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Contributors

Dana M. Caldemeyer is a PhD student at the University of Kentucky where she studies labor and political activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States. She is a member of Phi Alpha Theta and Golden Key Honour Society.

David Stradling is professor of History at the University of Cincinnati. He is the author of *The Nature of New York: An Environmental History of the Empire State* (2010) and *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills* (2007). His current work concerns the urban environmental crisis in Cleveland.

Bryon Andreasen is the research historian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum where he serves as historical consultant to Illinois’s Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition and edits the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*.

Conditional Conservatism

Evansville, Indiana’s Embrace of the Ku Klux Klan, 1919–1924

Dana M. Caldemeyer

When twenty Ku Klux Klansmen dressed in full regalia silently marched down the aisle of Evansville’s Central Methodist Episcopal Church during a March 1922 Sunday evening service not a single congregation member stirred. After silently praying at the altar, the lead Klansman handed Reverend A. M. Couchman an envelope containing twenty-five dollars and said, “In the interest of the work that you are doing in the church, we present you with this sum of money.” As the leader and his hooded companions exited the building, the church service resumed with no mention of the mysterious visitors. The event was one of the local Klan’s many attempts to alter its image in the community. With the region caught in an ongoing debate about the merits of vigilante organizations, members of the Secret Order strove to separate their revitalized organization from vigilantes of the past. The Klan’s new concern for public relations prompted local klaverns to try and convince locals that they represented the interests of the community and contributed to the greater good. Klansmen hoped
to show that their organization consisted of good men and honest churchgoers who genuinely wished to improve the city. The appeal transformed the organization, enhanced its prestige, and attracted new members from various classes who joined in the name of civic improvement and native white supremacy.¹

Historians of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan often begin their studies in 1915, when William Simmons re-established the Klan in Atlanta, Georgia, and then fast-forward to the 1920s when the Klan reached its zenith. Most dedicate a portion of their work to the Indiana Realm of the Ku Klux Klan because the state was home to one of the strongest Klan movements in the 1920s. Scholars who study the Indiana Klan have focused on Evansville during the early spring of 1921, when Klan organizer and future Exalted Cyclops Joe Huffington arrived in the city. Seemingly overnight, the organization took root, making Evansville the first northern city to join the Invisible Empire. Current historiography credits the Klan’s instant popularity to the impact of World War I. The war increased anti-German sentiment and fears of socialism, while helping spark the Great Migration, the movement of tens of thousands of southern African Americans to northern cities. These factors played an important role in the Klan’s rise, but dating the organization’s birth to 1915 obscures the reasons for its broad appeal in many northern states. Certainly, the Klan’s popularity in southern Indiana can only be understood by examining the region’s pre-World War I history and traditions—and particularly the region’s long experience with vigilante groups. For many Evansville citizens, the Klan’s arrival and the 1925 trial and conviction of Indiana’s Grand Dragon David Curtis Stephenson for murder did not constitute watershed moments, as historians have argued. J. C. Kerlin, an Evansville native and editor of the Evansville Courier in the 1920s, recalled that the Klan’s arrival in Evansville followed naturally from earlier events. The rise of the Klan, he asserted, was “the next episode in the story of Evansville . . . something of an interlude when related to what had gone before and what followed.” The organization’s establishment and popularity arose from “a variety of influences and interests and ambitions” that in the early 1920s coalesced into a powerful if short-lived social and political organization.²

Located on the northern bank of the Ohio River, Evansville served as the regional and commercial hub for the cluster of Indiana’s southernmost counties known as the “Pocket.” The region’s producers shipped corn and coal directly to Evansville via the dense railroad network that wove through the countryside. The railroad also carried coal, “Black Patch” tobacco, and laborers north from
western Kentucky, reinforcing kinship ties and business connections between the two states that predated the Civil War. The Pocket’s population was almost exclusively native-born, white, and Protestant. Like many states throughout the Midwest prior to the Civil War, Indiana citizens supported anti-black legislation to keep the region exclusively white. However, local officials never widely enforced the legislation and the Pocket’s African American population rose steadily, if slowly. The laws, in short, did little more than reflect the political values of the region’s native-born white inhabitants.3

Still, in the 1920s the number of minorities living in the Pocket was proportionally lower than in most states, and the region’s country towns had few immigrants or blacks. The Pocket’s small African American population concentrated in urban centers such as Evansville. The region’s German immigrants, who constituted 68 percent of the Pocket’s foreign-born population, resided separately from their native-born white counterparts, living in towns that conducted church services, business transactions, and printed newspapers in German. Moving to German towns or sections of Evansville eased the burden of culture shock for German-Americans, but their isolation also estranged them from their native-born neighbors. During the First World War, native-born whites identified German-American communities as a potential threat to America. Evansville’s German population responded with demonstrations of their “one hundred percent Americanism,” refusing to speak or read German and holding patriotic picnics, but native whites still questioned their loyalty to the United States. Anti-German sentiment among native-born whites remained high after the war when the city’s Germans pushed for a relief fund for Germany.4
The success of the Ku Klux Klan in Evansville, however, hinged on far more than anti-German sentiment. Evansville’s reputation as an immoral city also played an important role in the region’s decision to embrace the Klan. High levels of alcohol consumption and widespread prostitution in Evansville stained the city’s reputation in the 1920s, as did the willingness of city leaders and other respected citizens to engage in bribery and political corruption. As early as the 1870s, Democrats and Republicans rigged elections, bought votes, and blocked residents from voting against them. Political corruption continued into the new century, and Evansville’s most famous millionaire, Democratic Mayor Benjamin Bosse, became a prime example of Evansville’s dishonesty. As the owner and shareholder of numerous businesses, Bosse earned admiration among Evansville residents for refusing his mayoral salary and using private funds to construct parks and assist local schools. However, during his eight years as Evansville’s mayor Bosse ran the city with a firm fist and turned a blind eye to corruption. He ensured that the city purchased coal from his Bosse Coal Company, bribed voters, and hired his friends rather than the lowest bidder to perform maintenance on city roads and buildings. When the *Evansville Courier* printed an article critical of Bosse, the mayor purchased a competing newspaper to ensure he received good press. And in 1917, Bosse suppressed Evansville’s black vote to win a second term of office.5

By the 1920s Evansville voters sought a change. In 1920, seven of Evansville’s most respected public officials, including “the ‘boss’ of the Republican Machine,” the chief of police, sheriff, and deputy sheriff, were arrested and convicted for
transporting whiskey into the city from Henderson, Kentucky. Evansville residents of all political persuasions debated how to stamp out corruption in city government. Many supported the “city manager program” which would have created the new position of city manager to check the power of the mayor. Although defeated in the June 1921 election, the proposal reveals that many Evansville voters sought to reform their flawed local politics. The Klan capitalized on locals’ desire for change and presented itself as a moral organization that would stamp out political corruption. According to historian William Lutholtz, the politically savvy Bosse, seeking to retain his influence over Evansville politics, invited the Klan to Evansville under the guise of ending corruption in city government. He also wanted to use the Klan to discourage the city’s black voters and place himself at the head of a powerful political machine. The tactic worked. The Ku Klux Klan usually supported Democrats up to Bosse’s death in 1922, and by that year their influence had pushed Evansville’s politics in a more conservative direction.6

Evansville’s voting patterns reflected this change. During the first decades of the twentieth century, city voters favored the Democratic Party, while the surrounding county of Vanderburgh leaned Republican. Residents in the city’s working-class neighborhoods also cast their votes for Socialist Party of America (SPA), most notably in 1904 when SPA congressional candidates received over 10 percent of the vote. This trend continued in the 1910s, when SPA candidates received as high as 17 percent of the vote, with strong support coming from miners and railroad workers. In 1918, William H. Henry, secretary of Indiana’s Socialist Party, bragged at the ease of organizing the predominantly white workforce of Winslow, Indiana. “I received sixty two names paid up for a new local at Winslow, Indiana in yesterday’s mail,” Henry wrote, “fifty four miners and the rest are merchants, carpenters, machinists, barbers and etc. I am mighty proud of that local, and feel sure that since so many in a community like Winslow can agree to come in, that our cause may well expect many new results in the future.” Communities like Winslow existed throughout the Pocket. Henry identified nineteen Indiana towns requesting SPA meetings, eight of which lay within Indiana’s coal district, including Princeton and Evansville. In Evansville’s 1917 mayoral election, the Socialist Party carried 17 percent of the vote. The Socialists could not elect their candidate to public office, but the party was a force to be reckoned with, especially in working-class wards. Indeed, in Evansville’s eighth ward, where railroad workers and many miners lived, nearly one third of the voters cast their ballot for the Socialists, outpolling the Republicans.7

By 1919, however, Evansville’s Socialist fervor had cooled. The federal government’s World War I “America First” propaganda emphasized the importance of patriotism and associated socialism with labor unrest. When Evansville’s policemen, firemen, and factory workers went on strike during the late summer of 1919, their demands placed them at odds with the city’s strong Americanist sentiment.
When Evansville miners struck that October, they faced a city exhausted from extended labor clashes in nearly every sector of the economy. Political leaders criticized the miners’ willingness to put their interests above local residents’ need for coal, and claimed that “hundreds of people will be thrown out of employment because of the strike of the coal miners.” The *Evansville Press* printed a series of advertisements from the “America First” Publicity Association warning that “radical labor agitators” had fomented the 1919 strike. Foreigners employed at local mines, the ads asserted, “contaminated” the Pocket’s “free-born American” miners, leading them away from “the sound teachings of their fathers to sophistries and perversions their fathers despised.” These agitators “have neither heart nor conscience” and would ruin the region if citizens allowed them to persist. “America and American ideals,” the ads proclaimed, “must not be smashed by fanatic foreign agitators” who wanted to strike “at the very foundation of our governmental and industrial structure, seeking the heart-blood of the nation.”

Many working class Pocket residents embraced Americanist sentiments. With unions weakened and a rising number of immigrant laborers, local white miners felt vulnerable in a declining economy. Native-born whites blamed their economic position on the region’s new arrivals and the failure of government and the unions to keep them out of their towns and workplaces. Local miners distanced themselves from the United Mine Workers (UMW) and the Socialist Party and adopted the nativist platform supported by the middle class. By the spring of 1920, most Pocket mines operated under an open shop policy—meaning that the UMW still represented miners but union membership was not a condition of employment—and in the 1921 mayoral election the Socialists received less than 1 percent of the vote. The workers’ change in party affiliation marked an important shift in Pocket politics. Middle-class voters opposed unions in the workplace, but they united with workers in opposition to immigration. The *Evansville Press* drew support from both classes when it stated: “Let us see callouses [sic] again on a few million more American hands. And let us keep out the foreigners—all of them—until we can work out some plan . . . so that they will not be ruined as citizens as soon as they arrive.” The region’s working and middle classes shared common ground in their antagonism to foreigners and workers’ efforts to protect their jobs from immigrants enjoyed middle class approval.

Although most native-born white residents preferred lawful and organized action to counter the immigrant threat to local jobs, others concluded that the existing laws were inadequate to the task. As a result, many native-born Indianans turned to vigilantism to remove perceived threats. Those so inclined drew on a long tradition of vigilantism in the Pocket. After an 1857 dispute between a white and black family, for example, Evansville citizens attempted to “forestall future violence” by forcibly removing the entire black population of Vanderburgh County’s Union Township, sending them eighty miles north to Gibson County.
During Evansville’s 1899 coal mine strike, citizens ambushed thirty African American miners brought to the region to work in the mines. Tensions boiled over again in July 1903, when African American John Tinsley shot white patrolman Louis Massey outside a local saloon. Evansville erupted in a race riot that resulted in twelve deaths and the ransacking of at least four saloons, mostly black owned and operated. White Evansville residents targeted African Americans and their businesses because they associated blacks with criminal behavior that threatened the morality of the city. In 1903, the Good Citizen’s League, a local middle-class African American organization, claimed that Evansville lay at the mercy of blacks who had succumbed to the temptation of the saloons, gambling houses, and brothels that lined the streets of black neighborhoods. The League argued that the “worthless, degenerate negroes who bring shame and disgrace upon the race, who infest the vice-ridden dives of our city” threatened to spread immorality throughout Evansville. The targeting of Evansville’s black population reflected white residents’ displaced anger and racial anxiety, but also their desire to protect the city from a perceived moral threat.10

In fact, vigilante organizations employing blatant intimidation became a common way for distraught whites to confront supposed dangers throughout the Ohio Valley. In 1888, citizens of Indiana’s Crawford and Harrison counties formed a vigilante organization known as the “White Caps,” patterned after similar groups in the South. White Caps policed the region during the first decades of the twentieth century, punishing “chicken thieves and ‘immorality,’” typically by beating the lawbreaker. As the years passed, however, the

“White Caps” (masked vigilantes) issue a violent warning, from Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, October 1888. THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
organization’s image deteriorated as members used it for personal economic benefit, forcing people off their farmland and stealing crops and farm equipment. By 1918, the White Caps consisted largely of “bullies and thugs” who terrorized the region, and many locals had grown to despise the organization and the vigilantism it represented. Similar groups appeared in Kentucky. Farmers in the state’s “Black Patch” tobacco region formed the Dark Tobacco Planters Protective Association (PPA) in 1901 to defend farmers from national tobacco companies that drove down tobacco prices. Members of the PPA formed a vigilante organization known as the “Night Riders” that patrolled the countryside and maintained tobacco prices through fear and sabotage. Disguised by masks and sheets, Night Riders burned barns and crosses, plowed over crops, destroyed farm equipment, and beat farmers who refused to join the PPA. By 1910, Riders had expanded their activities, targeting the perpetrators of “immoral” activity such as drinking and gambling. Within a few years, the PPA became so powerful that their regional influence eclipsed that of local law enforcement. As with the White Caps, however, the chaos and corruption associated with the Riders sparked widespread animosity. As a result of its connection to the Riders, the PPA dissolved in 1915, while “vigilantism” became synonymous with the
night riding “thugs.” The Riders continued their activities well into the 1920s when they joined the Ku Klux Klan.11

Residents of the Pocket followed closely the course of vigilante activities in the Ohio Valley. In 1921, long after the Night Riders had become associated with lawlessness, the Evansville Courier praised the group’s activities, noting, for example, that “prices at [tobacco] warehouses” rose “higher” after Night Rider raids. Many residents found attractive a group that protected the interests of people threatened by changing social and economic conditions. Moreover, Indians had a history of employing legal vigilante organizations. An 1865 law allowed Hoosiers to form protective organizations to defend their communities “against horse thieves and other felons.” People throughout Indiana responded by forming branches of the National Horse Thief Detective Association (NHTDA), “an enforcing agency entirely separate and apart [from local law enforcement], above and beyond the regular constituted authority.” The 1865 legislation made these vigilantes unofficial policemen who could interpret and act on both written and moral law without answering to any court or governing authority. As members of a legal entity, NHTDA detectives did not conceal their identities and the state held them personally accountable for their actions. As a result, detectives had an incentive to act according to public sentiment in instances when law enforcement could or would not respond. This aspect of the NHTDA made it markedly different from the other vigilante organizations. Groups such as the White Caps and Night Riders often acted out of personal interest and their activities frequently devolved into what residents called “the mob spirit.” In contrast, the NHTDA worked in conjunction with law enforcement and enjoyed prestige throughout the state. In 1894, the organization could count among its members Indiana’s governor, James Atwell Mount, who also proudly served as president of the organization.12

By the time the Ku Klux Klan launched its campaign to entice northern states into the Invisible Empire, the NHTDA was no longer active. However, Pocket residents’ long experience with vigilantism persuaded many that such tactics represented a viable option for confronting and containing the perceived dangers of rising immorality, black and otherwise, and immigrant economic encroachment. The Klan quickly inserted itself into the ongoing debate about the use of vigilantism, despite many locals’ initial concerns about the organization. When the Evansville Press learned about the planned establishment of a klavern in the city, it editorialized that there was no place for the Klan “in Evansville or anywhere else in these United States, the land where ‘obedience to law is liberty.’” The editorial continued:

When an organization takes it upon itself to pass judgment on the acts of others and yet protects the acts of its own members from the judgment of the public by enfolding these acts in a veil of secrecy, a [dangerous] situation is
created. . . . Experience shows that even the best of men, when carried away by the mob spirit, will commit shocking crimes, which acting alone, they would not do nor approve of. And the proposed ‘Ku Klux Klan’ would furnish a fearful opportunity for breeding the mob spirit. If we have not the right laws, let’s demand them. If the law is not being properly enforced, let us, as sovereign voters, see to it that it is enforced. But let us do what we do openly, in our right names.

Many local residents undoubtedly agreed with the Press editorial, fearing that the Klan would encourage “the mob spirit.” For them, most of the Pocket’s problems stemmed from criminal behavior that could be prosecuted by law, making a vigilante organization unnecessary.13

Four months later, however, a handful of residents faced a new kind of injustice that lay outside the province of the law. In response to the UMW’s decline in membership and influence after the 1919 coal strike, mine owners and operators instituted an open-shop policy and began importing more eastern European immigrants, often pushing out native-born whites who had worked in the mines for years. The mine operators broke no laws by hiring immigrants, but many residents concluded that their actions, though lawful, were unfair. Lacking any legal recourse to protect their jobs, an “army” of nine hundred frustrated miners visited the Atlas and Homer mines in Pike County on June 9, 1921 to demand an equal division of labor, coerce operators to hire union men only, and “induce” the immigrants working in the mines to leave. The situation soon escalated. On June 11, eight hundred miners gathered at the Francisco Mine in Gibson County, Indiana, demanding that H. E. Cox, superintendent of the Ayrshire District Collieries Company, “‘get rid’ of the ‘undesirable’—foreign born miners—at the mine.” After making their demands, the crowd of miners chased the superintendent and his family out of town along with the foreign workers.14

Evansville’s three newspapers provided in-depth coverage of the miners’ actions. The Evansville Journal, the city’s Republican-affiliated paper, the Evansville Courier, the Democrat-affiliated daily, and the Evansville Press, the independent newspaper, all cast the miners’ June 11 actions in a positive light, revealing the strength of Americanist sentiment in the community. According to the Evansville Journal, “The miners said the company was trying to bring in foreigners to the exclusion of the resident miners. In this assertion they have received the backing of nearly the entire Francisco community.” Rather than depicting the miners’ vigilante actions as lawless, local newspapers described them as a legitimate way to enforce values that much of the Pocket shared. The Press insisted that residents of Francisco not only knew what the miners planned to do on June 11, but supported their efforts to purge the mines of immigrant workers. Despite gunfire and the presence of the sheriff, the Journal argued that the vigilantes “made their demands effective . . . accomplishing their aim without trouble.”15
However, the papers’ favorable assessment soon changed as the events of June 11 set off a wave of vigilantism. The same night, over one thousand men “from all points in the ‘Pocket’ district” congregated at the Oakland City rail yard to drive out several eastern European immigrants hired to build a rail switch for the Enos strip mine. According to the Courier, the miners concealed their faces and “went into the camp in automobiles, gathering like a flock of birds from all directions. The men in the camps were asleep, but were soon routed from their beds.” Immigrant workers fled the camp “in their night clothes,” chased and beaten by local whites armed with clubs. At least one man was hospitalized and others remained missing, presumed to have run away. Although the Journal expressed approval of the Francisco miners on June 11, a day later it condemned the outbreak of violence at Oakland City. Reporting that vigilantes had evicted one hundred fifty miners in forty-eight hours, the Journal claimed that the violence was perpetrated by “outside agitators . . . of the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World]” and demanded that Indiana Governor Warren T. McCray “preserve . . . order” in the mines.16

The Journal’s shift from approval to condemnation of the labor unrest reveals the conditions that shaped local community responses to vigilantism. Native-born whites accepted isolated and largely non-violent intimidation that protected local jobs from foreign encroachment when the government and UMW failed to act. However, when vigilantism escalated into outright violence and lawless chaos that put the entire region in jeopardy, many residents objected to the presence of vigilante organizations.

However, not everyone agreed with the Journal’s new editorial slant. Falling demand for coal had pushed several mines into part-time operation. In a stagnant economy, the Courier noted, the companies’ importation of outside laborers decreased the number of jobs available to local whites and directly threatened the miners’ livelihoods. As long as a foreign presence in the region endangered local jobs, citizens could sympathize with the miners’ actions, even if they did not condone them. As the Press editorialized on June 12:

It is well that the Gibson-co[unty] grand jury is to investigate the mob violence against foreigners who have entered the mine fields to get work. When men take the law into their own hands, or as in this case, act according to a law of their own making, there is no longer any disposition to let them get away with it. But the complaint of the Pocket miners against the influx of foreign miners is to be sympathized with. Where they have made their mistake is in acting against the foreigners, when they should act against the law which permits the foreigners to come to this country. There is not work enough for Americans in America; why permit foreigners, whom we do not assimilate, to enter? [Indiana] Congressman [Oscar R.] Luhring should take note of the Gibson-co situation. It is an argument for a law entirely cutting off foreign immigration.
The editorial revealed the appeal of the Klan’s nativist platform in many Pocket communities, even if most residents frowned on outright vigilantism. Both the *Courier* and the *Press* believed the miners were justified in their actions because they sought to stabilize the local economy.17

The Klan actively appealed to this sentiment. Thus, when Mayor Bosse authorized the re-paving of Evansville streets a few months later using a predominantly African American workforce the contractor received a visit from several Klansmen who demanded he fire all black workers and hire Evansville whites in their place. The Klansmen failed to alter the mayor’s decision, but they demonstrated how the Klan worked to advance the interests of white workers. Still, Klan tactics followed those of vigilant groups like the Black Patch Night Riders. Moreover, the June events at the mines confirmed the fears of many locals that even though “the original intention” of the Klan “might be the very best,” their tactics would “eventually lead to trouble.” In particular, many residents feared the anonymity of Klan members would make the group a “meddlesome institution.” In response, Klan organizer Joe Huffington
strove to make the organization more palatable to local interests. Realizing that local distrust of the Klan stemmed from hooded, lawless vigilantism, Huffington immediately set to work improving the group’s image. “The Klan is not an outgrowth of the old, pillaging night-riding lawless bands,” Huffington claimed. “It is a clean organization, standing for the uplift and protection of untainted Americanism. There is nothing mysterious, or white-shrouded about the Klan. It is merely a secret order just like the Masonic orders or any other.” Still, many white residents questioned why they should join the group. If Huffington correctly described the Klan as a supplement to local law enforcement, they wondered, “what does a man get out of the Ku Klux Klan that he cannot get out of existing organizations?”

