to the British colonies by Methodist founders John and Charles Wesley. Clerical tensions soon arose when Methodist preachers in the colonies began to reject the formality and hierarchy of their English counterparts. Worship gatherings became more energetic and spontaneous, and conversion experiences became so emotionally exhaustive that individuals succumbed to uncontrollable fits of shakes, jerks, or complete bodily paralysis. Although these changes did not alter Methodist doctrine, the new modes of worship proved too unsettling for Methodist leaders in Britain. In 1784, these disciplinary disagreements, coupled with pressure to distance the faith from its Anglican roots in the wake of the American Revolution, finally compelled John Wesley to declare American Methodism a distinctly separate Protestant denomination from English Methodism. This left the newly independent church’s clergy with the task of establishing a strategic yet practical process by which to strengthen and expand their spiritual community within a swiftly expanding country.

Post-revolutionary migration into the trans-Appalachian West threatened to stretch Methodist resources too thin almost from the very beginning. With only 227 Methodist preachers in America in 1790, providing each congregation with its own permanently settled minister was out of the question. Furthermore, Bishop Francis Asbury, whose leadership was indispensable to the young church, feared such a fixed arrangement would restrict active and continuous spreading of the Methodist faith. Asbury had observed the elasticity of itinerant preaching during his own ministerial appointment in rural times.

![John Wesley (1703-1791).](LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)
regions of England and America. Through his encouragement and example, circuit preaching became widely utilized in eighteenth and nineteenth-century America. In order to complete a single round of a given circuit, the appointed itinerant, usually traveling on horseback, visited towns, settlements, and households therein, preaching the gospel and welcoming new members as he traveled. Circuit boundaries remained intentionally vague in order to allow for their expansion, alteration, and evolution. This design placed no limits on how far Methodism could be extended.

Asbury’s rigorous mission instructed circuit riders to reach out to Methodists and non-Methodists alike. “My business was to preach anywhere I could get peaceable and orderly hearers,” asserted Reverend Peter Cartwright, a prominent nineteenth-century circuit rider in the trans-Appalachian West. In addition to strengthening and maintaining existing Methodist congregations, circuit riders reached out to individuals, towns, and entire regions that lay beyond their religious influence. Historians view the Methodist tactic of circuit riding as a revolutionary movement in evangelical Protestantism. Instead of waiting for their services to be called upon by new western settlements, Methodist itinerants ventured into regions where zeal for the Methodist faith did not exist, creating pockets of new religious fervor. This does not mean that other Protestant denominations in America were less passionate about the growth and spread of their own spiritual communities, but rather that the Methodist embrace of circuit preaching better positioned the faith for success within an expansionist America. Since Methodists were more aggressive in their itinerant preaching than other Christian denominations, their circuit riders often gained the advantage of being the first religion visibly present in the settlements of antebellum Illinois.

While Methodist circuit riders relied on the connectivity of itinerant preaching to extend the bounds of their spiritual community in Illinois, the institutional leadership provided a clerical conduit with the larger Methodist Episcopal Church and its central Atlantic hub. At the top of the hierarchical pyramid, the Bishop served as the spiritual anchor for the entire church. The geographic confines of the Methodist Episcopal Church then divided into smaller regions called conferences overseen by Presiding Elders. Finally, each conference was comprised of several Methodist classes (or congregations), each affiliated with a Methodist preacher. All three of these positions—Bishop, Presiding Elder,
and Preacher—could be filled only by an ordained Methodist minister. Other denominations, such as the Baptists, rejected this hierarchical pattern, fearing that it lessened the autonomy of individual parishes. To antebellum Methodists however, this network was essential to maintaining continuity in their religious ministry and identity. When the circuit riders entered antebellum Illinois, this infrastructure ensured managerial connectivity, evangelical flexibility, and an accessible religion rooted in the vernacular of rural America.  

“Extensive and Lonesome Prairies”

When Methodist circuit riders first entered the Northwest Territory at the turn of the nineteenth century, Illinois bore little resemblance to an ideal Methodist community. The moral conduct of many Illinois settlers proved so disagreeable to Methodist preachers that Reverend Benjamin Young was forced to concede in an 1804 letter that Illinois was “of all places, the worst for stealing, fighting, and lying.” Migrants to Illinois generally traced their roots to New England or the Upland South, and those who arrived from the Upland South brought a cultural heritage that Methodist preachers detested, including gambling, excessive drinking, horse racing, and shooting contests. The behavior that circuit riders perceived in these pastimes contradicted Methodist doctrines of temperance, reverent prayer and meditation, and orderly conduct. Circuit riders needed little convincing that such forms of leisure encouraged immorality and idolatry, reducing one’s ability to recognize God’s work and calling in daily life. Methodism taught that God, and God alone, was the central, omnipresent concern of the spiritual community, leaving no room for activities that might cloud the mind against divine enlightenment.

Social and civic unity proved equally as feeble as the territory’s spiritual fervor. Seemingly endless stretches of prairie separated minuscule settlements of a dozen or fewer inhabitants. When Reverend Peter Cartwright moved his family to Illinois in 1823, he noted an average of twenty to eighty miles between towns. Farmers traveled as much as sixty miles to the nearest gristmill, and the lack of ferries, bridges, and marked trails posed a constant obstacle to even the most basic journeys. When available, early maps were of little assistance, being disproportionate, inaccurate, and excessively vague. Circuit rider Elihu Springer wrote frequently of Illinois’s “extensive and lonesome prairies,” emphasizing the severity of regional isolation.
A root of this problem rested on the reality that much of Illinois lay in a virtual no man’s land between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Since the state of Ohio possessed a closer proximity to the Atlantic states and a better infrastructure than Illinois, the easternmost sibling of the Northwest Territory absorbed the majority of westward-moving settlers. On a personal level, removal to Illinois often meant permanent separation from family and friends who remained behind since cross-continental journeys were expensive, tedious, and just plain dangerous. Disorienting and rugged terrain, extreme summers and winters, nominal civic repression of criminal activity, unstable relationships with Native Americans, and epidemics of malaria-carrying mosquitoes added to the growing list of potential hazards of settlement in the Illinois territory. It remained largely an area to be passed over, not passed into.¹⁰

Despite these substantial obstacles to Illinois’s early development, the lands of the future twenty-first state possessed many features that appealed to both prospective settlers and evangelizing ministers. First, Illinois was free of the convoluted and overlapping settler land claims that plagued early Kentucky, and the 1803-1804 cessions by the Fox, Sauk, and Kaskaskia Indians opened millions of acres for new cultivation and settlement. Personal sustenance posed no great difficulty, for game was plentiful and the soil fertile, bringing forth a variety of berries, nuts, corn, and other produce. Such abundant resources could sustain a thriving rural population, and Methodist leaders were quick to note the land’s ability to also support a sizable religious community. Fresh water, fertile soil, and a steady supply of timber—these were necessities for an ideal site for religious gatherings, and Illinois offered many such locations. Much to the circuit riders’ satisfaction, Illinois’s prohibition of slavery dovetailed with the free-labor ideals of Methodism, leaving Cartwright and other preachers from the upland South hopeful that, in Illinois, they would finally “get entirely free of the evil of slavery.”¹¹

Above all else, the prospect of saving souls for Christ drew Methodist itinerants to Illinois. As the area lacked much religiosity in 1800, circuit riders had the potential for becoming the foundation for that infrastructure. Itinerants sought to connect with isolated Methodists, correct those who belonged to another religion, and prevent the unchurched from being converted by competing Christian ministers claiming to profess the true path to salvation. Calling individuals to embrace the Methodist faith, whether anew or for the first time, remained ever at the forefront of the circuit riders’ mission. Each individual was seen as a lost sheep whose salvation depended on spiritual fellowship in the Methodist Church. These ministerial efforts turned many heads when settlers discovered that the Methodist interpretation of a life of spiritual fulfillment meant more than actively participating in prayer meetings. It also meant giving up drinking, gambling, horse racing, and other such cherished cultural components of daily life and leisure. For these reasons, Illinois settlers did not always relish the sight of
a traveling Methodist preacher or his moral reform. Elihu Springer bitterly noted how the men “will work in the field close by the house where I am preaching and will not even do so much as to come in the house.” Other settlers were not so passive in their resistance to Methodist influence. Horse races disrupted the peaceful reverence of prayer meetings, and gangs of sometimes intoxicated ruffians disturbed the religious enthusiasm of camp meeting revivals.\textsuperscript{12}

Since Methodist gatherings involved group prayer and inner examination of the soul in the presence of both family and complete strangers, maintaining a secure environment remained essential to the success of building a strong Methodist community. Thus circuit riders swiftly moved to quell any infringements on Methodist discipline that arose amid their religious gatherings. Though often tolerant and even sympathetic toward the religiously disinclined, circuit riders spurned the violent and disrespectful. When one particular youthful group attempted to stone Cartwright for confiscating their whiskey at a camp meeting, they found themselves flying from the camp grounds in terror, pursued by a wrathful Cartwright pelting them in turn with a shower of small rocks.\textsuperscript{13}

While such outbursts give the appearance of a lapse in conduct by Methodist clergy, they actually emphasize preachers’ ability to adapt to threats of intimidation. Most circuit riders, Cartwright included, typically granted new acquaintances the benefit of the doubt and chose not to exercise extreme means of discipline unless it became absolutely necessary. Calm persuasion nearly always preceded physical
force, but troublemakers who crossed a circuit rider received a simple ultimatum. They could witness the power of God peaceably or forcibly. Put simply by historian Almer Pennewell, settlers “could choose which they wanted, hell or heaven,” and it was given to them accordingly. When a Mormon settler tried to overturn Cartwright’s authority at his own Methodist camp meeting, the infuriated preacher sternly retorted, “this is my camp meeting, and I will maintain its good order at the risk of my life.” In the antebellum South, this masculine patriarchal authority within the Methodist Episcopal Church reinforced regional systems of gender, social, and racial hierarchy. In antebellum Illinois, where civil law enforcement was still evolving, this same masculine patriarchy provided a parental air of order and security for more inclusive religious gatherings.14

“Total Strangers to Me and Mine”
Domestic hospitality played a central role in encouraging the growth of the Methodist community in Illinois. Itinerant preachers not only relied on it for their own shelter, they regularly selected private homes to serve as regional meeting
houses until formal churches could be built. It often took decades to acquire the funds needed to erect such an edifice, so the willingness of families to open their homes to neighbors and strangers alike remained essential to developing a Methodist community. Jane Hendrix continued to offer her house for regional class meetings well into the 1850s, thirty years after Walker’s first unexpected visit and, remarkably, twenty years after the construction of a local church. From a Methodist perspective, the home offered more than a place for cooking and sleeping; it presented a welcoming, cheerful, and—ideally—clean environment where families and guests could give thanks to God for His many blessings, reflect upon His presence in their daily lives, and discover their personal role in the Methodist community. Circuit riders used this inviting and unintimidating environment to draw Illinois settlers together as a spiritual family. Although large-scale revivals remained a popular means of mass conversion, they could not replace personal contact through the smaller domestic encounters. As late as the 1850s, this practice persisted among Illinois circuit riders. “I have never in my ministerial career, discovered so clearly the benefits resulting to a community, and the cause of Christ, from a thorough course of visiting from house to house, and praying with the people as I have in this mission,” reflected Reverend G. G. Worthington, “and he who undertakes this blessed work…and prosecutes it faithfully, will share largely in blessings of the divine Spirit.” Historians have long identified the domestic arena as central to the growth of Methodism, but in the sparsely populated settlements of antebellum Illinois, the relationship between religious and social hospitality was one of mutual benefit. The regional hospitality, coupled with the inclusiveness of Methodist door-to-door preaching, created a domestic environment that fostered vital communal networks among the state’s inhabitants.15

Although not every household proved receptive to Methodist reform, regional hospitality towards travelers impressed upon circuit riders that the land was not a Godless territory. John and Jane Hendrix were devout Methodists in their home states of Virginia and Ohio, and they retained this private devotion despite their 1824 removal to Illinois. For such families, any form of contact with a Protestant preacher provided a welcomed reprieve from religious isolation. One woman of New England origins told Cartwright that her family and neighbors had not heard a sermon since they moved to Illinois and were excited to receive him into their homes. Yet it was the hospitality exhibited by non-Methodists and the irreligious that left the deepest impression on the circuit riders. This was perhaps demonstrated no better than when Peter Cartwright experienced the untimely passing of his daughter. “There was in the settlement a very wicked family, total strangers to me and mine,” he recalled. “The old gentleman and two sons heard of our affliction, and they hastened to our relief, and every act of kindness that they possibly could do us was rendered with undisguised and undissembled friendship; and they would on no account have any compensation. This was true friendship,”
Cartwright warmly recollected, “and it endeared them to me in a most affectionate manner.” Such frequent acts of kindness—the offering of lodging, food, or a neighborly welcome—gave Methodist circuit riders a needed foothold in Illinois, for even when settlers resisted Methodist proselytization, the region’s overall inviting atmosphere granted circuit riders the freedom to establish and expand their spiritual community.16

Building on the foundation of domestic hospitality, the invitation to join the Methodist Episcopal Church remained likewise inclusive. Age—though not a barrier to membership—nevertheless determined how a prospective member would enter the faith. Only infants received an unconditional right to be baptized into the Church; adults had to first willingly and openly accept Methodist doctrine and discipline before they could be initiated. Methodist doctrine identified all humans as equally deserving of Christ’s salvation, regardless of age, gender, race, or physical disability. Native Americans and blacks were given the same invitation as whites to be baptized in the Methodist faith. Records even exist of a legally blind Illinois circuit Rider, Reverend William H. Milburn, who remained well traveled throughout the 1830s and 1840s. In short, the invitation to join the Methodist Episcopal Church was universal. One’s place within the Methodist community however was largely determined by one’s gender, race, and spiritual devotion.17

While gender was not a barrier to membership in the Methodist community, it clearly dictated access to leadership roles within the church. Just as women were barred from serving in civic offices, they likewise found themselves prevented from being ordained as Methodist preachers. However, women held a special role among class members, for they were frequently called upon to exhort, that is, to provide personal testimony about recent faith-based struggles or about the witnessed observance of God in daily life. Such testimonies were a key component of Methodist worship and could often be as moving as the preacher’s sermon. “I am sure I do not exaggerate when I say I have seen our dull and stupid prayer-meetings change from a dead clog to a heavenly enjoyment, when a sister has been called on to pray,” Cartwright attested. Furthermore, when men proved unreceptive to Methodist preaching, Illinois circuit riders frequently found an attentive audience among the region’s women. As many converted women carried the faith and virtues of Methodist doctrine home to their families, they added a spiritual emphasis to their domestic roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. Not unlike the American conception of republican motherhood, this maternal personification of Methodist women rendered female exhorters invaluable members of the Methodist community.18
Overcoming racial differences proved much more complicated. Although records by Peter Cartwright, Jesse Walker, and Elihu Springer point to occasional instances of racial integration among Illinois Methodists, most congregations remained segregated. Despite this exclusion, antislavery sentiments among Methodist preachers permitted the ordination of African American clergy, enabling them to form their own separate Methodist classes among black Illinoisians. Within white congregations, the most significant racial issue was not whether blacks should be integrated, but whether slave owners should be allowed to join the church. Methodist doctrine opposed slavery and forbade ministers to own slaves, but it gave little guidance on whether slave-owning lay members could be permitted. Cartwright welcomed anyone into the Church, regardless of their position on slavery, in hopes that complete conversion by both slave and master would lead to voluntary emancipation. In contrast, itinerants Jesse Walker and Peter Akers strictly forbade slave owners from entering the Church. Staunch abolitionists in Illinois reviled the circuit riders for not being more uniformly outspoken against the institution of slavery. This misrepresentation of Methodist doctrine—a doctrine that firmly opposed slavery—proved so severe that effective collaborations with some Methodist circuit riders grew strained. “It took all the grace I could muster to retain my antislavery views,” recollected an irritated Elihu Springer. The Methodist Episcopal Church would eventually split in 1848 over the issue of slavery, but as a general rule, controversies over slavery did not arise among Illinois Methodists until the 1850s when it became a national controversy, leaving the matter to the discretion of the region’s early circuit riders.19

Contrary to the preachers’ professed belief that the Methodist faith should be extended to every human being, Native Americans remained excluded from full equality in the Methodist community. Even though circuit riders such as Walker and Cartwright labored to bring the Christian faith to the Potawatomi, they made no reference to Native American religious integration or ordination. Language barriers, white settlers’ apprehensions and fears of indigenous peoples and political decrees of Indian removal further complicated this mission. Mixed opinions also existed among circuit riders as to whether Native Americans even deserved to be offered salvation. Walker and Cartwright remained more sympathetic towards the plight of “the poor children of the forest,” but sermons by William McKendree warned against attacks by “hostile” and “savage Indians.”
Jesse Walker’s daughter did adopt a young Potawatomi boy, raising him as her son. This boy likely worshiped in prayer meetings as an equal member of the Methodist class, but this instance marks an unusual and rare circumstance. In general, circuit riders and Potawatomi failed to comprehend each other’s spiritual beliefs, creating a barrier to mutual understanding and religious collaboration.²⁰

Beyond geographic, cultural, and racial barriers, circuit riders’ perhaps most antagonizing challenge was the diverse array of ministers seeking to proselytize the people of Illinois. Methodists may have been the spiritual forerunners in many parts of the territory, but Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Mormons soon added to the religious landscape, each one working to strengthen and expand their own religious community. Differences in doctrine and modes of worship occasionally produced intense confrontations between Methodists and those of other faiths. Cartwright ignited heated arguments with Baptist ministers over the correct manner of baptism, a sacrament that was not interdenominationally transferable. Similarly, Elihu Springer found himself competing with a group of Presbyterians who perpetually and deliberately scheduled their religious services at the same time as his own Methodist worship services, causing a lapse in Methodist attendance. Circuit riders had their prejudices as well, denouncing the “delusions” of the pre-millennialists, “the blasphemous organization” of the Mormons, and “the infallible church of Rome.”²¹

Despite some bitter encounters with other proselytizers, Methodist circuit riders typically encouraged mutual respect and ecumenism among Illinois’s religiously diverse population. Jesse Walker shared his Chicago Sunday school with a local Baptist congregation and, in 1836, Methodist and Presbyterian churches were both erected in the young city, coexisting quite peacefully. As ministers were relatively scarce in Illinois, preachers of different denominations occasionally invited one another to preach at each other’s worship services and revivals. Mormons and Catholics, however, were largely excluded from ever occupying the Methodist pulpit, except in cases of formal religious debate. On the whole, and as in other places in the Ohio Valley, Illinois preachers seem to have struck an unspoken agreement to work together to win souls for God while generally respecting the differences in each other’s doctrine. This expression of religious tolerance does not necessarily indicate a relaxed adherence to Methodist doctrine. Rather, it illuminates a desire among Methodist circuit riders to support an even broader community in Illinois where common ties among the Protestant faithful could enable people of different denominations to still accept one another as people of the same God, even if they adhered to different liturgies. Support of moral, social, and political platforms such as temperance and antislavery enabled Illinois evangelicals to find further common ground across denominational lines. By achieving a favorable degree of ecumenism among antebellum evangelicals, the Methodist community retained its ability to grow with, not against, Illinois’s diverse population.²²
Apart from the exhortations and sermons of formal worship services, circuit riders utilized creative yet instructive approaches to educate settlers about Methodist doctrine and to engage them in spiritually stimulating activities. When some evening entertainment was desired by their host families, circuit riders engaged their hosts in activities, such as singing energetic, improvisational church hymns or challenging one another in a friendly religious debate. As alternatives to dancing, or the widely popular pastime of card playing, these could be as lively as any barn dance while still retaining religious consciousness throughout the merrymaking. To foster continuing religious reflection and community, literature from the Methodist Book Concern was distributed and sold on a mass level. William Royal’s son Thomas recalled that his father’s saddlebag, though modestly furnished, always contained a few neatly preserved books for just such a purpose. “He was not content merely with his preaching and pastoral work,” Thomas recalled. “He was especially active in circulating religious literature and in securing subscribers to our church papers.” Itinerants hoped that households could find instruction, inspiration, and guidance for reflection in these pocket-sized publications. Literacy among early Illinois households was never a guarantee. Historians have shown that the possession of a common literature had the power to engender a feeling of cultural and spiritual community. Methodist preachers recognized that literacy and the circulation of religious tracts were effective tools in mass conversion and in nurturing individual spirituality. Because of this ability of a common literature to culturally and spiritually unite a given population, Methodist Circuit Riders strongly advocated literacy among Illinois settlers, even before schools could be erected.23

As was expected of their profession, Illinois circuit riders devoted special attention to the spiritual instruction of children. Methodist sponsored colleges, Sunday schools, and a limited number of short-lived Native American mission schools remained an integral component of Methodist education. These institutions all strove to discipline young minds to the virtues and beliefs of Methodist doctrine, increase literacy through the examination of Scripture, and preserve the Methodist faith for future generations of believers. For instance, Jesse Walker maintained a Sunday school in Chicago that met every week or two. The most prominent Methodist Native American mission school in antebellum Illinois opened in 1825 on the Fox River, instructing young Potawatomi children in the language and doctrine of the Methodist faith. Observing the moral and spiritual benefits from such instruction, many Illinois settlers eagerly supported such endeavors. William Royal recalled that, when he was a boy, “So anxious was my father to hold me under religious influence that he would cheerfully submit to almost any inconvenience to keep me in touch with preachers and the gospel.” Public schools did not become more prevalent in the antebellum Northwest until the mid-1800s, therefore
religious-sponsored schools often provided the only formal education available to children of antebellum Illinois. Furthermore, by bringing the Word of God down to a level which young minds could more easily comprehend, circuit riders reinforced—from a religious standpoint—the familial bonds of Illinois settlers. In a region where children shared actively in domestic labors, these same children were now entrusted with maintaining spiritual righteousness with equal vigor.24

Methodist clergy’s attention to the spiritual instruction of Illinois youth soon evolved into a collaborative effort among itinerants to promote the establishment of institutions of higher learning. Peter Cartwright for one, passionately advocated educating the laity, and endorsed developing academies to produce more Methodist clergy. Yet he opposed educating itinerant preachers in advanced theological doctrine, fearing that too much time spent on such endeavors would weaken the circuit rider’s ability to preach in a “plain practical” manner. Several colleges and seminaries including McKendree College, the Illinois Conference Women’s Academy, and Illinois Wesleyan College began to evolve under the watchful supervision of the Methodist clergy. Special funding was reserved for
the spiritual education of the physically handicapped whose travel and mobility were limited. At these preparatory institutions, Methodist leaders hoped to instill young men and women with the zeal and discipline of the Methodist faith while at the same time providing them with competent and affordable training for employment, especially as teachers, and basic life skills. Methodist preachers played active roles in these colleges, such as serving as teachers, trustees, administrators, and members of the board of directors. The youth represented the future of the community, and these institutions of learning strove to shape the minds, attitudes, behaviors, and work ethics of the youth before “wicked” habits could develop. “Just as the tree is bent it inclines,” recollected Elihu Springer, and by way of education, he aimed to bend his trees in a distinctly Methodist fashion.25

Book distribution and formal education enabled circuit riders to offer spiritual guidance and counseling, but regional camp meetings yielded far more tangible examples of how Methodist preachers envisioned the social milieu of an ideal Methodist community. These revivals provided circuit riders with a period of significant influence over the environment of mass religious gatherings without being hampered by civic regulations, social distractions, and the sometimes unsanitary conditions of their hosts’ small living quarters. These lively retreats were held in carefully-chosen wooded areas and attended by hundreds of people from the outlying regions. Most lasted five to seven days and were filled with worship services, sermons from multiple preachers, and times for group prayer, exhortation, and inner reflection. Here, in this simplified environment, itinerants exercised pastoral leadership to instill practices of prayerful meditation, reconciliation, respectful conduct, cleanliness, and communal support. Preachers hoped that through shared conversion experiences, individuals might find common ties that would strengthen settlers into a more united community of believers. “I am very certain that the most successful part of my ministry has been on camp-ground,” wrote Cartwright, one of the region’s strongest advocates for the camp meeting. “There the word of God has reached the hearts of thousands that otherwise, in all probability, never would have been reached by the ordinary means of grace.” Because of its effectiveness in stimulating spiritual fervor and fellowship, Cartwright, well into the 1850s, encouraged his fellow preachers to spend at least a week each year “on the tented field.”26

Camaraderie began well before the formal worship services commenced and was not limited to the scheduled periods of group prayer and worship. Those who arrived at the campsite brought lumber, tools, fresh produce, meats, and other basic necessities to share and to make the site clean and habitable for the many in attendance. When a suitable shelter, such as a barn, could not be borrowed, men volunteered to help erect a simple structure in which to hold religious services. These same men also took an active role in maintaining the safety and order of the camp meeting by serving as night guards and helping preachers to reprimand those who caused disturbances. With leadership, organization, and police, it was a community in miniature.27
Camp meetings attracted settlers and preachers from up to fifty miles away, nurturing social and spiritual networking important to a community of believers. Residents of remote settlements forged spiritual ties with those of outlying towns, and circuit riders benefited from meetings and reunions amid their network of fellow preachers, presiding elders, and the occasional bishop who attended these regional gatherings. Camp meetings made it possible for the Methodist community to overcome social isolation and recognize a larger sense of belonging beyond that of small individual congregations. Furthermore, the act of communal prayer provided overwhelming emotional encouragement for those seeking repentance and a renewed relationship with God. To circuit riders, these were preeminent goals of a camp meeting: to renew one’s relationship with God and with God’s people. Over the years, these sites evolved from campgrounds to formally erected Methodist churches, but these central purposes of communal fellowship remained the same. Like the camp meeting, and like the smaller household prayer groups, these humbly ordained edifices continued to offer Illinois residents regular opportunities for invitation, participation, and renewal in the Methodist community.\(^{28}\)

*Civic and Spiritual Lives*

Beyond carefully controlled boundaries of Methodist worship services, schools, and camp meetings, circuit riders labored to build a Methodist community that would merge with and amplify the civic lives of its members. Just as camp meeting participants collaborated to support and provide for the gathered spiritual community, itinerants encouraged and exhibited this same energetic involvement in
maintaining the social welfare of Illinois’s counties, cities, towns, and settlements. In addition to leading a relief expedition to transport much-needed provisions from Sangamon County to Peoria County, Jesse Walker carried election returns from Chicago to Peoria, built a bridge over the Des Plaines River, operated a ferry across the Fox River, and served on a committee to scout out and develop a road from Peoria to the mouth of the Fox. His house served as the first polling place in Illinois and, in 1825, Walker served on Peoria County’s petit jury. Reverend Mead Otwell served on the board of Trustees for McKendree College, participated in the dry goods trade, and oversaw the construction of Carlinville’s brick courthouse. Itinerant Samuel Bogart personally raised and led a battalion in the Black Hawk War, and both John Hogan and Peter Cartwright took time out of itinerant preaching to serve in the state legislature—a rarity for circuit rider preachers.29

As circuit riders received exceptionally meager wages, this work also provided Methodist preachers with an invaluable means to cover the incurred expenses of their itinerant ministry. Elihu Springer periodically hired himself out for seasonal jobs, such as driving oxen to market, and his wife wove and sold carpets. Similarly, Walker and Cartwright maintained a small trading post and smith’s shop at their Potawatomi mission school, providing a source of income through the sale of basic provisions and craftsman services. Surviving only on handouts and donations would have been contradictory to the circuit riders’ mission. Productive labor that directly benefited the social well-being of Illinois residents reinforced the virtue of service as a key pillar of the Methodist community. Furthermore, the emphasis which circuit riders placed on civic and charitable labor meshed almost seamlessly with the region’s familial outlook on domestic labor. Within most rural households of antebellum Illinois, every physically able member of a family was expected to contribute to the domestic labors necessary for that family’s sustenance and survival. As with other aspects of their ministry, Methodist circuit riders began with a simple domestic component of Illinois settlements and applied it to a wider communal population, encouraging civic and spiritual unity to grow in tandem.30

Ideally, all of these itinerant efforts—preaching, praying, educating, promoting spiritual connectivity, and civic service—culminated in a Methodist community that could assume the responsibility and leadership necessary for each individual, household, and class to sustain its own active faith. Itinerants relied on lay leaders to spearhead routine but essential communal services such as conducting Bible studies and worship services, directing institutions of learning and book presses, and catering to the basic spiritual needs of the community. Cartwright asserted that only when the laity assumed a willing and cheerful commitment to actively maintain religious fervor and unity could the itinerant preacher become available to carry his evangelical mission to new regions. “It seems to me wrong that the ministers of God, divinely called to the holy work of saving souls, should
leave that work, and go and serve tables,” he attested. “Wherefore, let the Church look out competent and well-qualified lay teachers and officers for our literary institutions, who can build them up just as well as preachers.” Even after the establishment of formal parishes, Cartwright feared that without the perpetuation of itinerant preaching, the Methodist Episcopal Church would lose its
ability to maintain a larger regional unity and continue to grow within the territories. Lay leaders represented the next generation of Methodist preachers, for those who displayed an especially passionate commitment were often recommended to the regional conferences as potential candidates for ordination. Thus the cycle and the circuit would begin anew.31

Notwithstanding the ranging efforts of circuit riders, initial tallies of Methodist conversion in Illinois appear rather underwhelming. In 1830, just over 157,000 people populated Illinois, yet less than three percent were Methodists. Some towns like Edwardsville remained largely unresponsive to Methodist reform, and Jesse Walker's Fox River mission school yielded few Native American converts, closing after only five years. Methodist chronicles also record encounters with what circuit riders called “backsliders,” individuals who, in a preacher's absence, slipped back into immoral and impious behavior. When backsliding became so severe for Reverend James Dew in Pope County, he finally expelled everyone from the local Methodist class, burned the church ledgers, and vowed to rebuild the Methodist community anew. On the whole however, reports of backsliders were isolated incidents and usually resulted from a lack of a meaningful spiritual community in a circuit rider's absence. Within the Methodist Episcopal Church, the negative influence of backsliders generally did not significantly hinder the growth or stability of Methodism in Illinois.32

Conference journals of the Methodist Episcopal Church reveal that the Illinois circuit riders continued to achieve a steady increase in membership through the early decades of their itinerant preaching in Illinois. Jesse Walker alone gained over two hundred converts in his first year in Illinois and, within three decades, Peter Cartwright received thousands of Illinois residents into the Methodist Episcopal Church. By 1824, Illinois accumulated enough Methodist members to become its own conference, and over the following two years the number of Illinois Methodists nearly doubled. In the 1850 census, Methodism was the most populous religious affiliation in Illinois, comprising more than one-third of the state's faith-based population, illustrating a drastic growth since the turn of the century. With over 178,000 declared members in 1850, the Methodist community in Illinois had achieved a solid network of active and connected believers across the state.33

Parishes like the Shiloh Methodist Church as well as Methodist-sponsored institutions of learning such as McKendree College (now McKendree University) and Illinois Wesleyan College provide examples of long-term success of Methodist instruction. These centers of learning and religious gathering have all enjoyed more than a century and a half of prosperity and religiosity, leaving a visible sign of an enduring Methodist legacy. Yet these institutional beacons represent only a fraction of the success of the circuit
riders’ mission. Their overall success encompassed more than the number of settlers they were able to convert to Methodism. Many Illinois residents who attended a Methodist camp meeting or college, who hosted a Methodist preacher, or who received Methodist literature would never convert to Methodism. Yet these encounters offered settlers social, educational, and even civic advantages beyond the obvious benefit of spiritual nourishment. Despite the abysmal failure of the Fox River mission in converting Potawatomi, both Walker and Cartwright praised the many tribal members who renounced the consumption of alcoholic beverages. While not a direct embrace of the Methodist faith, such moral reforms reflect a broader influence of Methodist itinerancy and instruction.34

The extent to which a Methodist community in Illinois blended with the state’s civically-defined communities helped to strengthen the social infrastructure of Illinois. Camp meetings, though extremely effective in fueling religious enthusiasm, also provided isolated settlers with opportunities for social, economic, and professional exchange. The distribution of Methodist literature and the establishing of religious schools fostered literacy and education of Illinois residents. Circuit riders’ civic service, such as surveying new roads and carrying mail, along with their promotion of Christian ecumenism, facilitated webs of communication among Illinois residents. While increasing the size and geographic scope of their spiritual community, Methodist circuit riders worked to improve community bonds, moral stability, rural refinement, and regional unity of a previously sparsely-populated and regionally isolated territory. Scholars have shown that the domestic, ministerial, and social qualities of early Methodism enabled it to blend almost seamlessly with the democratic ideals of the early American Republic. Based on the social and civic influence of the Methodist circuit riders in antebellum Illinois, I would take this argument one step farther. I argue that the inclusiveness of spiritual communities, such as the Methodists, played a key role in the success of American westward expansion. The mutual need for a solid communal infrastructure created interdependence between civic communities of antebellum Illinois and the spiritual community embodied by the presence of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The newly arrived settlers in antebellum Illinois required more than a shared geography and government to bind them together under a common purpose and identity. Religion provided a visibly present avenue for this endeavor. That is why Peter Cartwright always concluded his correspondence with the parting phrase, “Yours in the best of bonds.” The attitudes, movements, and institutions fathered by the transcendency of these religious communal ties have both shaped and tested the limits of growth, unity, and identity within the United States, leaving an indelible imprint upon American society.35

1 Personal recollection of Jane Hendrix, wife of Jonathan Hendricks, recorded in “Address of Rev. Dr. James Shaw,” Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, Illinois, Volume 1, War Record of McLean County with Other Records (Bloomington, Ill.: Pantograph Printing Stationery Company, 1899), 302-303 (quotation).


10 While historians such as James Davis, John Faragher, and William Cronin highlight an array of environmental and logistical challenges to settling antebellum Illinois, John Craig Hammond’s comprehensive study of the Northwest...


17 For requirements for initiation into the Methodist Episcopal Church, see *Doctrines and Discipline*, 10-15, 72. For references to the inclusion and accommodation of members and preachers with disabilities, see *Centennial History of McKendree College*, 138; "Ministerial Help from God," Papers of William Royal, Folder 18, ALPL; Cartwright, *Autobiography*, 230. Recent historians such as Kim Nielsen have provided testimony of the advancement of the disabled throughout American History, but the subject has received little attention within the realm of antebellum religious history. See Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Publishing, 2013).


20 *Ninth Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, N.Y.: Azor and Hoyt, 1828), 8-9 (first quotation), accessed at United Methodist Archives and History Center, Madison, New Jersey (hereafter UMAHC); *Seventh Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, N.Y.: Azor and Hoyt, 1826), 36-37, accessed at


33 Illinois Conference Minutes, Journals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Church Collections, ALPL; Leaton, History of Methodism in Illinois, 259; Cartwright, Autobiography, 267; Pennewell, A Voice in the Wilderness, 139-141; J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States (Washington DC, 1854), 136.

34 Regarding Methodist success with Native Americans, see Cartwright, Autobiography, 188-189; Pennewell, A Voice in the Wilderness, 139-141.

35 “1835 Cartwright Report on Circuits and Missions” (quotation), broadside, Audio-visual Collection, ALPL.
Disorder at the Derby
Race, Reputation, and Louisville’s 1967 Open Housing Crisis

Samuel Abramson

“...ain’t going to lay down in front of a horse myself, but there’s a lot of cats that will,” Dick Gregory told the protesters sitting in the street. “If it comes to closing the [Kentucky] Derby, we’ll just have to close it up.” Gregory made his living as a comedian, but he had also allied himself with African American civil rights causes throughout the 1960s. Now, on April 11, 1967, he spoke to protesters in Louisville, Kentucky, following a rally demanding the city adopt a comprehensive, enforceable open housing ordinance. “We’re going to march and march until the people of this town learn they’re not dealing with animals,” Gregory said, adding that a disruption could “keep those out-of-town folks from enjoying a city we can’t even enjoy ourselves.”

All through an unseasonably cool April, civil rights protesters would threaten to disrupt the Kentucky Derby if the city did not adopt an open housing ordinance. “No Housing, No Derby” became the slogan. Washington Post columnist Shirley Povich described a “clear and present fear” around town that the “fair housing demonstrations that have raged in the city for weeks will spill over onto the Derby scene.” Few cities were as associated with a single event as Louisville with the Derby; it was the city’s annual bourbon-soaked weekend in the national spotlight. If housing supporters wanted attention, they had certainly targeted the right weekend.

Louisville’s 1967 open housing crisis contained familiar elements from other southern civil rights sagas in the 1960s: African American student protesters; downtown business boycotts; a white citizens’ council and claims of outside agitators; backroom negotiations at the eleventh hour; marches that devolved into name-calling, violence, and arrests; even an appearance and rousing speech by Martin Luther King Jr. Few such crises, however, involved a city’s signature event like the Derby. By early May, many Louisvillians were less concerned with residential segregation than they were with the national embarrassment that might stem from the accompanying protests. They simply wished to sip their juleps and place their bets in peace. Out-of-towners had not flocked to renowned hotels like the Seelbach and the Brown to watch civil rights demonstrations on Saturday. A Derby disruption would jeopardize the image the city had crafted for itself. “To Kentuckians,” New York Times columnist Arthur Daley wrote, “that would [be] akin to profaning the temple.”
While scholars have since unpacked how civil rights narratives and institutionalized racism were not exclusive to the American South in the mid-twentieth century, a widely held regional myth was the reference point for Louisvillians at the time. For decades, Louisville, a city caught between regional reputations, had fancied itself an “All-American city,” a progressive haven in the Upper South impervious to the civil rights debacles that haunted places like Little Rock and Birmingham. Its residents thought of their hometown as culturally southern yet free of the racial stigma that plagued many southern cities. During the open housing crisis of 1967, activists would challenge the myth of Louisville as an exceptional city with an already concluded civil rights narrative. Ultimately, Louisville’s successful effort to preserve its reputation on its most important weekend exposed broader racial and social issues that had existed all along.4

When open housing supporters threatened to “close up” the Kentucky Derby, they threatened Louisville’s sporting, cultural, and economic centerpiece. First contested in 1875, the Derby was more than just the “greatest two minutes in sports” for Louisvillians. Prior to the famed horse race, the city hosted the Kentucky Derby Festival, a two-week slate of events that included a steamboat race on the Ohio River and a downtown parade featuring themed floats and marching bands. Race day itself blended glamour and grit, the once-a-year jauntiness of wearing seersucker and oversized hats with a free-for-all, open-bar picnic. From its inception, the Derby marketed itself as a tribute to a bygone era, embracing both the debonair and the plain-clothed. Historian James Nicholson notes that Kentucky “had been a slave state and remained a racially segregated society after emancipation, but the Commonwealth also retained its reputation of being more racially progressive than the deeper South.” This reputation spanned into the twentieth century and functioned as “an asset to promoters of the Kentucky Derby.” The Derby offered its audience “a taste of the Old South without having to travel to the geographically and culturally distant Deep South.” Natives and guests, whites and blacks could all congregate underneath Churchill Downs’ twin spires on Derby Day, yearning for a simpler, more leisurely time.5

With this image came controversy. By marketing itself as a place to appreciate vestiges of the Old South, early Derbies conjured images of sprawling plantations and affable slaves. Even into the twentieth century, Kentucky’s famed horse farms still “resembled old southern plantations, complete with a black labor force and presided over by a Kentucky colonel,” a figure that “never really existed, but that could nonetheless be celebrated in Louisville at Derby time.” White Derby-goers in the 1920s and 1930s had no qualms with reciting the line, “‘Tis Summer, the darkies are gay” in My Old Kentucky Home, the Stephen Foster-penned tune celebrating life on an antebellum plantation. Derby festivities toned down references to white gentility and black servitude in the post-World War II era, but broader tributes to antebellum ways persisted. Local African American
activist Raoul Cunningham, who grew up in Louisville in the 1940s and 1950s, later described the Derby as “a major event that reflected Louisville at the time: segregated.” He recalled that “the owner of [Louisville’s long-running African American newspaper] the Defender had a box, but most blacks did not,” adding that “the restrooms were also segregated” at Churchill Downs and “blacks were primarily at the track’s infield before college students took it over.” The city was selectively southern during Derby week, trading in its “All-American City” reputation for a brief period to honor the myths of “Old Kentucky.”

When the parties ended and the visitors departed Louisville every May, the city’s progressive visage endured; the “No Housing, No Derby” movement was an aberration for an urban area proud of its “self-image as a model for its southern neighbors” at the “forefront of racial change.” School desegregation in response to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision proceeded peacefully in the fall of 1956, without National Guard escorts or politicians standing in school doorways. It buoyed Louisville’s standing, and some in the national press “showered praise on the city…cementing [its] image as a progressive leader for the region.” In response to a first school day without a major incident, the New York Times declared that “when the history of this proud southern city is written, this day will undoubtedly go down as a historic landmark…even in the South…integration can be made to work without violence.”