Despite such doubts, Klan membership climbed among Evansville’s most powerful people. Huffington established connections with city officials who sympathized with the Klan. Editor J. C. Kerlin recalled that Jesse Jones, a city prohibition agent, “was pretty close to Joe Huffington.” This friendliness translated into “selective enforcement” of prohibition laws and allowed Klansmen to violate them with impunity. “It was more or less obvious. There were places you could go to for a home brew or rot gut whiskey if you wanted to drink it. . . . Places you could go and feel perfectly safe and you knew darn well there would never be a raid while you were there.” One of these “safe” locations was likely the Whoopee Club, which Evansville resident and future mayor Manson Reichert claimed was run by Exalted Cyclops Huffington. The Klan’s immunity to local laws became an unspoken selling point for Huffington as he worked to transform the organization’s image from vigilante association to social group. Recruiting among church members, business clubs, and civic organizations, Huffington drew many aspiring young men into the ranks, including future Indiana Grand Dragon David Curtis Stephenson. In an interview with the *New York World*, Stephenson recalled how he became involved with the Klan:

I was in Evansville in the fall of 1921, where my friends were a crowd of fine young men. Nearly all of them had joined the Ku Klux Klan. I was against it. . . . They kept after me, tho, and explained to me that the Klan was not an organization which took Negroes out, cut off their noses, and threw them into the fire. Nor did they tar and feather people or oppress them in any way. I was told that the Klan was a strictly patriotic organization. . . . They finally convinced me the Klan was a good thing, and I joined.”

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*Robe of Exalted Cyclops, from Catalogue of Official Robes and Banners, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1925). RARE PAMPHLETS, THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY*
After joining, Stephenson used his charisma to recruit new members. Unlike Huffington, Stephenson enlarged Klan membership by looking beyond Evansville’s prominent businessmen and tapping into the city’s tradition of law enforcement, vigilantism, and night riding. In particular, Stephenson built the Klan on the foundation of the old NHTDA. He incorporated former members of that group into the Klan and encouraged new recruits to join both groups, in the process reviving the older organization. A 1924 *McClure’s Magazine* article captured the scale of the transition: “Before Klan No. 1 was organized at Evansville, the National Horse Thief Protective Association numbered a few hundred inactive members. At this writing it has 40,000 members.” Of these recruits, twenty-two thousand were confirmed members of the Ku Klux Klan. Stephenson’s success hinged on presenting the Klan to white working class Pocket residents as a supplement to the NHTDA, using the legality of the older organization as a means to circumvent the vigilante question. According to J. C. Kerlin, the NHTDA served as the “strong arm” for the Klan, punishing its enemies and rewarding its allies. The NHTDA conducted alcohol raids on anti-Klan constituents, monitored roadsides for teenagers “parking,” and addressed potential threats to individual Klansmen or the Klan platform. Meanwhile, the Klan burnished its image by participating in philanthropic actions such as the March 1922 donation to the Central Methodist Episcopal Church.20

The NHTDA operated under a system that fused the local court system with legal vigilantism. A March 1923 issue of the *Fiery Cross*, a weekly Klan publication from Indianapolis, reported that the Vanderburgh County sheriff and his three-man “booze squad” arrested five times as many liquor law violators as the Evansville police. Two of the three men on the squad had direct ties to the NHTDA. They brought those arrested before city judge and Klan sympathizer Emory Ireland, who convicted the violators. Local residents saw an organization that actively combated immorality, and when local newspapers picked up the story, NHTDA membership increased. By April 1923, the Vanderburgh County commissioners had appointed thirty-six new constables to the NHTDA. That summer, Huffington, who addition to his role in the Klan also served as a leader of the Vanderburgh County NHTDA, launched an effort to put city law enforcement to shame. Within weeks, NHTDA detectives had busted eight liquor law violators in Evansville. The violators were tried in city court, where Judge Ireland handed five of the eight cases over to his newly appointed special judge William Lee Smith, a young lawyer, NHTDA constable, and future klaliff in the Evansville Klan.21

Robe of Klansman, from *Catalogue of Official Robes and Banners, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1925).

RARE PAMPHLETS, THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The vigilante system worked because the Klan operated within the parameters of the legal system. As a result, local white residents viewed the Klan as an organization that combated lawlessness in a legal manner for the greater good rather than one that incited “the mob spirit” for the benefit of a few. For native-born whites, the Klan became a means to maintain order, safeguard morality, and keep jobs secure and streets safe. As historian Leonard Moore concludes, “Those who joined the Klan did so because it stood for the most organized means of resisting the social and economic forces that transformed community life, undermined traditional values, and made average citizens feel more isolated from one another and more powerless in their relationships with the major institutions that governed their lives.” The Klan’s potential as a vehicle for protecting local interests gave it a broad appeal among Evansville’s middle and working classes. Although no membership rosters exist for the Evansville Klan, the constable roster of the NHTDA reveals that many came from social classes that joined the Klan in large numbers elsewhere in Indiana. Of the NHTDA constables appointed by the Vanderburgh County commissioners between 1922 and 1926, at least 40 percent held occupations such as railroad and factory workers, servants, and coal miners. Like many middle class Pocket residents, local workers believed that the Klan’s involvement in local community and political life helped secure what union impotency and party corruption had lost. The Klan and the NHTDA promised to restore the political voice and workplace power of the white man.22

How the working class used the new organization became apparent almost immediately after the Klan arrived in southern Indiana. On February 5, 1922, seven union miners were arrested for attacking Herachel Crow, a non-union miner employed at the Peacock Coal Mine, and threatening “to lynch him if he refused to join the union.” The men each received a two hundred dollar fine for their actions, but their efforts were not in vain. Before the court had processed the charges against the men, Crow joined the union. Less than six months later in the midst of a coal mine strike in the Pocket, a handful of masked men visited a Boonville mine and threatened several non-union strikebreakers. The masked men warned, “You fellows clear out and if you’re here and [mine operator] Samples reopens the mine we’ll kill you all.” The mine opened the next day without incident, but the use of the Klan as a means to enforce union membership reveals local residents’ willingness to employ vigilante tactics to address issues beyond the traditional Klan platform. And Evansville workers
were not alone in such efforts. Historian Ronald Lewis notes that white miners’ allegiance to the Klan often undermined unionization drives in Midwestern mining districts in the 1920s. Although the UMW remained open to miners of all races, many white miners in Ohio and West Virginia joined the Klan despite the union’s efforts to discourage dual membership. When the number of African American miners grew in regions such as West Virginia’s northern Panhandle, native-born white residents reacted by joining the Klan and burning crosses during strike demonstrations.23

Although centered on white supremacy, the Klan’s appeal extended beyond racism. The Klan used vigilantism to enforce local values and promote change in the workplace and politics. The Klan’s reputation for upholding morality also became a useful tool for fighting corruption and restoring tarnished reputations. After an infamous 1922 Williamson County, Illinois, coal mine massacre during which at least twenty strikebreakers were killed in cold blood, residents of southern Illinois embraced the Klan because it “offered them an opportunity” to improve the region’s reputation and “make the name of Williamson one of which the state and nation could be proud.” Similarly, historian William Jenkins notes that the Youngstown, Ohio, Klan exploited native-born middle-class residents’ desires for a local government free of the corruption they associated with immigrants. Klan-endorsed candidates promised to preserve morality and remove the immigrant presence in local politics and workplaces. In Knoxville, Tennessee, where blue-collar workers comprised roughly two-thirds of Klan membership, white working-class residents distanced themselves from unions. Instead, workers “turned to the KKK in an attempt to regain their sense of dignity and importance” in the workplace and local politics.24

Indiana’s native-born white residents shared a similar faith in the Klan’s ability to restore moral standards. McClure’s Magazine writer Max Bentley described the Klan as essential in a time of political corruption:

[The Indiana Ku Klux Klansman] is not a terrorist with Hate as his motto. He does not whip negroes, stage tar parties, or write anonymous threats. He does not break down the machinery of regular law enforcement with informal extra-legal methods. On the contrary, the unbiased verdict in Indiana seems to be that he has been, all things considered, a real factor for the betterment of municipal rule. Most of the time he is pursuing the favorite avocation of all Hoosiers, which is, of course, politics; but he has found time to assist the regular officers in cleaning up some bad situations, and in some instances has gone in and cleaned a town himself. He has done that in a strictly legal fashion.

The Klan’s reputation for preserving local values in the workplace and politics led one Evansville native, J. C. Kerlin, to recall: “It was . . . a time . . . when a fellow thought, ‘Maybe you’d better belong to it [the Klan],’ if you weren’t a Catholic or a Jew or a black man. ‘Maybe you’d best get in there.’ It got pretty prestigious just in that respect.”25
Evansville Press writer Ed Klingler recalled that the Klan’s secretive nature made it a particularly useful vehicle for promoting immigration restriction and workplace issues. Secrecy also enabled the Klan to build a strong political machine through which it ran the city. “Because of its secrecy,” Klingler argued, the Klan “lent itself ideally to the creation of political power and the people who were involved in it were people who were interested in the exercise of political power. Not that they would run for office, but they would be in a position to dictate to those who held the office.” Evansville editor Kerlin agreed, noting that “Huffington was mayor when [Herbert] Males was in the mayor’s office.” Once it gained political control, the Klan grew in prominence and spread rapidly throughout the Pocket. Its image as a protector of local values and a philanthropic rather than lawless vigilante group played an instrumental role in its success. Members of the Klan embraced the group’s nativist and white supremacist message, but they found local issues such as corrupt government officials and job security far more pressing than the potential threat of immigrants. The Klan provided working-class whites a vehicle to express their economic demands, while middle-class Klansmen enjoyed enhanced political influence.26

After Democratic Mayor Bosse’s death in April 1922, the balance of political power in Evansville shifted. During the tight fall 1922 elections, Evansville voters favored the Republican Party for the first time in over a decade, but Republican candidates won their precincts by less than one hundred votes. White working-class and immigrant neighborhoods continued to vote Democratic, but not in the numbers they had in the past. Even precincts that had previously voted for Socialist candidates now favored Democrats over Republicans, but by less than one hundred votes. The outcome revealed Evansville’s shifting political allegiances. Running for superior court judge, Democratic candidate Lane Osborn lamented the influence of the “KKK Clan” over the election. According to Osborn, Edgar Durre won the election because he belonged to the anti-Catholic Evansville Lions, which “marked openly and effectively for his election” and “drew heavily” from the Protestant votes. “There was not a Catholic elected,” added Osborn’s wife, “and the leader of the Ku Klux said he was satisfied with the result.”27

In 1923, Evansville’s support for the Klan increased. In July, the local Klan held its biggest rally, a family picnic in Mesker Park attended by roughly ten thousand people who traveled from Illinois, Kentucky, and central Indiana to socialize, watch a Klan parade, and hear speeches from Klan representatives. The same year, UMW officials noted, “fifty percent of the members in [the Evansville District] belong to the Klan, and in some local unions 75% of our members belong to the Klan.” This level of support gave the Klan enormous power in the Pocket’s unions. In July 1923, Evansville district union representatives traveled to Columbus, Ohio, to meet with prominent Klansmen, who
assured union leaders they would instruct the region’s Klansmen “to take no action in the labor movement, for or against anyone who was not affiliated with their organization.” The issue, however, was not so easily laid to rest. At the UMW convention the following year, union members debated a resolution, based on over thirty proposals sent from locals within Indiana’s Pocket, which would allow known Klansmen to join the union. Many local union representatives warned that the UMW would lose massive numbers in the state if Klansmen left the union. Others stressed that the two organizations could work together for the miners’ cause. “We believe,” they argued, that “the principles as advanced by the Ku Klux Klan, if properly applied, will be for the uplifting and betterment of the laboring men of today.” The resolution failed, but it reveals the level of support the Klan enjoyed in the mining districts of Indiana. Many native-born whites in the Pocket identified with one miner’s claim that the “Klan is not as harmful to labor as radical labor organizations.” Miners sought protection in the workplace, but they eschewed socialist and “Wobbly” labor “agitators” whom they believed fought for workers’ rights at the expense of native-born Americans. Unionized Klan members, in contrast, enjoyed protection in the workplace while holding fast to their patriotic ideals.28

Meanwhile, the local Klan continued to exploit white Evansville residents’ fears of lax law enforcement and corruption. At a July 1924 Klan rally attended by ten thousand, Exalted Cyclops Huffington, following a quartet of robed Klansmen singers, proclaimed:

If a politician fails to make good and keep his promises, the voters can recall him. . . . The Klan stands for law enforcement in this city. I believe the law enforcing forces of Evansville are inefficient. This condition is not because of any one man. The city administration should get behind its officers of the law and make this the clean city it should be. . . . All of us can reform our city. We should be able to say to our administration: ‘We are the master, you are the servant, if you don’t perform, you’re fired.’”

Huffington added that Klansmen would support candidates in the upcoming election who “have regard for religion and honesty, who are willing to work for the public and who have the least regard for money and politics.”29
In the fall 1924 elections, the Klan-endorsed Republican Party worked to gain votes in working-class and black neighborhoods, even promising African Americans representation in the city government and other political favors. In a surprising outcome, Republicans carried the vote in thirty-three of the city’s thirty-nine voting precincts, including African American and working-class neighborhoods like the seventh ward. Most black voters in Evansville traditionally favored the Republican ticket, but candidates typically won by less than one hundred votes. The 1924 election, in contrast, sparked a significant increase in voter turnout in the seventh ward and resulted in sweeping victories for Republican candidates, all of whom won by margins of roughly a thousand votes. In the period of Klan dominance that followed, city officials did not enact or endorse any additional discriminatory laws aimed at Evansville’s black population. The Klan also made good on its promises regarding municipal representation. Although many of the new black officials were little more than puppets directed by the Klan, the Secret Order appointed more African Americans to city office than its anti-Klan predecessor.

The Stephenson scandal harmed the Klan’s reputation throughout the nation, and it doomed the organization’s popularity in Indiana, with membership throughout the northern portion of the state declining rapidly after 1925. However, the majority of Evansville’s Klansmen remained in the Order until the Klan and Republican Party came under scrutiny for political corruption in the late 1920s. In fact, despite Stephenson’s association with Evansville Klan recruitment, the NHTDA continued to expand throughout his trial, with thirty-four new constables appointed in 1925 and 1926, and only fourteen constables resigning. Evansville’s unwillingness to break from the organization at the height of the scandal highlights Pocket residents’ positive view of the Klan. For native-born Evansville voters, Klan membership was more than a fad that exploited local nativist sentiment. Despite the city’s numerous and politically influential social and philanthropic organizations—which included the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, Kiwanis, the American Legion, the Young Men’s Christian Association, and the West Side Nut Club—Evansville Klansmen did not abandon the Secret Order in 1925. For them, the Klan offered more than a social or community improvement organization. Instead, the Klan enjoyed extensive political and social influence in the Pocket because residents believed the organization could make tangible improvements in their lives and community. Election trends and NHTDA membership rosters reveal that though the Klan benefited from residual First World War Americanism and the targeting of ethnic groups in the 1922 election, the organization’s regional political dominance came only after its leaders connected the Klan’s nativist platform to local concerns about political corruption, inefficient law enforcement, and immigrant encroachment in the workplace.
Within the Pocket, the Klan’s success rested upon the organization’s ability to conform to the needs and desires of disparate social and political groups. To Evansville’s middle-class residents, the Klan fought immorality and provided a voice in local government. To workers such as the miners, the Klan offered a means to protect local jobs without threatening to awaken “the mob spirit” or calling their patriotism into question. In supporting the Klan, workers who previously favored radical political options could now join together with a powerful conservative constituency without altering their underlying goals. Drawing on the region’s tradition of vigilantism, the Klan convinced middle- and working-class native-born residents that its threats and violence could secure not just a common nativist goal, but also effect social change that previous political parties and labor unions had failed to achieve.

1 Evansville Courier, Mar. 27, 1922; Evansville Press, Mar. 27, 1922.


7 White, Fragile Alliances, 17-29; Evansville Press, Nov. 7, 1917; William H. Henry to Theodore Debs, Apr. 20, 1918, Eugene Debs Collection, Correspondence File, Indiana State University Archives, Terre Haute.


11 Rachel Perry, “The Old Jail,” Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History 11 (Winter 1999), 39; Wade, Fiery Cross, 115; Waldrep, Night Riders, 46, 75, 98-109, 182-86. The Klan never gained a strong foothold in the Black Patch, however, because of residents’ negative experience with vigilantism.


13 Evansville Courier, Jan. 27, 1921; Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 144-46; White, Fragile Alliances, 31; Bentley, “Ku Klux Klan in Indiana,” 23; Frank “Pop” Fessenden, interview by Josephine M. Elliott, May 21, 24, 1974, OHC-USI; Evansville Press, Feb. 5, 1921.

14 Evansville Journal, June 9, 10, 11, 1921; Evansville Press, June 9, 10, 11, 1921; Evansville Courier, June 10, 11, 1921. According to the Journal, Cox hired three Bulgarian miners from southern Illinois to work in the Francisco mine; other mines hired a “few” Austrians, Bulgarians, and Slavs.

15 Evansville Journal, June 11, 1921; Evansville Press, June 11, 1921.

16 Evansville Courier, June 12, 1921; Evansville Journal, June 12, 1921.

17 Evansville Courier, June 12, 1921; Evansville Press, June 12, 1921.

18 McIntyre interview, OHC-USI; Evansville Courier, Feb. 5, Mar. 26, 1921; White, Fragile Alliances, 45-46; Evansville Press, June 24, 1921 (Huffington quote), Oct. 17, 1921. Jackson’s Ku Klux Klan in the City illustrates the 1920s transformation of the Klan as organizers altered its platform to make it acceptable in cities that otherwise had no interest in the Secret Order.


21 Fiery Cross, Mar. 9, 1923; Board of Commissioners, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, “Record of Minutes,” book U-1, Sept. 2, 1918-Dec. 29, 1924, s.v. (Indiana Detective Association), Board of Commissioners, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, “Record of Minutes,” book V-1, Jan. 1925-May 31, 1931, s.v. (Indiana Detective Association), both in Evansville City Archives, Evansville, In. (hereafter VC, “Record of Minutes,” years, ECA); Kerlin interview, OHC-USI; Evansville Courier, Mar. 11, 1923; Evansville Press, June 21, 1923; “Local Officers of the Ku Klux Klan,” 1925, William H. Smith Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis (hereafter IHS). The three men on the sheriff’s “Booze Squad” were Art Epperson, Jesse Jones, and Ed Hansley. Epperson served as a constable in the NHTDA and Jones and Huffington were close friends.


26 Kerlin interview, LaFollette interview, and Edward Klingler, interview by Darrel E. Bigham, July 10, 1974, all in OHC-USI; White, *Fragile Alliances*, 56, 64; “Local Officers of the Ku Klux Klan,” 1925, IHS. Herbert Males, a Republican, served as sheriff of Vanderburgh County from 1919 to 1923 and as mayor from 1926 to 1930.

27 *Evansville Journal-News*, Nov. 8, 1916 (1916 Vanderburgh County election results); *Evansville Courier*, Nov. 4, 1920 (1920 Vanderburgh County election results); *Evansville Journal*, Nov. 8, 1922 (1922 Vanderburgh County election results); *Fourteenth Census*, 1920; Lane Osborn to Louise Brown Osborn, Nov. 13, 1922, Amy Osborn to Louise Brown Osborn, Nov. 9, 1922, Louise Brown Osborn Papers, IHS.


29 *Evansville Courier*, July 18, 1924; *Evansville Journal*, July 18, 1924.

30 *Evansville Journal-News*, Nov. 8, 1916 (1916 Vanderburgh County election results); *Evansville Courier*, Nov. 4, 1920 (1920 Vanderburgh County election results), July 17 (advertisement), Nov. 5, 1924 (1924 Vanderburgh County election results); *Evansville Journal*, Nov. 8, 1922 (1922 Vanderburgh County election results), Nov. 5, 1924; *Evansville Press*, Nov. 5, 1924; *Fourteenth Census*, 1920; White, *Fragile Alliances*, 62. Evansville’s seventh ward, which held some of the city’s oldest African American and working-class neighborhoods, voted overwhelmingly Republican, allowing Klan-endorsed candidates to win every precinct in the ward, with some Republicans winning by over seven thousand votes.

31 The only available Klan membership report from the Pocket dates from 1925, after the Stephenson scandal. At that time, the Klan claimed 5,455 members in Vanderburgh County and the favor of the sheriff’s department, though whether or how much membership had fallen since the previous year is unknown. In late 1926, the city launched an investigation into the Klan’s control of the Republican Party and several anti-Klan politicians ran on a “clean” platform. By 1928, the political clout of the Klan had eroded and membership plummeted. See “Local Officers of the Ku Klux Klan,” 1925, IHS; *Evansville Courier*, July 17, 1924, June 16, 1932; White, *Fragile Alliances*, 66; VC, “Record of Minutes,” 1918-1924, and VC, “Record of Minutes,” 1925-1931, both in ECA.
Mt. Airy Forest
One Hundred Years of Conservation in the City
David Stradling

Mt. Airy Forest celebrated its one hundredth birthday in 2011. A green expanse on Cincinnati’s near west side, Mt. Airy can bear all the clichés of a great urban park: it is a gem in the city’s crown; the lungs of the urban body; that most necessary of urban places, where overtired residents can escape into nature, away from the bustle of the workaday world. Nearly fifteen hundred acres traversed by trails and winding roads, dotted by rustic shelters and clusters of picnic tables in oak groves, Mt. Airy has all the physical markers of America’s large urban parks. Its central feature, however, is the forest. The woods are so expansive that most visitors may not understand just how constructed and managed this “natural” area is—just how much conservation has been practiced on this landscape over the last century. Hikers of the park’s many miles of trails might feel as though they are passing through a purely natural forest, but this sensation really reflects the success of the forest’s management. This forest feels natural. Far from being a patch of wild forest preserved for posterity’s enjoyment, though, Mt. Airy is a cultivated forest, planned and planted on hundreds of acres of former farmland.