The local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP) agreed, branding Louisville’s integration as “an outstanding example of what can be done to effect an orderly transition to desegregated schools in the South.”

When it came to integration and a moderate image, however, Louisville had well-defined limitations. In her book, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980*, historian Tracy K’Meyer details how a city eager to accept praise for its civil rights gains erected clear barricades to integrating local neighborhoods. Louisville veered from the Jim Crow South in terms of political participation, granting African Americans voting access by the end of Reconstruction and fostering a strong, loyal base of Republican African American voters who took “a more active political role than African Americans in any comparable southern city” and “provided the basis for interracial cooperation with black leaders and groups throughout the movement era.” But if many Louisville whites yielded on integrated schools, restaurants, downtown businesses, and other public spaces, they remained “openly hostile to the breakdown of Jim Crow in private spaces—especially housing.” The tradition of segregated housing persisted despite the ruling in *Buchanan v. Warley*, a 1917 U.S. Supreme Court case that declared prohibiting the sale of property to African Americans in Louisville as unconstitutional. A combination of “policies of government agencies, financial institutions, and real estate professionals, together with public pressure,” ensured that Louisville residential patterns mirrored those of the rest of segregated America well into the post-World War II era.

No incident reflected the limits of Louisville’s civil rights tolerance quite like the Wade case, which involved an African American family purchasing a home in an all-white neighborhood in suburban Louisville. With the assistance of Anne and Carl Braden, a prominent white couple in progressive Louisville circles, Andrew and Charlotte Wade purchased the Shively neighborhood home in 1954. Immediately, the Wades endured threats and harassment. Neighbors burned crosses, threw rocks, and fired shotguns; the tension culminated in a detonated bomb that destroyed part of the house. In the community, meanwhile, “the white moderates and liberals who so readily praised Louisville for following the Supreme Court edict to integrate the schools” expressed “little sympathy for the Wades and even less for the Bradens.” While the Wades had plenty of allies, particularly in the African American community, opponents accused both couples of partaking in “a Communist plot to weaken America and deprive whites of their rights.” A grand jury investigation and subsequent trial piggybacked on “the national and regional red scare and the local history of anti-Communist attacks,” successfully linking Carl Braden and his associates to a Communist-inspired conspiracy. Braden was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to fifteen years in prison, though he was released on bond and only ended up serving seven months after a Supreme Court decision invalidated local sedition laws.
After the trial and Carl’s release from prison, the Bradens remained in Louisville, suffering “hate mail and harassing phone calls” and feeling “abandoned by white liberal friends…and black civil rights organizations.” According to scholar Catherine Fosl, the couple “lived in a subculture that validated interracial friendships and civil rights gains” and subsequently “overestimated progressive trends in Louisville and vastly underestimated the hostility their act would provoke.” As accused seditionists, the “taint of Communism” would render the Bradens as “symbols of a demonic internal subversion in their hometown” for “years to come.” Having dealt with months of violence and harassment, the Wades eventually sold the home in Shively and moved to Louisville’s West End, concluding that they could “never feel safe surrounded by such avowed racists.”

The episode spoke to the limits of civil rights progress in Louisville. Fundamentally, many white citizens—even those who identified as liberal or socially progressive—felt socially and economically threatened by the idea of African American families moving into their neighborhoods. These citizens believed that African Americans moving in next door threatened both white suburban privilege as well as neighborhood property values. It did not seem to matter that those African Americans might be lawyers, doctors, or chemists—the saga with the Wade and Braden families “threatened the white civic elite’s control of the pace of change” and revealed the limits of “acceptable integration” within public and private spaces. As K’Meyer observed, the picture in the national media of the harassment of “a pioneering black family and the persecution of the white citizens who had tried to help them” strongly contradicted “the image of a forward-moving leader in southern race relations.” As the forthcoming open housing crisis demonstrated, Louisville’s precedent for fierce resistance to integrated neighborhoods would resurface again.

Louisville’s 1967 open housing crisis was not the city’s first experience with a tense and prolonged civil rights struggle. The local drive for open access had its roots in the 1950s, when African Americans wanted equal access to lunch counters and drugstores. After the Board of Aldermen voted down a bill banning citywide discrimination in all public facilities in 1960, protesters responded with a combination of student-led marches, sit-ins, and boycotts, resulting in violence, arrests, negotiations, and even an appearance by Dr. King. “We had a plan, and we knew how to disrupt city life and send everything haywire downtown,” Cunningham recalled. When downtown demonstrations yielded little progress in 1961, open accommodations supporters vowed to descend upon Churchill Downs if lawmakers did not address their concerns. As with the 1967 crisis, open accommodations leaders in 1961 believed that threatening disorder as Louisville played “host to the world” would increase the likelihood of passing an accommodations ordinance.
Ultimately, they backed off their plans. Upon hearing the news that protesters would skip Derby Day demonstrations, the *Defender* published an editorial complimenting the 1961 movement’s principals on their judgment. Accommodations leaders, they said, had “both the force and the right to shame Louisville before because of continued segregation,” but had instead exhibited “high statesmanship” in choosing “not to damage our city at this time.” *Defender* editors agreed that the city needed open accommodations, but keeping the peace and avoiding widespread embarrassment amid the city’s “most advertised event” took precedence.\(^{13}\)

Activists waged the accommodations battle for two more years before the Board of Aldermen finally passed an ordinance desegregating all public accommodations in May 1963. Its passage sparked national praise for the “first city in the South to pass a public accommodations law.” Despite years of protests, violence, and stalling, Louisville emerged from the accommodations crisis with its racially progressive reputation and the perceived sanctity of the Derby intact. Four years later, city officials confronted another civil rights protest; this time, however, the threats to spoil the Derby and embarrass the city were quite real.\(^{14}\)

In early April, local NAACP head W. J. Hodge encouraged African Americans to boycott the upcoming Derby if city lawmakers did not respond to calls for a housing ordinance. “We regret such measures have to be taken, but we have no alternative in light of weak and vacillating leadership of the mayor and the stubborn inaction of the Louisville Board of Aldermen,” Hodge had said. The passing of a week did little to change this perception. Hours before Gregory spoke to marchers who sat in a downtown street as an act of protest, the Louisville Board of Aldermen had, as anticipated, rejected the housing ordinance recommended by the City-County Human Relations Commission by a vote of nine to three. The vote ensured a tumultuous month leading up to the Derby; after several months of relatively subdued campaigning and discussion of the housing issue, the “No Housing, No Derby” campaign began in earnest. Four weeks of turmoil forced the city to gaze upon its unresolved racial issues in unprecedented fashion.\(^{15}\)

The origins of the open housing crisis lay in the March 1962 establishment of the Human Rights Commission (HRC), a city-county agency that prioritized “trying to better conditions for Negroes in public accommodations, employment and housing.” In August 1962, the commission began assessing integration in Louisville’s neighborhoods with an eye toward drafting a housing ordinance. With the passage of the public accommodations ordinance in May 1963 and a job ordinance in February 1965, the HRC turned its attention more squarely to the issue of housing. It approved a voluntary compliance housing law and recommended its passage in July 1965; the following month, the Board of Aldermen passed the ordinance. Voluntary compliance seemed like progress for open housing, but the municipal government’s inability to enforce the ordinance rendered
it hollow and ineffective. When HRC officials ordered two local real estate dealers to cease discriminating against African Americans buyers in September, they had no enforcement authority.\textsuperscript{16}

Frustrated open housing supporters, including the HRC, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, and the newly minted Committee on Open Housing (COH) continued to pressure local officials all through 1966, urging swift action. By the time the Board of Aldermen officially addressed the ordinance on December 27, 1966, the open housing crisis had escalated. An advisory committee formed by Louisville Mayor Kenneth Schmied labeled the existing voluntary ordinance as ineffective, and both the HRC and civil rights and clergy leaders had approached aldermen and the mayor’s office in the fall to reiterate the need for a stronger law. Schmied argued that the proposed punishments were too harsh and that the ordinance gave the HRC too much power. Rev. Alfred Horrigan, chairman of the HRC and president of Bellarmine College, a local Catholic liberal arts institution, responded by calling upon the aldermen to stop “foot-dragging” and display “statesmanlike leadership” on the housing issue.\textsuperscript{17}

In spite of Schmied’s insistence that no resolution would come with the lurking threat of demonstrations, unsatisfied COH leaders met with officials from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Louisville on February 24 to plan protests.
More local organizations and local politicians weighed in on the open housing crisis as it gained momentum in March. As supporters became more impatient with the mayor’s occasional and halfhearted efforts, Schmied continued to posture for a watered-down ordinance. On March 30, Dr. King led protesters in an attempt to enter a Concerned Citizens Council (CCC) meeting that had been convened to discuss opposition to open housing; the incident resulted in numerous arrests. An unapologetic King declared there was “no more powerful way to dramatize and expose social evil than to tramp, tramp, tramp.” Four days later, as Schmied urged Board of Aldermen President J. W. Young to act quickly on the housing issue before the city climate deteriorated further, protesters changed tactics and began marching in all-white South End neighborhoods, where resistance to open housing was more entrenched than anywhere in the city. The marches triggered a month of uncertainty and confusion in a crisis that had slowly escalated through the winter.18

Hodge’s April 5 recommendation that African Americans and “others of goodwill” boycott the Derby arrived on the heels of several nights of protests in the South End. Leading the protests was Reverend Alfred Daniel King, better known as A. D., a younger brother of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A veteran of civil rights activism in his own right, A. D. King had moved to Louisville in 1965 to lead a local church. In the initial series of South End protests, the marches encountered epithet-spewing hecklers, often armed with eggs and waving Confederate flags; as the frequency and size of open housing marches increased through the month of April, so too did harassment rooted in decades of opposing integration in Louisville neighborhoods.19

Each day seemed to bring a larger South End demonstration in a more volatile environment. The April 8 march foreshadowed the ugliness of what lay ahead. Many of the marchers were African American teenagers who proceeded through all-white neighborhoods as hecklers pelted them with eggs and rocks, often resulting in black eyes and broken noses. One white teenager dangled an effigy resembling an African American man with the head of a monkey. Protesters sang freedom songs, chanting “Ain’t gonna let no crazy white folks turn us ‘round,” as trailing neighborhood teens poked and prodded the effigy before setting it ablaze and triumphantly draping a Confederate flag over a “For Sale” sign. Hecklers, who often became so enraged that they simultaneously tangled with police and protesters, taunted African Americans with chants like “Hey nigger, bet you’d like to be white, I’ll let you be white for a quarter, but you can’t be, because you’ve got an odor.” Despite the harassment, Cunningham, who participated in some of the South End marches, said activists were prepared for the abuse. “When we marched in South Louisville, that caused some resentment, [but] you’ve chosen to [march] and adopted nonviolence as a tactic…if you can’t take it, don’t come,” he said. Television cameras captured the bewildering scenes for citywide viewing.
Neither housing supporters nor neighborhood opponents seemed interested in backing down. In a matter of days, a conflict previously characterized by public barbs and peaceful protests had snowballed into one of the most frightening, racially-charged episodes in Louisville history.20

Before the April 11 vote, members of the HRC executive committee spoke to aldermen at a caucus in a last-ditch effort to sway them in favor of the housing ordinance. Citing a Louisville Urban League report, HRC chair Rev. Horrigan asserted that having no housing ordinance dissuaded African American professionals from moving to Louisville. Six examples from the report included an African American chemist forced to live in a more modest house than he preferred, twelve miles from his job, and a survey of African American college students who said they were not interested in moving to Louisville due in part to the housing issue. Horrigan pointed to each example as “just one more compelling point about why an effective open-housing ordinance is so important for the economic well-being of the community.” Schmied and Horrigan hoped these final words would sway undecided aldermen and put an end to the marches and threats of Kentucky Derby protests.21

But the aldermen were not convinced. As anticipated, the proposed ordinance failed by a vote of nine to three. “Take a man’s word, the outside demonstrations are what did it,” Alderman Harry Herling said. The chair of the Aldermanic Committee outlined the board’s reasoning and recommended that “this ordinance be rejected and that no further action be taken until our community regains its composure and the outsiders have gone home.” The aldermen pointed to the city’s racial progress, noting that “our Republican administration has done more in the last five years for civil rights than in the previous century” and that city officials “were able to draw up and implement the first public accommodations law in the South.” This comment drew mocking laughter from open housing supporters present in the chamber. Protesters, according to the statement, had “poisoned the atmosphere so that no rational thought or action is possible.” Concluding pleas urged a “calm atmosphere, free of further threats… if the outsiders are interested in public welfare and open housing, as they profess, they will heed this request and go home… if they refuse… they will be exposing their motives for what they are.”22

Predictably, the statement infuriated open housing supporters, who believed that obeying the pleas for calm was a do-nothing solution that would only benefit open housing opponents. Gregory’s fervent speech on the evening of the ill-fated vote was the first direct reference to stopping the running of the Derby itself. Following his prediction that the movement had supporters willing to lay down on the track, Gregory, A.D. King, and a number of housing leaders, accompanied by scores of police officers armed with riot gear, marched through the streets of downtown Louisville. They chanted “Hey, ho, freedom!” as onlookers spilled out
onto sidewalks to watch them pass. It marked the first significant march outside of a residential neighborhood. Housing opponents trailed the marchers and showered them with jeers of “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t want to integrate!” and “Lock ’em up!” Marchers and opponents spanned the length of a city block, filling up Fourth Street from sidewalk to sidewalk.23

On the morning of April 12, the NAACP announced a boycott of downtown businesses in response to the ordinance’s rejection. Hodge said the NAACP intended to distribute 30,000 pamphlets and target businesses associated with officials who opposed the ordinance. The boycott asked African Americans not to buy from any establishment in an area covering nearly eighty square blocks. That evening, a crowd of 1,500 open housing opponents threw rocks, tomatoes, bottles, and even firecrackers at 150 marching supporters. The scene turned ugly enough that city law director Eugene Alvey issued a plea to South End residents to keep their children away from the marches.24

The HRC had remained relatively even-tempered in its support of housing until the aldermanic vote, but, like many housing proponents, its members had lost patience. They convened on April 13 for a two-hour meeting and issued a five-page statement in response to the aldermen’s decision. They deemed the board’s decision “seriously deficient because of its complete failure to make any explicit reference to the main issues of human freedom and dignity” and spoke out against the characterization of open housing supporters as “outsiders.” Louisville, it claimed, was not “an isolated 19th-century Southern village in which all persons whose grandparents were not born in the local county are regarded with suspicion and hostility as ‘foreigners’ and ‘outsiders’…we are a great, modern, metropolitan community.” With this observation, commission members called Louisville’s identity into question, asking how a self-proclaimed “All-America City” could harbor such a provincial view on the origins of its own residents. Open housing opponents, they argued, wanted to expand and accept critical acclaim for the city’s reputation without having to make the adjustments that actual growth required. “Does anyone seriously propose that we wish to create the image of a community which insists that the newcomer does not have a right to speak and actively participate in community affairs until after he has served a probationary period of residence?” the commission asked. It was a fair question to pose.25
Police resorted to using tear gas on hecklers in a South End march on April 18. Earlier they had arrested fifty singing protesters before marching began, attempting to chase off those who had gathered more than two hours prior in anticipation of the march. One white heckler asked his friends, “What is a SPONGE?” He replied to his own question with “a Society for the Prevention of Niggers Getting Everything.” When the hecklers defied orders to retreat and even tossed bottles and stones in response, police released twelve canisters of “invisible tear gas.” The tear gas canisters “exploded with small pops and showers of sparks,” prompting the coughing crowd, most of whom were teenagers, to disperse.26

With the open housing crisis and its “ugly spring ritual” of evening protests hurtling toward the Kentucky Derby, officials began to worry. If the mayor and aldermen did not act, according to HRC executive director J. Mansir Tydings, Louisville would be “on a collision course…I am scared to death and can see [what will happen at] the Derby and the parade…people are going to get hurt.” Derby Festival officials watching the nightly scenes admitted that postponing or canceling the Pegasus Parade was “a possibility ever since the [open housing] situation developed.” Officials decided to gauge the situation over the next ten days and reconvene. They joined a growing number of Louisvillians who desired “restoring order if not sanity to the city.”27
As the evening marches continued, both sides prepared to resume negotiating. Heeding the call from a *Courier-Journal* editorial to transfer the crisis “from the streets…to the conference room,” members of the Louisville Urban League suggested a meeting involving the mayor, the Board of Aldermen, HRC officials, other civil rights figures, and real estate leaders. In the first meeting, open housing advocates contended that protests would cease if the Board of Aldermen made it clear they were committed to acting on the housing ordinance. Horrigan claimed the meeting served as “an opening wedge” and a “glimmer of hope,” while activist Hulbert James said it resolved nothing. Furthermore, a miscommunication at the initial meeting led one alderman to mistakenly believe that housing leaders were placing a moratorium on protests. A. D. King and the leaders had not, in fact, agreed to a moratorium, and were furious when the board released a public statement on the issue that was subsequently reported on local radio and television. Several nights of peace did not mean a moratorium; housing supporters claimed they had reached “a point where we can’t stop demonstrating…we are afraid that they will get past the Derby…and then tell us to go to hell.”

Through the course of the month and the nightly demonstrations, the local press had sided with the protesters; editorials attacked hecklers and leaders for vilifying a peaceful movement that simply desired open housing and equal treatment. With the Derby on the horizon, the tone of housing editorials suddenly changed. The *Courier-Journal* published a piece on April 28 questioning whether proposed demonstrations at the Derby might be “self-defeating.” Editors agreed with the need for an open housing ordinance, but they feared the ugly scenes associated with the demonstrations had made Louisville “the focus of attention for the whole country,” and that “disorders in or around Churchill Downs would provide sensational material for the TV cameras.” The piece also pointed to the “celebrated glamour of the Derby” and Churchill Downs’ excellent record in civil rights, a record dating back several decades, well before the city passed public accommodations and employment ordinances in the 1960s. Demonstrations held while “thousands of visitors gathered in Louisville for a holiday event” could “damage the whole embattled civil rights movement nationally.” This opinion, issued by proponents of open housing, was the first of several editorials published that week as a warning against infringing on Derby traditions.

Encouraged by a spell of relative calm, Derby Festival Committee chairman Thomas Ballantine announced on April 28 that the annual Pegasus Parade would proceed as planned the following week. Three days later, however, after meeting with police and the city safety director, the festival committee reversed its decision. In spite of six months of preparation, the parade, a Derby week hallmark, was cancelled to “protect the best interests of participants and spectators.” Privately, festival organizers reportedly blamed housing demonstrators for the cancellation; one businessman feared “what would happen with horses if
someone set off a cherry bomb or a firecracker during the parade.” Derby Festival Executive Director Addison McGhee expressed the “disbelief” of many when he said that a “small city has completely capitulated to a dissident minority.” In a week when anticipation would normally build for the weekend Derby festivities, local leaders dreaded what might ensue, as the nation watched, in such a volatile atmosphere.30

On the Tuesday before the Derby, five teenagers hopped the Churchill Downs grandstand railing and wandered onto the main track, awaiting the ten-horse field from the day’s first race. It was a trial run of how to bring the weekend pageantry to a standstill. The teens gathered in the homestretch and “formed a ragged line across the inside half of the track, waving their hands as horses ran close behind them” and ducking under an inside railing with seconds to spare. Photographs showed security officers arresting the teens as they ran from the grandstands toward the horse barns. They were charged with “disorderly conduct, malicious mischief, trespassing and banding together to commit an unlawful act.” No one was injured, but the incident left several jockeys who were forced to swerve from the protesters confused and irritated. One claimed that while he did not have anything against the protesters, but if “one of those beasts hits them, they wouldn’t be back…if anyone else gets in front of me, I’ll run ‘em down.” Another said that if the protesters “wanted to stay there, they could have…I wasn’t going to detour around them.” The incident also drew criticism from some activists; as Raoul Cunningham recalls, “to run across a racetrack is almost suicidal…I don’t think you’d be the victim should anything happen, nor do I think you’re a martyr. It was not endorsed by anyone in their right mind.”31

Attention turned immediately to whether housing leaders had planned the incident. One Louisville Times article singled out Dick Gregory for the comments he had made about jumping in front of horses three weeks prior. While housing leaders denied direct association with the teenagers who ran on the track, SCLC project director Hosea Williams acknowledged them for doing “a great thing…they shook this town today, they brought to light on a national arena our problems here in Louisville.” Shirley Povich observed that even with a high level of security, there was “no absolute guarantee that the Derby cannot be wrecked as a race by one impassioned demonstrator in a crowd of more than 80,000.” The Derby was “the pride of Louisville and all Kentucky,” he noted, “but there “was warning Tuesday of what could happen on Saturday.”32

The day after the on-track demonstrations, the Courier-Journal printed another editorial discouraging Derby Day protests. Editors agreed that the city needed an open housing ordinance but viewed charging into the path of racehorses as an extreme, unwise strategy. The crowd would be “so dense, the atmosphere so charged with excitement that a minor incident could easily blow up into a tragic event.” Open housing, they argued, had “nothing to gain and a great
deal to lose by demonstrations at Churchill Downs on Derby Day.” The Defender issued a similar message. Derby, claimed the editors, was “neither the time nor the place to run the risk of sparking a riot,” and another protest risked losing “many potential supporters of open housing” and tarnishing a “local source of pride” that “people of all origins and colors have helped to make…world famous.” Having supported open housing protesters all through April, local newspaper editors now balked with a possible Derby disruption in the offing.33

Churchill Downs management offered no comment on the incident, and Mayor Schmied released a statement Tuesday evening reiterating that the Derby would proceed as scheduled and that officials would “use every means at the disposal of the City of Louisville to insure the normal running of the Kentucky Derby…one of the world’s greatest sporting events.” As protests and pray-ins continued daily in the same South End neighborhoods, the Board of Aldermen held a closed-door meeting, and Churchill Downs officials pondered the degree to which they wanted to increase Derby Day security. The track received a visit from uniformed Ku Klux Klan members offering to “help the police keep order.” KKK leader Justin Smith predicted “thousands” of Klan members would attend and suggested that officials “either bar Negroes from Churchill Downs or find some other way to control them…the Kentucky Derby is an important national event, and we don’t see that it has anything to do with open housing.” Police refused to let them in and declined the offer, stating firmly, “we don’t want or need any help from them.”34

As officials were mulling the security situation for the weekend, May 3 brought a new development, when the Board of Aldermen announced that the tenets of an open housing ordinance were present in existing legislation, citing a new reading of city-county law. The timing of the discovery was curious; for months, aldermen had remained silent and passive on open housing before defeating a proposal on April 11. Now, three days before the Kentucky Derby and with the imminent threat of protests, officials had suddenly turned conciliatory and found common ground. A.D. King acknowledged the claims but emphasized they “do not offer the answer we are looking for.” His brother, Martin, who arrived in Louisville to a cheering crowd and signs that read “Bet on the human race, not the horse race” called instead for “a very strong housing bill…not one devoid of teeth.”35

On Wednesday night, two hundred protesters participated in a three-and-a-half mile march from Louisville’s West End to the downtown police station, singing freedom songs along the way. Prior to the trek downtown, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a brief speech to a crowd of 500 at a West End church, declaring that housing supporters “don’t mind filling up the jail to get this city right.” At one point, he posed whether Louisville had “earned the right to have a Kentucky Derby” in 1967 and said he hoped the city would be “reasonable enough, moral enough, and practical enough” to adopt a housing ordinance. He concluded by
saying that if “there is a demonstration on Saturday” it would come with the purpose of “drawing injustice out into the open” and as a result of the “stupid moves by the city administration…[if] the other side gets out of hand, blaming the demonstrators would be something like blaming a robbed man for the actions of a robber because he was carrying money.” His colleague, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, spoke more directly, declaring that if “our brothers can stand up in front of the bullets and tanks and bombs in Vietnam, then we are willing to stand in front of the horses.” The speeches galvanized supporters and seemed to make some type of Derby demonstration inevitable.36

Many locals remained uneasy, urging open housing supporters to reconsider their plan. Repeating its 1961 approach, the Defender published an editorial titled “An Argument Against Derby Demonstrations.” The editorial cast doubt on what a disruption might achieve, proclaiming a “very small chance of successfully boycotting Churchill Downs without a costly loss of many potential supporters of open housing of all races” and pointing to the successful passage of a public accommodations ordinance because of the “we like Louisville too” behavior exhibited by demonstrators in the past. A Derby demonstration, the Defender claimed, would only undermine the housing effort, and was not the “end victory” needed to resolve the broader issue. Editors refused to “provide a trouble-making vehicle for out-of-town extremists of both races who plan to capitalize personally” on the Derby’s cherished traditions, particularly when “world-famous Churchill Downs is and has been voluntarily desegregated.” Defender editors knew better than to mention sullying Louisville’s misleading progressive reputation, so they framed their anti-demonstration argument in terms of hindering open housing
and embarrassing proud locals in the process. The editorial elicited a strong reaction from A.D. King and Hodge, who bristled at the notion that the Defender was the source of “all racial progress in this community in the past 30 years.”

The day before the Derby, Horrigan and HRC officials again questioned the Board of Aldermen’s claims about open housing laws already existing. The HRC cited several recent examples where African Americans sought assistance after they were barred from renting properties in white neighborhoods, only to discover that the HRC was ultimately powerless. Hope for a compromise persisted, but the question posed by housing leaders earlier in the week resurfaced: “if the city had the power for several months to enforce open housing, why didn’t it do so before all the shouting, all the marching, all the bitterness?” A Courier-Journal editorial raised a similar question, wondering why “the city’s legal officials wait[ed] until two days before the Kentucky Derby to discover this surprising new interpretation? What assurance is there that City Hall’s spirit of compromise will not fade, once the Derby is past?” Although the “legal move” came “perilously late” and seemed more like a public relations maneuver, the paper argued that it offered “more reason now to proceed with caution rather than with dramatic demonstrations” on Saturday.

As Derby eve guests enjoyed a night on the town before the race, Louisvillians braced for the worst. Governor Edward Breathitt issued a plea for peace, reiterating that the Derby was not a place where people go “to be swayed politically or ideologically,” but rather one of “pleasure, merriment, food, fellowship, and good humor” in a state with “an excellent record of orderly progress in civil rights.” The Derby, said the governor, was “Kentucky’s friendliest, finest hour in the eyes of people throughout the world,” and the same “genuine Kentucky hospitality” would continue “despite the open-housing problem in Louisville.” Mayor Schmied issued a similar statement pleading for law, order, and respect for Derby tradition, calling on “all our citizens, all our guests, all civil rights leaders who are sincerely interested in not only a fair-housing law, but the welfare of our community to continue to refrain from any disruptive activities…while we continue to work for a solution to this situation.” At the track on Friday—known locally as Oaks Day—“fifteen police cars and four paddy-wagons were parked at the main entrance to the Downs, and about 20 deputy sheriffs—equipped with walkie talkies—were sprinkled through the crowd.” Across the city, caution and dread loomed in equal measure as Saturday approached.

In the end, housing leaders nixed an on-track incident in favor of an innocuous downtown parade. After extended deliberation, including a nearly all-night meeting on Thursday and another set of talks that lasted until 2 a.m. on Saturday, open housing leaders announced on Derby morning the final decision to call off on-site protests. Ultimately, they decided that a downtown parade remained the best option, citing “the large number of security forces, the dense crowd, and the
fear of alienating many white supporters.” Dr. King emphasized at the news conference that housing leaders would “work even more vigorously” for open housing and framed their decision as “an act of good faith…it is our desire to make it palpably clear that we are not interested in creating a riot” nor, as he accused the press of characterizing it, “disruption for the sake of disruption.” With those words, the open housing threat to the 1967 Kentucky Derby dissipated. King vowed to return to Louisville frequently until the ordinance passed.40

On Derby Day morning, six hours before the race, a protest of about 140 open housing supporters marched without incident through Louisville’s relatively deserted downtown streets. Marchers encountered only a few hecklers on their route down Fourth Street—the same street where Gregory had urged housing supporters to lay down on the track a month earlier—to City Hall, where they concluded with a prayer and a singing of “We Shall Overcome.” King had already departed for Atlanta and did not participate in the peaceful march, but many younger housing supporters expressed disappointment over the Derby demonstrations being canceled. One student said he didn’t “see any point in this [downtown march]. I wanted to go to the Derby. I personally would have laid down in the track.” Even after the final decision, dissent reigned among some open housing supporters. When the Derby protest ended, many of them convened at a West End coffee shop for their own Derby party. They put aside their grievances for an evening to celebrate Derby Day, just like hundreds of thousands of others around Louisville.41

Several miles across town, the security at Churchill Downs was “three times the number” usually assigned to the Derby. Despite the damp conditions, festivities proceeded undisturbed. Precautionary measures included 2,500 additional security personnel at the track, with riot-stick-wielding National Guardsmen on both sides of the oval and police officers on bomb detail at the entrance gates. A *Sports Illustrated* writer observed that “the searching eyes of the law seemed to be everywhere” on Derby Day. When an officer questioned the wife of a Kentucky State Racing Commission official about her picnic basket, she replied that it contained only standard Derby lunch fare—“fried chicken and beaten-biscuit ham sandwiches.” Officers “had little to do as they stood in a fine drizzle except to cradle riot batons in their arms.”42

On a soggy late afternoon, the traditional playing and singing of the controversial, recently amended *My Old Kentucky Home* proceeded under unusual circumstances. Columnist Arthur Daley likened the track to having “the chilling appearance of an occupied village” on race day, describing it as an “unnaturally depressing spectacle.” A capacity crowd watched as 31-1 shot Proud Clarion carried Darby Dan Farm’s fawn-and-brown silks to the winner’s circle with a stretch-running surge in the ninety-third renewal of the Kentucky Derby. Officials reported fewer arrests at the racetrack than in most years. The tumultuous month that had threatened the festivities and left the city unnerved had finally ended.43
The 1967 Derby did not signal the end of the open housing crisis. Activists resumed marching in the South End two days later. Volatile protests and housing meetings continued for nearly six months. In November 1967, local voters had their say, ousting several Republicans on the Board of Aldermen who had opposed open housing. The election was, at least in part, an indictment of a governing body that had dragged its feet on the housing issue. Within a matter of weeks, the political climate had changed, and in early December, the aldermen finally approved an open housing ordinance by a vote of nine to three. For Cunningham, who was active in state and local politics, victory at the polls was gratifying; “Demonstrations are a tactic—an important tactic—but the demonstration within itself never attains your goal…Voting did,” he said. A year later, Kenneth Schmied was out of office as well, losing the mayoral race to Democrat Frank Burke in late 1968. Louisville has not had a Republican mayor since Schmied’s defeat.\(^{44}\)

While the month preceding the Derby was only a segment of a broader movement, the complex struggle open housing supporters faced during that month illuminated many of the larger issues faced by civil rights activists in the context of a one-of-a-kind cultural event. Direct action and proposed legislation—as well as the stalwart resistance to integrated neighborhoods—were familiar components of Louisville’s civil rights narrative; what was not familiar was the
opportunity to articulate these demands by upstaging an iconic event such as the Kentucky Derby. The Derby’s involvement for a brief period in the housing crisis personalized the conflict for Louisville, threatening to taint an event normally associated with refinement and leisure.

In the end, of course, the upstaging never happened. By calling off protests, housing leaders did what was best for their movement while the press and politicians pleading for peace did what was best for Louisville’s image. The on-track incident the Tuesday before the Derby represented exaggerated fears of radicalism, something that never came close to happening but nevertheless offered leverage to those looking to preserve the city’s reputation. The possibility that demonstrations could backfire on open housing supporters led those supporters to exercise restraint. If the leaders acted in good faith, a large part of that action was a cost-benefit analysis of public perception, a result of the well-founded belief that proceeding as planned would harm the open housing movement. Yet a peaceful day with the cameras rolling masked an inconvenient truth: Louisville, a city that had long coasted on its forward-thinking reputation, still faced the same unresolved racial issues as many American cities when it came to housing. The open housing crisis had fused the Louisville traditions of the Derby’s yearly weekend in the national limelight with the belief held by the majority of whites that integration stopped with residential zoning. The city avoided humiliation and riots on the crown jewel of its social calendar, but the crisis exposed how some officials wished to preserve the sanctity of the Derby rather than act promptly on a crucial civil rights issue. The tension of April 1967 spoke more to Louisville’s reality than the longstanding myths of the first Saturday in May.


K’Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South*, 39, 9, 46, 61.


K’Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South*, 74, 75, 76.


“High Statesmanship,” *Louisville Defender*, May 12, 1961. The Defender, founded in 1933, was the city’s preeminent African American newspaper by the 1940s. Frank Stanley, a prominent white liberal in Louisville, published the Defender from 1936 to 1973. The newspaper cited a likely backlash from opponents, inadequate security, and a desire to avoid the confusing process of bailing out protesters as reasons for canceling the demonstrations. Cancellation was “for the good of Louisville,” because the protesters “care[s] more for Louisville than all segregated public accommodations put together.” Stanley, “Being Frank.”

Stanley, “Being Frank.”


Ibid.

Ibid.

“NAACP Asks Boycott of Derby.”


DISORDER AT THE DERBY


37 “An Argument against Derby Demonstrations.” The Defender pointed to its civil rights credentials to emphasize its commitment to a sensible housing ordinance, but reiterated that it could not willingly mar “a source of consuming pride” such as the Derby when “marches, drive-ins, kneel-ins, pray-ins and what-have-you during the remainder of Derby week” would do more harm than good. Don Bliss, “‘House-Hunting’ March Is Set in South End,” Louisville Times, May 5, 1967.


43 “Traditionally, ‘My Old Kentucky Home’ is played and sung ten minutes prior to each renewal of the Kentucky Derby. Daley, “Still Shrouded by Mist.”

44 Cunningham, in discussion with the author.
“I Would Not Have a White Upon the Premises”

The Ohio Valley Salt Industry and Slave Hiring in Illinois, 1780-1825

Thomas Bahde

“We will I believe get the Wabash Saline,” wrote Andrew Jackson to his wife Rachel in May 1803, referring to the likelihood that he and his business partners would become the first renters and salt producers at the federally-controlled saltwater springs on the Wabash River in southern Illinois. In a letter to President Thomas Jefferson a year earlier, Jackson observed that large salt manufacturers in the West had developed a virtual monopoly over the commodity, controlling supply in order to drive up prices. Jackson and his partners proposed to correct this by producing salt “to benefit our country and not Self agrandizement [sic].” By regulating the price and availability of what Jackson called a “necessary of life,” he averred to Jefferson that “Publick good [is] the only object.” But when he wrote to Rachel with the cautious good news in 1803, Jackson admitted that in renting the federal saline, “My hope is that it will place me above the frowns or smiles of fortune.” Jackson was not alone in believing that the salt business would make him wealthy, nor was he alone in failing to see that belief realized. Jackson and his partners ultimately decided against entering a business that could just as easily break fortunes as make them, but he rightly observed salt’s value to the public good and its potential to create wealth on the Ohio Valley frontier.¹

Gold medal presented to Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) by Congress.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Salt and the river networks through which it moved played a significant role in establishing regional patterns of trade and capital investment in an era marked by contests over labor practices in the expanding West. By the time production began at the federal saline in Illinois, slave hiring was common throughout the regional salt industry to offset the substantial financial risk. In contravention of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which banned slavery, a special allowance for hiring slaves within the federal salt works was granted during the Illinois territorial period and was later written into the first state constitution. Illinois statehood and the subsequent debates over extending the slave hiring allowance coincided with the escalating national debate over the expansion of slavery in the West. The expiration of the allowance gave both pro- and anti-slavery advocates reason to position the saline as central to the controversy over slavery in the state, but the allowance itself had virtually nothing to do with any organized effort to extend slavery north of the Ohio River.²

The slave hiring allowance has been largely overlooked by historians or conflated with other protections for indenture that allowed Illinoisans to hold black servants in de facto slavery. Early historians of Illinois’s slavery debates of 1823-1824 cared little for the origins of the allowance, assuming that efforts to renew and expand it were part of a larger effort by proslavery Southern settlers to turn Illinois into a slave state. The initial reason for the allowance became unimportant in the dramatic struggle for the soul of the state. Recent scholarship has followed
this lead in focusing on the debates themselves, on the other portions of the Illinois constitution that allowed for indenture, and on the underlying racism on both sides of the debate. In practical terms, legal slavery in Illinois existed only on the federal saline lands, and an examination of how and why the federal government allowed slaveholding within the borders of a free territory and state replications slavery in Illinois not only as an ideological battleground, but as a real labor arrangement whose roots lay deep in slavery’s borderland. We can better understand how slave hiring came to be permitted—and why it ultimately perished—in an ostensibly free territory and state by placing it within the context of the business and labor regimes of the Ohio Valley salt industry, which allowed slave contracts to cross an ambiguous practical boundary between slavery and freedom.3

The Ohio Valley Salt Industry
The regional salt industry that supplied Kentucky, Illinois, and the broader Ohio Valley was part of a frontier economy that connected communities on both sides of the Ohio River and deep into the hinterlands. Salt, cash, slaves, and contracts crossed state and territorial lines, and permeated geographical and practical boundaries between slavery and freedom. Retail stores at large salt works were nodes of commerce in otherwise unsettled areas, and salt itself served as currency on the specie-poor frontier. Salt making was among the first domestic industries in the region, and unlike trapping or farming, required direct and frequent infusions of capital and manpower to construct and maintain its infrastructure. The difficulty and expense of operating salt works was central to the development of the industry’s labor practices and patterns of capital investment. Manufacturers guarded thin profit margins with stingy and manipulative market practices and sought to save on labor costs and increase productivity by renting slaves from local owners when possible, rather than employing less reliable white laborers, who might quit without notice if offered better terms elsewhere. Neither practice was entirely successful, but both played crucial roles in the formation and operation of salt works throughout the Ohio Valley, including the federal saline in Illinois.4

The salt industry in the Ohio Valley first coalesced in the 1780s, and remained practically the same over the next several decades. Saltwater in the region came from subterranean saline springs, which showed above ground as “licks” where buffalo and other animals congregated to lick the residue at the surface. Once a lick was located, test wells were sunk and the water sampled to determine the depth and quality of the spring. If the brine was deemed strong enough to yield profitable output, one or more large permanent wells were dug, often six feet or more in diameter. These were walled with timber, and pumps or pulleys brought water to the surface. The water then flowed through extensive networks of wooden pipes into iron kettles mounted in brick furnaces, where laborers stoked fires with wood cut from surrounding timberland. The water evaporated
as it boiled, leaving refined salt to be shoveled into barrels and shipped to market. Ideally, furnaces burned constantly to conserve fuel, and the kettles were tended day and night since the process required a practiced eye and precise timing when removing finished salt.
Constructing the physical infrastructure of salt production was costly, difficult, and time-consuming. Wells, pumps, pipes, kettles, and furnaces were only the bare essentials; salt works also needed warehouses, housing and provisions for the workers, barrels, wagons, livestock, tools, and stockpiles of materials to repair or expand the works. Before the first quarter of the nineteenth century, most of the metal goods, like kettles and fittings for pipes and furnaces, had to be floated down the river from manufacturers in Pennsylvania. Bricks for the furnaces, wooden pipes, wagons, barrels, and construction materials for the cabins, sheds, and warehouses could usually be obtained nearer at hand, but they also required transport and sometimes months of waiting. Once everything was on site, workers were needed to assemble, run, and maintain the extensive apparatus of the works. A salt works might begin with only a dozen hands, but could quickly grow to hundreds of workers performing a wide variety of tasks around the clock.