As Mt. Airy’s centennial began, large red signs warned prospective hikers: “Park Closed for Wildlife Management.” Although the signs were purposefully vague, they indicated the days during which bow hunters would be in the woods culling the forest’s excessively large deer herd. “Wildlife management” has a much more benign sound than “hunting,” at least to many urban ears, but the phrase also accurately describes the need for the continuous management of urban parklands. Hunting removed the deer’s natural predators long ago, and despite the omnipresent threat posed by automobiles and the increasing presence of coyotes in Hamilton County, deer find it much too easy to make a living in Mt. Airy, and by their sheer numbers—more than two hundred by one count in 2009—they threaten to damage the forest through over-browsing. Thus, park managers must control the number of deer in order to preserve the ecosystem that foresters have constructed over the last century. This conservation of flora and fauna is the never-ending task of the city’s park employees.¹

From its beginnings in the late 1800s, the conservation movement has had its greatest—and most visible—effects in rural America. Conservation brought scientific knowledge to forestry, regulated hunting to protect valued species, reduced soil erosion through better agriculture, and made better use of scarce water resources through irrigation projects. All of these aspects of conservation...

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have had significant consequences for the American landscape, from the creation of the national forests and wildlife refuges to the building of massive dams for the generation of power and the supply of water to western farms. Despite the transformative influence of conservation in the countryside, historians have been slow to recognize the many ways conservation has influenced the urban landscape. Mt. Airy’s history reveals only the most obvious way in which the movement to protect and improve America’s natural resources has had a lasting influence in the city. 

Visitors to Mt. Airy today might think the forest a result of great foresight, an act of preservation decades ago that allowed a forest to remain intact inside the growing city. Instead, Mt. Airy is the result of conservation: the application of scientific expertise designed to husband natural resources and improve them for future use and subsequent generations, including our own. Ironically, one of the people most responsible for its construction, the forester Edmund Secrest, underestimated his own abilities as he began work in 1914. “A forester would only by accident make a beauty spot,” he claimed, “but nature makes both forests and beauty without premeditation.” Mt. Airy provides ample evidence, however, that conservation through forestry could indeed create “a beauty spot.”

Mt. Airy occupies a special place in forest history and therefore in the history of conservation. Cincinnati was not the first municipality to engage in forestry. In the late 1800s, several New England states began the practice of allowing municipalities to appoint tree wardens, men trained in forestry who oversaw the care and planting of shade trees, primarily along streets and on town properties. Beyond selecting the preferred trees for shade purposes—especially American elm—these men trimmed problematic branches and removed diseased trees. In addition to the work of tree wardens, urban forestry has roots in the purchase and care of lands outside municipal boundaries, secured to protect water supplies, which occurred in cities as different as Oberlin, Ohio, and Seattle, Washington. But Cincinnati’s efforts in Mt. Airy mark a new level of municipal engagement in silviculture: the intentional remaking of a forest.

The history of Mt. Airy holds more than a story about pioneering urban forestry; it offers more than just good evidence of the conservation movement’s role in reshaping urban landscapes. Two additional themes emerge from this story. The first may seem commonplace, but it bears amplification: this valued natural resource in the city has been the product of public investment and attention over the long term. The city did not simply set aside and protect the forest from private development. Rather, Mt. Airy Forest is the result of continuous, though fluctuating, government investment.

Second, the history of Mt. Airy reveals the growing influence of ecology within the forestry profession. Initial discussion of Mt. Airy included the language of productivity, an assumption that the forest would yield wood products as well as recreational opportunities. Over time, assumptions changed, and especially after World War II foresters concerned themselves less with the value of individual trees and more with the health of the entire forest ecosystem, a management philosophy that persists to this day.
Creating Mt. Airy Forest
Cincinnati built Mt. Airy Forest over time—built in every sense of the word. The city began piecing together the park with an initial purchase of 168 acres in 1911, a piece of land called the Kirby tract. This purchase was part of a great expansion in parkland in the early 1910s, an expansion guided by a park system plan created in 1907, known as the Kessler Plan after its author, landscape architect George E. Kessler. Following Kessler’s advice, the city added significant acreage and diversity to its parklands. There would be new playgrounds in the densest neighborhoods, new expansive natural parks on the city’s fringe, and even parkways that would connect the green spaces in one great, uplifting recreational system. Kessler understood that a good park system could solve many problems, including providing “adequate recreation grounds,” relieving “unsightly conditions,” and preserving “unrivaled natural scenery.” Given these goals, especially the emphasis on creating a more beautiful city, Kessler’s plan emphasized hillside preserves, new parks featuring scenic views, and parkways that would allow long pleasure drives inside the city. Important steps to completing this system came in 1911, when
the city made several key additions, including the land that became Ault Park (via gift) and the Mr. Storm property in Clifton, both of which included spectacular views of the city’s valleys. When Kessler issued his plan in 1907, the city had only 469 acres of parkland. By 1913 it had over nineteen hundred.

The city also purchased 121 acres of the “McFarlan Woods” in 1911, and soon united it with the Kirby tract through additional purchases to form Mt. Airy Forest. This was done piece by piece over the next twenty years, as the city assembled approximately thirteen hundred acres of farmland, patches of mostly second growth forest, and a sizeable stretch of the West Fork Creek. The inaccessibility of the land—reached from the industrial Mill Creek Valley only by steep winding roads—kept land prices low and allowed the city to make extensive purchases.

Significantly, Kessler’s 1907 vision did not include a large forested park or a park of any description in the area of West Fork Creek. But two years after the city began purchasing farms to create the forest, Kessler, still acting as the park’s landscape architect, noted, “In Cincinnati, the gradual acquisition of properties—now known as Mt. Airy Forest—would supply to the northern or northwestern sections of the city, one of the finest forests as a park that could be established about any city in the country.” By this time, Kessler clearly understood the value of a vast forested tract as a recreational opportunity. Indeed, Kessler’s excitement at the forest’s potential may have led him to exaggerate the quality of the forests the city had purchased. As he described Mt. Airy in 1913: “In the forest growth, covering in particular its extremely rugged hillsides, there already exists a charm of the remote forests.” Even if Kessler oversold the “charm” of the extant forest, the description reveals one of the benefits of the forest park: it would provide a proximate region for romantic nature appreciation.

Although Kessler’s vision was critical to the development of a greatly expanded park system, he was a landscape architect, not a forester. Thus, the park commissioners sought additional expertise as the city assembled land to create a great urban forest. They found the ideal person for this work in Edmund Secrest, the most prominent Ohio forester of his era. By the time he began working in Mt. Airy in early 1913, Secrest had been on staff at the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station in Wooster for eight years, and he had initiated the planting of what became known as the Secrest Arboretum in 1909. He had published articles on woodlot forestry and the rehabilitation of forests damaged by grazing, both topics of great utility in Mt. Airy and Ohio generally.

More than just a practical forester, Secrest thought deeply about his profession and its goal of cultivating the nation’s natural resources. A firm believer in the power of expertise, Secrest advocated an expansive role for forestry. “Our cities can and ought to take a part in forest conservation,” he asserted. Secrest understood that Mt. Airy would be a new kind of development: a “forest park; not a city park but a place where practical economic forestry will be carried on.
In other words,” he concluded, “it will be a forest reserve owned by the city.” This represented an entirely new endeavor in the United States, but Secrest used Frankfurt, Germany, as an example. The Frankfurt City Forest had medieval roots, but its management and use by modern foresters most inspired Secrest.9

A few years after beginning his involvement with Mt. Airy, Secrest described the potential of further municipal forest development. “There is ample opportunity in Ohio,” he declared, “for a considerable number of cities to acquire lands on broken topography suitable for forests contiguous or in close proximity to the corporate limits.” He thought forests could serve as “natural parks for the benefit of the urban dweller,” but at the same time “be a factor in timber production” for the nation. In addition, he explicitly argued that such forests could “yield a revenue” through the sale of timber. Indeed, as early as 1914 a little more than twelve thousand board feet of oak were removed from Mt. Airy “and transferred to the sawmill.” However, Secrest understood that the greatest value of these municipal forests would come through their ability to teach visitors to love nature. Like most conservationists, Secrest was both a practical man of science and a romantic. “We must combine the useful with the aesthetic in order to reach the greater number of people, and in order to keep alive sentiment for trees,” he concluded.10
Secrest was not building romantic, naturalistic public space along the lines of the great nineteenth-century urban parks, such as New York’s Central Park (1857) or Louisville’s Cherokee Park (1892), both designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. As Secrest flatly stated, “This area is not designed for an ordinary park.” Mt. Airy represented a conceptual leap away from Olmsted’s greensward plans, away from parks containing broad, open spaces, with curving paths and precisely placed natural features. Olmstedian park designs incorporated clustered plantings, rock outcroppings, ponds or small lakes, all to enrich the landscape. Olmsted, often working with his partner Calvert Vaux, constructed parks that broke the monotony of urban development through visual diversity. Olmsted’s large parks always included long vistas across grassy lawns, while curving paths, irregular tree lines, and plantings of various heights combined to create ever-changing scenery for those strolling or riding through. Olmsted sought to replicate the diversity of rural scenery—pastoral scenes here, wild spots there—all within the confines of the park.11

Mt. Airy would be different. Secrest was recreating a forest, diverse in tree species certainly, but nearly uniform in other ways. He devised no open fields tucked in the woods; he introduced no new water features. For the most part, the real farm pastures were not replaced by artificial ones. Until the development of the arboretum in the 1930s, landscaping was kept to a minimum, with road placement following ridge lines and pre-existing roadways. “Roads and paths will be laid out only to the extent that they will make natural features accessible,” Secrest pledged, and he assured his fellow foresters that Mt. Airy would in no way resemble “the artificial ostentatious city park.” Vistas would be limited to sightlines along roads and to overviews of the valleys below, although even these spots did not gain special attention. Indeed, the overlooks at Mt Airy are qualitatively different than those of other Cincinnati parks, such as Alms and Ault, where valley views are a central feature, emphasized by road placement and architectural enhancement.12

Secrest did not so much build a park as a forest, a task that required his knowledge of Ohio forest composition and ecology. In the fall of 1914, Secrest issued a report to the Board of Park Commissioners on the state of Mt. Airy Forest and his initial planning for its transformation. The report noted that although the park included remnants of “primeval forests,” most of the acreage consisted of “mere open woodland pastures culled years ago of their best timber, and composed now in general of trees of no commercial value.” The city had purchased unsustainable farmland mostly, dominated by open fields and livestock-damaged forests, where years of grazing had prevented the growth of saplings. The steep hillsides had been badly eroded, particularly the slopes that ran down toward West Fork Creek and the neighborhood of Northside. Since little of the land held healthy forest, Secrest proposed improvements for essentially every acre. He
acknowledged that Mt. Airy included some patches of old growth forest, and that taken together these areas included “practically every species” of tree in the region. In some spots the mere removal of livestock would bring the desired improvements, as self-seeded trees would allow for a “natural regeneration” that the grazing of animals had impeded. In other spots reconstruction would be accomplished through understory planting of the species already present. Secrest declared, “The reconstruction of these woodlands will be a simple matter.”

In creating his plan for Mt. Airy, Secrest was guided by the science of forestry as it existed at the time. As an active practitioner, Secrest would have known the work of Bernhard Fernow, former chief of the U.S. Division of Forestry and still one of the nation’s premier foresters, who had recently published an extensive essay on the role of foresters in forest parks. The “pleasure forest,” as Fernow called it, relied on “natural naturalness,” rather than the artificial naturalness created in romantic landscape parks of the type Olmsted and Vaux had created. Still, forest parks needed “constant attention and the use of the axe,” according to Fernow. Even the interior of forests, which he thought should be “left to Nature as far as possible,” required “the correcting hand of man in improving the composition.” Fernow advised careful consideration of what species should be planted, noting that added species “must have elements of form or other qualities which make their introduction appear natural and desirable.”

The professional ethos Fernow expressed clearly informed Secrest’s plans. When it came to planting, for example, he selected trees based “upon our knowledge of the specie habits and their adaptability to environment.” The development of plantations—large collections of planted trees—lay at the heart of Secrest’s mission in Mt. Airy. Actually, tree plantings had begun in 1912, even before his arrival. These first plantings were made on the former Smith farm, near the center of the new parklands. Here workers replaced acres of pasture with red oak and black walnut. These earliest plantings were often undertaken by volunteers, including garden clubs and other park enthusiasts. Secrest managed plantings beginning in 1913, and over the next two years, he and the experiment station planned and directed the planting of five hundred thousand trees in Mt. Airy. Workers planted more than a dozen species in significant number in the first four years, with most activity taking place in the spring and fall. Sometimes they planted seedlings, as they did in the spring of 1913 when they set three-year-old white pine. In the fall of that year, workers used acorns to plant another field with mossycup oak. A year later, they planted nuts in heavy sod in the hopes of creating a black walnut stand, which in fact did grow successfully. In addition to seeds and seedlings planted throughout the park, thousands of trees were planted in nurseries for later transplantation.

Native trees, such as tulip poplar and red cedar, constituted the largest plantings, but Secrest also planted many non-native species, including Austrian pine, Ginkgo biloba, and European ash. In addition, workers planted species native to
North America but not to southern Ohio, such as bald cypress, found in the south, and white pine, which grows in more northerly climes. Clearly, Secrest’s vision for the forest went well beyond recreating the native mixed hardwood forests of southern Ohio. An ecological understanding of plant communities had yet to influence the profession. Instead, Secrest selected species for planting based on his understanding of a hierarchy of trees, with “noble” species like white oak and white pine gaining favor at the expense of “weedy” trees, some of which were native to southwest Ohio forests, such as black locust. Noble trees had a variety of desirable qualities, from tall, straight trunks and strong, marketable wood, to colorful fall foliage and full, attractive crowns. Less worthy, weedy trees, however, had a propensity for creating thickets of seedlings that required thinning; they were short-lived, less attractive, and susceptible to disease. Poor or nonexistent markets existed for their wood. All of the plantings in Mt. Airy followed this logic of a tree hierarchy, as Secrest hoped to create a beautiful, diverse, and productive forest.16

Secrest experimented with non-native plantings in the hope of introducing noble species previously absent from the region’s forests. In the spring of 1914, for instance, workers and volunteers planted more than two hundred twenty thousand trees in Mt. Airy. Of the twenty-five species planted, thirteen were not native to the region, including Jack Pine, Scotch Pine, Russian Mulberry, and European beech. They heavily planted other beautiful and widely admired trees, including nearly thirty thousand bald cypress seedlings, and hemlock, also not native to the region’s forests. By 1920, tree plantations—thick plantings with little species diversity—covered nearly four hundred fifty acres of Mt. Airy Forest, with red oak, tulip poplar, and American ash well represented. Large-scale planting ended in the 1930s, by which time over eight hundred acres had been planted with more than a million trees.17

The transformation of farm to forest required more. Workers dismantled fences and buildings associated with the farms the city had purchased, removing almost all evidence of the earlier uses of the land—a process the park engineer referred to as “clearing and cleaning up.” (The most important exception to this demolition involved the preservation and reuse of the 1860s farmhouse, now called Pine Ridge Lodge.) Managers cleared unwanted species from the land as well. The forest warden’s 1916 report noted that much of the forest was “covered with a growth of trees which are in many ways undesirable.” These included weedy species, such as honey locust, cork elm (also known as rock elm), silver poplar, and the tree of heaven (also known as Ailanthus). Park employees engaged in a long-term campaign against these species, clearing acre after acre of the “tree weeds.” In 1916 alone they cleared more than twenty-five acres in McFarlan Woods. Some of the harvested wood was put to use, in good conservationist fashion. The cleared wood created seven hundred fence posts, one thousand nursery stakes, and twenty cords of stove wood for use in the park.18
Secrest’s involvement with Mt. Airy ceased in 1920, and in the following decade the planting of trees slowed considerably. Still, the management of park lands remained important. The park continued to produce hay and corn, apparently for municipal use. The city harvested seventy tons of hay from Mt. Airy in 1922, most likely for feeding municipally owned horses. The new forester also continued to remove undesired species, including elm, which he referred to as “a weed in all pastures and waste land as well as in nurseries and shrubberies within reach of the light wind-blown seed.” The forester also monitored the many plantations in the forest, measuring trunk size and crown height and recording progress. By 1924, some of the plantings were more than a decade old, and the trees had reached more than twenty feet tall.19

By then Mt. Airy had also become an increasingly popular destination for recreation. In the 1920s more Americans purchased automobiles, making the park accessible to a greater numbers of residents. That, combined with improvements in the forest itself, led to steadily increasing visitation. The chief forester even noted that many Cincinnatians who toured “the northern forests and wood-lots find species of evergreen and deciduous trees which are of such interest, and come home only to find these same species growing in their own forest park.” Cincinnati had created its own forest vacationland, a true tourist destination, just a few miles from downtown.20

**Great Investments during the Great Depression**

Ironically, the Great Depression offered new opportunities for park development. In early 1933, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt entered the White House, Americans needed reassurance. The nation’s economic fortunes had deteriorated steadily since the stock market crash in the fall of 1929. Herbert Hoover’s actions had failed to stem the erosion of wealth and confidence. The depression had begun; at least a quarter of the nation’s workers were idle. Americans of different ideologies put forth their own recipes for recovery, some radical, others conservative, but almost always at their core was the idea that government could and should do something to restart the national economy.21
In his inaugural address—most famous for the line “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself”—Roosevelt established himself right away as the Conservationist in Chief. “Our greatest primary task is to put people to work,” he recognized. “It can be accomplished in part by the direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.” He made clear that his effort to get the nation back on its feet economically in the short term would also improve economic opportunities in the long term, especially by increasing efficiency. The president understood that the nation lost too much soil to erosion, wasted too much wood through poor forestry practices, and failed to make good use of too much of its countryside, leaving millions of acres of failed farmland idle. As governor of New York State, Roosevelt had already engaged in public works designed to improve the countryside’s resources while putting men back to work.22

The general principles that Roosevelt laid out in his inaugural address quickly became concrete in the form of government programs, collectively known as the New Deal. On March 21, 1933, Roosevelt asked Congress to create the Civilian Conservation Corps “to be used in simple work not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects.” The CCC would engage in work close to Roosevelt’s heart: planting and maintaining forests, as well as repairing damaged farmland. This latter task proved especially important in southern Ohio, where several CCC camps eventually

Civilian Conservation Corps breaking camp at Mt. Airy Forest, July 4, 1937.
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
engaged in erosion control projects, even on private lands. Roosevelt declared, “this type of work is of definite, practical value, not only through the prevention of great present financial loss, but also as a means of creating future national wealth.”

Although Roosevelt understood the CCC’s primary value would be to the nation’s natural resources, he also asserted that those men—all men, no women—who served in the corps would benefit in multiple ways. In addition to earning a paycheck, much of which would be sent directly home to needy families, the enrollees (as they were called) would benefit from “the moral and spiritual value” of hard work out in nature. “The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief,” Roosevelt reminded Congress, “would infinitely prefer to work.” The federal government could “take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings.” In this way, the CCC and nature itself could help heal the wounds of unemployment.

Over the nine years of its existence the CCC enrolled more than three million men, most of them in their late teens and early twenties. For many of these men, participation in the CCC proved a truly transformative experience. They gained training through work, from forestry and firefighting to construction and masonry. For many, participation afforded other opportunities, too, including education, from high school courses to technical training. Not surprisingly, the Civilian Conservation Corps proved an extremely popular program. Although not immune to the criticism that surrounded all parts of the New Deal—mostly from those concerned about creeping socialism—the CCC was about as noncontroversial as a massive governmental employment program could be. The CCC did more than remake the men who enrolled. These men helped transform the American landscape, remaking broad swaths of the countryside. Most famously, they planted trees, perhaps a billion of them. They also worked on local, state, and national parks, building trails, roads, and buildings. Although much of this work happened in the far West, the CCC worked in every region of the country, and they worked in and around cities, too. Several CCC camps worked in southern Ohio, in Butler and Clermont counties, where they mostly engaged in erosion control projects, and one CCC unit even set up camp in the city of Cincinnati, inside Mt. Airy Forest.

Before the arrival of federally funded laborers, Cincinnati Parks hired George W. Kase, a native Cincinnatian trained at the Colorado College of Forestry, to map the forests of Mt. Airy. Just two years out of school when the park commissioners hired him, Kase nevertheless had experience in the United States Forest Service and was well prepared for the work. He spent the summer of 1933 in the forest creating his map, to which he added over the next several years. Hanging in the arboretum building today, the map divided the forest into dozens of plots of trees, most identified by dominant species, such as red oak or white oak; Kase marked other areas for future arboretum plantings, designated by letters. In these latter areas, he created an arboretum plan, mapping out plantings grouped by genus flanking the park’s roads as well
as occupying an unforested area in the northern corner of the park. As it turned out, Kase would oversee these arboretum plantings, as he stayed at Mt. Airy Forest for more than thirty years. During this time he was instrumental in the transformation of the park. Part of Kase’s work involved supervising the CCC workers who arrived in Mt. Airy in the spring of 1935. At first, just twenty young men arrived to construct their own camp west of the West Fork Creek. The remainder of the unit—two hundred men total—arrived to begin work several weeks later. All of the men, except the supervisors, were African American—the CCC was a segregated operation, just like the military at the time. The unit remained in the Mt. Airy camp for two years.26

The CCC enrollees performed a wide variety of work in Mt. Airy. In addition to planting some trees—a task that had slowed considerably over the previous decade—the young men moved trees for aesthetic purposes, breaking up the straight lines that indicated the edges of plantations, for example. They built retaining walls along Shepherd and West Fork roads, which run through the park, and constructed a total of two hundred fifty parking spots along several roadways. They developed picnic
areas, where they crafted and installed one hundred sixty new tables. Other important projects included the construction of concrete and stone dams along West Fork Creek to slow erosion. On the western edge of the park, the CCC built a new access point, McFarlan Woods Road, leading to a new shelter. CCC laborers also built the Blue Spruce Shelter, using the same rustic style that unifies the architecture of the park, with stone and heavy timber giving visual clues about the rural nature of the scene. One of the few non-rustic buildings, Pine Ridge Lodge, the reconditioned 1860s farmhouse, was rehabbed in 1936 with CCC labor. Although not all of Mt. Airy’s structures were built by the CCC, the majority of them date to the 1930s, including restrooms, the first of which was built at the oval in the center of the park in 1932, and the oval concessions building, completed in 1934.  