As salt works became ersatz settlements, productivity increased, but so did the expenses and risks associated with keeping the works running at a profit. Like many others who thought the high-demand commodity would provide a smooth road to easy riches, Marcus Huling, in Wayne County, Kentucky, instead found that salt production required “an immense deal of Expense and Labour.” Mary Daniel, who had some experience making salt, cautiously advised her brother regarding the prospects for production at Bullitt’s Lick in Kentucky: “If it turns out as I expect you will draw something handsome the second year,” but she warned that the first year’s work would yield no profit at all, for “you can’t possibly form a just Idea of the expence that we shall be at in setting the works a going.” Andrew Jackson’s partner John Coffee estimated that it would cost nearly $50,000 to run the Wabash Saline with sixteen furnaces for the first year, and that was even after taking into account the value of the materials already on hand.5

![Diagram of Salt Works prototype (detail).](FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY)
If an entrepreneur survived the crucial first year, the process of refining salt was subject to many costly problems and delays that could lead quickly to ruin. The labor-intensive and extractive nature of the work meant that producers were always at the mercy of the weather, water quality, and the availability of men and materials. Edmund Lyne’s chronicle of time lost between September 1787 and September 1788 at Blue Lick, Kentucky, gives an idea of the challenges faced by salt makers even after they had established their works:

3 Weeks [lost] at the time the Indians killed Mason which was Sept. 5th 1787. First Week in Novr. employed in getting in Corn. From Decr 22 till Febry 3rd I made only 2¼ bushels salt. Febry 3rd. Kettles set to work—worked till Febry 15th the thaw then set in + high water, which preventing working till 20th thence to the 24th when my Waggon broke down. My waggon being not repaired till March 20th that evening the Kettles were set to work thence worked till the 29th then stoped on acct. Indians. Then lay idle to June 9th thence worked to the July 6th. Then lay idle for the want of hands ’till the 15th thence idle for [the same] till the 21st then to work, thence worked for a considerable time losing only one Week when the [illeg.] Waggon gave way, lost till Sept. 7 1788 21 weeks in all.6

Salt manufactures could do little to guard against such frequent and potentially catastrophic setbacks; many suffered wild fluctuations in both productivity and profitability, leading them to abandon the pursuit entirely. As smaller producers failed, successful entrepreneurs bought out their leases and worked the most profitable springs while letting others stand idle. When Nathaniel Harris tried to expand his production at the works he rented from Adam Shepherd and Henry Crist at Long Lick, Kentucky, in 1796, they declined, having rented the rest of their works for one year to Thomas Smith, on the promise that he would keep them idle in hopes of raising the price of salt. Other attempts to control the volume of salt in the market, and the monopolistic practices observed by Andrew Jackson in 1802 and 1803, still hindered the market in western Tennessee in 1808 when petitioners in Nashville appealed to the federal government to introduce salt from the Illinois works into their market to bring down prices and to “correct the impositions and abuses that have taken place is the sale of that article.” These impositions and abuses, although a burden to merchants and consumers, were one way for salt producers to offset the significant challenges they faced in getting their product to market.7

Salt producers’ attempts to mitigate financial risks only intensified the capriciousness of the industry by entangling capital within convoluted and sometimes volatile networks of credit, contract, and obligation. In 1785, Thomas Perkins wrote from Lincoln County, Kentucky, to General Joseph Palmer in Boston to report on the state
of frontier salt production. He observed critically that “The business is carried on by people who have but little knowledge and less curiosity, and it seems to me managed in a very slovenly manner.” This was likely a reference to both inefficient refining practices and the fact that the business of salt making was exceptionally complicated, and sometimes underhanded. Although one person typically claimed ownership of a salt spring, the right to make salt was often leased to one or more entrepreneurs, who sometimes worked the springs themselves, but more often subcontracted the actual labor. “In few instances have the lessees manufactured salt themselves,” noted one observer of the Illinois saline, instead “they generally sub-leased the saline in fractions to individuals.” When several salt makers held leases on the same spring, those contracts stipulated how much water each could draw for their own works, as well as improvements to be made to the existing infrastructure, and the amount of rent (often in salt) to be paid to both the primary lessee and the landowner.8

Subcontracting was one of the industry’s most significant and troublesome features. Because the owners of saline springs rarely had the knowledge to work them, they employed numerous managers and overseers, who in turn subcontracted much of the work. “Men of competent capital to work the whole establishment,” wrote Territorial Delegate-elect Nathaniel Pope, “are generally devoid of the required information, which can only be acquired by a long apprenticeship in the school of experience. That information is most frequently found in men of moderate capital…[and] those are in fact the manufacturers of the salt.” Equipment and labor used at salt works added layers of complexity to the production process. Subcontractors sometimes employed their own men and material and sometimes rented the same from owners and lessees. This meant that the kettles might belong to one party, the furnaces to another, the pipes to another, and the wagons and horses to yet another, to say nothing of the contract arrangements that provided the works with laborers, both free and enslaved.9

Map of the State of Kentucky; with the Adjoining Territories (detail), 1795. FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Because it was rare that owner, lessees and subcontractors were simultaneously present, it was not unusual for contracts to be stretched or violated. Absenteeism, along with the complicated and, at times, vague terms of contracts allowed the various parties to either forget or openly infringe upon the rights of others. In 1807 at Bullitt’s Lick in Kentucky, three salt producers complained bitterly to the subcontractor who maintained their wells. “You promised that after the next Sunday we should not want for water,” they began, “but alas that appears to be like all the rest of all your promises for on Monday night last we were obliged to blow out [the furnaces] for want of water.” The producers warned that if there was no water when they next visited the wells, “you must from henceforth consider yourself not under our Employment.” Always alert to the prospect of gaming the system, lesasers, owners, renters of equipment, and other subcontractors frequently landed in county courts to settle disputes that encompassed every aspect of the salt-making process, from the conveyance of salt water to furnaces, to the maintenance of kettles, to the hiring or leasing of laborers.¹⁰

**Slave and Free Labor in Salt Production**

After the expense and effort required set up a productive salt works, the problem of how to provide enough hands to perform the work constantly occupied salt producers. In his observations for Joseph Palmer, Thomas Perkins counseled that if Palmer wished to enter the business in Kentucky, then “I should advise by all means to bring workmen from New England—they are more active and more industrious, and better men than can be procured in this Country.” Whether Perkins referred to free workers or slaves is unclear, but other salt entrepreneurs echoed his concern about the importance and difficulty of finding reliable local labor. Because salt manufacturing required some knowledge and skill, as well as tiring work around the clock, owners and renters of salt works constantly weighed whether to employ more expensive, yet reliable, skilled workers or cheaper, yet risky, unskilled laborers. At the very least, one experienced overseer living full-time at the works was considered essential. At Bullitt’s Lick in 1785, Robert Daniel advised his business partner William Christian that the “Intricacy required for [salt making] is of such a Nature that without the greatest care and diligence nothing can be made…it would be greatly to y[ou]r advantage as well as mine to Employ some good Industrious carefull man to manage the business.” Most serious salt entrepreneurs, especially those who absented themselves from remote salt works, employed such an overseer or manager.¹¹

Even with a good overseer, labor management in the salt industry could be troublesome. Absentee owners and lessees who owned slaves rarely made their chattel available as laborers. In these instances, overseers frequently hired slaves from nearby owners. On the Little Sandy River, one frustrated overseer wrote his employer in 1815: “The repugnance which the people have to their Negros
coming to this place and the high price given by others it will be impossible to get any in this quarter.” This overseer also noted that “the negroes themselves are much opposed to coming here not knowing what kind of hands they might fall into.” Another overseer reported that some local owners were asking as much as $130 or $140 per slave for an unspecified rental period. The next year at the same works, another manager rented five slaves at $100 dollars each. They formed only a small part of a larger force of thirty-four hired slaves, including new hires and “old stock” who stayed on from previous hires. The manager estimated that “If this force can be kept up it will be sufficient with the white men which will be necessarily employed.” At her family’s salt works at Bullitt’s Lick, Kentucky, Annie Christian observed in 1788 that “Renting [slaves] has amounted to something considerable,” and “a much more saving plan must be fallen upon.” To that end, Christian hoped soon to employ the family’s own slaves as woodcutters rather than hiring slaves from other owners. But most frontier slaveholders did not own sufficient numbers of slaves to use them for both salt work and farm or plantation work, even if they did live nearby.12

As in other areas of the regional economy, labor remained scarce. Consequently, salt works typically employed a combination of free white workers and rented slaves for both skilled and unskilled work as kettle tenders, cooper, blacksmith, carpenter, brick mason, mechanic, well digger, pump hand, woodcutter, and drayman. Management of a combined slave and free workforce presented significant challenges. Salt overseers were not typically experienced slave drivers, and slaves performed the same tasks and received similar treatment as free workers, eroding distinctions between free and enslaved labor. Because overseers were usually men who had worked in the salt industry in various capacities and understood all parts of production, they often labored alongside the men they oversaw, sweating over kettles and furnaces, unloading wood, digging wells, and repairing pipework further collapsing slave-free distinctions. When William Green sold a slave named Dick who worked on his family’s salt operations in the summer of 1823, he reported that Dick had “been there so long that he has a great notion of his freedom.” In another instance, shortly after Robert Daniel hired Nicholas Merriwether, a “good Industrious carefull man,” to manage his and William Christian’s salt works at Bullitt’s Lick, the manager wrote that he was sending back to Christian a slave named Judah, who had engaged in “such miss Conduct that I should, I find be under the disagreeable necessity of inflicting such severe punishment that I would by no means undertake to do.” Overseers also lived with their workers, sharing cabins, mess tables, and taverns. This could make it
difficult to inflict harsh discipline on both slaves and free workers. Francis Gaines, an overseer along on the Little Sandy River, readily admitted to his employer in 1815 that “I absolutely feel incompetent to the management of a number of hands, the most of which bad ones…it will be necessary for you to employ some person that has been more in the habit of it than I have been.” Another overseer was described as “useless, because the hands not being afraid of him paid little or no attention to him…and because [he] seldom attempted to overlook them.”

Managers at the salt works also had difficulty keeping and disciplining their free white workers. Salt work required shift work around the clock while the furnaces were burning, since starting and stopping the furnaces wasted valuable time and fuel. Kettle tenders, woodcutters, furnace men, and other hands were constantly on call, trading jobs with each other through long days and nights, so even one unreliable hand could throw the works into disarray. Francis Gaines described problems with several of his free workers at the Little Sandy Salt Works: “As to the employment of Mr. Chenowith…he is jobbing this week and will tend Kettles next—tho it seem to be with some reluctance that he agrees to go at it—it will be necessary to mark out his bounds.… Boyd will quit your employment…he is wonderfully spoilt.” Problems with white workers were so pervasive that one salt industry insider recommended that he “would not have a white upon the premises, except superintendents. It is impossible to keep them from taking the liberty of thinking.… If the process of operation be correctly arranged, thought by the common workman…is entirely superfluous.”

Whether free white workers thought too much or too little, there were often too few of them to keep an entire salt works running day and night, and high rates of attrition among those who were available endangered productivity. “[T]he great difficulty with white men is they won’t stick to it,” noted the Illinois saline agent to the governor in 1824, “not because they can’t do it,” but rather “it is a kind of business that requires many hands and each one to perform his part or the others are thrown out.” By the time large-scale salt production began at the federal saline in Illinois in the early nineteenth century, Kentucky entrepreneurs who leased the works expected to bring rented slaves into the territory, not only because it had become an industry norm, but also because the same labor challenges prevailed in southern Illinois as in northern Kentucky. If the works were to be profitably and effectively managed as a corrective to the price fixing elsewhere in the salt industry, they could not rely on free white workers alone. Like their competitors in Kentucky, they argued, the Illinois salt works would need to be manned with a combination of free and slave labor.

The Illinois Saline and Slavery
In 1803, the federal government formed a treaty with a coalition of Native American leaders to acquire the salt springs on the Wabash River and the
surrounding timberland in exchange for an annuity in salt. Congress authorized leasing the springs to salt producers to promote production in the West and attempt to bring down the price. Most of the commercially productive salt works in the region were located near Louisville, Kentucky, nearly 400 river miles from the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. As the Louisiana Territory came under federal control and southern markets along the Mississippi River became more accessible to American commerce, establishing salt works on the northern bank of the Ohio River near the Mississippi facilitated flows of salt, settlement, and capital into the newly acquired regions. As one Illinoisan described the value of the Illinois saline, it “supplied a part of Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana with Salt and opened a new near and safe market for their surplus produce.”

The federal saline reservation was known variously as the Wabash Saline, the Ohio Saline, the Illinois Saline, and the U.S. Saline, and by the names of the two principal licks: the Lower Lick (later known as the “Nigger Well”) and the Half Moon Lick. John Bell of Lexington, Kentucky, held the first government lease in 1803, and he had likely been producing salt at the site even earlier. Bell died shortly after making his lease with the government, and Jonathan Taylor and Martin Bringman of Jefferson County, Kentucky, took over the remaining time, signing a new lease that began March 1, 1808. Taylor held the lease with Bringman and other partners until 1813, their tenure inaugurating the first large-scale operations at the salt works. John Bate, also of Jefferson County, then held the lease from 1814 to 1817, followed again by Jonathan Taylor who leased the Lower Lick in 1817, while Willis Hargrave and Meridith Fisher, George Robinson, James Ratcliff, and Timothy Guard held leases at the Half Moon Lick. From 1818 until 1830, Timothy Guard was most often identified as the primary lessee of the salt works, but there were other lessees and sublessees.

Unlike their counterparts in Kentucky, salt producers at the Illinois saline were forced to comply with strict contracts imposed by the federal government and enforced by territorial officials. Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin appointed Illinois Territorial Governor Ninian Edwards superintendent of the saline, a responsibility Edwards described as “a great deal of trouble” that required “considerable expense” on his own part. He complained that he found the saline duty “more troublesome to me than almost all those I had to perform as Gov[ernor]. I made
all the leases, superintended their execution, and had to travel to the lick repeatedly, receive monthly and quarterly returns of sales of salt and kept regular accounts, and had to receive every proposition (and they were very numerous) concerning this and other licks, to discuss and report upon those propositions to the Treasury Department, and to correspond with a multitude of private individuals.” In short, said Edwards, superintending the salt works was a “most unpleasant responsibility.”

Federal management was intended to counteract the market practices of the regional salt industry by setting the prices and establishing non-competition clauses within salt makers’ contracts, but it also hindered producers, imposing conditions on production and prices. Taylor and Bringman’s contract—and all subsequent contracts that could be located—specified that lessees would not combine with or be interested in any other salt manufacturing operations and would cap the price of a bushel of salt, and sell only a limited number of bushels at one time. The latter stipulation presumably was to prevent competitors and unauthorized individuals from cornering the market, hoarding, or destroying the cheaper salt. Despite these prohibitions, a traveler on the Ohio River in 1807 found that third parties, or “private copartners” were buying salt at the contracted price, then reselling it on site at higher rates, presumably splitting the subsequent profits with the lessees or sublessees with whom they colluded. Albert Gallatin made the same observation a year later (although he did not suggest willful wrongdoing on the part of the lessees), noting a markup from seventy cents per bushel to two dollars. According to Gallatin, the continued scarcity of salt and high demand ensured that customers throughout Indiana, Illinois, western Kentucky, and western Tennessee would continue to pay inflated prices.

Efforts to circumvent federal regulations at the Illinois saline did little to lessen the burdens on producers created by government. Producers were accountable to the federal government for contracted quantities of salt paid as rent, and they were ostensibly prohibited from setting or changing their own retail prices to offset manufacturing setbacks. The partnership of Taylor and Bringman was the first to engage in large-scale manufacture at the Illinois saline, and although they likely used some of the infrastructure put in place by John Bell, they were expected to substantially expand the works. In their lease from 1807, Taylor and Bringman agreed to “erect, establish, set up and fix at the said saline springs...kettles to the aggregate contents of fifteen thousand gallons for the purpose of making and extracting of salt” and they were expected to “increase the quantity of kettles to
the aggregate contents of at least twenty-five thousand gallons, and...work and employ the same in the manufacturing and extracting of salt...in a workmanlike manner, and that without any willful neglect.” As early as August 1808, Taylor and Bringman begged a modification of their lease because they had not been able to extract the required amount of water. The terms were changed and the lease continued, but this was the first of many problems to come. The lease was again modified in 1810 with a lower rental rate, and the price at which the lessees were authorized to sell the salt was reduced, “in consequence of the large supply of Salt in the Western Country” and the “great difficulty in making sales.”

Troubles continued throughout that year, and when Ninian Edwards and Albert Gallatin asked Taylor and his partners to pay the government in cash for the finished salt on hand when their lease began, Taylor explained to Edwards, “There is such a want of specie in the country that we are obliged in order to vend our salt at any rate to instruct our Agents at the different deposits to barter it away for the produce of the Country which it is very probable we shall be obliged...
to sell at a loss if there were no other reason this Circumstance of itself must convince your Excy. that we cannot promise money for the Salt.” Jonathan Taylor’s difficulty at the salt works, and Ninian Edwards’s irritation over the constant flow of contracts, correspondence, and modifications to the leases show how fully the federal saline in Illinois was enmeshed in the practices and expectations of the larger Ohio Valley salt industry. 21

As in Kentucky, white settlers already in the region were unlikely to engage in time-consuming and labor-intensive salt work when better opportunities were available. Moreover, many had their own land to clear or their own enterprises to oversee. Consequently, overseers, free workers, and hired slaves at the Illinois saline came, like the lessees and subcontractors who employed them, from salt-producing regions of Kentucky where their experiences positioned them strongly within the marketplace. In 1805, just two years into the first saline lease with John Bell, the Indiana Territory, then including Illinois, enacted an allowance for the use of slaves in the territory. The allowance remained in force until 1809, when the Illinois Territory was created, and another was extended under Illinois territorial law in 1814. The separation of the Illinois Territory was precipitated in part by a growing pro-slavery sentiment, a welcome development for Taylor and his Kentucky partners. The 1810 territorial census listed twenty-six holders of indentures, or contracts, for hired slaves within the bounds of the saline reservation. Taylor and his partners together held 176 hired slaves, while others held from one to fifteen hired slaves each. The smaller lessees were likely subcontractors who employed their hired slaves in the typical salt work activities, from cutting and hauling wood, to tending kettles, building and repairing pipes and wells, coopering, ironwork, carpentry, and masonry. 22

On this front, federal policy buttressed state advocacy. In 1813, a bill was introduced in the federal House of Representatives to “encourage the making of salt, at the United States Saline, in the Illinois territory, by the partial introduction of negroes therein.” The wording was disingenuous, since the use of hired slaves had long been permitted, but the provision that “no slave shall be introduced into the said territory, by any other than the lessees or sub-lessees of the said United States’ Saline, and for the sole and only purpose of working at said Saline” reflected the bill’s intent to address the labor needs of salt producers without abandoning the principles of the Northwest Ordinance. Shadrach Bond, an Illinois slaveholder and future first governor of the state, wrote to Ninian Edwards that he believed “the Partial introduction of Negroes to carry on the salt works I suppose will make a fuss with some” and he did not think the bill would pass. Bond was correct, but the failed bill’s language suggests common factors shaping labor, free and enslaved, throughout the Ohio Valley salt industry, including Illinois. The bill cited the “high price of labor, and the restrictions against slavery” for the inability of the salt works to meet public demand, and asked that “it may
be lawful for the lessees, or sub-lessees...to introduce into the said territory a sufficient number of negroes, owing service or slavery in some of the states or territories where slavery is permitted, to work the said Saline.” In 1814, an “Act concerning negroes and Mulattoes” adopted by the Illinois territorial legislature left out most of the language from the failed 1813 bill, but referenced the necessity of using hired slaves in the salt works because “the manufacture of salt...cannot be successfully carried out by white laborers.” This language reflected two decades of opinion and practice throughout the Ohio Valley: rented slaves were more reliable and thus more cost-effective than white workers. Enshrining the slave hiring allowance in a territorial statute did little more than acknowledge that the federal saline in ostensibly free territory was as fully integrated with the regional salt industry as were private producers in slaveholding Kentucky.23
Even as protections for slave hiring were written into territorial law, the regional salt industry experienced decline, especially in Illinois. Production at the federal saline decreased, not because there were too few hired slaves or free workers, but because salt production in the Ohio Valley was tied to factors beyond the control of even the federal government. Salt maker Joseph Street claimed that the massive New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812 had “materially affected the quality of the water” by contaminating the wells with fresh water, diluting the brine and reducing salt production. The partnership of Jonathan Taylor and Charles Wilkins survived by pooling their resources, but Street recalled that “Taylor after spending several years laboriously employed in conducting this concern found himself at its close nearly ruined.”

John Bate’s subsequent tenure at the salt works was also financially disastrous. In a petition for federal relief, Bate claimed that the Ohio River rose in the spring of 1815 and overflowed the entire salt works for two months, not only stopping work and driving away his workers, but also destroying much of his expensive infrastructure. Wells, pumps, pipes, and furnaces had been rebuilt, but Bate claimed that the flood reduced the saline content of his wells, requiring him to invest even more heavily in new infrastructure to extract more water to produce enough salt to meet the terms of his lease. The government agent appointed to the works, Leonard White, agreed with this assessment in 1816 and advocated filling up the contaminated wells at the site to prevent them from affecting the working wells. Jonathan Taylor, who remained interested in the salt works, noted testily in 1815 that “The Saline is going fast to destruction John Bate is gone a begging to the City of Washington to surrender the works if he cant get the rent forgiven him…there cant be less than 40,000 Bush. of Rent Salt due the Government the Devil help such a Bag of Wind.”

Bate struggled for three more years until 1817, when with approaching Illinois statehood the question of whether to allow multiple leases in order to make the saline more profitable was turned over to the territorial government. The addition of more lesiers during the period of territorial management only exacerbated the saline’s problems. Leonard White explained as early as 1816 that the expensive terms in the saline contracts discouraged experienced salt producers with limited capital, forcing them into less desirable subleasing arrangements with speculative entrepreneurs. Moreover, White observed, these subleasers constituted “a third party over whom the United States have no immediate control.” This gave rise to further problems, since “there are so many more of this class tha[n] can actually get water, that they have injured the place considerably” by using too much timber and making too little salt. Since the government contracts specified that salt could only be sold at a set rate, and since there was now so much salt already on the market, “the means of payment [has] not increased in proportion, thereby injuring the credit of the place.”
As they struggled to make their respective enterprises profitable, salt makers continued to use hired slaves, primarily from Kentucky, as permitted by the Illinois constitution until 1825. In correspondence over the future of the saline and the division of the wells among the several lessees, sublessees, and subcontractors, there was no mention of the use of hired slaves or other workers, suggesting that for those involved in arranging and executing leases, the question

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**Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States**

Northwest of the River Ohio, July 13, 1787.

JOURNALS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 32: 343.

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of what sort of labor would actually be employed at the works was of relatively minor importance. But the allowance for slavery become a focal point for both pro- and anti-slavery politics within the state, and the saline became embroiled in the statewide slavery debates of 1823-1824, which resulted in a popular referendum and rejection of the further introduction of slavery or extension of the slave hiring provision. The polarized debate pointed to the diminished role of the salt industry and its labor practices within the state economy and political discourse. In the face of a growing antislavery movement, and the broader controversy over the proposal to write slavery into the Illinois constitution, extending the provision for hiring slaves made neither commercial nor political sense.

Constraints on labor in the Ohio Valley salt industry played a key role in creating the slavery allowance in Illinois, and also in its eventual demise. The evident corruption, the difficult work of salt production, and continuing financial problems at the saline, combined with the growing political controversy over slave labor in the state, ensured that the saline was in decline even during the statehood process. By 1818, the saline’s declining profitability and poor management, and the likelihood that it would eventually pass out of state control, made the slave hiring provision far less controversial in its own right than the debates it spurred after statehood. Rather than an attempt to enshrine slavery within the state’s constitution, the slave hiring allowance was a remnant of earlier federal concessions to salt makers who had struggled to operate profitably in the public interest. The allowance attempted to promote and regulate salt production, but it ultimately failed as completely as the Northwest Ordinance’s ostensible ban on slavery. Even as the question was openly and vigorously debated in the 1820s, the failure of the saline’s public role and the decreasing profitability of its salt production meant that there was little chance—convention or not—that the saline would continue to provide the foothold for slavery that proslavery advocates needed and antislavery activists feared.


3 Recent work on the Ohio River as a borderland has provided a framework for the present article, but also fails to engage the salt industry or the slave hiring allowance. See especially Matthew Salafia, Slavery’s Borderland: Freedom and Bondage along the Ohio River (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). For an examination of the allowances for servitude and slavery in the Northwest Territory,

4 On salt works as market centers, see the store records for 1806-1814 at the Goose Creek Salt Works in Clay County, Kentucky, James and Hugh White Account Books, Special Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter FHS); see also Edmund Lyne's accounting in salt for goods and services at Blue Lick in the Edmund Lyne Estate Papers/Durrett Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter SCRC).

5 Marcus Huling to David Huling, Oct. 23, 1826, Edward C. Thurman Collection, FHS. Mary Daniel to her brother, Nov. 21, 1783 [typescript], Bullitt's Lick Papers, vol. 1, Robert Emmett McDowell Collection, FHS. For the Coffee estimate, see J. Ward Barnes, “The Salt Works and Pioneer Life,” in *Saline County: A Century of History* (Harrisburg, Ill.: Register Publishing Co., 1947), 45, citing from the John Coffee Papers, Dyas Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

6 Ledger entry, undated, appears after entry for Aug. 23, 1788, Edmund Lyne Estate Papers, Durrett Collection, SCRC.

7 Deposition of Nathaniel Harris, Sept. 3, 1796, Bullitt County Circuit Court, Robert Emmett McDowell Collection, vol. 5, p. 90, FHS. George Washington Campbell to Albert Gallatin, Aug. 29, 1808, Brown-Ewell Family Papers, George Washington Campbell Retained Letterbook Drafts 1807-1821, FHS.


10 Ezekiel Field, Henry Churchill, C. Sanders to Mr. Thomas Joyce, Sept. 23, 1807, Miscellaneous Papers, Thomas Joyce, FHS. See multiple cases from Bullitt and Jefferson Counties, portions of which are transcribed in the Robert Emmett McDowell Papers, FHS.


Francis H. Gaines (Little Sandy Salt Work) to David L. Ward (Louisville), June 13, 1815, Speed Family Papers, David L. Ward Correspondence, FHS. [James? Colquhoun to David L. Ward, Feb. 21, 1814, Speed Family Papers, David L. Ward Correspondence, FHS.

Leonard White to Edward Coles, Oct. 9, 1824, cited in John Musgrave, Slaves, Salt, Sex, and Mr. Crenshaw: The Real Story of the Old Slave House and America’s Reverse Underground R.R. (Marion, Ill.: IllinoisHistory.com, 2005), 151. Musgrave transcribes much of White’s letter and cites a collection at the Illinois State Archives that has since gone missing. Musgrave’s self-published work is problematic for several reasons, but seems at present to be the only source for this letter; the work is cited here with reservation.


With statehood in 1818, control over the salines was transferred to the state, and in the late 1820s Illinois began the decades-long process of privatizing the saline lands. Bate is often identified as “Bates,” but “Bate” occurs more frequently in a wider range of original records. Because multiple and often-overlapping leases and subleases were made throughout the period, it is difficult to establish concrete dates and an exhaustive list of the lessees and sublessees. Lease contract between Jonathan Taylor and Martin Bringman of Jefferson County, Kentucky and William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory, Feb. 27, 1807, Ninian Edwards Papers, CHM. Christian Schultz, Travel on an Inland Voyage (New York: Isaac Riley, 1810), 199. Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 3, 1808, including report entitled “Wabash Salines.” The Thomas Jefferson Papers, series 1: General Correspondence, 1651-1827, Library of Congress.


U.S. 12th Congress, 1811-1813, House of Representatives, Feb. 6, 1813, “A Bill to Encourage the Making of Salt” (Washington, DC, 1818), Early American Imprints no. 30142. [Shadrach] Bond to Ninian Edwards, Feb. 7, 1813, Ninian Edwards Papers,


27 For the role of the saline slave hiring allowance in the slavery debates, see Pease, The Frontier State, 73-74, 84-85. After 1825, it was illegal to use rented slaves from other states within the Illinois saline, but the practice of using legally indentured black servants as permitted under Article Six of the constitution continued until a new state constitution was adopted in 1848, although many of these contracts were illegally or fraudulently made.
On January 7, 2015, two gunmen forced their way into the Parisian headquarters of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*. They killed eleven people and injured eleven others. The motive for the massacre was the magazine’s cartoons, which had lampooned Islamic leaders and the Prophet Muhammad. It was a grim reminder of the dangers faced by those who push the envelope of freedom of expression. Although cartoonists are in the business of making people laugh, events such as the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks call attention to the serious nature of their work. Over the years, cartoonists have used humor to encourage people to think in new ways, to criticize those in power, to challenge the status quo, or to point out absurdity in our society. In countries where free speech is limited, cartoons have often been a subtle way of circumventing censorship.

Of course, not all cartoons are created with such pointed intent. Some cartoonists simply seek to entertain their audience with comic strips that millions of readers turn to over a cup of coffee on a lazy morning. The most successful strips create characters that capture the imagination of a nation, such as Charlie Brown from *Peanuts* and Calvin from *Calvin and Hobbes*. People remember these characters fondly for years after the cartoon has ceased publication.

The Filson collects cartoons of both varieties: political cartoons, with their commentary on events, and cartoons of the simply humorous variety. The following provides an overview of cartoons preserved in The Filson’s archives.
Humorous Cartoons

“All I have to say is that it’s a mighty queer way to make a living!” So Fontaine Fox’s father exploded when he saw his son’s first editorial cartoon in the local newspaper. Fox started his career as a reporter for the *Louisville Herald*—a path his father, an editorial writer himself, appreciated. In short order, however, and to his father’s evident chagrin, Fox switched to drawing cartoons. 1

During a visit to the town of Pelham, New York, Fox received inspiration for what would become one of the nation’s most beloved comics. While in Pelham, he rode on the local trolley car, where the conductor’s unhurried manner and penchant for gossiping with his passengers gave Fox the idea for his own comic strip. By 1915, the resulting comic series, *Toonerville Folks*, had come to the attention of the Wheeler Syndicate and was soon published in newspapers across the nation. It had indeed become a way to make a living.

Piloted by the Skipper, the Toonerville Trolley was a notoriously noisy contraption, Fontaine Talbot Fox Papers. FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The Filson’s collections contain a number of items documenting the life and career of this celebrated cartoonist, including photographs of Fox and his family, as well as some of his correspondence and several scrapbooks with clippings of his cartoons. Notable among Fox’s papers are a collection of twenty-one original pen and ink cartoons from his beloved *Toonerville Folks*. Set in the fictional town of Toonerville, the single-paned cartoon featured a rickety trolley car and a glimpse into suburban life in the early twentieth century. In its initial years of publication, Fox received letters from readers across the nation who were convinced that he was caricaturing their hometown. Fox created a cast of characters that charmed a nation: the Terrible-Tempered Mr. Bang, the Powerful Katrinka, Mickey (Himself), McGuire (the town bully), Aunt Eppie Hog (the fattest woman in three counties), and of course the Skipper, who piloted the beloved trolley car. *Toonerville Folks* ran in hundreds of newspapers nationwide for over forty years, until Fox’s retirement in 1955. His comics would become an inspiration for a future generation of cartoonists.

The influence of *Toonerville Folks* is clearly evident in the work of Wallace Mathis. During his college years, Mathis drew cartoons for Vanderbilt University’s humor magazine and yearbook. Although he pursued a career as a teacher at Louisville’s Rugby University School, his interest in drawing persisted. In 1933, he began publishing daily cartoons in Louisville’s *Courier-Journal* newspaper.

The Filson has 1,187 original pen and ink cartoons drawn by Mathis. His single-panel cartoons depicted a character named “Rollin’ Stone,” who was described as a “philosophical tramp who commented on small-town happenings.” Like *Toonerville Folks*, Mathis’s cartoons feature a cast of recurring characters, each with their own humorous foibles. The cartoons cover a range of subjects: marriage and relationships, small town gossip, workplace interactions, and distrust of the political process and politicians, among other topics. In particular, the poverty and turmoil of the Great Depression era is documented therein. “Rollin’ Stone” was a regular feature in the *Courier-Journal* until 1941.2

**Political Cartoons**

Another contemporary of Fontaine Fox was Wyncie King. In contrast to Fox, King was primarily known for his work in caricature and political cartooning.
When he was nineteen, King signed on as a weighmaster for the L&N railroad. In his spare time, he sketched caricatures of his coworkers. One day, he took his drawings to the editor of the Nashville Banner. Impressed by his work, the Banner purchased his sketches and requested more. Soon, King was on staff with the Banner.

In 1910, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky, eventually becoming the feature cartoonist for the Louisville Herald, a position he held for ten years. In Louisville, King gained national recognition for his work. He would later go on to work for the Philadelphia Public Ledger and as a contributing artist to the Saturday Evening Post. Readers of the Post loved King’s “curious eye, which is like a camera endowed with imagination and an irrepressible sense of humor.”

In his final years, King donated a portion of his drawings and personal papers to The Filson. Most notable are eighty-one pen and ink sketches and watercolor caricatures, mostly of Kentuckians and visitors to Louisville. They were created between 1920 and 1921, during King’s final years in the city. “They were people of character and distinction in the community of that era,” King wrote to Filson Curator Dorothy Cullen in May 1958. “I savored the making of each drawing and remember many details of each.” The caricatures provide an unusual glimpse into the “life and likeness” of these historical figures that is hard to glean from books, documents, or even formal portraits. Furthermore, the development of King’s artistic style is documented by these caricatures drawn early in his career.

The Filson holds Wyncie King material in addition to his Louisville caricatures. His papers contain humorous sketches in pencil, ink, and watercolor. Also among King’s papers is an additional collection of caricatures from his time in Philadelphia. These caricatures were clipped from the newspapers and primarily date from 1921-1922 while King was on staff at the Ledger. There are also several scrapbooks of clippings of King’s work from The Ladies’ Home Journal, Life, and The Saturday Evening Post.

The politics of the roaring twenties is documented in the cartoons of Alexander J. Van Leshout. The child of immigrants, Van Leshout studied art in the United States as well as abroad in Paris, Holland, and Germany. In 1914, he moved to Louisville, where he worked as an artist for the Courier-Journal and the Louisville Times. He gained fame for his work in etching, and was also instrumental in the founding of the Louisville School of Art in 1919, serving as the school’s director as well as an instructor.
The Filson contains a number of Van Leshout’s drawings, including a series of over thirty of his original pen and ink political cartoons, circa 1920. As a political cartoonist, Van Leshout commented on subjects including prohibition, aviation, the influenza epidemic, the parks system, and local and national politics. Van Leshout was also known for his sketches of Louisville scenes and The Filson has a series of his drawings entitled “Odd Corners in Louisville.” Van Leshout’s landscape art complements the work of other local artists like Walter Kiser, whose drawings of Kentucky homes and buildings are also preserved in The Filson’s archives.

The World War II era is best documented in the work of Edwin Finch, who moved to Louisville in the late 1930s to work as an artist for the Courier-Journal. The Filson has a large collection of his cartoons and other drawings. Of particular note are 113 of his original political cartoons dating from the height of the Second World War. Finch’s military background as a sergeant during World War I is evident in some of his work. Among his cartoons are a few original watercolors of the comic strip “Sergeant Cinch,” which feature the misadventures of a bumbling military sergeant. In addition to cartoons, Finch also illustrated a series that appeared regularly in the Courier-Journal magazine section. Called “Kentuckiana All Over,” the series featured amusing anecdotes from local history accompanied by Finch’s watercolors. The Filson has 457 issues of this series.
The Filson holds several other collections of political cartoons that are worthy of mention. A scrapbook assembled by Lillian Walker Thixton contains a few clippings of political cartoons dating from the late nineteenth century. Moving into the twentieth century, the Jack Smalley collection documents foreign affairs and World War II. The Smalley collection contains political cartoons of various artists, clipped from national newspapers, as well as a few British publications. Likewise preserved are the papers of Hugh Haynie and Paul Plaschke, political cartoonists in Louisville during the twentieth century. Haynie's political cartoons were syndicated in over eighty newspapers and generally supported liberal causes. His collection primarily consists of his correspondence; however, a few of his cartoon proofs are also included. An immigrant from Germany, Paul Plaschke earned his livelihood as a cartoonist but also had ambitions as a painter and landscape artist. The Filson has several of his original cartoons, as well as some of his other artwork.
**Conclusion**

Cartoons can lead to a more complex understanding of life during a particular historical era and The Filson pursues its mission to preserve these humorous works seriously. Although The Filson collects cartoons from many eras, the strength of the collection is in the first half of the twentieth century. Cartoonists who worked in Louisville, Kentucky are well represented in The Filson’s collections, while the work of those from other locales is lacking. The Filson seeks to strengthen its holdings by acquiring and preserving a broader selection of cartoons representative of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley region.

Jana Meyer  
Associate Curator

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4. Wyncie King to Dorothy Cullen, May 10, 1958, Wyncie King additional papers, FHS.
Collection Essay

The Richard Fosdick Papers

Cincinnati has inspired a number of nicknames: some devotional “The Queen City,” some that appeal to a younger demographic “the ‘Nati,” and some that defy expectation such as “Porkopolis;” unless, of course, you are familiar with the city’s history as one of the nation’s leading pork-processing locations during much of the nineteenth century when pigs were herded through city streets on their way to slaughter. For residents of the Cincinnati neighborhood of Corryville, Fosdick Street (sandwiched between Eden and Highland Avenues) is a neighborhood address, but exactly who were the Fosdicks and what did they have to do with the city’s porcine moniker? Cincinnati Museum Center houses the Richard Fosdick Papers, a collection containing more than four hundred letters, dozens of personal invoices, and a business letter-book. Recently processed, this collection documents the familial and business relationships of Richard, his siblings, and many of their descendants and extended family members over a ninety-nine year period from the late eighteenth into the late nineteenth century.

The Fosdick family’s ancestors immigrated to the American colonies from England in the late 1600s, many of them settling in Connecticut and later, on New York’s Long Island. Richard’s father Thomas, a physician, practiced in New London, Connecticut where he and his wife, the former Anna Havens, had ten children, only five of whom survived into adulthood. Reflecting a typical American family of the Atlantic coast, the Fosdick sons were involved in shipping, whaling, cabinetry, and furniture making. In the collection, Richard and his brothers and sisters, their spouses, and children, contributed to a body of correspondence that peeks into the dynamics of eighteenth and nineteenth century familial relationships that often bled over into business relationships. As importantly, it also provides clues into the thoughts of average American citizens on the matters of the day: national politics, international commerce, the Haitian Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, as well as the impact of epidemic illnesses and financial hardships.

Richard was born New London on November 28, 1765. From the collection’s earliest correspondence (a letter from brother Nicoll Fosdick, fifteen years Richard’s senior) Richard cast about as a young man, searching for his life’s direction. At various points, he took up furniture making, running a mercantile establishment, captaining a whaling ship (gaps in correspondence may be attributable to extended sea voyages) and then around 1810, moved his family to the “Westward,” settling in Cincinnati. He came with his wife, the former Phebe L’Hommedieu of Sag Harbor, New York and their six children: Thomas Richard,
Sylvester, Samuel, Anna, Betsy and baby Henry Nicoll (the seventh, son Charles Updike, was born in Cincinnati in 1815). Richard is credited with inventing a new process of curing pork and beef with rock salt, and opened Cincinnati’s first slaughterhouse on what is now Eggleston Avenue.¹
He also brought with him a Declaration of Independence broadside printed by John Holt of White Plains, New York. Donated separately, The Holt Broadside, one of only four known copies of the document to exist, is now temporarily on display in the museum’s “Treasures of Our Military Past” exhibition.

Nicoll Fosdick to Thomas R. Fosdick (November 18, 1810)
“Glad to hear you have arrived safely in Cincinnati.”

CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
Much of the collection’s early correspondence is directed to Richard from his brothers Nicoll and Thomas Updike and his youngest sister Anna and her husband. Nicoll Fosdick was born in 1750 in New London, Connecticut. He and wife Abigail Eldredge had eight, or nine, children (sources vary). In the first several years of his correspondence with Richard, Nicoll wrote quite often from Aux Cayes, Haiti (now known as Les Cayes) where he had interests in a coffee or sugar plantation. Nicoll comments in more than one letter on the racial unrest and eventually on the Haitian Revolution. At some point, he captained a ship, and only later returned to undertake various careers on land including holding minor official governmental positions that provided a steadier income. Nicoll died in 1821. Brother Thomas Updike Fosdick was born in 1754 in New London and he served in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He and wife Sarah Howe had one son (also Thomas Updike). It appears from the correspondence both by and about Thomas Updike that he struggled to find himself both professionally and personally. For a time, he ran a newspaper in Virginia, but then fell on hard times and returned to the Fosdick family’s farm property on Shelter Island, New York. He died in 1811 after an extended illness. Richard was also very close to his youngest

Henry P. Dering to Richard Fosdick (February 28, 1813).
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
sister Anna, and her husband, Henry Packer Dering. Anna was four years younger than Richard and she and Henry authored some of the most charming letters in the collection. They had nine children. Always living beyond their means, the Derings nevertheless opened their home to extended family and wayward strangers. Henry died in Sag Harbor in 1822 leaving Anna with crushing debts.