Federally supported work continued even after the CCC left Mt. Airy in the summer of 1937. In 1938, two different Works Progress Administration contracts brought on average fifty men into the forest five days a week. They continued moving trees, now using a large truck outfitted as a tree mover, with a massive metal scoop that could unearth and lift sizeable trees. By the close of the year, the park had eleven miles of pedestrian trails through the woods, mostly constructed using federal dollars. In 1940, the WPA employed on average forty-five men to work in Mt. Airy from January through early October. These men undoubtedly aided with regular maintenance at the park, but also completed plantings at McFarlan Woods and moved pines along Ponderosa Ridge to break up the straight line effect from the plantation. Also in 1940 workers “grubbed out Ailanthus sprouts” in several locations, hoping to keep that undesirable invasive species from taking hold. In 1941, the WPA supported the labor of forty-five men per day through early July, when the project ended as New Deal spending
decreased and war preparation increased. Projects in 1941 included the spraying of lead arsenate to control insects and the planting of five thousand honeysuckle plants on barren slopes to prevent erosion. These projects are a reminder that not all depression-era attempts to improve forests—in Mt. Airy and beyond—were ecologically sound. Today, Cincinnati parks can hardly keep pace with the spread of honeysuckle, organizing volunteer parties to remove the non-native species.28

Mt. Airy was not the only Cincinnati park transformed by federal work programs during the Great Depression. Workers built bathrooms and a service building in Alms Park. Burnet Woods gained its picnic shelter, the Trailside Museum, and the famed concrete slide that connects the two. Mt. Storm Park gained its shelter house, the rustic stone building perched overlooking the Mill Creek Valley. Eden Park acquired an enlarged and updated conservatory in 1933, named after Irwin M. Krohn, a member of the Board of Park Commissioners. Altogether the depression-era investment in Cincinnati’s parks was transformative, leaving the system better prepared to serve the growing city. Kase well understood the significant opportunities presented by the available labor paid for by federal programs. In 1939, he reflected, “With the abundance of labor available for work in Mt. Airy Forest we endeavor to perform this work with one fundamental thought in mind—that Mt. Airy Forest was created for the preservation of certain values in the state of nature to be enjoyed by all people.” The language is instructive; Kase praised the preservation of values, not the forests themselves, which indeed did not exist when the city created the park.29

Postwar Changes and Continuity

After World War II, Kase returned from thirty months in the United States Naval Construction Battalion and surveyed his beloved Mt. Airy. He summarized his thoughts in a special report in January 1946. The trees had survived his absence, of course, but he worried about the neglect the park had suffered during the war. Too little money and too few men had been at work in Mt. Airy in the preceding years. In the woods, Kase saw much work to be done. He noted that the U.S. Forest Service had determined through field experiments that the ideal wooded acre should contain from four to five hundred trees. Mt. Airy’s plantations contained nearly twice that, indicating to him that continued thinning was necessary. Kase explained, “A forest is never at its best until inferior trees have been weeded out.” This meant that intervention was necessary in all parts of the forest, not just in the nine hundred acres of plantations. The forester’s intervention would mean more than just healthier trees. Kase quoted Joseph Illick, dean of the New York State College of Forestry: “The forester’s forest should supply more fully the present and prospective human wants than they can be supplied by depending on nature’s uncertain and unregulated performances.” According to Illick, better management of the forests would mean improved experiences for visitors, not just more productive forests.30
Kase returned to work, making a variety of interventions in the forests, especially thinning the older plantations. “Assisting nature in this manner promotes, in time, a healthier plantation, more uniform crown development and increases diameter growth, resulting in a more sturdy tree,” he reported. In addition, he and his men continued to grub undesirable species, including scrub elm (by which he probably meant slippery or rock elm), black locust, and Ailanthus. In 1946, his crew treated eighty acres in this way. Kase also continued his battle against poison ivy, spraying “Weed-No-More,” a 2,4-D herbicide, around picnic areas and along trails.31

By 1949, Kase, like the field of forestry itself, began to take a more ecological approach. He expressed a growing appreciation for natural systems and the benefits in allowing them to take their own course. Although he thought “judicious” thinning of the mixed hardwood forests should continue, “promiscuous cutting of dead trees or any tree is to be discouraged unless said tree presents a definite hazard to the public.” Since the park’s creation forest managers had culled dead or dying trees, mostly in an effort to stop the spread of tree disease. Now, however, Kase understood that “so called dead or nearly dead trees serve a very important purpose, a place of refuge for small game and birds alike,” and he concluded that they should be left to fall and decay naturally. Increasingly, Kase saw himself as the manager of an ecosystem rather than merely a husbandman of trees.32

The development of ecological forestry and better forest health allowed Kase to decrease his intervention in the forest, but he could not have been pleased with declining municipal investment in the park system. Cincinnati’s population plummeted in the 1960s and 1970s, and the economic fortunes of the city soured in turn. Budget problems, concerns about crime, concentrated poverty, and failing schools all led to decreased investments in the city’s parks. Around the district amenities diminished through municipal neglect and disuse. Refreshments
stands closed; bathrooms remained locked. Eventually graffiti covered some park buildings and signs. No longer could visitors rent a boat to ply the lake in Burnet Woods, and in 1981 even the Trailside Nature Center, built during the depression, could no longer stay open. Kase, who had worked at Mt. Airy for thirty-seven years, expressed concern about the diminished investment in the parks when he retired in 1971. He reminded the city that building Mt. Airy Forest had required considerable work, including selective thinning, protection against disease and fire. “In recent years,” Kase added, “the lack of manpower has practically eliminated this important work.”

Perhaps the most fitting symbol of the city’s failure to protect its great investments in parks came in the late 1960s when Interstate-74 pushed through Mt. Airy Forest, cleaving the park in half and leaving the western portion of the forest less accessible and underutilized. The construction of the highway created a massive scar in the forest just up the hill from West Fork Creek, and it forced the relocation of the old CCC camp, now used by Talbert House to shelter and counsel homeless men, some with substance abuse or mental health problems.

Conclusion

One need not read an article to understand the value of conservation’s effects on Mt. Airy Forest: take a hike in the woods, have a picnic in an oak grove, relax in a rustic shelter looking across an open field and into the deep forest, all near the center of Cincinnati’s metropolitan region. Despite diminished investments since the 1970s, Mt. Airy’s landscape still readily reveals the great success of conservation in the city. The entire park is an object lesson in the power of government to do good work. Indeed, in recent years a new policy emphasis on creating a livable city has led to an expansion of the park system, including the building of beautiful riverside parks, Bicentennial Commons, opened in 1988, and Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park, completed in 2003. Mt. Airy has also seen recent improvements, most noticeably the construction of a universally accessible treehouse, constructed in 2006, mostly with volunteer labor and donated materials.

In Mt. Airy’s centennial year, budget concerns led to talk of reducing services throughout the city. Cincinnati will refrain from planting flowers on public lands, and most likely reduce the upkeep and staffing of the city’s parks. Today, Ohio residents seem remarkably accepting of the degradation of all things public—in rhetoric and reality. The history of Mt. Airy reminds us, though, that investments in natural resources pay incredible dividends. Sit in a shelter built during the Great Depression and overlook a beautiful, healthy forest built through decades of public investment, and you can appreciate how important it was for the city—and the federal government—to invest in the nation’s natural resources, to create places of lasting value. Then you may wonder why so many citizens and politicians now claim that we simply can no longer afford to invest in public amenities like parks.
I would like to thank Vicki Newell at the Bettman Center Archives, Larry Parker at the Mt. Airy Arboretum, and Anne Shepherd at the Cincinnati Historical Society for their help and guidance.

1 The study of deer in the park began in 1995, after the population of the animals had recovered significantly. The first deer hunt inside the park began in the fall of 2007, when Cincinnati police sharpshooters took more than two hundred animals. Hunting has taken place each fall since then, although bow hunting replaced rifles in 2009. In total, more than four hundred deer have been taken from Mt. Airy, and while the population remains too large, the downward trend suggests the success of continued management. Author’s conversation with Jim Godby, Cincinnati Parks District Crew Leader, Jan. 24, 2011.


3 Edmund Secrest, “Report to Board of Park Commissioners,” Nov. 24, 1914, p. 8, Mt. Airy Forest Arboretum Building, Cincinnati, Oh. (hereafter MAFA).


5 Park Commission of Cincinnati, A Park System for the City of Cincinnati (Cincinnati: C. J. Krehbiel, 1907). On Kessler and park history, see Zane L. Miller, “Greening the American City,” Queen City Heritage 51 (Spring 1993), 3-8; and Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh, “Parks and People: The Place of the Kessler Park Plan in the History of Parks and Public Recreation,” Queen City Heritage 51 (Spring 1993), 52-64. On Kessler’s career beyond Cincinnati, see Kurt Calherson, “The Origins of Landscape Architecture in Ohio: The Life and Work of George Edward Kessler,” Queen City Heritage 51 (Spring 1993), 9-19.

6 Report of the Board of Park Commission of the City of Cincinnati, From Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1911 (Cincinnati: Roessler Bros., 1912), 40-41, Bettman Center Archives, Cincinnati, Oh. (hereafter BCA) 5410-26. The park remained largely inaccessible to residents who did not own cars, since trolley lines went only to the base of the hill in Northside.


8 See, for example, W. J. Green and Edmund Secrest, “Forest Suggestions,” Bulletin of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station (Jan. 1908). Secrest was also a regular contributor to The Ohio Forester, a quarterly journal published by the Ohio State Forestry Society from 1909 until 1926. On the history of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, see http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/secondary2/History.htm.


12 Secrest, “Forestry Work of the Experiment Station,” 10.

13 Secrest, “Report to Board of Park Commissioners,” (1914), p. 2, MAFA.


Roosevelt, “Three Essentials for Unemployment Relief.”


“New Deal Remedy Has Current Appeal,” Cincinnati Post, May 14, 1983. Sixty of these young men went to Hughes High School in the evening in hopes of earning degrees.

George Kase, “A Resume of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Mt. Airy Forest, July 10, 1935-July 14, 1937” (Aug. 11, 1937), pp. 1-6, BCA 5073-7. For details on the construction of the park’s buildings, see the National Register Nomination form completed by Nancy Recchie in May 2008, http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/weekly_features/MountAiryForest.pdf. A wide variety of New Deal federal programs supported changes in Mt. Airy Forest, beginning even before the arrival of the CCC. The Civil Works Administration paid for work undertaken in the spring of 1934, and through the summer the Federal Emergency Relief Administration employed workers who planted about seven acres of Corsican and red pine. Unfortunately, most of those seedlings died due to drought and the poor training of the men who did the planting; see Kase, “Mt. Airy Forest Annual Report” (1934), pp. 2-4, BCA 5073-7.


Kase, “Mt. Airy Forest Special Report” (Jan. 23, 1946), pp. 1, 2, 4-5, BCA 5073-7.

Kase, “Mt. Airy Forest Annual Report” (1946), pp. 3, 4, 5, BCA 5073-7. First released commercially in 1946, 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) is a pesticide/herbicide used to control broadleaf weeds.

Kase, “Mt Airy Forest, Forestry Division, Annual Report, 1949” (Jan. 4, 1950), p. 7, BCA 5073-7. In 1949, Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There appeared (New York: Oxford University Press). Leopold, a trained forester, had died the previous year, but his writings became among the most influential in encouraging the development of ecological consciousness, or what Leopold call “the land ethic.”


Abraham Lincoln casts a long shadow over all things historical in Illinois. “Land of Lincoln” is imprinted on Illinois license plates and plastered on Illinois billboards. Lincoln’s prominence in historical tourism is reflected in the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition’s success in obtaining congressional designation of an Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area that spreads across forty-two Illinois counties. The “Civil War Traveler” internet site confirms Lincoln’s preeminence; eight of the fifteen Illinois Civil War sites highlighted are largely Lincoln themed. Even calendar chronology conspires in Lincoln’s favor. The Lincoln centennial, sesquicentennial, and bicentennial (1909, 1959, and 2009) taxed the energy, interest, and resources of the community members and officials most inclined to support and lead Civil War anniversaries (1911-15, 1961-65, and 2011-15) that always follow in the wake of a Lincoln anniversary. Lincoln is indeed the colossus astride Illinois’s historical landscape.

Nevertheless, the Civil War lurks in the state’s Lincoln story. For instance, the war looms in the background at the seven historic sites where Lincoln and the Democratic incumbent, Senator Stephen A. Douglas, famously debated during their 1858 U.S. Senate campaign. All seven Lincoln-Douglas Debate Communities—Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton—refurbished their debate sites with new interpretive storyboards and other improvements for the 2008 sesquicentennial commemoration. In addition to these wayside exhibits, visitors encounter at each site dramatic statuary or bronze bas-reliefs commissioned especially for that locale. Knox College’s Old Main in Galesburg is the only debate-site building that still survives. Visitors can sit in the “Lincoln chair” and look out the window that he and Douglas climbed through to mount the outdoor platform in front of Old Main. Two sites—those at Charleston and Quincy—have excellent

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865).
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
small museums dedicated to the debates. All seven sites afford visitors the opportunity to stroll across historic grounds where the acrimonious senate campaign foreshadowed the issues of the war. Some sites explicitly carry the story up to the beginning of the war triggered by the 1860 presidential election.

Another consequence of the 1860 election—Lincoln’s leaving home for Washington, D.C., and the war that awaited him—is memorialized at Springfield’s Great Western Railroad Depot where the town’s most prominent resident delivered his farewell address acknowledging the kindness of the hometown folks to whom he “owe[d] everything.” Here, the Civil War intrudes into the story of the inaugural train trip. A storyboard describes the danger surrounding the president-elect as he wound his way to Washington, D.C., in the wake of southern secession, and his strategy to build public support along the route in preparation for taking a hard line with secessionists. A continuously running video program on the depot’s second floor plays during the summer months from Memorial to Labor Day. National Public Radio personality Scott Simon narrates this telling of the dramatic story of Lincoln’s inaugural train ride to Washington.

The Civil War surfaces in other Lincoln-themed places such as the Old State Capitol State Historic Site in Springfield, where the interpretative storyline chronicling the decades-long rivalry between Lincoln and Douglas culminates in the latter’s “Rally Round the Flag” speech. After the fall of Fort Sumter, Douglas spoke from the same podium in the Hall of Representatives from which Lincoln had delivered his famous “House Divided” speech, calling on his fellow...
Democrats to set aside partisan differences and support the Republican president in sustaining and defending the Union. Wartime Governor Richard Yates directed Illinois’s response to and participation in the war from his office in the Old State Capitol, assisted in the first days of the war by a former army officer and West Point graduate, Ulysses S. Grant. Visitors learn of those hectic days when northerners scrambled to meet the secession threat from the South, which in Illinois existed in the state’s southern counties. The Old State Capitol also provides a book-end to the war. Lincoln’s body lay in state for the last time in the building’s Hall of Representatives before burial at Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery.

At Oak Ridge Cemetery the Civil War appears prominently at the **Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site**. Three years after the president’s death, the National Lincoln Monument Association sponsored a competition to select a design for Lincoln’s tomb. They chose a design submitted by sculptor Larkin G. Mead Jr. that features four stirring war scenes surrounding a towering obelisk and an imposing Lincoln statue.
The four war scenes consist of statue groupings that include figures depicting the four branches of the military: infantry, artillery, cavalry, and navy. The United States government donated sixty-five Union Army cannons that were melted into nearly fifty thousand pounds of bronze and used for the statue groupings. Four important northern cities funded production of the statues: Chicago paid for the infantry group, the iron town of Pittsburgh bankrolled the artillery group, Boston funded the cavalry group, and the port city of New York paid for the naval group. Down the hill behind the monument and a little to the west up a cemetery road stands the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Mound, built by the nationwide fraternal organization for Union veterans. Identified by a large Civil War cannon mounted vertical, muzzle pointed earthward and partially submerged in a pyramid of cannon balls, the GAR Mound lies at the center of the burial area for Union soldiers, a somber reminder for visitors to Oak Ridge Cemetery of the price paid for Lincoln’s vision of an undivided nation.

The train depot, the Old State Capitol, and the Lincoln Tomb provide but three examples of Lincoln-themed historic sites that focus on the Civil War. The war also crops up in many of the Looking for Lincoln wayside exhibits—215 in all—found in fifty-two localities scattered throughout the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. These constitute the Looking for Lincoln Story Trail, created to help visitors imagine both the Illinois world that Lincoln knew, and the Lincoln that his Illinois contemporaries knew. A storyboard in downtown Springfield, for example, documents the location and examines Lincoln’s struggle to draft his first inaugural address while confronting the threat of secession and civil war. Another, in the prairie hamlet of Bement, recounts how that village (where Lincoln and Douglas had previously met to discuss their planned debate schedule) rallied to President Lincoln’s call to arms at the onset of the war. Still another wayside, this one in Jacksonville, relates how local college president James Jaquess performed delicate wartime missions for Lincoln by traveling south to confer with southern officials, including Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who insisted that the Union recognize southern independence as a non-negotiable prerequisite to peace talks. These represent three examples of how the Civil War pushes its way into stories told throughout the new Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. The Looking for Lincoln website provides a state-wide map and GPS coordinates for every Looking for Lincoln wayside along the Story Trail.

Even at sites specifically devoted to stories of the pre-presidential Lincoln—places like the Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site (his parents’ farm) in Lerna, Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site near Petersburg, the Vandalia Statehouse State Historic Site (where Lincoln served early in his legislative career), the Lincoln Home National Historic Site and the Lincoln-Herndon Law Office State Historic Site in Springfield—the Civil War takes a prominent place in the gift shops. But visitors seem not to notice the incongruity between the absence of anything specific
about the Civil War in the stories they have just seen and heard on their tours and the myriad of Civil War-themed merchandize crowding gift shop shelves.

The Civil War posed a special challenge for Illinois’s largest Lincoln site, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. The war was so momentous, so central to Lincoln’s presidency, so vast in its scale and scope and carnage that it had to have a major presence in the museum. Yet the sheer size of the war threatened to overwhelm the main narrative focus of the museum which is Lincoln’s improbable rise and successful leadership. How could the museum do justice to the war without losing sight of the overall Lincoln theme? The solution was to concentrate the visitor’s war experience in space and time, distilling it into a brief media presentation entitled “The Civil War in Four Minutes.” At first this sounded ludicrous to some of the museum’s historical consultants. The resulting presentation, however, provides a profound visual unfolding of the war across a continental panorama. The ebb and flow of a line demarcating the constantly changing boundary between territories occupied by northern and southern armies reveals the fluid nature of the war and its geographic vastness. With no narration or text beyond the flashing names of battles that explode on the screen map in synchronization to the chronology of the war (one
second equals one week), and with a relentlessly spinning odometer of death in one corner that grimly tallies the horrendous casualties, the automated map program acquaints (or reacquaints) visitors with the Civil War in an uncommonly visceral way. On the wall across from the map screen stands a War Gallery that displays scores of images from the Presidential Library’s Civil War photograph collection. Visitors learn each picture’s unique story by touching a computer screen that brings the picture to the fore.

Because Lincoln was the Civil War president, war themes obviously influence other areas of the museum, such as the two multimedia presentations, “Lincoln’s Eyes” and “Ghosts of the Library.” Other displays in the museum also consider the war: the president’s war office where Lincoln announced to a startled cabinet his decision to emancipate the slaves; murals depicting the attacks on Fort Sumter, Fort Wagner, and the Battle of Gettysburg; and war-related artifacts such as one of the five existing copies of the Gettysburg Address written in Lincoln’s own hand and the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution that abolished slavery. In short, the museum provides an excellent introduction to the Civil War through the perspective of President Lincoln.

But Lincoln sites are not the only places in Illinois where visitors can encounter the Civil War. Other Illinois residents figured prominently in the war. The U. S. Grant Home State Historic Site in Galena pays homage to the general who ultimately led Union forces to victory. In 1860, Grant moved his family from St. Louis to Galena, in the extreme northwest corner of the state, where he began working in his father’s store. The modest home they occupied when they arrived still stands on the western bluff overlooking the city center. Grant lived there when the war started. Though privately owned today, a marker identifies it for intrepid visitors willing to climb the hill and search it out. Staff at the state historic site can provide visitors with directions. After the war, Grant—the celebrated victor of Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Petersburg, and Appomattox—returned in glory to Galena with his family and received a jubilant welcome from local citizens that included a gift of a stately brick Italianate home overlooking the city from the eastern bluff. Julia Grant described the house as “a lovely villa exquisitely furnished with everything good taste could desire.”

Grant lived here when he was elected president in 1868. In subsequent years, he returned only occasionally to visit. But he retained the residence for the rest of his life. In 1904, his children transferred the home to the city of Galena to keep as a memorial to their father. Eventually, the state of Illinois assumed responsibility and restored the house to how it appeared.
in 1868 when Grant won the presidential election. Almost 90 percent of the furnishings and artifacts displayed in the home belonged to the Grant family. Out buildings provide additional exhibit space devoted to Grant’s wartime exploits. A larger-than-life statue of Julia Grant occupies the center of the hilltop yard facing the city below.

A few blocks north of the Grant Home on the west bank of the Galena River lies Grant Park. In this serene setting, visitors will find a large obelisk dedicated in 1882 to the memory of the region’s Civil War soldiers. Also there, perched high on a stately pedestal presiding over the park named in his honor, stands a statue of Gen. Grant, dedicated in 1891. Nearby sits a twelve hundred pound bronze smoothbore cannon produced for federal forces in 1862 at Cincinnati, one of the hundreds of twelve-pounder field guns known as “Napoleons” that Illinois soldiers used to help subdue the southern rebellion. One other cannon on the grounds is a trophy of war captured by the 45th Illinois Volunteer Infantry (consisting of Galena-area troops) near Cheraw, South Carolina, in March 1863. The artillery piece is an English-made 3.67 caliber Blakely rifled gun delivered to the South Carolina militia at Charleston in December 1860 after the state seceded from the Union. The same cannon had been part of a Confederate battery on Morris Island in Charleston harbor during the siege of Fort Sumter. The gun—said to be the first rifled cannon fired in combat on the American continent—battered Fort Sumter some twelve hundred yards distant, rifling twelve pound cannon balls through the air with devastating effect on the fort’s brick walls. Brought to Illinois’s Rock Island Arsenal after the war, former members of the Galena infantry unit arranged to have it permanently moved to Grant Park in an official ceremony in 1896.