Two of Richard and Phebe’s sons figure prominently in the collection: Thomas Richard (Thomas R.) born in 1797 and Samuel born in 1801. Both boys apparently followed their father into his various business ventures. Thomas R.’s letters chronicle several buying trips he made for his father to the “Eastward” (as do Samuel’s early letters) and his travails of running the mercantile establishment in Cincinnati when Richard returned to New York every year or so for a few months at a time. Thomas R. died in 1829 from an undisclosed illness (apparently in Louisville, Kentucky) where he and his wife and small child had gone to establish a business. Samuel then became the chief contributor of letters in the collection once he reached adulthood in the late 1820s. “Fosdick Street” mentioned above was named for Samuel who owned a significant amount of real estate in the city during the late 1800s. Samuel and his wife Sarah Wood had four children, Richard L’Hommedieu, Wood, Frances, and Sarah (Sallie) and their personal correspondence is marked by separations for travel for business and for Sallie’s health (tuberculosis). The collection also includes five years’ worth of household invoices for Samuel and Sarah from the 1870s. They provide a fascinating look at the consumer culture of an affluent Cincinnati family of the day.

The Richard Fosdick Papers not only offer insights into a family that made an impact wherever their travels took them, but whose relationships help us understand the personal toll on families of the nineteenth century who migrated west from the Atlantic Coastal regions in order to pursue dreams of personal financial independence. Like other American families who survived the challenges of contact with Native Americans, epidemic illness, financial success as well as hardship, they chronicled their adventures and small moments in letters to distant family members who they might never see in person again. The Richard Fosdick Papers provide a rich resource for researchers not often privileged to hear the voices and witness the recounting of the daily existence of the men and women that history often overlooks.

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1 M. Joblin & Co., Cincinnati Past and Present: or, Its Industrial History, as Exhibited in the Life-Labors of Its Leading Men, Photographically Illustrated by James Landy (Cincinnati: The Elm Street Printing Company, 1872), 90.
Was the antebellum South capitalist? This question has provoked debate among historians since at least the 1960s, when the nature of slavery became a key aspect of every discussion about race relations in the United States. Historians have come down decisively on both sides. Eugene Genovese argued persuasively that slavery in the South before the Civil War depended on markets in the North and in England for both capital and buyers of the South’s most important slave produced product, cotton. The social relations of slavery in the South, however, were decidedly not capitalist in nature, but instead pre-capitalist—what he called paternalism, a form of slavery that was distinctly different and more caring for slaves than could be found in the Caribbean.

On the other hand, historians such as James Oakes have argued persuasively that planters were decidedly capitalist in their motives and practices, essentially modern businessmen for whom slaves were merely factors of production useful only in making profits, and implying that they treated slaves like any farmer or merchant or factory owner in the North might treat the hands who worked for them. Both approaches to slavery in the antebellum South have one severe limitation. Each account has little room for force and violence, essential elements of the power every slaveholder wielded over his or her slaves, as any abolitionist tract written or dictated by a former slave shows in gruesome detail.

Edward Baptist, in his history of slavery in the South from the Revolution to the Civil War, seeks to remedy this problem. According to Baptist, Southern slavery even before the cotton revolution in the early nineteenth century, was grounded fundamentally in violence located in two capitalist places: the slave trade and the slave auction, both market transactions. Slave traders, of course, notoriously used physical violence in capturing and transporting Africans to the Americas, but auctions in this country, particularly in New Orleans, also were the scene of much physical coercion, especially in the city jail, which was available to slave traders at a low cost. The violence continued on plantations, where slave owners used whipping and threats of physical violence to extract labor from their slaves, a fact that is well known from both abolitionist tracts and the WPA narratives.

Less well known among historians is the fact that planters employed another kind of force, a particularly capitalist form, to extract additional labor from their slaves—accounting. Baptist’s close examination of the ledgers kept by slave owners shows clearly that the act of recording days and hours of work and tasks
performed by slaves—acres plowed, rows of corn hoed, pounds of cotton picked—was constantly used to make slaves raise their level of productivity by increasing the length of the work day (the stretch out) and the amount of goods they produced in that time (the speed up). If slaves did not do so, planters did not hesitate to enforce their accounting techniques with physical violence. In using accounting, a kind of numerical surveillance akin to one of social theorist Michel Foucault’s techniques of discipline, Southern planters put themselves in the vanguard of capitalist development early in the nineteenth century.

Beginning in the 1820s, according to Baptist, violence took on new forms in American slavery, first in a series of slave conspiracies leading to the Nat Turner revolt, and then among whites themselves. This last argument is new and compelling. Here Baptist describes what he calls Potterizing, a word that after 1830 in the South was used to denominate the passionate and vicious attacks that Southern whites levied on each other and that often led to murder or maiming. Potterizing refers specifically to John Potter, a resident of Granville County, North Carolina, who in August 1831 kidnapped two men who had had sex with his wife, and cut off their genitalia with a knife. The trial became a sensation throughout the South because it raised questions about the nature of power, sexual in this case, and the extreme ends to which Southern white men would go to exercise their power over others.
From here Baptist segues to a different fight over power, the struggle over the national bank, a conflict that decisively shifted power to Southern whites whose legislators formed new state banks to serve the interests of a tiny group of extremely wealthy planters. This occurred in conjunction with land grabs in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia, where the state violence of Indian removal led to the Trail of Tears. Baptist then shows in great detail how that violence led to a booming economy in the 1830s, and then a profound bust in 1837, here connecting capitalist expansion and crisis with both personal and collective violence committed by white men. That same capitalist boom and bust in the South also led to fraud. Specifically, Southern white men cheated each other on an extensive scale through a variety of means mainly so as to buy more slaves and thereby make more money.

From 1840 to 1860, the same capitalist logic and financial practices led to a second boom that ultimately ended in a second financial panic in 1857. Here Baptist documents a second speed up of production on plantations in which slave owners competed to find new and more vicious means to exploit their slaves, while they sought new lands in Mexico, Cuba, and Kansas in order to repeat the economic frenzy of the 1830s. It was here that capitalist expansion in the South began to falter. Territorial expansion failed to bring land to Southern planters suitable for a further profitable extension of slavery. And that led Britain to funnel capital that earlier had flowed to Southern planters and financed the purchase of more slaves to Northern businessmen, who wanted to open new factories and extend railroads to the West. Thus the growth of capitalism in the South slowed and then, as a result of the Civil War, failed as Britain sought to stimulate the production of cotton in Egypt and India. Thereafter, the “falling rate of profits” predicted by classical economists kicked in, and the price of cotton declined steadily until 1885, when it fell below the cost of production, thereby producing poverty for generations in the South.

Baptist’s account of slavery and capitalism, however, is not limited to the subject of force and violence. He ranges widely over the social consequences of slavery, from the disaggregation of slave families and communities during the two cotton booms, to their reconstitution and efforts by blacks to develop a coherent society and culture outside the one that excluded them. He also explores sexual violence, especially the exploitation of black women by planters and their sons. In these passages especially, Baptist writes evocatively and makes particularly good use of sources produced by slaves themselves. If there are any limitations to this account of antebellum slavery they lie in two areas. First, by stopping his story abruptly at the beginning of the Civil War, the author fails to explore the implications of the greatest act of violence to result from slavery, a war that killed 650,000 men, and that fundamentally changed the nature of capitalism in America by shifting its center to the North and eventually the West. Second,
although Baptist documents the decisive role in Southern slavery of British and Northern capital and consumers, he does not follow up on the broader participation in slavery by Northerners and Europeans, and hence the responsibility they must share with Southern slaveholders for the violent exploitation of blacks in the antebellum South. But perhaps these are subject for another volume.

Like Baptist’s account of Southern slavery, Sven Beckert's global history of cotton proves helpful and enlightening in tracing the connections between force and capitalist development, particularly his focus on what he calls “war capitalism,” the melding of the power of new nation states in Europe with a vast expansion of capitalism from the early eighteenth century to the 1920s. Beckert begins his history of capitalism and cotton with various expeditions from Europe in the 1400s and 1500s that laid down the circuits that war and money would follow to North and South America, Africa and Asia. Following those paths, western European powers relentlessly used their armies and navies to open up those far flung territories to trade, sometimes by conquering whole civilizations as in Mexico, and in other places by coopting whole peoples bit by bit over a long period of time, as in India. In this story, cotton to about 1800 proves important as one of the basic commodities that fueled a capitalist revolution in Europe. In England especially, cotton transformed capitalists, moving their center for a time from London to Liverpool, as British traders made huge profits clothing a new European working class, and then plowed those profits back into the many factories making steel and ceramics in the English midlands.

On the periphery of capitalism, however, expansion little altered the regions that produced cotton, mainly India and Egypt, both of which had cotton growing and textile making industries that had been in place for centuries. There English merchants encountered a problem: They did not control the source of the goods. In both India and Egypt, cotton was grown, processed, and then woven into cloth at the household level, and then the goods were purchased and transported by local traders to port cities where British merchants finally got their hands on the finished product. For a time, this worked well enough, but British capitalists always knew in the back of their minds that there was more money to be made if they controlled the production and distribution of cotton from seed to consumer. Therefore during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they tried to extend their reach into the countryside of Egypt and India in hopes of cutting out the middlemen who took a large portion of the profit in this trade. British traders, however, had little success. Peasants in both India and the Nile Valley resisted at every level, as did local traders, and in this task local princes and other powerful men often aided them.

The solution lay in conquest. In India, in the late 1850s, after the Mutiny threw the subcontinent into chaos, the British government took over from the East India Company and thereafter sought to control the economy through a
combination of military interventions, direct rule by the Colonial Office, and political agreements with the many and various princely states. This effort, however, proved only partially successful. Cotton traders continued to find ways to cut British merchants out of the trade, and peasant farmers proved reluctant to give up growing small crops of cotton as a sideline to their subsistence activities. Conquest proved more successful in expanding the supply of cotton in the United States. There, after the invention of the cotton gin that made short staple cotton profitable to grow in the upcountry of the South, military campaigns conducted by the U.S. Army against Indians opened up vast areas for new capitalist expansion. This in turn led to truly global markets, making cotton a uniform medium of exchange through the worldwide establishment of Liverpool prices and grading standards. In the end, however, the expansion of cotton production in the United States led to the Civil War. In Beckert’s view, cotton produced two dramatically different economies in one nation state, and that led to political tensions over further expansion in the West and the morality of holding slaves. When these tensions led to a final showdown over who would run the United States, Southern planters or Northern industrialists, Britain had to make a fundamental decision, back Southern planters and get plenty of cheap cotton for the foreseeable future, thus pleasing the Liverpool crowd, or go with Northern industrialists, who were now being financed mainly by British bankers in London. The British government chose to back the London bankers, with momentous consequences worldwide for cotton in particular and capitalism as a whole.

Britain’s decision led to a rapid expansion of cotton growing not only in India and Egypt, but also to what Beckert calls a global reconstruction of the cotton industry in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cotton growing soon spread to China, Korea, Brazil, and parts of Africa, as well as fueling the growth of the Russian Empire in central Asia where cotton growing became a booming industry. By the 1880s this expansion drove the cost of cotton below the cost of production and impoverished millions of small farmers who had leapt into the cotton growing business after the end of slavery in the American South. This in turn made it possible for the newly emerging working classes around the world to buy more clothing made of cheap cotton, and that increased demand led to an expansion of textile manufacturing in what Beckert calls the Global South. Increasingly the making of cotton cloth moved from central England and the American northeast to China, Japan, and the American South.

Sven Beckert has written a truly sweeping history of an important aspect of the worldwide expansion of capitalism from the early eighteenth century to about 1940, and he has made a convincing case for the role of state sponsored violence in that global process. He has also implicated Europe and its cotton merchants, financiers, shippers, and manufacturers much more deeply in the rise and fall of slavery in the Americas than most historians have been willing to admit to date.
But Beckert’s account of cotton and capitalism does have a couple of limitations. First, it is mostly a supply side story. The striking and relentless rise of consumer demand for cotton, and the reasons for that demand, remain somewhat obscure here. Second, by stopping his story about 1940, he misses the deindustrialization of the American South as both cotton production and textile manufacturing moved to the Little Tigers of southeast Asia. In short, the consequences of the rise of cotton and capitalism have not been fully traced here. These reservations aside, the *Empire of Cotton* is an enormously important book that shows clearly in the example of cotton that capitalism was never just about market transactions among equal individuals, but rather capitalists have relied from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present on violence, conquest and slavery to produce profits, and that the state served as the key mechanism to exert that force on behalf of planters, traders, shippers and manufacturers around the world.

Together these two books significantly shift the focus of studies of capitalist development during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from stories of merchants and manufacturers operating in a free market to narratives about the state and its use of force and violence to expand the reach and power of capitalists of all kinds in both Europe and America. These books also demonstrate that slavery in the antebellum South must be considered a capitalist enterprise, but not the relatively benign version depicted by many historians. Rather from the beginning, American slavery relied on violence at all levels, from the personal violence that planters inflicted on their slaves with whips and other devices of torture to the force exerted by local, state, and national governments.
The term genocide has frequently come into play when recounting the histories between Native Americans and the Europeans who encroached on their lands. The process of expansion and control took centuries, and saw many different forms as native peoples were subject to injustice and violence on a monumental scale. But words have power, and genocide is a term fraught with problems, demonstrating the basest and cruelest attributes of mankind. For Gary Clayton Anderson in his work *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian*, genocide is a misnomer in the narrative of Indian-white relations.

Anderson presents his argument in terms of careful definition, as set forth by the United Nations World Court. Genocide in this sense, he explains, is nearly impossible to prove. Anderson feels that ethnic cleansing is a more accurate depiction of this long history which begins in 1607 with Jamestown and ends with the allotment system in the waning years of the nineteenth century. This stance not only challenges the work of academics such as Barbara Mann and Lawrence Hauptman, but it also calls into question the entrenched social paradigm which invokes genocide as a defining element in the long relationship between colonizer and colonized in North America.

Anderson makes the following arguments as to why genocide is an inappropriate term to use when considering the treatment of Native Americans. First, Native Americans are still alive today. Had there been a concerted effort towards genocide, Anderson seems to feel it would have been complete. Second, there really were not enough Indians systematically killed to constitute genocide. Further, the use of the term somehow diminishes what happened in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Rwanda. This argument is remarkable in that, while Anderson is insistent on using the U.N. definition of genocide in order to soften the violent experiences of colonization, he has no problem expanding the parameters of the definition to require a threshold of population statistics. Third, genocide needs to manifest itself as a policy driven by the government that advocates the destruction of a group, which Anderson contends was not the case. In fact, he sees the worst instances of wanton slaughter as the actions of rogue elements carrying out their own agendas, rather than governmental policy.

Anderson’s arguments are indicative of the ongoing process of colonization. Reconfiguring Native American history in terms dictated by the colonizer is simply one more avenue of injustice. One glaring issue in Anderson’s premise is his desire to homogenize native peoples to suit his argument. There were more than 500 distinct cultures in what is currently the United States on the eve of contact, each one constituting a unique people with their own history. By
generalizing the Indian, while at the same time carefully framing definitions of violence, Anderson ignores the fact that some of these groups were virtually wiped out as a direct cause of settler aggression. To be fair, throughout his narrative Anderson does examine the atrocities committed on a case-by-case basis, however, the framework on which he builds this narrative rests firmly in the construction of an ethnic Indian.

The other aspect of Anderson's argument rests in his blaming individuals or movements for the most egregious violence carried out, which has the effect of insulating the government from allegations of genocide. Beyond that though, Anderson takes great pains to assure his audience that the political leaders during most of the formative eras of conquest and expansion were actually benevolent and fair. The works of philosophical thinkers such as Grotius and Locke framed thoughtful dialogues and ensured that administrative policies were put in place under the auspices of the dual tenants of “natural law” and “just war” and as such, never turned down the darkest of paths. As he moves fluidly from one massacre to the next, Anderson points to the charges which the perpetrators would face if they were tried in The Hague today; ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, war crimes to be sure, but never genocide.

If Anderson’s argument is fraught with issues, his narrative is not. He presents the reader with a well-crafted monograph which traces a long arc of Indian-white relations. The wide scope of Anderson’s research covers a large geographical and temporal space. This work could serve as a valuable resource for an audience interested in reading a clear and succinct overview of the violence perpetrated in interactions between natives and newcomers on a large scale. His juxtaposition between the desires of administrative authority and the actions of their agents on the ground is compelling. Anderson has boldly staked out a controversial position in what is an already polemical field, and has initiated a discourse that has the potential to be vibrant and lively.

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Although devastating in its own right, historians have tended to discuss North Carolina’s Tuscarora War only within the context of the arguably more dangerous Yamasee War it preceded. David La Vere rectifies this tendency in *The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies*. Using the experiences of eight individuals to frame the war, he delves into critical issues such as the dangers of land speculation and Indian slave trading, the complexities of Indian diplomacy, and the difficulties of North American identity formation.

Land encroachment and Indian slavery formed the backdrop for the war, but the immediate catalyst was a 1711 expedition by Christopher de Graffenried and John Lawson to survey the Neuse River basin. The area into which they sailed was Tuscarora country, and along the way they neglected to stop at Catechna Town (on Contentnea Creek) to get permission to explore from the *teethha* “King Hancock.” Already wary of recent English expansion around the Pamlico, Neuse, and Trent Rivers, Hancock took offense at this oversight. A group of Tuscaroras subsequently captured the two men, and upon their return to Catechna everything went haywire. Hancock, it seemed, was politically vulnerable. He had wanted only to warn Lawson and Graffenried and send them on their way. Many of his townspeople, however, had become influenced by “Core Tom” (who could well have been a Seneca sent to encourage war) and called for the two men’s execution. Graffenried ultimately survived (Lawson was not as fortunate), but he could only watch as Contentnea Creek Tuscaroras and several allies initiated a damaging attack on the Pamlico and Neuse River settlements. Albemarle County residents in turn were horrified and descended into a state of paralysis.

The 1711 attack came just as political squabbles between North Carolina’s “old settlers,” Quakers, and “proprietary men” reached a crescendo. In desperate straits, officials such as Edward Hyde and Thomas Pollock appealed to their colonial neighbors for help. Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood in effect chose neutrality. Bacon’s Rebellion resonated powerfully in colonial memory, after all, and he understood the danger of a war rooted in Indian slavery. It was a lesson that South Carolina had not yet learned, and the possibility of acquiring slave capital convinced its assembly to get involved. In 1712 it sent Robert Barnwell along with a militia and a number of Indian allies to North Carolina. Ever dwindling in numbers, Barnwell’s army engaged in inconclusive expeditions before going home—just as another round of Tuscarora attacks began.

Fortunately for North Carolinians, Tuscaroras were no more unified than their European counterparts. They lived in three separate regions, and each town made autonomous decisions. Their lack of national identity directly affected the progress of the war. Upper towns along the Roanoke River, for example, decided that Virginia trade was more important than fighting. Towns along the Tar River decided similarly. In November 1712, moreover, five Tuscarora *teethbas* agreed to execute Hancock and to
maintain peace with North Carolina, a development that isolated Contentnea Creek Tuscaroras and their allies. In 1713 they were finally overwhelmed at Neohoroka by a combined army of South Carolina militia, Catawbas, Yamasees, and Cherokees. Although Cores and Machapungas continued sporadic fighting until February 1715, Tuscaroras were finished with the war that bears their name.

La Vere’s narrative is both old and refreshingly new. On the one hand, his explanation of the causes and consequences of the war reinforces long-held arguments: that settler expansion and slave raiding were central issues; that North Carolina needed a lot of outside help; that success opened the floodgates for European expansion to the west and south of Albemarle County; and that the political chaos that had defined North Carolina from 1663 through Cary’s Rebellion in 1710-1711 effectively ended with the war. On the other hand, La Vere provides fresh insights that cry out for further research. He suggests, for example, that the lack of national identity was arguably more important to Tuscarora failure than colonial attacks. He shows how Senecas factored squarely in the war without actually getting involved. And although Europeans employed Yamasees and other Native Americans in their armies, they could never maintain consistent numbers. Thus, far from supporting Europeans, Indians became involved for their own reasons and departed when it no longer suited them. In many cases their actions hamstrung colonial initiatives. Put simply, indigenous peoples set the parameters of the Tuscarora War.