Across the river from Galena’s Grant Park stands the restored Old Market House State Historic Site. Constructed in 1846, the building now houses a museum that holds many war-themed artifacts and displays, including personal articles used by Grant, such as a saddle and hat case. At the Galena History Museum, two blocks west of the Old Market House, visitors learn about eight Civil War generals from Galena in addition to Grant, including Ely S. Parker (Grant’s Iroquois military secretary) and John A. Rawlins (Grant’s wartime chief of staff and secretary of war in his cabinet). Featured prominently in the museum’s War Room is a nine by twelve inch oil painting by Thomas Nast entitled “Peace in Union,” depicting Grant accepting Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House.

Grant was a West Pointer and military professional. But most of Illinois’s Civil War military leaders were “political generals,” politicians given military commissions for political reasons. However, one such general, John A. Logan, earned the respect of professionals. Born in Murphysboro in 1826, this native of southern Illinois imbued the intoxicating potion of Democratic and anti-abolition politics that permeated Illinois’s Egypt. As a young state legislator representing his
southern district, he earned the epitaph “Dirty Work” Logan for proposing that the state prohibit free blacks from entering Illinois and championing the strict enforcement of unpopular fugitive slave laws. Elected to Congress in 1858, he carried his pro-southern views to Washington, D.C., where he disagreed with secession but opposed coercion to prevent it. The seceded states, he declared, would “return from their wanderings . . . at some future day, if our action shall be tempered with forbearance and moderation.” Yet in the days before the first Battle of Bull Run, Congressman Logan accompanied a federal unit into the field and participated in one of the skirmishes that preceded the battle. His subsequent decision to raise a regiment from southern Illinois and accept a colonel’s commission in the Union Army helped temper anti-Union sentiment in the region.

Logan proved a capable military leader. Grant promoted him to brigadier general for his heroic efforts during the capture of Fort Donelson, and later promoted him to major general. He became one of Grant’s key lieutenants during the Vicksburg campaign, and served a similar role for Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman during the Atlanta campaign and the famous “March to the Sea.” His flowing coal black hair and mustache, accenting his swarthy complexion, made him one of the more recognizable faces of Civil War America. His troops endearingly called him “Black Jack” Logan. Following the war, Logan became a powerful Republican politician and, after changing his views about African Americans, a vocal advocate for black rights. He won election to the U.S. Senate three times, ran for vice president on the 1884 Republican ticket with James G. Blaine, and might well have become the Republican candidate for president in 1888 but for his untimely death in 1886.

The Gen. John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro pays tribute to the man’s impressive career. Centered in a two-story Victorian home on property once owned by the Logan family, it stands adjacent to the lot where Logan’s boyhood home once stood. Visitors take a chronological journey through Logan’s life as they move from room to room viewing permanent exhibits consisting of recently redesigned graphic panels interspersed with personal artifacts of the general and his family. The sword Logan used at Vicksburg and his mittens, spyglass, and binoculars number among the military artifacts on display. A pipe fashioned from a tree branch after the Battle of Shiloh by an unknown member of the 31st Illinois Infantry and a wooden snake whittled from wood taken from the “Dead-Line” at Andersonville are representative gifts from individual soldiers to Logan, indicating the respect and devotion he engendered among his troops. A sixteen hundred...
square foot gallery used for receptions, a gift shop, and temporary exhibitions that tell the story and interpret the impact of the Civil War in southern Illinois adjoins the original building. For an introduction to the war's history in the southern region of the state, there is no better place to visit.

Richard J. Oglesby was another of Illinois's politicians-turned-soldier. A lawyer and Whig politician, he became an associate of Abraham Lincoln and is credited with devising the “Rail Splitter” slogan for Lincoln's 1860 presidential campaign. At the beginning of the Civil War, members of the Illinois 8th Regiment elected Oglesby colonel and he capably led his troops during the Battle of Fort Donelson. Promoted to brigadier general on the eve of Shiloh, he participated in that battle and the subsequent battle at Corinth, where he was gravely wounded. In 1864, Lincoln urged Oglesby to run for Illinois governor and he won. He was at Lincoln's bedside when the president died, and he headed the commission that directed the building of the Lincoln monument in Oak Ridge Cemetery. Voters elected him to the governorship twice more, and he served a term in the U.S. Senate. At the end of his career he retired to a forty-six-room mansion, Oglehurst, which he built with his second wife (the daughter of a wealthy cattle baron) on the top of Elkhart Hill in Logan County. There he died in 1899.

Oglehurst burned to the ground in 1984. But the Victorian mansion in Decatur, Illinois, that Oglesby occupied with his first wife still stands and is open to visitors on a limited schedule. Volunteers walk visitors through the restored Gov. Richard J. Oglesby Mansion while relating family stories and identifying items that belonged to family members. Most of the furnishings are not original to the house, but date to the period. The general's library contains the actual volumes that Oglesby enjoyed consulting and is the most authentic room in the house. The museum offers occasional dinner programs in the family dining room, which is decorated in the same fashion employed by Mrs. Oglesby. Visitors will want to check ahead of time to verify when the mansion is open for tours.

Illinois's Benjamin H. Grierson was the model for John Wayne's character in John Ford's classic 1959 Civil War film, The Horse Soldiers. When the war broke out, this commander of the Union Army's most famous cavalry raid worked as a music teacher, band director, and struggling merchant in Jacksonville, Illinois. He immediately volunteered for service and quickly rose to colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. During the Vicksburg campaign, Gen. Grant chose Grierson to lead a daring raid deep into enemy territory to divert attention away from his movements against the river city. In mid-April 1863, Grierson led seventeen hundred mounted soldiers on a seventeen day, eight hundred mile dash through Mississippi to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, disrupting Confederate communications, destroying rail tracks and supply depots, and otherwise spreading fear and havoc in the southern heartland. The success of “Grierson's Raid” brought him a promotion to brigadier general of volunteers. After the war, he joined the
regular army and became colonel of a black cavalry unit, the “Buffalo Soldiers,” on the western frontier. By the end of his career over twenty years later, Grierson had become one of the few civilians to attain the rank of brigadier general in the regular army. The two-story Gen. Benjamin Grierson House in Jacksonville still stands, though it is privately owned and does not offer tours. However, a Looking for Lincoln wayside exhibit stands nearby the house, and is one of the stops along Jacksonville’s Lincoln and Civil War-themed car audio tour, “Voices of Jacksonville.” Visitors can find maps and instructions for the audio tour at the Jacksonville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau which has a link on the Looking for Lincoln website.
Unfortunately, other Illinois Union generals have no surviving homesteads or historic sites that people can visit. Only their gravesites and tombstones remain to commemorate their Civil War exploits. Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand, for example, enjoyed success as a brigade and division leader, but was less successful as a corps commander and butted heads with his superior Gen. Grant in the western theater. His tomb in Springfield's Oak Ridge Cemetery lies on a hillock plot north of the Lincoln Tomb. A historical marker on the south wall of McClernand Elementary School, built on the site where the general's Springfield home once stood, provides biographical information. Brig. Gen. W. H. L. Wallace led Illinois troops in a stubborn defense at the “Hornet's Nest” during the Battle of Shiloh, was shot in the head on the first day of that battle, and died soon after. He is buried in a family plot on a bluff overlooking Ottawa, Illinois, and a huge colorful mural painted on the front of a building on La Salle Street just south of Washington Park (site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate) commemorates him and his Ottawa troops.

Historic sites commemorate other important Civil War-era Illinois residents in addition to military leaders. Returning to Gen. Grant’s hometown of Galena, for instance, visitors may tour the home of the general’s political patron and neighbor, Congressman Elihu Washburne. A lawyer and prominent Whig, Washburne became one of the earliest Republicans elected to Congress. President Lincoln often sought his advice and political assistance. Washburne also championed Grant in his rise through the ranks of the Union Army. As president, Grant appointed him secretary of state, but soon reassigned him as U.S. ambassador to France. Visitors touring the Washburne Home State Historic Site, a large Greek Revival-style house where the congressman lived from 1843 to 1882, walk through rooms restored with period and family items, including the library where Grant sat with Washburne while the two awaited news of the 1868 presidential election results that carried Grant to the White House.

Another Illinois Civil War congressman, Owen Lovejoy, brother of the martyred abolitionist minister and newspaper editor, Elijah Lovejoy, staunchly supported Lincoln’s rise in Illinois politics, and defended the president against criticism from fellow Radical Republicans. When the war broke out, Lovejoy took leave from Congress to raise a regiment and serve as a colonel of infantry for several months in Missouri under Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont. Toward the end of 1861, he returned to Congress to support the president and nudge him along the path to emancipation. When he died of Bright’s disease in March 1864, President Lincoln remarked, “Lovejoy was the best friend I had in Congress.” In the 1970s, the city of Princeton, Illinois, restored the home that Lovejoy occupied from 1838 until his death. Today, it is open to the public as the Owen Lovejoy Homestead. Visitors view closets where the Lovejoy family secreted runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad. The museum has worked to increase the number of antebellum furnishings in the residence to supplement several family artifacts on display.

At the David Davis Mansion State Historic Site in Bloomington, the war appears because of a famous legal decision written by Judge David Davis. Before the war, Illinois trial judge Davis rode the fabled Eighth Judicial Circuit with Lincoln and acted as his campaign manager at the 1860 Republican convention in Chicago. In 1862, Lincoln appointed Davis to the U.S. Supreme Court. After the war (and with Lincoln safely dead), Justice Davis wrote the court’s opinion in Ex parte Milligan (1866), holding that the Lincoln administration had violated
the constitution in allowing the trial of a civilian in a military court in localities where civil courts functioned. Davis built a majestic thirty-six room, mid-Victorian mansion after the Civil War on the site of his former farm house. The museum sometimes displays the judge’s robe in his upstairs study. Guides interwine stories of Davis and his wife, Sarah, a remarkable New England woman who helped bring gentility and middle-class mores to the rugged Illinois frontier. The historically authentic horticultural restoration of Sarah’s gardens is a highlight of the tour during the spring and summer seasons.

Neither David Davis nor Mary Lincoln liked U.S. Senator Lyman Trumbull, Republican from Alton, Illinois. He held the Senate seat they both believed should have been Abraham Lincoln’s. An anti-Nebraska Democrat, Trumbull turned against Stephen Douglas over the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act that repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820. When Lincoln ran for the Senate against Douglas’s ally James Shield in 1855, Trumbull and other renegade Democrats refused to support Lincoln, leaving him a few votes short of victory and deadlocking the contest. When it seemed that another Douglas candidate might break the stalemate, Lincoln threw his support behind Trumbull to prevent the Douglas man from winning. However, Lincoln did not allow personal bitterness to cloud his political alliance with Trumbull, who became a Republican and chaired the Senate judiciary committee during the Civil War. Trumbull wrote both congressional Confiscation Acts and became a leading proponent of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. After the war he authored the Freedman’s Bureau bill and the Civil Rights Act of 1866. The Lyman Trumbull House in Alton was the senator’s home from 1849 until 1863. Although privately owned and lacking inside tours, the house is featured prominently in Alton’s “Lincoln and Civil War Legacy Trail,” and interpreted with historical markers and narration as part of the trail’s audio tour.

John Wood served as Illinois’s governor when Lincoln was elected president. Wood, who lived in Quincy, Illinois, had been a political ally of Lincoln’s for years. He allowed Lincoln to use the governor’s rooms in the capitol building in Springfield as a campaign headquarters, and later as a reception area for greeting people as president-elect. After leaving office, Wood became one of Illinois’s delegates to the “Peace Convention” in Washington, an unsuccessful attempt by political leaders from around the country to avert civil war. When the war started, he became quartermaster general of Illinois and assumed the immense task of provisioning the state’s military forces. Eventually, the federal government took over military procurement from the states, leaving him free in the summer of 1864 to recruit a one hundred-day regiment, at a time when manpower shortages plagued the Union Army. The sixty-four-year-old former governor led his regiment, the 137th Illinois Volunteers, as an occupation force in western Tennessee, where they encountered Confederate Nathan Bedford Forrest’s cavalry. Today,
visitors can tour the **John Wood Mansion** in Quincy, Illinois, an impressive Greek Revival-style house completed in 1838 and restored to its Civil War-era appearance with family items and other period furnishings. The mansion is part of a historical complex run by the Adams County Historical Society that includes nearby buildings housing a historical museum (which includes a special section on Quincy during the Civil War), and a Resource Center with a library and gift shop. Quincy also hosts one of the Lincoln National Heritage Area’s largest concentrations of Looking for Lincoln wayside exhibits. These storyboards enhance the historical experience for anyone who visits this historic city located on the Mississippi River not far from Mark Twain’s hometown of Hannibal, Missouri.

Mary Bickerdyke, the Civil War nurse who symbolized battlefield compassion and fought for better care and sanitation without regard for military protocol, was a forty-four-year old widow living in Galesburg, Illinois, when the war started. When Galesburg minister Rev. Edward Beecher complained that soldiers from the community suffered from squalor and neglect in the army camps at Cairo in southern Illinois, Bickerdyke accepted the assignment to carry supplies down to the Galesburg boys. What she found shocked her. She remained with the western armies for the duration of the war, caring for soldiers in the aftermath of Shiloh, Vicksburg, and the Georgia campaigns. When offended officers complained to Sherman about Bickerdyke’s contempt for military formalities, he supposedly replied, “She outranks me.” The Bickerdyke home no longer stands, but upon her death in 1901 grateful veterans commissioned a statue to commemorate “Mother Bickerdyke.” A thirty-one-year old female sculptor from Boston, Theo Alice Ruggles Kitson, won the commission. She created a moving life-sized bronze statue of Bickerdyke supporting a wounded soldier against her knee while administering him water. The memorial stands on a granite pedestal in the yard of the Knox County Courthouse in downtown Galesburg. Over eight thousand people attended the statue’s dedication in 1904, and the **Mother Bickerdyke Monument** continues to attract visitors who wish to remember a different side of the Civil War.

In 1952, the **Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War** established their headquarters in Springfield, Illinois. In 1969, the DUV remodeled a house on Walnut Street as a museum to display their large collection of war medals, pictures, uniforms, and other Civil War artifacts. But museums in Illinois rarely confine their interests strictly to the Civil War, instead treating the war as one theme among many. For example, the permanent Civil War exhibition at the **Illinois State Military Museum**, located on the north end of Camp Lincoln, Springfield’s National Guard base, is part of a larger exhibit that tells the story of Illinois’s citizen soldiers from territorial times through today’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Military Museum’s Civil War display contains such notable artifacts as a large tree trunk embedded with shot and shrapnel from the Battle of...
Chickamauga; the flag of the 13th Illinois Volunteer Regiment, stained with the blood of its flag bearer, Sgt. Patrick Riley, who became embroiled in the colors when he was killed during the Battle of Ringgold Gap in Georgia; and a pine board target shot through seven times by President Lincoln while he test-fired a Spencer repeating rifle near the White House. The Museum of the Prairie in Mahomet, Illinois, provides another good example of a permanent Civil War-themed exhibit in the context of a local/regional history museum. Visitors learn about the war’s impact on Champaign County and surrounding east central Illinois communities through interpretative displays that examine the wartime experiences of soldiers and citizens from the region. Indeed, many of the smaller local and regional history museums in Illinois have Civil War sections of interest to visitors who wish to experience local color and customs.

Union and Confederate forces fought no major battles on Illinois soil. But that does not mean the state escaped wartime violence. Southern sympathizers, army deserters, and anti-war “Peace Democrats” (derided as “Copperheads” after the poisonous snake) often came into conflict with military personnel and Republican Party supporters. The state witnessed many incidents in which individuals from one group intimidated, humiliated, or physically assaulted members of the other group. Such episodes could sometimes escalate into largescale violence. Furloughed Union soldiers, for instance, mobbed and ransacked Democratic newspaper offices in Bloomington, Olney (twice), and Springfield (where a Looking for Lincoln wayside on West Adams Street notes the incident). When soldiers tried the same thing in the Edgar County seat of Paris, Democrats formed a posse in defense, led by the neighboring county’s sheriff. One Copperhead died and several soldiers were wounded in the exchange of gunfire that resulted when the soldiers threatened the Copperheads’ Paris arsenal. Alleged Missouri bushwhackers hid out at Blandinsville in rural McDonough County in west central Illinois and raided farms at La Harpe and other Hancock County communities before escaping across the Mississippi River into Iowa, where the raiding continued. In Marshall, Illinois, a Democrat state circuit court judge ordered the arrest of two soldiers and tried them on the charge of kidnapping alleged deserters they had captured in the community. During the soldiers’ trial, a detail of two hundred fifty Union troops surrounded the courthouse, abducted the judge, and carried him away to military authorities in Indiana (after which a federal judge ordered his release). At Mattoon, soldiers assaulted the same state judge again, resulting in a fracas that killed a Copperhead. In Danville, three persons died when soldiers from Lafayette, Indiana, squelched a riot occasioned by a Republican ripping a Copperhead pin from the breast of a Democrat.

In addition, outbreaks of violence against draft enrollment occurred in the counties of Clark, Fulton, and elsewhere. At a Democrat anti-draft rally on the grounds of the Coles County Courthouse in Charleston, furloughed soldiers
and some local Republicans confronted Copperheads. Shots rang out. Within moments, nine men were dead and twelve more wounded. The soldiers suffered most of the casualties, though each side blamed the other. Federal authorities quickly dispatched two thousand troops to the area to quell further unrest. The “Charleston Riot” is the subject of a huge mural covering the side of a building in downtown Charleston near the site of the draft riot. It represents one of the few places visitors can learn about one aspect of the Civil War not usually commemorated in northern communities.

Illinois escaped a full-scale Civil War battle in part because within days of the fall of Fort Sumter, Illinois Governor Richard Yates rushed troops and artillery down the Illinois Central Railroad to the city of Cairo at the southern tip of the state. There, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, troops constructed a flat top mound fortification, Fort Defiance, that secured Union navigational control of the Mississippi to all points northward. The fort at Cairo also helped protect southern Illinois from the internal threat of pro-southern sympathizers among local citizens. Union forces quickly developed a huge military supply base at Cairo that became the staging grounds for the armies that would fight under Grant and Sherman in the bloody campaigns of the Civil War’s Western Theater. The Union Navy also established a major naval depot and shipyards at nearby Mound City to outfit and tend the Union’s river gunboats, the “Brown Water Navy’s” Mississippi Squadron that would play a critical role in the North’s ultimately successful invasion of the western Confederacy. Grant made Cairo his headquarters while he prepared his army to move south. The narrow and often-flooded peninsula was an unpopular post among soldiers. After Grant launched his army south from Cairo, the area became a temporary stop for Union troops on their way further south to join the fighting. Sadly, many of them returned as casualties to recuperate or die at the hospital facilities in Cairo or on the hospital ships moored at Mound City.

Visitors to this economically depressed area will have a difficult time imagining the vast scale and dynamic energy of the military enterprise that encompassed everything in sight during the Civil War years. Fort Defiance State Park now occupies the place where artillery batteries once guarded the rivers. Flooding and state budget woes have left the park in disrepair and camping facilities have been abandoned. But state workers still periodically mow the grass and the public can still drive on a narrow paved park road to an old cement observation platform to view the awesome sight where the two mighty rivers of the American heartland come together. A look at a map reveals the strategic importance of the spot. But studying a map cannot replicate being there and standing at water’s edge. Surging from the left, in the current of the immense Ohio River, come waters that earlier flowed past Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River or past Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River. Running together into the current of the Ohio River,
the whole merges with the mighty waters of the Mississippi River that enter from the right. Stretching south as far as the eye can see, the comimgled waters flow on a course that eventually passes the site of Island Number 10, Fort Pillow, and Vicksburg. Here, visitors can imagine the flotillas of gunboats and troop transports that once crowded the scene, a sight that thousands of Union soldiers viewed before heading downriver to fight in the Civil War’s western campaigns.

Nothing remains of the shipyards at Mound City where workers constructed the “City Class” ironclad gunboats *U.S.S. Cairo, U.S.S. Cincinnati*, and *U.S.S. Mound City*, nor do any of Mound City’s substantial wartime hospital facilities survive (though historical markers along Route 37 in Mound City identify the location of both the shipyards and the hospital). High mortality rates necessitated the creation in 1864 of the nearby *Mound City National Cemetery*. Here more than four thousand eight hundred Civil War soldiers lie buried, including a number of Confederate soldiers. In the center of the rows of white marble headstones, visitors will find a towering monument erected by the state of Illinois in 1874 to honor its war dead. Statues of a soldier and a sailor stand on opposite sides of a tall marble shaft that supports a statue of a resolute Goddess of Liberty. Along the avenue that leads to the cemetery’s funeral rostrum are seven plaques inscribed with verses from Theodore O’Hara’s poem, “Bivouac of the Dead.”

Mound City National Cemetery was the first of several national cemeteries created in Illinois for the interment of its Civil War dead. Like Mound City, most of them were laid out in close proximity to a large military camp. Receiving and training the first large waves of recruits at the beginning of the war necessitated the development of military facilities on a scale previously unimaginable. At first, officials tried to create a network of regional training camps near Chicago, Joliet, Freeport, Ottawa, Peoria, Springfield, Quincy, Belleville, and Anna to gratify local desires to keep soldiers relatively close to home. This proved inefficient and Governor Yates consolidated most provisioning and training of troops at the camps hastily developed near Springfield and Chicago. The first such facility in Springfield, Camp Yates, was established on the state fairgrounds west of town; a historical plaque mounted on the wall of DuBois Elementary School now marks the site. But these grounds quickly proved inadequate and the governor ordered the construction of Camp Butler six miles east of Springfield near Clear Lake. Over the next four years almost two hundred thousand men mustered in and out of the Union Army at Camp Butler. State officials picked Camp Douglas, near Lake Michigan on the south side of Chicago, because the site’s flat terrain permitted the simultaneous drilling of thousands of men. But the topography also created drainage problems that at times turned the camp into a cesspool of mud and disease, a condition that unfortunately plagued almost all of Illinois’s military camps.
The nature of these training camps dramatically changed in the aftermath of Grant's conquest of Fort Donelson in February 1862. The Union Army found itself hard pressed to find enough places to send the almost fifteen thousand Confederate soldiers who surrendered. Four destinations in Illinois—Camp Butler, Camp Douglas, Rock Island Arsenal, and a decommissioned state penitentiary at Alton—became major prisoner of war camps. For the rest of the war these prison camps struggled to assimilate successive waves of prisoners. Although the Illinois camps emptied out through prisoner exchanges with the Confederacy, they quickly refilled when in subsequent battles Union forces captured and shipped north by boat and train still more prisoners. All the camps struggled to accommodate the captives who often arrived in a deprived and diseased condition. Overcrowding added to the already deplorable sanitary conditions at most camps, particularly during the latter part of the war when Union leaders terminated prisoner of war exchanges. Although Confederate prisoners usually had sufficient food rations, the lack of adequate housing, clothing, and blankets created deadly hardships for southerners especially vulnerable to cold northern winters. Hundreds died from exposure and disease.

Illinois prison camps became the focus of a rumored plot by the Sons of Liberty, a clandestine Copperhead organization. On August 16, 1864, armed Copperheads allegedly planned to rise up and free Confederate prisoners of war through simultaneous attacks on Camp Douglas and the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois, and Camp Morton at Indianapolis, Indiana. The freed prisoners would then join their Copperhead liberators in overthrowing the state governments of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Kentucky, and take those states out of the war. Confederate operatives in Canada would provide money to purchase armaments for the initial Copperhead assault. Stores captured from federal arsenals in Indianapolis and Chicago would provide arms for the escapees. Authorities discovered and disrupted the plot, though nervous officials and loyal civilians kept a wary eye on the prison camps in their midst.

Chicago's Camp Douglas earned a reputation as the most notorious of the Illinois prison camps and received the most prisoners. During the war almost twenty-seven thousand Confederates were sent to Camp Douglas. Almost one in seven prisoners held at the camp—over four thousand Confederates in all—died during their captivity. Only the prison camp at Elmira, New York, where almost one in four prisoners died, had a higher casualty rate. State officials dismantled Camp Douglas by the end of 1865 to accommodate the growing city. The state reburied most of the Confederate dead whose remains could be accounted for in the pauper’s grave section of the city cemetery. By 1867 it became necessary to relocate the graves to Oak Woods Cemetery in the village of Hyde Park south of Camp Douglas; today, Hyde Park is the south side city neighborhood that includes the University of Chicago. Confusion caused by lax record keeping and
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
squabbles regarding the bids to carry out the removal and reburial work make it impossible to know with certainty the number of prisoners buried there, but Oak Woods is probably the largest Confederate burial site in the North. In 1895, President Grover Cleveland dedicated a forty-six-foot monument built by the regional chapter of the United Confederate Veterans. Deteriorating conditions at the cemetery site made it necessary to reset the monument in 1912, at which time its designers attached sixteen bronze tablets inscribed with 4,243 names to a new granite base and added a concrete walkway. Visitors to Oak Woods Cemetery today will find the Camp Douglas Confederate Mound Monument a prominent feature of the landscape.

Nothing from the period, however, remains at the actual site of Camp Douglas. It has become a part of the urban landscape of Chicago's south side, lying a few miles north of the Oak Woods Cemetery, roughly along the Martin Luther King Drive corridor between Thirty-First and Thirty-Sixth Streets, and just west and northwest of the burial place of Stephen Douglas. Indeed, the state named Camp Douglas in honor of the senator, known as Illinois's Little Giant, and incorporated much of Douglas's estate into the camp. Today, the park at the Stephen A. Douglas Tomb State Historic Site is all that remains. Visitors to the tomb enter a mausoleum to view the Little Giant's marble sarcophagus, on which rests a marble bust of Lincoln's chief rival. Leonard Volk, a noted nineteenth-century Illinois sculptor, designed the ninety-six-foot tall granite monument that includes allegorical figures in bronze representing Illinois, History, Justice, and Eloquence. On top of the burial chamber rests a forty-six-foot high column on which stands a nine-foot tall bronze statue of Douglas, eternally braving the winds and storms of Lake Michigan.

Of the 5,178 Confederate prisoners held at Springfield's Camp Butler over the course of the war, 866 died there. All that remains of Camp Butler is the burial ground, now the Camp Butler National Cemetery. Unlike Camp Douglas, Camp Butler has retained its rural character, as the grounds reverted to agricultural use at the close of the war, and urban sprawl has not yet encroached. The cemetery holds the remains of veterans of American wars through the twentieth century and up to the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Its Civil War dead—1,642 in all—are buried in a section toward the left as one enters the front gate. The graves of northern and southern soldiers are segregated, with Union grave markers the typical rectangular white tombstones and Confederate markers peaked to prevent, so legend has it, disrespectful northerners from sitting on them. Confederate memorial groups dedicated a small obelisk monument in the Confederate section of the cemetery in 2005, but not before generating controversy over the potential use of Confederate flags during the ceremony.

Military installations on Rock Island, located in the middle of Rock River at the point where it enters the Mississippi River, date back to 1816 and the
establishment of Fort Armstrong. Although an important staging ground for troops during the 1832 Black Hawk War, the old fort suffered neglect and deterioration in the decades before the Civil War. Not until the summer of 1862 did Congress authorize the building of an armory and arsenal on the island near the old fort site. The next summer, in July 1863, the War Department ordered the construction of a prisoner of war camp on the island, with prisoner barracks erected on the island’s north side. Margaret Mitchell chose Rock Island as the prison camp for her fictional character Ashley Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind.* The first real Confederates arrived in December 1863, after their capture during the Chattanooga campaign. They arrived just in time for one of the coldest winters in decades in the region. In all, 12,409 Confederates spent time in the prison at Rock Island, and 1,960 died there. They are buried in the Confederate section of the **Rock Island National Cemetery**, where an obelisk memorial flanked by Confederate cannons from Georgia memorializes the fallen. Union soldiers are buried in a separate area that includes a memorial walkway dedicated to the defenders of the Union. The Civil War sections constitute just a small portion of this national cemetery where veterans of all eras rest under acres of white tombstones.

Today, Rock Island Arsenal remains a huge and active military base. Machine shops, barracks, and offices long ago obliterated the last vestiges of the prison camp area. But the **Rock Island Arsenal Museum**, one of the nation’s oldest army museums displaying one of the largest collections of weaponry anywhere (including from the Civil War-era), features a special exhibit devoted to Rock Island’s history as a Civil War prison camp. Letters, photographs, and diagrams recount the story, as do artifacts such as arts and crafts produced by Confederate prisoners, including an exquisite hand-carved violin. A computer kiosk provides access to a database of Confederate prisoners. Signage on the base directs visitors to the museum. Be aware, however, that Rock Island remains an active military installation and visitors require official picture identification to enter the grounds.

Union officials quickly identified the empty state prison facility at the Mississippi River town of Alton, Illinois (just upriver from St. Louis), as a place to hold war prisoners, despite its relatively small size. Constructed in 1833 as Illinois’s first state penitentiary, the prison could hold no more than one thousand prisoners effectively, but it was available for immediate use. The first Confederate prisoners arrived in February 1862 in the wake of Gen. Grant’s successes at Forts Henry and Donelson. Overcrowding became progressively worse. By the last months of the war almost two thousand prisoners were crammed into the building—almost double its official capacity. During the winter of 1863 the drain pipes to the Mississippi River froze, causing raw sewage to back up into the sinks and latrines of the prison, fouling the compound’s hospital dining area, and creating a horrendous stench. Over the course of the
war about fifteen hundred Confederates died at Alton, most of them felled by small pox, pneumonia, and dysentery aggravated by crowded conditions. Prison officials quarantined stricken prisoners on an island in the Mississippi River, where two hundred sixty of them were buried. Today, a Smallpox Island Monument located in Alton’s Riverfront Park memorializes the dead. The rest of the Confederate dead are buried in a special Confederate Cemetery on Rozier Street, their names listed at the base of a sixty-seven-foot tall monument that marks the burial plot. The Alton National Cemetery across town on Pearl Street holds the remains of two hundred fifty Union soldiers, in close proximity to the grave of the martyred abolitionist, Elijah Lovejoy. As for the Alton Military Prison, all that remains today is a section of wall ruins identified by a historical marker. In 1970, local officials moved the ruins to their present location about three blocks upriver from the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site at Landmarks Boulevard. These sites are part of Alton’s “Lincoln and Civil War Legacy Trail” audio tour, and visitors will find a map with directions to the sites in an interpretive trail brochure available at the city’s visitor center or from its website.

Thus, though contending armies fought no major engagements on Illinois soil, the state enjoys a rich Civil War heritage. Over two hundred fifty thousand Illinois soldiers left their homes and fought to preserve the United States. Citizens who remained on the home front experienced their own ordeals. And, of course, the brooding countenance of Abraham Lincoln towers over the state’s antebellum and wartime history. Illinois’s Civil War stories are preserved in historic places spread across the state, in museums and historic homes, historical site markers and wayside storyboards, historic trails and pathways, former military installations, prisoner of war camp sites, and national cemeteries. Visitors who seek them out will be richly rewarded.

**Historical Site List**

Below is a listing of historical sites discussed in the essay. Because of state budget uncertainties, visitors should check ahead at all sites to determine hours of operation. Consulting the calendar of events on the Illinois Civil War One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary website at www.illinoiscivilwar150.org (maintained by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency) will apprise visitors of special programs and activities that can enhance their sesquicentennial experience. Also helpful is the Looking for Lincoln website at www.lookingforlincoln.com, the official website for the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area.

**Lincoln-Douglas Debate Communities**

Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, Alton.

See www.lookingforlincoln.com/debates/communities.asp
Great Western Railroad Depot
Tenth Street and Monroe
Springfield, Illinois
217-544-8695 or 217-788-1356

Old State Capitol State Historic Site
Downtown mall at Adams Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets
Springfield, Illinois
217-524-3971

Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site
Oak Ridge Cemetery
1500 Monument Avenue
Springfield, Illinois
217-782-2717

Looking for Lincoln Story Trail
Network-wide map and GPS coordinates for all exhibits at www.lookingforlincoln.com/storytrail

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
112 North Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois
800-610-2097

U. S. Grant Home State Historic Site
500 Bouthillier Street
Galena, Illinois
817-777-3310

Grant Park (outdoor park)
Park Avenue (east of Johnson Street)
Galena, Illinois

Old Market House State Historic Site
123 North Commerce Street
Galena, Illinois
815-777-2570

Galena History Museum
211 South Bench Street
Galena, Illinois
815-777-9129

Gen. John A. Logan Museum
1613 Edith Street
Murphysboro, Illinois
618-684-3455

Gov. Richard J. Oglesby Mansion
421 West William Street
Decatur, Illinois
217-429-9422

Gen. Benjamin Grierson House
(historical marker)
852 East State Street
Jacksonville, Illinois
(part of the Voices of Jacksonville audio tour; www.lincolninjacksonville.com)

Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand
(historical marker)
McClerndand Elementary School
Enos Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets
Springfield, Illinois
(grave site)
Oak Ridge Cemetery
Springfield, Illinois

Brig. Gen. W. H. L. Wallace (building mural)
815 La Salle Street
Ottawa, Illinois

Maj. Gen. John M. Palmer (statue)
Illinois State Capitol Grounds
Illinois State Capitol Complex
Springfield, Illinois
Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut (grave site)
Belvidere Cemetery
Belvidere, Illinois

Bt. Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Parsons
(historical marker)
Floyd Nelson Junior High School
North Stanford Road and US-50
Flora, Illinois

Bt. Maj. Gen. Michael K. Lawler and
Maj. Gen. James Harrison Wilson
(historical markers)
Shawneetown Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard
Shawneetown Mall
Shawneetown, Illinois

Col. Everton J. Conger (historical marker)
302 West Main Street
Carmi, Illinois

Washburne Home State Historic Site
908 Third Street
Galena, Illinois
815-777-3310

Owen Lovejoy Homestead
East Peru Street, near corner of Sixth Street
Princeton, Illinois
815-879-9151

David Davis Mansion State Historic Site
1000 Monroe Drive
Bloomington, Illinois
309-828-1084

Lyman Trumball House (historical marker)
1105 Henry Street
Alton, Illinois (part of Alton’s “Lincoln and Civil War Legacy Trail”;
www.visitalton.com/Lincoln)

John Wood Mansion
425 South Twelfth Street
Quincy, Illinois
217-222-1835

Mother Bickerdyke Monument
200 South Cherry Street
Galesburg, Illinois

Daughters of Union Veterans
of the Civil War Museum
503 South Walnut Street
Springfield, Illinois
217-544-0616

Illinois State Military Museum
1301 North MacArthur Boulevard
Springfield, Illinois
217-761-3910

Museum of the Prairie
Lake of the Woods Preserve at
Routes 57 and I-74
Mahomet, Illinois
217-586-2612

Charleston Draft Riot Site
(marker and mural)
Seventh Street and Jackson Avenue
Charleston, Illinois

Fort Defiance State Park
Intersection of Route 51 and US 60/62
Cairo, Illinois

Mound City National Cemetery
Junction of Highways 37 and 51
Mound City, Illinois
Oak Woods Cemetery and the Camp Douglas Confederate Mound Monument
1035 East Sixty-Seventh Street
Chicago, Illinois

Stephen A. Douglas Tomb State Historic Site
636 East Thirty-Fifth Street
Chicago, Illinois
312-225-2620

Camp Butler National Cemetery
Intersection of U.S. 36 and Sangamon Avenue (about six miles northeast of Springfield)
Springfield, Illinois
217-492-4070

Rock Island National Cemetery
Rodman Avenue
Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois

Rock Island Arsenal Museum
Building 60 (North Avenue side)
Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois
309-782-5021

Smallpox Island Monument
Riverfront Park
Alton, Illinois

Confederate Cemetery
Rozier Street
Alton, Illinois

Alton National Cemetery
600 Pearl Street
Alton, Illinois

Alton Military Prison
William Street and Broadway Street
Alton, Illinois
800-258-6645


5 Sherman in Lloyd Lewis, Sherman: Fighting Prophet (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), 364. Several variations of this quotation exist; see Nina Brown Baker, Cyclone in Calico: The Story of Mary Ann Bickerdyke (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), 159-60, 257n. “She outranks me” is the version quoted on the Galesburg Bickerdyke monument.
Collections Essay
Six Views of Lytle Square

Cincinnati’s landscape, like that of most cities, has experienced significant change through the years. While many of these changes are ultimately for the good, the loss of what existed leaves a void in the city’s heritage. But researchers can recapture at least part of the past through the medium of photography. The Cincinnati Museum Center is fortunate to possess in its collections a series of six photographs, given in memory of Elizabeth Livingood McGuire (direct descendant of William Lytle), which capture in detail the appearance of the Lytle Square area not long before the city leveled the area’s structures to transform the property into what became known as Lytle Park.

This series, probably taken during the winter of 1904-05, was the product of Cincinnati photographers Louis Rombach (1848-1910) and Theodore Groene (1860-1911). Rombach and Groene became partners in 1883 when Groene purchased the business of his employer, Charles Muhrmann. Best known for their photographs of the Great Flood of 1884 and the Court House riot of the same year, Rombach and Groene created and maintained high standards for their work in landscape and commercial photography. Although it is not known who commissioned these images of Lytle Square, the team chosen was eminently qualified for the task. The city block illustrated by these photographs was bounded by Fourth, Lawrence, Third, and Lytle Streets. Part of a larger tract of land known as Peach Grove, the original owner, Dr. Richard Allison, served as the post surgeon of Fort Washington, located just to the west. In 1800, Dr. William Goforth resided at Peach Grove, Allison by this time having removed to another location. Dr. Goforth may have rented the property from Dr. Allison; in 1806, the property was deeded from Allison to William Lytle in consideration of twenty-nine hundred dollars. William Lytle’s purchase of the land brings us to the first of our pictures.

Photograph 1: Built in the second half of 1809, the Lytle home was originally constructed to face Symmes Street (later East Third). Measuring fifty by fifty-five feet, the structure required over two hundred fifteen thousand bricks, with the masonry work completed by Robert Bailey. Messrs. Wood and Crouse undertook the carpentry work and Ezekiel and John Thorp applied the plaster. The house as seen in this picture has undergone some alterations. In 1867, Dr. Nathaniel Foster and his wife Josephine (granddaughter of William Lytle) moved the entrance of the home from Third Street to Lawrence Street in response to development on Third Street and additions made to the convent, seen to the right of the house. Also at this time, the Fosters added the porch and iron veranda at the Lawrence Street entrance, and added dormers to make the attic more habitable.
The Lytle home viewed from Lawrence Street, c. 1904-1905.
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER

The Lytle home, c. 1904-1905.
CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER
Photograph 2: This view was taken from Lawrence Street with its streetcar track prominent in the foreground. To the right of the home, the congested development of Third Street is readily apparent. William Lytle and his family lived in this house until his death in 1831, after which his son Robert Todd Lytle and his family resided here. Robert died in 1839 and his wife Elizabeth died two years later, leaving three children who were subsequently raised by their grandmother, Margaret Smith Haines Lytle. Robert’s son, William Haines Lytle, was the last of the Lytle name to live in the house. During the Civil War, William Haines Lytle served as a Union general and died on September 20, 1863 at the Battle of Chickamauga. Known as the “Poet General,” Lytle never married and after his death the house passed to his sisters Josephine Foster and Elizabeth Broadwell. At the time of these pictures, Anna H. Foster and William Lytle Foster, two of Josephine and Nathaniel Foster’s children, lived here. The presence of the tower of the American Book Company building immediately to the left of the home helps to date this picture.

Photograph 3: This view is of the southeast corner of Fourth and Lawrence Streets. Ezekiel Smith Haines built the house seen here in the late 1840s. Ezekiel was the son of Margaret, William Lytle’s second wife, and stepbrother of Robert Todd Lytle. After Robert and Elizabeth Lytle died, Ezekiel managed the affairs of the Lytle property and the care of the three orphaned children. Ezekiel died on
April 8, 1865, and for several years his widow, Charlotte, rented out the house. Charlotte Haines returned to the house around 1872, and after her death in 1875, the house was sold to Washington McLean, proprietor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. In the late 1880s, the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, under the direction of Clara Baur, occupied the old Haines home as well as the addition seen to the left of the house. At the time of this photograph, the conservatory had relocated, and both the house and its addition served as residences. The streetcar tracks seen in the lower right corner of the picture proceed down Lawrence Street. The open space immediately to the right of the Haines house is the lawn of the Lytle home. The cluster of structures seen beyond the lawn border on Third Street, and this brings us to the next image.

*Photograph 4:* This is a view of the north side of Third Street east of Lawrence. Visible to the left is Lawrence Street with the conservatory buildings and the gate to the Lytle home. The three buildings at the northeast corner of Lawrence and East Third Streets are 500, 502, and 504 East Third. Built around 1850, this group of row houses had a variety of occupants through the years, including James J. Faran, co-proprietor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (who lived at 504), George E. Pugh, an attorney and U.S. senator (who lived at 500), and William Howard Taft, a judge and later U.S. president (who also lived at 500). At the time of the photograph, Isabella Cochrane (500), Clement Bates (502), and Charles R. Faran (504) occupied the residences. The building just to the east of these three homes can be seen in greater detail in the next view.
Photograph 5: This image shows the northwest corner of Third and Lytle Streets. The large structure, or rather group of structures, is the Convent of St. Clara. The doorway immediately to the left of the corner is a remnant of the first structure built on this lot around 1851 by Erasmus Gest. Sarah Worthington King Peter purchased the house in 1856 and presented it to the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis in 1861 to serve as a convent. Peter played an instrumental role in bringing the order to America, and in exchange for the deed to the property she received life tenancy in the convent. Construction of a chapel and additions to the original house were completed in 1861, and five years later another addition brought the convent to the shape and size seen here. To the left of the convent stand the row of buildings from the last photograph. The street to the right of the convent is Lytle Street, which extends to Fourth. The whitewashed fence midway up the street lies at the rear of the Lytle house lot.
Photograph 6: Taken at the southwest corner of Fourth and Lytle, this view completes the circuit around the block. The house at the corner was constructed in the late 1870s as the residence of Aaron Bugher, son-in-law of Washington McLean. Down Lytle Street to the left of the house stand two structures that served as stables for the buildings on Fourth Street. Further down the street, the fence of the Lytle house and the convent come again into view. On Fourth Street to the right of the corner house lies the Conservatory of Music building, which by then served as a boarding house. At this time, Rufus Burckhardt, who resided in the old Bugher home, owned all the property in this block of Fourth Street.

In 1905, shortly after this series of photographs was taken, the city razed all the structures in Lytle Square except for the Lytle home to provide space for a city park. The Lytle house remained vacant for the next three years while various groups and individuals tried to save it for posterity. These efforts proved fruitless, and in 1908, the city demolished the Lytle house, erasing any evidence of human occupation on the site.

This set of images provides a fairly complete representation of the structural development of what is today a vanished city block. Along with the prominent individuals who resided here, various cultural, social, and religious institutions of nineteenth-century Cincinnati also called this space home. In the more than
one hundred years since Lytle Park was completed, the surrounding streets have changed yet further. The section of Third Street bordering the park vanished with the construction of the Lytle Park Tunnel, along with Lawrence and the north half of Lytle Street. Even the gentle slope of the terrain toward Third Street has been brought level to the Fourth Street elevation. Taken as a whole, this set of photographs vividly captures a part of Cincinnati’s physical and cultural past that might otherwise have disappeared forever.