A few issues stand out. Indian motivations, for example, would make even more sense if contextualized within the evolving shatter zone phenomenon. And what about imperial affairs? After all, the war took place at the same moment that Queen Anne’s War occupied metropolitan British officials. How might the western Atlantic theater of that confrontation have affected fear and paranoia, actions and reactions, at the local level? Finally, it seems to this reviewer that biographical peregrinations occur a bit too often. At times they do not directly relate to the narrative and thus threaten to overwhelm entire sections. Overall, however, David La Vere has provided an excellent study of the Tuscarora War. Scholars will find a lot to chew on in this monograph.

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Over the last decade, Civil War historians have turned their attention to the irregular aspects of the conflict. Perhaps the most notorious such event was the Fort Pillow Massacre. The latest analysis of that terrible day, *The River Was Dyed with Blood*, offers an even-handed and comprehensive account. Brian Steel Wills, the author of a biography of Nathan Bedford Forrest, pursued the topic because he recognized inaccuracies in the polarized nature of the historical literature on Forrest and Fort Pillow. Rather than serve as yet another apologist or dismiss Forrest as a monster, Wills pursues a middle path, emphasizing evidence and context.

The book opens with a condensed biography of Forrest, emphasizing his courage, guile, and native military intelligence. The narrative then shifts to the Union’s moves to recruit black soldiers, the key issue that drove the extraordinary violence at Fort Pillow. As Wills shows, the Confederacy regarded the Union’s use of black soldiers as violation of civilized war, which made it highly likely that the two sides would clash over the issue. Added to this was the volatile background of irregular conflict all around Fort Pillow’s location along the Mississippi River in western Tennessee. Even the regular military commanders in the region—Union as well as Confederate—adopted aggressive and sometimes lethal tactics against civilians in the area. The white Tennessee Unionists and black U.S. soldiers who manned the fort when Forrest attacked in April 1864 represented the worst enemies Forrest’s native Tennessean Confederates could imagine. The social and military context that Wills carefully recreates does not excuse, but does help explain, the atrocity.

The book’s narrative moves smoothly, particularly when Wills turns his skilled pen on the military action of the battle itself. He describes the final moments of the attack, when discipline on both sides dissolved and surrendering soldiers were killed, with admirable clarity. The chapters after the pivotal moments on the river’s banks focus on the competing chronicles of the event. Forrest celebrated the battle’s bloodshed, a self-defeating posture as news of the battle’s nature came to be known. Radical Republicans in Congress led an investigation and their report generated indignation across the North. The
role of the battle in the U.S. presidential election of 1864 and the Confederate counter-reaction ensured that the event immediately became clouded by allegations and denials.

The moral heart of the book lies in Wills’ assessment of Forrest’s culpability. He makes two points clear - that “men died who should have not have been killed” and that these men were not “victims of a plot to exterminate them by a pitiless Confederate commander bent on their destruction” (6). Although this sounds like an exoneration, Wills explains that Forrest failed in his duty as commander to control his troops. He remained physically distant from the fort for much of the battle, despite knowing the animus that his soldiers held against those inside it. In short, regardless of Forrest’s intent (and this appears to be a question that we can never really answer), he was responsible for the unnecessary deaths that occurred. This conclusion echoes the one Wills reached in a 1992 biography of the general. He also shows just as clearly, however, that Fort Pillow was not just Forrest’s responsibility. The social sanction of racial hatred and violence, articulated by those from Jefferson Davis on down to local religious leaders, surely helped condition Forrest’s soldiers to see their enemies as less than human.

One of the tragedies of Fort Pillow is not just reckoning with Nathan Bedford Forrest but with the deeper legacy of violence and dehumanization perpetuated by American slavery.

Aaron Sheehan-Dean
Louisiana State University

Informal Ambassadors
American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945
Dana Cooper

Dana Cooper’s Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945 examines the proliferation of transatlantic marriages, defined here as marriages between prominent American women and members of the British aristocracy, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, peaking around the turn of the century, and finally declining after World War I. She argues that these American wives of British aristocrats acted as unofficial or “informal” ambassadors, bringing their quintessentially American character into a new British identity. Cooper, an associate professor of history at Stephen F. Austin State University, employs a biographical

approach to assert that these marriages helped to foster and strengthen the Anglo-American “special relationship” during these years. Specifically, she analyzes the lives and marriages of five prominent women who each served as “informal ambassadors” between the United States and Great Britain through their various social, political, and philanthropic endeavors.

Lady Jennie Jerome Churchill’s marriage to British politician Lord Randolph Churchill in 1873 marked, as Cooper explains, “the beginning of hundreds of such transatlantic unions and the opening chapter of American-born, British-wed women working as informal ambassadors” (66). She brought her American personality to her husband’s political campaigns and career, and to British society. She became well-versed in and knowledgeable of political matters, which made her an asset as well to her son Winston Churchill’s political career. Mary Endicott Chamberlain was the wife of British colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain, and practiced her own version of what Cooper terms “drawing room diplomacy” by hosting frequent dinners for prominent Londoners. She was also step-mother to future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and aided as well in his political career. As the wife of Indian Viceroy George Curzon, Mary Leiter Curzon served as a mediator not only between the United States and Great Britain but also as an emissary between both of those countries and India. Cooper explains that, given the oft-noted challenges of George Curzon’s personality, she also acted consistently as her husband’s liaison and personal representative. Consuelo Vanderbilt Marlborough, though unhappily married to the 9th Duke of Marlborough before eventually divorcing him, worked both during and after her marriage to strengthen Anglo-American relations and to pursue more overtly charitable and political activities, including the cause for women’s rights and suffrage. Finally, Lady Nancy Astor, after marrying William Waldorf Astor, became his key political partner when he won his seat in the House of Commons. When Astor inherited the title “Lord” from his father, he took his seat in the House of Lords and Lady Astor ran for, and won, his seat in the House of Commons, becoming the first woman to win such a position. Her political career thrived through the 1920s.

Cooper devotes one chapter to each of these women, stressing the representative qualities each American born woman brought to her new home across the Atlantic, and the ways in which each woman contributed to overall British perceptions of America and Americans. She also emphasizes the dual character and identity of each woman, though she does not explore extensively the citizenship laws concerning women and marriage during this era. Instead, she focuses on the often-cited term “soft-power” to explain the ways in which each of these women enhanced Anglo-American relations over the years. Soft power in this context refers to the ways in which these women wielded wider social and political influence beyond the family even though they remained, for the most part, in traditional gender roles and defined themselves primarily as “wife and mother.” In other words, their transatlantic marriages defined them, but they figured out ways to use that union to achieve greater individual agency.

Cooper sees these transatlantic marriages playing out in three chronological phases: the “pioneering marital efforts” from 1860 to 1880; the “self-made girls” intent on improving themselves, from 1880 to 1900; and the “American aristocrats” (28) of the era from the turn of the century through World War I. Courtship in all cases rested primarily on economic factors, and
predictably some of the marriages resulted in lasting loving relationships while others were unhappy, even if still successful in the larger social and political realm. Cooper also sets the appropriate historical and economic context, on both sides of the Atlantic, for these marriages, and analyzes the ways in which each woman practiced both “cultural assimilation” (identifying as newly British) and “cultural identity” (still identifying as American). Finally, she links the significance of these marriages, through the efforts of these women as informal ambassadors from the United States, to a growing rapprochement between the U.S. and Great Britain during these years.

*Informal Ambassadors* contributes to an ever-growing body of scholarship linking diplomatic and transnational studies with gender and women’s history, and it provides new archival research and analysis on some unique American women. It should appeal to historians of women and gender, and to historians of foreign relations, especially those interested in cultural and social analyses beyond traditional diplomacy. Because of the biographical format and strong, entertaining narrative, it should also appeal to a more general audience, especially those drawn to the American-British “special relationship.”

Molly M. Wood
Wittenberg University

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*James A. Rhodes* *Ohio Colossus*
Tom Diemer, Lee Leonard, and Richard G. Zimmerman

It is somewhat surprising that a major biography of former Ohio governor Jim Rhodes was not penned until 2014. No single individual has figured as prominently in Ohio political history, yet until this book Rhodes was relegated to a smattering of journal articles and book chapters. Diemer, Leonard, and Zimmerman provide a much-needed overview of the life of the colorful Ohio governor.

Three authors collaborated on this book, all of whom were journalists who worked the Columbus political beat for a variety of newspapers and wire services. The authors covered Ohio politics at different times in the career of Rhodes, and they offer interesting anecdotes about Rhodes and his associates. Even readers already familiar with Rhodes will find much in this book that helps provide deeper insights into the character and personality of the self-described hustler-turned-politician.

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Rhodes, observed one source quoted by the authors, should not be viewed as a mere opportunistic populist who changed when new opinion poll data emerged. Instead, Rhodes “already knew what people were thinking...he did not have to go and ask them...Jim Rhodes was one of the great political minds in Ohio because he thought like the people” (141). For all his flaws, argued the authors, Jim Rhodes had an innate ability to understand what voters wanted, and his formula for political success was simple: “find out what people want and then do it – or at least try” (xxii).

The single recurrent theme in the political career of Jim Rhodes was to put Ohioans to work, preferably in a good-paying industrial setting. “Jobs and Progress” was the campaign slogan in the first successful gubernatorial run by Rhodes in 1962, and Rhodes focused on the same message in his subsequent campaigns. The relentless campaign mantra about jobs made for occasional boredom among reporters covering the candidate’s speeches; the authors recalled that reporters organized cash pools to bet on how many times Rhodes would say the word “jobs” in a given speech. Reporters who “bet on the high side usually stood the best chance of winning” (36).

While this work straddles the line between popular and scholarly history, it is scrupulously footnoted, drawing on a wide range of primary sources, including interviews conducted by the authors with Rhodes and various other Ohio political leaders. The authors also make use of government documents, newspaper articles, and archival materials to develop their examination of Rhodes. The book follows a chronological approach, tracing the early life of Rhodes through his retirement years.

The authors are quite conscientious in identifying areas in which there are competing versions of recollections of the past, especially with regard to Rhodes’s childhood and young adulthood. Generally they simply present these conflicting narratives (such as claims by Rhodes that as a child he lived for a period of time in a refurbished chicken coop, or the various versions of summarizing his short academic experience at The Ohio State University) and allow readers to draw their own conclusions.

The authors also take a nuanced approach regarding Rhodes and the Kent State Massacre. They acknowledge the incendiary rhetoric Rhodes delivered in a campaign speech that may have contributed to the chaos on the Kent State campus in 1970, but they also examine the effects that his tough stance on campus unrest may have held for his Senate campaign. The authors cite private polling conducted by the Rhodes campaign that suggest that the law-and-order approach by Rhodes may have actually closed a polling gap as high as eight percent held by his opponent, Robert A. Taft, Jr. The authors quoted a county Republican Party chair who offered the following assessment of the effects of the shootings at Kent State on the 1970 senatorial primary: “Between the polls that showed Taft far ahead and Election Day, something had to [have] happen[ed]...I think it was the Governor’s move to keep order on campus...Remember, there were a hell of a lot of people who have had it with these kids” (64).

It is his handling of the economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, for which the authors most take Rhodes to task. The governor, they argue, did not have a firm grasp of the new economy and the structural changes in the American job market. They quote a former adviser of Rhodes, executive assistant Robert Howarth, as saying that Rhodes failed to understand “that there was an evolution from smokestacks to high tech” (125).
The collaborative effort by the three authors occasionally suffers from inconsistency in writing style. While this is not overly problematic, it is intermittently distractive. There are also a few occasions when the individual authors repeat information in one chapter that has already been presented in an earlier one. Yet these are only minor stylistic issues, and they do not significantly detract from the value of this book to both scholars and general readers. Diemer, Leonard, and Zimmerman have assembled a first-rate biography of Jim Rhodes that is as rigorous as scholarship as it is enjoyable as literature. The book is a valuable addition to any serious collection of texts related to Ohio political history.

Michael E. Brooks
Bowling Green State University

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**Burley**

*Kentucky Tobacco in a New Century*

Ann K. Ferrell

Political and economic restructuring has roiled the Tobacco South in the last two decades. In 1998, the largest American tobacco manufacturers agreed to pay out hundreds of billions of dollars to repay states for the care of indigent smokers, fund anti-smoking initiatives, and provide money for farmers to transition from tobacco to other crops. In 2004, the federal government ended the federal tobacco program that had since the 1930s rewarded farmers for limiting the amount of tobacco they sold by offering guaranteed minimum prices. At the same time, the auction system of selling tobacco disappeared in favor of contracting directly with manufacturers at the beginning of the season. In response to these initiatives, thousands of tobacco farmers gave up the crop and even farming entirely. Those who have continued to farm have expanded their tobacco acreages while giving more control over their crops to the companies to which they sell.

The breakneck speed at which change has come in the Tobacco South has sent scholars scrambling to explain its meanings. Ann K. Ferrell’s beautiful new book on the changing culture of tobacco farming in Kentucky’s Burley Belt is among the best of this recent wave of scholarship. Written in a way that is accessible to numerous audiences, the book digs out the various meanings of the changing tobacco
economy for those involved in it. With close attention to detail and employing a strong, but not overwhelming analytical framework, Ferrell reveals much about a part of the rural South that has often been obscured by a mixture of defensiveness and nostalgia.

After a tight opening chapter that explains her method and sets out a brief history of burley tobacco agriculture in central Kentucky, Ferrell takes a three-pronged approach to exploring the cultural ramifications of the changes of the past twenty years. In the first section, she explores the work routines that are central to tobacco’s seasons. Drawn largely from fieldwork conducted on a number of farms and interviews with even more farmers, their families, and various others connected to the burley tobacco economy, the section effectively reveals the centrality of work and skill to the culture of tobacco farming. Weaving past and present effectively, Ferrell shows how change does not move along a simple vector in the rural parts, but curves as farmers themselves adjust to it. Her willingness to allow farmers to explain their world without requiring them to fit any predesigned models and her decision to include voices other than those of the (mostly) male farmers who owned the farms where she worked (especially those of Latino farmworkers), makes this section of great value to anyone trying to understand the human dimensions of agricultural change in the rural South.

In the second section, Ferrell moves her attention from the work of farming tobacco to the rhetoric of representing tobacco. Noticing that the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) distanced itself from tobacco by not displaying images of tobacco in its offices (despite its continued economic importance), Ferrell explores the history of the Commonwealth’s support for tobacco farming by examining more than seventy years’ worth of the KDA’s newsletters. Taking this long view, she documents how government’s relationship with tobacco shifted over time from celebration in the years before the surgeon general’s 1964 report linking smoking and disease to defensiveness in smoking wars of the 1970s and 1980s to nostalgia since the 1990s. Her close reading of this official organ reveals that Kentucky’s tobacco culture was not simply an organic development of farming and selling (and even manufacturing) the crop, but a result, in part, of the development of a public rhetoric that posited the crop in terms that responded to changes in the political landscape. Once a celebrated crop, tobacco is now largely depicted as something from the past, its production, and its producers, largely ignored by the Commonwealth’s agricultural leaders.

The ramifications for this status change is what Ferrell explores in the third section, where she turns her attention back to the farmers and how they perceive the changes that have remade not only their work, but their social esteem as well. Tobacco farmers, she argues, have been stung by changing public perceptions of their work, especially since it has resulted in many blaming them for cancer and other diseases related to smoking. She finds that most are not reflexively defensive or in denial about the dangers of smoking, but position their work as simply meeting a demand that will be met in some way by manufacturers. They have by and large accepted the new political and economic landscape of tobacco, while continuing to wrestle with its longer legacies. In doing so, they illustrate that the Tobacco South may be changing, but it is far from dead.

Evan P. Bennett
Florida Atlantic University
Legends take the field in new exhibit on Cincinnati’s baseball history

Queen City Baseball: Diamonds and Stars
The story of baseball is the story of Cincinnati. Home to the first professional baseball team in 1869, Cincinnati changed professional sports in America. Names like Pete Rose, Johnny Bench, and Barry Larkin are known by baseball fans in every city regardless of age or hometown team. Queen City Baseball: Diamonds and Stars tells the story of Cincinnati baseball over the nearly 150 years since the Red Stockings first took the field en route to a 57-0 season.

Listen to the roar of the crowd as legendary announcer Waite Hoyt provides play-by-play as you tour the exhibit. From the mustaches of the Red Stockings to the dominance of the Big Red Machine, Queen City Baseball tells the history of baseball in the city where the game as we know it today began. View 19th century players’ contracts and payment records and photographs of Cincinnati’s earliest teams. Relive the 1919 World Series and the infamous “Black Sox Scandal” through archival newsreel footage and see baseballs signed by all-time greats like Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle. Queen City Baseball also celebrates those who broke racial barriers like Chuck Harmon, the first African American to play for the Cincinnati Reds, and Louis Dula, whose 1937 contract with the American Negro League’s Homestead Grays will also be on display.

Queen City Baseball: Diamonds and Stars will be on display at Cincinnati Museum Center through September 7. For more information visit www.cincymuseum.org or call (513) 287-7000.

Exhibit honors military contributions and sacrifices of Cincinnati’s men and women over two centuries

Treasures of Our Military Past
Treasures of Our Military Past honors the men, women, and organizations who have turned the tides of war and battled injustice around the globe for over 220 years. The exhibit offers a look inside Cincinnati Museum Center’s vast collections to tell the story of these men and women through uniforms, weaponry, equipment, photographs and documents. A hand-drawn plan of Fort Washington from 1793 and a directive from General “Mad” Anthony Wayne tell the story of battles fought in the 18th century in America’s early frontier. The green silk flag of the 10th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, the “Irish Regiment,” and the uniform and personal effects of General William H. Lytle tell the story of the region’s contributions during the Civil War.

Artifacts recognizing Cincinnati’s contributions to two world wars, including a Croix de Guerre awarded to Maria Clinton Herron during World War I and the World War II army nurse’s uniform of Bobbie Sterne, Cincinnati’s first female mayor, are fascinating glimpses at the region’s men and women who offered their services to the war effort. Uniforms, photos, and equipment from post-World War II conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan honor generations who still have stories to tell.

Treasures of Our Military Past also features a rare Holt Broadside printing of the Declaration of Independence, one of only four in the
country and a piece of Museum Center’s collections since the 1870s.

You can honor the veterans in your life by adding a name to the Veteran Tribute Wall that is featured in Treasures of Our Military Past. For a suggested minimum contribution of $10, you are invited to add a name “in honor of” or “in memory of” the veteran in their family.

Treasures of Our Military Past is now open at Cincinnati Museum Center through September 20. For more information or to add a name to the Veteran Tribute Wall, visit www.cincymuseum.org or call (513) 287-7000.

The largest Allied operation of World War II comes to the OMNIMAX® theater

D-Day: Normandy 1944

Narrated by Tom Brokaw, D-Day: Normandy 1944 details why and how Normandy, France, became the most important location in the world over the summer of 1944. The film uses sweeping panoramic and aerial footage, animation, CGI and stunning live-action images to blend history, military strategy, science, technology and human values.

D-Day: Normandy 1944 is an immersive experience dedicated to those men and women who fought and sacrificed in one of history’s most incredible operations. Discover just how this pivotal day, and those days before and after it, changed the world.

D-Day: Normandy 1944 is now playing in Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX® Theater at Cincinnati Museum Center. For more information and showtimes visit www.cincymuseum.org or call (513) 287-7000.

Filson Exhibits Suspended

The Filson Historical Society has suspended tours and exhibits through 2015 due to building expansion. The Library and Special Collections departments will be open for research during this time. For more information, please contact the society.

Indiana Historical Society Announces Heritage Grants

The Indiana Historical Society (IHS) is pleased to announce the creation of its new Heritage Grants, an initiative funded by a $3.43 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

During the next five years, IHS will provide $2.5 million in grants to Indiana’s local historical organizations. These will fund a wide variety of projects to help local organizations meet high-priority needs in areas of capacity building, collections stewardship, innovation and collaboration. The first applications will be accepted in late 2015, and the first grants will be awarded in 2016, Indiana’s Bicentennial year.

IHS has also hired a full-time fundraising educator to develop an educational fundraising program that will enhance the capability of organizations to raise money on their own, as well as offer support to local organizations through fundraising education workshops and ongoing grants coaching.

IHS has more than 35 years of experience supporting local historical organizations across Indiana through its Local History Services Department. Building on their commitment to training, workshops and consultations, staff in that division will administer the Heritage Grants and coordinate its fundraising education initiative.

For information on IHS, call (317) 232-1882 or visit www.indianahistory.org.