Richard R. Kesterman
Cincinnati Museum Center
Review Essay

Adam Goodheart and the North’s War for Freedom

Daniel W. Crofts

Anyone who seeks to find out why people in the free states resolved to fight will welcome 1861: The Civil War Awakening. Adam Goodheart writes deftly. Moreover, the writing is grounded on impressive research. When he delves into a topic, he does so with authority. His book provides fresh perspective on the incredible chain of events triggered by Abraham Lincoln’s election as president in November 1860. Goodheart uses his writing and research prowess to drive home a core idea: the Civil War was “a war against slavery, even before it began” (19). Having long blinded themselves to the obvious, northerners awoke in 1860 to take on the task at hand. They finally grasped that emancipation was necessary. These views will undoubtedly find a receptive audience. From the perspective of the early twenty-first century, slavery appears the essential catalyst for North-South antagonism and its abolition the most meaningful aspect of the conflict. It makes intuitive sense to us that our like-minded predecessors saw things as we now do. Our intuition, however, may be an imperfect guide.

Biography provides the scaffolding for Goodheart’s thesis. One of his lead characters is twenty-nine-year old James Garfield, an obscure college professor turned politician who soon would become a warrior and eventually a president. Articulating values held by a generation of young northerners, Garfield spoke out against “aristocratic privilege” and opposed any compromise with the South (94). But others in Garfield’s home city of Cleveland, Ohio, sought to show the South that they were “true and loyal to the Constitution” (116). They therefore allowed Lucy Bagby, who had fled from her Virginia owner, to be returned to captivity.

The crumbling structure of North-South amity could not survive the outbreak of war. In mid-April, immediately after Confederates assaulted Fort Sumter, Elmer Ellsworth, a young man befriended by Lincoln, rushed to New York City and organized a regiment of firemen to defend the Union. Just a month later, as he led his “Zouaves” into Alexandria, Virginia, Ellsworth was shot down—and Lincoln devastated. In another part of Virginia, at Fortress Monroe, Benjamin Butler, a Massachusetts Democrat turned political general, endeared himself to a contingent of “bleeding hearts” under his command by refusing to return runaway slaves to their owner. “I am under no constitutional obligations to a foreign country, which Virginia now claims to
be,” Butler resolved; “I shall hold your negroes as contraband of war” (302, 314). Goodheart’s chapter on Ben Butler and his “contrabands” stands as the highlight of the book.

Like a novelist, Goodheart has a knack for putting himself (and his readers) in the shoes of somebody else, and imagining what another person might see. Thus, for example, he depicts how the black “contrabands” might have reacted to
Yankee soldiers: "they made you feel self-conscious in ways that Southern whites did not," but "even the obnoxious ones were often curious to learn your life story, whereas the Virginia whites never were; in fact, they seemed actively to avoid realizing you had one" (335). He imagines how construction crews installing poles and wires in the Great Basin west of Salt Lake occasionally encountered "a compound creature, a man-beast out of some bygone millennium," rushing ahead with "a clatter of hooves . . . headlong and heedless." So might "two eras" have met; the Western Union Telegraph Company was about to make the Pony Express obsolete (218).

Goodheart has an eye, too, for tangible detail. Aware that many men started to grow beards during the Civil War era—most notably Lincoln himself—Goodheart reminds us that facial hair had quite suddenly become a way to make a statement. The custom originated in Europe among revolutionary nationalists of the 1848 generation, and it then leaped across the Atlantic. For younger American males especially, "beards connoted a certain frank and uncompromising authenticity" (113). The unexpected comet that suddenly flared to become the brightest object in nighttime northern skies in early July 1861 provides a powerful concluding image for this book. The "magnificent nocturnal spectacle" was "a thing of wonder and terror." Goodheart commends a "prophetic" newspaper editorial that saw the "luminous messenger" as the herald for "a new and important epoch in the history of the world" (367-69).

In Goodheart's view, residents of the free states divided into two groups: conservative traditionalists who instinctively favored "policies of appeasement and compromise," and "a new generation of Americans [who] arose to throw aside the cautious ways of its parents and embrace the revolutionary ideals of its grandparents." He celebrates the Republican Party's rank-and-file, who refused to accept that the American nation would be forever "stranded halfway between its love of freedom and its accommodation of slavery" (18, 22). These Republicans, Goodheart argues, started to prepare for war even before the 1860 election. To show that they were spoiling for a fight in the summer and early fall of 1860, he points to militaristic campaign spectacles, the parades of the so-called "Wide Awakes." Many young Lincoln supporters, wearing "military-style caps" and shiny "black capes," joined together for night-time marches, illuminated by torches and conducted after advance drilling so that "their boots [struck] the cobblestones in perfect cadence." They represented the vanguard of the Union Army, "awakened to a new and clearer vision of the world, while the rest of their countrymen still drowsed" (47-48).

Goodheart has an important point to make here. He recently coined the clever phrase "Deep North," which included New England, upstate New York's "Burned Over District," Ohio's "Western Reserve," and the northern reaches of the Old Northwest, especially newly settled Wisconsin, where radical German
“Forty-Eighters” interacted with the westward prong of the New England exodus. Some residents of the Deep North had their backs up even before the states in the Deep South seceded. They were not about to surrender the nation to rebels and traitors. They would instead rekindle the spirit of 1776. “In the hour of darkness and peril and need, the people will waken,” predicted Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his best-remembered poem, “Paul Revere’s Ride,” written just before Lincoln’s election and published at the same moment South Carolina seceded.¹

But Goodheart skirts a mountain of evidence showing that leading Republicans expected Americans throughout the country to accept the 1860 election results peacefully. Of course, they expected bruised feelings. Losing always hurt, and this intensely waged campaign attracted record numbers of voters to the polls. For Democrats and the southern-dominated Democratic Party, which had controlled the federal government for most of the past three decades, the pain would be acute. Republicans well knew that some southern firebrands claimed to favor breaking up the Union rather than accept a “Black Republican” president. Throughout the campaign, however, Republican editorialists and orators reassured northern voters that white southerners had too much invested in the Union ever to follow through with their insidious disunion threats. The clamor in the South was just “the old game of scaring and bullying the North into submission,” and preventing northern voters from following their own best judgment. As historian David Potter wisely noted, Republicans believed that the threat of secession “was a mere rhetorical weapon, devised to frighten the electorate, but not for a moment seriously intended to be used, except by the most ultra of the fire-eaters.”²

Goodheart stretches his evidence when he describes the Wide Awakes as a proto-military force. In making this case, Goodheart depends on a recent essay by historian Jon Grinspan, who actually offers a different assessment. Although some Wide Awakes later claimed to have anticipated the Civil War, Grinspan writes, “at the time they barely saw it coming.” Their principal role was to rouse a strong Republican turnout in several closely contested northern states where Democrats remained formidable; they were not “preparing for civil war” but instead organizing to “finish off the northern Democracy.”³

Goodheart’s confidence that northerners fought the war for the right reasons leads him to discount all efforts to preserve the peace during the months after Lincoln’s election. He views the “Old Gentlemen” who still thought this possible as deluded and morally tainted. They wanted to avoid entirely “the question of what black men and women were or might ever be” (63). They “trusted pieces of paper to solve things” (81). All that resulted from their labors was a proposed Constitutional amendment, satisfying only to equivocating “temporizers,” that would have forbidden Congress from ever interfering with slavery in the states where it already existed (130).
Some northerners at the time saw things as Goodheart does, but in presenting their perspective as the view of the majority he dismisses a broader spectrum of political views. Indeed, Goodheart shows little interest in politics, that often-sordid business of building coalitions, winning elections, passing legislation, and exercising power. He barely touches Republican electoral strategy in 1860, which hinged on winning three key states in the lower North—Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois—where party managers had to persuade conservative former Whigs and nativists that a vote for Lincoln was safe and sensible, not a mandate for upheaval or disorder. He dismisses the orators who delivered “long-winded, ineffectual speeches” in Congress during the secession winter; they were only going through the motions as they spoke to half-empty chambers while “their colleagues dozed, wrote letters, or picked their teeth with penknives” (126). Aware with the benefit of hindsight that the secession movement would not be reversed through the legislative process, Goodheart disdains as an ephemeral mirage the high drama that Henry Adams and so many others thought they were witnessing.

Getting Lincoln to fit his scheme of interpretation requires some fancy footwork on Goodheart’s part. He downplays Lincoln’s inaugural address, with its eloquent pleas for peace and its expressed readiness “to rewrite parts of the Constitution to accommodate the South.” It was “entirely ineffectual” and composed in an apparent fit of absentmindedness. For good reason, the speech is not “quoted much today” (130-31). So, too, Goodheart writes, few “would remember much about the month after Lincoln’s inauguration,” when the country seemed in a “trance” (131). Although Lincoln recalled that the challenges he faced during those weeks were “so great that could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to have survived them,” this book does not linger over the new president’s apprenticeship.4

Goodheart instead chooses to make a long story short: Lincoln overcame “months of vacillation and evasion” and finally showed his mettle. He rejected the pacifist counsels of William Henry Seward, Stephen A. Douglas, and Winfield Scott and heeded the advice of an “obscure former navy captain named Gustavus V. Fox,” whose wife was the sister of the wife of Montgomery Blair, one of Lincoln’s cabinet members. Fox thought it possible to resupply Sumter, the beleaguered fort in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Lincoln concluded that whether or not Fox’s scheme worked, a “demonstration of the administration’s resolve” might compel the slave states in the Upper South to stick with the Union (154-55, 157).

But the new president’s apparent calculation backfired. The start of a shooting war undermined heretofore pro-Union majorities in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, and made things touch and go for a time in the remaining Union slave states along the border. The southern Confederacy suddenly doubled in population. After April 15, it had the manpower and resources—and
perhaps most important—the nationalist ethos to put up a hellacious four-year fight. Like Lincoln, Goodheart needs a better handle on the situation in the South. He does engage with three border-state southerners who resisted secession: Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden, the would-be promoter of compromise; Major Robert Anderson, also from Kentucky, who commanded the federal outpost at Sumter; and Virginia-born Jessie Benton Frémont, whose already-notable career took a new twist in mid-1861 when she and her husband, John C. Frémont, championed the campaign to drive secessionists from Missouri and place the state under the control of militantly antislavery and pro-Union Germans. But Goodheart has little to say about secessionists or about the large number of white southerners who hated secession but supported the Confederacy when forced to choose sides in a war.

Goodheart bluntly explains his reason for slighting the southern side of the story: the Civil War had “a right side and a wrong side” (20). The Confederacy was conceived in “intellectual poverty and moral laziness” and “fated to become a historical dead end” (18, 358). It was “never truly much of a cause” because it stood fundamentally at odds with the defining American ideal of equality, as articulated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence (352, 358). However much readers might agree with these stricture, the fact remains that many white southerners saw things differently, and they willingly fought and died for the difference. The question is not whether the benighted white southern cause squares with modern sensibilities. It does not. The real question is this: Can we understand the war without taking into account the outlook and motivations of those without whom there would have been no war in the first place? Can we marginalize the abundant evidence—as Goodheart unfortunately does—that a southern nation sprang to life in 1861, and that it commanded the loyalties of most whites living in eleven slave states and a fair number of those living in three others?

Rather than take the white South seriously, Goodheart takes at face value what antislavery northerners thought they knew about the South. For example, some southern spokesmen during the 1850s claimed that the sky was falling and that the South must expand or die. Republican politicians loved to hear such opinions. It validated the case they made to their more ideologically antislavery constituents—that restricting slavery’s expansion placed the institution on the road to “ultimate extinction.” Goodheart thus considers it axiomatic that the South had to “extend slavery through the Union’s new states and territories” and acquire new slave territories in the Caribbean and Central America, so as to build “a vast slave empire” (37, 222-23). He depicts the 1860 census as portending the demographic doom of the slave states, assuming they would soon become a helpless minority in the nation unless they found a way to enlarge the slave system. But the asserted right to take slaves to new territories functioned principally as a symbol. White southerners craved recognition of their “equal
rights” in the Union but they had little motive to take slaves to the far West or the Caribbean. Investments in valuable slave property were safe and profitable in the existing slave states, especially when slaveholders put their laborers to work in the immensely fertile lower Mississippi Valley and east Texas. When secessionists struck for independence, they effectively renounced—without any apparent qualms—all hope for acquiring new slave territory.

Readers may respond that 1861: The Civil War Awakening focuses deliberately on the North rather than the South, and that Goodheart should not be held responsible for more than he set out to cover. But he also shortchanges the large segment of northern white opinion that sought to maintain both the Union and slavery. Most free state residents prized the Union more than they hated slavery, and they judged that any assault on slavery undermined attempts to preserve the Union. After the fighting started, some northerners started to change their minds. Seeing slavery as the taproot of the rebellion, they argued that the Union could be restored and secured only by getting rid of slavery. But this still did not represent a majority view in the North. Historians who study the Union Army likewise judge that only a small fraction of Union soldiers favored emancipation during the early part of the war. They were “few and far between” in the units that became the famed Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac, concludes Lawrence A. Kreiser Jr. Painting with a broader brush in his spirited new volume, The Union War, Gary Gallagher rejects the idea that there was “substantial, and early, antislavery sentiment within Union ranks.”

This reviewer would suggest that Goodheart’s and Gallagher’s books be read in tandem. Considering any war other than a war for freedom a chimera, Goodheart depicts a Union war effort destined to become a war against slavery. He draws readers’ attention to dramatic episodes that foreshadowed the enlargement of Union war aims, especially Butler’s “contraband” decision and the civil war within a civil war that erupted in Missouri. Gallagher, by contrast, insists that white northerners gave priority to restoring the Union rather than abolishing slavery; most would not embrace emancipation until the war degenerated into an inconclusive bloodbath that necessitated a more radical agenda for defeating the Confederacy. He challenges the idea that emancipation ultimately became the principal war aim, or at least the equal to reunion. For those who lived at the time, Gallagher maintains, Union was always paramount.

1861: The Civil War Awakening will attract a wide readership. The book is extraordinarily well written and presents compelling, three-dimensional accounts of characters who struggled to adapt to fast-changing circumstances. Most of all, it makes the conflict purposeful from its beginnings. Today, many Americans very much want to believe this. Living in an era of diminished aspirations and political gridlock, we welcome the idea that political leaders once stood for something substantial and citizens stood ready to sacrifice and make hard choices.
But Goodheart’s interpretation of the great crisis between late 1860 and mid-1861 will not persuade everyone, nor will all his readers concur with the uplifting implications that he discerns. But I will assign his book to my students. It will oblige them to think about matters of first importance. And it will confront them with a potentially liberating learning experience, as they discover that their teacher admires a book he does not fully agree with.


2 David M. Potter, Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis (1942; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 11-12, 16.


In Halls of Honor: College Men in the Old South, Robert F. Pace explores the lives of southern college students in the antebellum United States. He argues that earlier studies of antebellum colleges were either too geographically narrow in focus or too concerned with institutional history to explore the culture of college students in detail. Seeking to understand college culture across the Old South, Pace examines twenty-one colleges in eleven Old South states (though Virginia is slightly over-represented in his sample, with one-third of the schools). Pace utilizes traditional institutional histories but he also turns to the diaries and correspondence of students and faculty members to reveal the lived experiences of students. Pace concludes that antebellum southern college culture was shaped by the intersection of adolescent development and the southern code of honor. Employing psychological theory, Pace argues that the average student, who entered college around the age of fifteen, was experiencing the phase of cognitive development known as adolescence, a period marked by the ability to think abstractly. He contends that adolescent thinking allowed college students to manipulate the southern code of honor to fit their needs in a college setting composed of other adolescents. While many of their actions remained childish, they nonetheless strived for independence, incorporating components of their parents’ culture into the world they were creating.

Pace employs Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s Southern Honor (1982) as a guide and framework for his study. According to Wyatt-Brown, the code of honor, which permeated all levels of southern society, placed a premium on appearances; southerners deemed shameful those who appeared to neglect their duties to family and community. Pace argues that southern honor as refracted through adolescence shaped the southern college experience. Thus, Halls of Honor explores various aspects of college life, including academics, the campus environment, social life, violence, and the coming
of the Civil War. Each context provided young southerners the opportunity to become honorable men. Pace’s discussion of how adolescence and southern honor impacted academics challenges previous interpretations which contend that the primary tension between faculty and students arose from sectional prejudices in schools in which many northern faculty members taught a student body that hailed mostly from the South. Pace argues instead that tension existed between professors and students because professors had the ability to strip students of their honor by shaming them. Academic success ensured that a scholar enjoyed honor. Yet students could secure good grades and honor through means other than hard work. Students often cheated—a practice many deemed acceptable because it enabled them to outsmart the professor. Other students faced the academic challenges and devoted time to their studies. Occasionally, undergraduates resorted to open defiance of their professors, acting as if they did not care about academic success. This diminished the professor’s ability to embarrass them in front of their peers. Whatever coping mechanisms they employed, successful students made it to commencement where they earned the opportunity to show off their rhetorical skills to fellow students, faculty, parents, and the community, stepping out of the liminal stage of college life and into full manhood.

Pace’s study also incorporates Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese’s view of a static, preindustrial Old South that showed little change over time. In The Mind of the Master Class (2005), Genovese and Fox-Genovese argue that antebellum southern elites looked to the past, particularly the ancient world, as a model for their own society. This interpretation of southern society, and Pace’s reliance on European student protests as the model for southern student uprisings, leads him to downplay the important role politics played in young men’s lives, especially during the secession crisis. Pace’s study would have benefited from incorporating Peter Carmichael’s contention that this cohort was deeply concerned with politics, supporting secession long before their fathers’ generation (see The Last Generation, 2005). Indeed, Pace demonstrates that during the 1860 election students at Louisiana’s Centenary College supported the Constitutional Union Party over the proslavery John C. Breckinridge, even though most Shreveport voters supported the southern Democrats (100). Whether the students’ vote represented a rebellion against authority or a genuine opposition to secession, they recognized the importance of politics and did not blindly follow their fathers’ example. Likewise, Pace’s conclusion that when students left college they no longer faced the possibility of falling into dishonor is unrealistic because southern society continued to place significant pressure on these newly minted gentlemen to act honorably.

Nonetheless, Hall of Honor is rich in detail and offers a unique picture of college life in the antebellum South. For readers interested in the ways the southern code of honor shaped the lives of young college men, Pace’s study is a must read.

Lori Jean Wilson
University of Louisville
Hanna’s Town: A Little World We Have Lost
W. William Wimberly II

A hint of nostalgia and W. William Wimberly’s love for Wabash, Indiana, pours through the pages of Hanna’s Town, where he tells the story of nineteenth-century life on the banks of the Wabash River. Drawing from newspaper articles, Wabash County history books, and pamphlets, Wimberly opens his first chapter describing the life of the region’s first inhabitants, primarily Algonquian-speaking Native Americans. From there, Wimberly traces the development of Wabash from its humble beginnings as a white frontier settlement to the dawn of the twentieth century when the town was a bustling center for local trade.

With chapters on pioneer life, nineteenth-century society, and municipal development, Hanna’s Town captures the life and culture of Wabash citizens and how their definitions of progress and style, and visions of the city’s future changed over time. One aspect that did not change, however, was the hardy spirit of these residents who tirelessly worked to develop their home town. Wimberly’s description of Wabash residents’ first clearing of the land, their embrace of a burgeoning commercial culture, and their efforts to rebuild the town after a devastating 1870 fire demonstrates that the success of young towns depended on more than a good location and viable plans. Rather, it required the vision and determination of community leaders, such as Hugh Hanna and his contemporaries, who invested their lives and pocketbooks in the region’s development.

Wimberly is at his finest when he describes how the people, architecture, and layout of the town transformed over time. His description of the houses, accompanied with extensive biographies and genealogies of the families that lived in them, offer the reader a rich sense of life in Wabash. Along with these biographies, Wimberly includes plenty of tall tales to highlight residents’ flare for the outrageous. Wabash pioneers survived the “great squirrel stampede of 1834,” vanquished forty-five foot long rattlesnakes, and bravely trod through quicksand-like mud, while a Civil War soldier survived a long float down the Mississippi River in nothing but a checkered shirt (11-12, 56, 146). When combined with the countless stories of new business ventures, schoolchildren’s pranks, and brave efforts to “tame” this wilderness town, Wimberly vividly captures the personalities, hopes, and dreams of Wabash’s inhabitants.
Yet instead of painting a wholly romantic picture of Wabash’s past, Wimberly uses these cheerful stories to highlight the steep divides that also plagued the town. Hugh Hanna may have enjoyed a nice home, participated in local politics, and spent his free time at Wabash’s Masonic Lodge, but Wimberly clearly shows that Wabash residents were not always on their best behavior. Stories of sultry affairs, gruesome murders, gang violence, and the region’s constant fight against crime, alcohol consumption, and prostitution add spice to the story and make Hanna’s Town stand out among typical local histories. Perhaps more important, as he recounts this darker side of Wabash’s history, Wimberly demonstrates that even small towns such as Wabash could not escape the economic and social stratifications of the Gilded Age.

Wimberly found many of these stories in Wabash newspapers and the scrapbook of prominent resident Elijah Hackleman. While such sources describe major events in the town’s history, Wimberly’s account could have incorporated other sources. In his recounting of the Treaty of 1826, for example, government documents such as the tract book or the treaty itself would have enriched the story. Likewise, Wimberly’s discussion of Wabash residents’ political affiliations would have benefitted from an examination of voting records, and his analysis of Wabash’s crime trends and community responses would have been stronger if he had studied city and county arrest or court records. When describing Wabash’s city improvement efforts, Wimberly cites common council minutes only once, and most frequently relies upon newspapers and museum pamphlets for most of his account. Incorporating additional sources would have added depth to Wimberly’s analysis. Further examination of common council minutes, for instance, could have illustrated how Wabash leaders’ discussion of the town’s development shifted over time in a way that newspapers typically cannot capture.

Despite these shortcomings, Hanna’s Town is an excellent book for anyone interested in the history of Wabash, Indiana. Wimberly’s colorful anecdotes and flowing prose make his book a quick and entertaining read. Certainly, the book offers a treasure trove of information on the vision, spirit, and stamina of early Indiana residents.

Dana M. Caldemeyer
University of Kentucky
The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln’s Widow, as Revealed by Her Own Letters

Myra Helmer Pritchard, with Jason Emerson

Myra Pritchard and Jason Emerson’s *The Dark Days of Abraham Lincoln’s Widow* reveals an interesting and largely unknown chapter in the post-Civil War life of Mary Todd Lincoln. The book’s value lies in its analysis of Mary Lincoln’s letters and Emerson’s annotations. Mary Lincoln was often derided and more often simply misunderstood, but this work presents another item of interest in the increasingly voluminous historiography of the Lincoln family. Emerson frames the work by arguing that Mary Lincoln’s insanity has been her most enduring legacy. He decided to resurrect Myra Pritchard’s unpublished work because he contends that contemporaries vastly overstated Mary Lincoln’s insanity and/or emotional volatility. Pritchard’s work, Emerson argues, would have sparked a revolutionary rethinking of Lincoln’s widow if it had been published as planned in 1927. A friend of Mary Lincoln, Pritchard saved their correspondence. Emerson describes the considerable haggling over the Lincoln legacy that hindered Pritchard’s publication hopes. The Lincoln children and extended family featured prominently in the era’s publishing wars; so, too, did other contemporary figures such as Carl Sandburg, then in the midst of writing his own Lincoln biography.

The work itself remains indicative of the melodramas that paraded as biography during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Pritchard’s work is obviously hagiographic, but one cannot fault her for taking her subject at face value. Mary Lincoln did, as Pritchard writes, work tirelessly for the Union cause, but to describe her as “the dynamic spirit that brought order out of the chaos” (18) at Washington’s putrid military hospitals is grossly inaccurate. Mary Lincoln supported the war effort with sincere devotion and near maniacal loyalty. But as most of her biographers have since argued, she possessed far too erratic a temperament to have been the sustaining material benefactor of hospitals and other charitable causes. Pritchard also never addresses the public debate over Mary Lincoln’s war-time loyalties. Mary Lincoln’s biographers and historian Stephen Berry have argued convincingly...
that much of her ardor for the Union stemmed from her horror at being associated with her rebelling brothers. Her dynamism is better explained by her Confederate brothers than by her ordered charitableness.

The cause of Mary Lincoln’s considerable psychological problems, Pritchard avers, was the heart-wrenching shock of watching her husband’s murder. However, Pritchard also heaps blame on the Lincoln children for their apparent abandonment of their mother in her hour of greatest need. Pritchard wrote that Mary’s mental state further declined because of her fall in social prominence after her husband’s death. Stricken with grief, she nevertheless garnered little sympathy from the Radical Republican Congress (Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner was a notable exception). Accustomed to being at the center of American political and social life during her aristocratic childhood and adolescence in Lexington, Kentucky, and then for over four years in the White House, she led a life of relative modesty after Lincoln’s murder. Her son, Robert T. Lincoln, began to worry that his mother’s mental state might be declining to the point of insanity. Mary Lincoln’s conversations became increasingly erratic and she often entertained her children only partly clothed. Pritchard’s narrative prominently features Robert Lincoln’s successful attempts to gain control of his mother’s estate, but the letters associated with Robert’s control often incriminate Mary.

Mary Lincoln further injured her quest for independence by what her son called mental irresponsibility. On several occasions she imagined that Robert was ill and near death, probably remembering her son Eddie’s death in 1850. Mary Lincoln did not lack for benefactors. Pritchard’s grandparents, the Pattersons, sided with her against her son when he began to assert more control over his mother’s life. Her final confinement at Bellevue Place asylum in Batavia, Illinois, rent Robert Lincoln from the affections of Mary Lincoln’s friends. Pritchard certainly counted her family among Mary’s friends, and her work promotes the idea that she was the victim of tragedy and an unsympathetic son.

Mary Lincoln remains one of the two or three most popular First Ladies for biographers. The last twenty years have seen several capable biographies emerge, most notably by Jean Baker and Catherine Clinton. Clinton’s is more sympathetic, but Baker acknowledges that Mary Lincoln suffered at the hands of her often well meaning but exasperated son. Jason Emerson’s resurrection of Myra Pritchard’s work helps scholars understand the nuances of Mary Lincoln’s family and social relationships, but the work is best used in conjunction with one of the existing biographies. Still, Civil War historians and Lincoln biographers will find useful primary source material in Pritchard’s book.

Miles Smith
Texas Christian University
Claiming Lincoln: Progressivism, Equality, and the Battle for Lincoln’s Legacy in Presidential Rhetoric

Jason R. Jividen

Jason Jividen’s Claiming Lincoln adds to the growing subfield of what might be termed Lincoln memory studies: books that examine the various ways subsequent generations of Americans have manipulated Lincoln’s legacy and image. Jividen focuses on five presidents—Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Barack Obama—all fairly identified as liberals/Progressives who tried in various ways to connect his administration’s policies to Lincoln. Jividen is especially interested in how these presidents used Lincoln’s ideas about social and economic justice to legitimize their own particular political agendas. “American politicians’ attempts to appropriate the Lincoln image have often turned on an appeal to the American promise of equality,” Jividen points out, and they “have claimed to continue Lincoln’s unfinished work in the name of the American promise” (3). But in doing so, they misunderstood and distorted Lincoln’s legacy. “U.S. presidents and presidential candidates appealed rhetorically to the Lincoln image,” Jividen argues, “only to mischaracterize and distort his understanding of equality in the process” (5).

Jividen rests his argument on a thorough examination of exactly what Abraham Lincoln said about equality; he finds a set of Lincolnian ideas about the subject that lie on a different ideological plane than the ideas of his Progressive successors. According to Jividen, Lincoln embraced a theory of equality that envisioned allowing individual Americans the personal liberty necessary to maximize their talents, but one that was also rooted in what Jividen terms Lincoln’s “realistic view of the human condition.” “Recognizing the imperfections of an unchanging human nature,” Jividen argues, Lincoln followed the Founders’ thinking in his “understanding of equality [and] did not seek to eliminate the natural inequalities between human beings but, rather, sought to compromise with these inequalities in the best manner possible” (23).

This point of view was entirely different from the five Progressive presidents. According to Jividen each in his own way misread and
misused Lincoln to bolster a much more open-ended definition of equality of condition than Lincoln would ever have countenanced, a definition transcending immutable human differences and in some cases the legal/constitutional system itself. Lyndon Johnson, for example, approvingly cited Lincoln’s legacy in his attempts to secure passage of the 1964 Civil Rights and his Great Society legislative agenda, all of which aimed, in Jividen’s words, to achieve an “equality of results” and “abolish racial injustice entirely” (136, 140). Such goals, Jividen writes, stood at odds with Lincoln’s inherent prudence, his sense of political and constitutional realities, and above all his abiding understanding of the limitations of human beings in an imperfect world.

“Lincoln’s thought and the basic tenets of American Progressivism are incompatible” (97), Jividen flatly states. He tends to somewhat exaggerate the point, ignoring potential commonalities between modern American liberalism and some of Lincoln’s more expansive statements about the Declaration of Independence, as well as Lincoln’s quite “progressive” (for his day) embrace of Radical Republican politics during his last months in the White House. But on the whole Jividen’s argument is sound enough: Abraham Lincoln was not a “progressive” in the modern sense, and the five presidents Jividen examines did cut and paste Lincoln’s words and ideas to fit their own particular needs, often without taking into account Lincoln’s own intentions or the significant differences of context between their times and his.

But what are we to do with this information? A meticulous and careful scholar of both Lincoln’s ideas and various subtle nuances of American political thought, Jividen proves these presidents were neither meticulous nor careful in their treatment of Lincoln. Nor were they scholars; they were politicians, and as such saw Lincoln as a handy political tool. They did not bring a scholar’s level of sophistication to the task. This being the case, one wonders what exactly Jividen wishes his readers to take away from his exhaustive vivisection of these presidents and their mangling of Lincoln’s thought. Indignation? Perhaps. But as a serious scholar of American political history Jividen must surely realize that such distortions are not the exclusive domain of Progressives, presidents, or even politicians. At bottom, Jividen is holding politicians to a scholar’s standards. This is not entirely realistic or fair.

Brian Dirck
Anderson University
After all this time, do historians still misunderstand the Populists? Apparently so, for in recent years the literature on the People’s Party has undergone a significant transformation. Richard Hofstadter’s seminal analysis of Populism framed the movement as the expression of rural communities’ “status anxiety” in an age of rapid urbanization and industrialization, and portrayed its ideology as fundamentally illiberal, anti-modern, and parochial. Even later historians more sympathetic to the movement have understood it as largely agricultural. But more recent scholarship has recognized the party’s appeal to urban laborers; these historians have portrayed the Populists as progressive-minded reformers rather than backward-looking reactionaries. Michael Pierce’s *Striking with the Ballot* fits within this more recent strain of historiography; he argues that in Ohio, Populism was an urban rather than rural movement and that the Populist Party exerted significant influence over the state’s political evolution. “Ohio’s labor-Populists sought to reconcile their needs with modern industry and production methods,” asserts Pierce, “and helped foster reforms that are associated with modern America” (236).

A Populism based on agrarian radicalism, Pierce demonstrates, never gained much traction in Ohio. The key to explaining this peculiarity, Pierce argues, lies in the single-party dominance of regions where Populism held greatest appeal: the South (Democratic) and Midwestern plains states (Republican). In these areas, Populism provided the only feasible reform alternative to the dominant party. In states with more vigorous two-party systems, Populism gained fewer votes from farmers because competing parties frequently co-opted Populist ideas, and thus the votes of those sympathetic to the Populist platform but unwilling to “waste” a vote on an unviable movement went to the major parties. Ohio Populism rose to relevance when the political and economic crises of the 1890s shook Ohio’s cities, particularly Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. Pierce demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of local politics in each city and demonstrates how key crisis moments—an 1893 streetcar strike in Columbus, for example—unmasked the major parties’ mutual loyalty.
to business interests and drove trade unionists to Populism. These urban-based workers rallied behind the party’s 1892 Omaha platform, which espoused goals such as a graduated income tax, limits on working hours, nationalization of railroads, and direct legislation through initiative and referendum. The strength of the alliance between Ohio labor and the People’s Party facilitated the election of John McBride, the state’s leading Populist, as president of the American Federation of Labor in 1894.

In the same year, however, the alliance between labor and the People’s party began to crumble. While the party saw dramatic gains in the 1894 state elections, a wave of labor unrest—the Pullman strikes, the United Mine Workers’ push for a nationwide coal work stoppage, and Ohio Populist Jacob Coxey’s march on Washington—worried the business community and shifted public opinion against the strikers. Fearing that an association with radicalism would damage their political fortunes, Populist leaders at the national level distanced themselves from labor and denounced their “socialist” ideals. This choice, Pierce argues, helps explain the party’s subsequent rapid demise.

While the People’s Party never succeeded in taking the reins of Ohio government, Pierce asserts that Populists markedly shaped the state’s labor movement. Even after McBride ceded leadership of the AFL to Samuel Gompers in 1895, the union’s conservative “pure and simple” unionism found only tepid support from the state’s urban labor base; Populism’s ideology of producerism fostered a persistent suspicion of corporate capitalism among the state’s workers. Indeed, later political reforms, particularly the Progressive-led rewriting of the Ohio constitution in 1912, achieved the bulk of the Populist agenda. The thirty-four amendments ratified that year included many longstanding goals of the labor-Populist alliance: a minimum wage provision, increases in the state legislature’s regulatory power over business, workmen’s compensation, and direct legislation.

Inexplicably, Pierce leaves largely unexamined the issue of immigration and its impact on Ohio’s labor-Populists. The 1892 Omaha Platform’s preamble lamented the effect of “imported pauperized labor” on urban workers’ wages and its list of sentiments condemned the current national immigration policy, which “opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world and crowds out our wage-earners.” One wonders whether nativism served as a common ideology that attracted urban workers facing an influx of immigrant competition to Populism. In what ways did the different demographic trends of Cleveland (which attracted many immigrants in the 1890s) and Cincinnati (which did not) shape the appeal and influence of Populism? Perhaps the answer is elusive, but Pierce’s argument rests on the parallels between the Omaha Platform and the political objectives of Ohio’s labor movement. The reader is left to wonder whether Pierce has not overlooked an undercurrent of rather conservative nativism that may have also facilitated the alliance. At any rate, the issue deserves significantly more attention than it receives here.

But this is a rare oversight in an otherwise meticulously researched and sophisticated analysis. Beyond the goal of enriching Populist historiography, Pierce’s study demonstrates “the centrality of the labor movement to the American reform tradition” (236). In a time when labor unionism in Ohio and the nation is in steady decline, Striking the Ballot raises compelling questions about the implications of that tradition’s survival.

Aaron Cowan
Slippery Rock University
Frank L. McVey and the University of Kentucky: A Progressive President and the Modernization of a Southern University
Eric A. Moyen

The rise of the modern American research university remains a central point of inquiry for historians of education. Scholarly interest in the subject is understandable. The story of America’s educational paradigm shift—from the denominationally controlled, socially privileged small colleges of the nineteenth century to the democratically principled, publicly funded universities of the twentieth—is often inspiring, sometimes disheartening, but always enlightening and infinitely fascinating. Eric A. Moyen’s biography of Frank McVey, president of the University of Kentucky (UK) from 1909 to 1940, humanizes and contextualizes the subject in ways no single institutional history could. Moyen makes use of a dizzying array of source materials in his defining account of McVey’s transformational career. He deftly combines seemingly disparate pieces of evidence—love letters, newspaper extracts, anecdotal stories, and excerpts from McVey’s personal journal—with hundreds of official and unofficial records. The effect is a lavish, three-dimensional portrait, not merely of a university president, but of a man, an institution, and an emerging national ideal.

The work follows a strict chronology divided among seven distinct periods. McVey’s early life, childhood, education, and years spent as president of the University of North Dakota comprise the opening chapter; the remainder focuses on McVey’s thirty-one-year career as president of UK. Moyen places special emphasis throughout on McVey’s evolving progressive agenda. His work as an economist, participation in civic organizations, and deeply held spiritual convictions produced his complicated blend of progressive values and conservative tendencies. McVey saw the university as an asset to the state of Kentucky, a means of raising the intellectual standards of its citizens and the commercial capacities of its industries. But his vision required massive financial outlays: money to increase the size of UK’s physical plant, the quality of its matriculates, the productivity of its faculty, and the scope of its mandate as the state’s flagship university.

McVey dedicated his career to these ends. As the leader of Kentucky’s premier institution of
higher education, he felt justified in pressing for the same advantages won by other state institutions. The state legislatures and tax plans of North Carolina, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana all contributed vastly higher sums to their flagship universities; McVey sought only to bring parity to his adopted home. To this end, McVey courted private donors, pressured state legislators, cajoled and politicked Kentucky’s governors, and took his educational vision directly to the people, one year traversing over six thousand miles of Kentucky roads in order to give public speeches in defense of his vision. McVey found his efforts to increase funding all the more difficult because of increased competition from Kentucky’s regional institutions and normal schools, all of which desired a larger piece of the state-funding pie. His efforts paid off. Increased state appropriations and private donations allowed for the construction of over thirty campus structures, agricultural experiment stations in western and eastern Kentucky, an improved rate of retention and recruitment of faculty (through increased salaries), a host of new academic departments and colleges, and countless other reforms.

But Moyen presents another side to McVey: the university president who allowed UK’s campus and curriculum to expand without an efficient plan of development; who suppressed academic freedom; who twice rejected proposals for a medical college; who worked against the inclusion of minorities in higher education; and who argued for the complete cessation of UK’s athletic programs. Although Moyen makes no attempt to disguise these unsavory features of McVey’s professional life, he certainly downplays statements and actions that contradicted the more favorable aspects of the president’s “progressive” ideology in order to present a positive portrait. Less problematic but equally distracting are Moyen’s organizational decisions. The richness and breadth of available source materials gives his larger points of analysis great focus, but it also leads him to lengthy and unnecessary digressions. Detailed yearly financial statements, specifics of individual campus building projects, administrative records related to extension projects such as the E. O. Robinson Mountain Fund, and the internecine political battles within the colleges of Agriculture and Engineering are treated in too much detail and detract from the central ideas of the text.

These obstacles do not, however, lessen the impact or detract from the importance of Moyen’s study. The McVey era was indeed transformational for UK. Moyen’s lucid account of these years touches on scores of topics unique to Kentucky, from the rising preeminence of Adolph Rupp to the hard fought battles over the teaching of evolution. But McVey was also a major figure among southern university presidents; thus, his life and career provides a compelling if unfamiliar vantage from which to view national trends within American institutions of higher education.

James P. Cousins
Western Michigan University
In Derelict Paradise, Daniel R. Kerr explores the history of homelessness in Cleveland from the end of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 to the early twenty-first century. The book fills a gap in the historiography of American cities by situating homelessness firmly within the context of the rise and decline of American downtowns, inner-city neighborhoods, and industries. Kerr argues pointedly that homelessness was not only advantageous to city leaders’ vision for what the city should be but also part of their strategy for achieving their vision. He connects homelessness to the destruction of affordable housing and provides sustained analysis of how the “unhoused” resisted those in power and carved out autonomous spaces where they could exercise some control over their own lives. Moreover, he contends that the city’s elite, many of whom directed major industrial firms, also constrained public- and private-sector responses to homelessness through their control of charitable organizations and reliance on employment agencies to deliver the most desperate class of workers to their plants and mills. Kerr’s carefully constructed account draws on an impressive range of archival and newspaper sources and at times provides a strident rebuke of most aspects of American urban development since the Second Industrial Revolution.

Kerr advances some important even novel insights. The notion of the “undeserving” poor has long constrained charity work. Kerr’s examination of the Associated Charities’ use of the woodlot as a screening procedure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the persistence of the longstanding practice of subjecting the homeless to high levels of surveillance to contain them, makes a compelling case for a long thread connecting early charity movements and more modern public-private methods of institutionalizing homelessness. He also demonstrates that although leaders failed to create a large middle-class zone to connect downtown and the suburbs, they succeeded in removing nearly all truly affordable housing through decades of municipal demolition campaigns and private sector-driven housing projects that revised ever upward the metrics of affordability.
In the process, they pushed city housing out of the reach of those who most depended on low-cost homes. Perhaps Kerr’s most stunning discovery is that the damage wrought by arson in the 1970s, coupled with ongoing demolition, did far more damage to the city’s housing stock than two race riots in the 1960s. Beyond its sheer originality, Derelict Paradise easily offers the best chronicle of the many plans for downtown and housing redevelopment in twentieth-century Cleveland.

Kerr’s book will have lasting value that cuts across several subfields of history and the social sciences, but it is not without flaws. First, his repeated assertions that Cleveland leaders sought to make downtown into “a leisure resort for the well-to-do” (59) often give readers the wrong impression. Until the 1980s civic leaders’ primarily focused on trade shows, industrial expositions, and regional and national conventions. Kerr’s repeated characterization of downtown as an elite “playground” may reflect his decision to emphasize the homeless as producers (typically underemployed) and the city’s affluent leaders as consumers of leisure. Second, in making urban pro-growth coalitions bear the brunt of responsibility for homelessness, Kerr makes a range of civic leaders complicit in a conspiracy with control of the impoverished the driving force rather than a fringe benefit. In focusing so heavily on leaders’ pervasive methods of social control, he may unduly diminish the role of mental illness, substance abuse, and other personal problems in homelessness, although great value lies in bringing previously neglected explanations to the fore. Third, Kerr argues convincingly that a local focus best reveals social relations, but he also misses opportunities to connect Cleveland to developments in other cities. How typical was Cleveland’s history of urban development and homelessness? Readers could turn to Kenneth Kusmer’s Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History (2002) to situate Cleveland’s history of homelessness, but Kerr might have drawn more comparisons. His fascinating consideration of arson also begs the question of whether it played a similarly important role in reshaping other postwar American cities. Finally, and possibly a reflection of the publisher’s need for economy, Derelict Paradise is frustratingly opaque in its documentation, withholding much potentially revealing information about both newspaper and archival sources.

Kerr helps us understand the inseparability of industrialists, downtown boosters, city government, charitable organizations, and employment agencies—all with something to gain from homelessness as long as they could leverage or contain the un-housed. The efforts of Cleveland leaders to expand downtown to attract offices and conventions, revitalize neighborhoods amid a population exodus, and redress the city’s relatively high labor costs to retain manufacturing were not entirely misguided, but Derelict Paradise instills a heightened appreciation of the social costs (not to mention the ineffectiveness) not only of charitable initiatives but also of both growth policies and responses to decline.

Mark Souther
Cleveland State University
Angene and Jack Wilson have provided historians with a valuable service. Between 2004 and 2008, they collected the oral histories of eighty-four returned Peace Corps volunteers. The collective experience of the volunteers they interviewed spanned the entire existence of the Corps to date, from the early 1960s to the first decade of the twenty-first century, and represented service in more than fifty countries. The Wilsons, themselves both Peace Corps veterans, conducted the interviews in concert with the University of Kentucky’s Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, where future historians will no doubt find the collection crucial to understanding social movements and the social aspects of foreign policy in the post-1945 United States. *Voices from the Peace Corps*, which more closely resembles an edited volume of oral history interviews than a monograph, represents the Wilsons’ own attempt to distill their interviews into a narrative of Kentuckians’ participation in the Peace Corps. Condensing the chronologically and spatially diverse experiences of the interviewees represented in this book into a cohesive narrative would be a daunting task for even the most graceful authors. Unfortunately, the Wilsons do not quite succeed. Although their enthusiasm for their topic and compassion toward their interviewees is obvious and their content is often compelling, the book often suffers from questionable organization and presentation.

There is merit in some of the organizational choices the Wilsons make. At the book level, for instance, the Wilsons arrange their content in an intriguing and effective fashion. They divide the chapters thematically, in an order that mimics the experience of a Peace Corps volunteer. Topics include volunteers’ motivations for joining the Corps, training, the difficulties of learning to live and work in a different culture, and the lasting impact of the Corps experience on volunteers’ notions of themselves and the global community. The progression of themes, from motivation to legacy of service, allows the Wilsons to present the Peace Corps experience as something that is simultaneously personal and shared by multiple people across space and time. Some chapters demonstrate how different the experience was for volunteers depending on the period of time and country in

**Voices from the Peace Corps**: *Fifty Years of Kentucky Volunteers*

Angene Wilson and Jack Wilson.

which they served. For instance, later volunteers remember being motivated more by the ways in which volunteering boosted their marketability to employers, and somewhat less by the idealism that inspired earlier volunteers. Similarly, variations in living conditions, training, and cultural adjustment become clear as volunteers from different decades and host countries discuss their experiences. At other times, however, the experiences recounted by volunteers seem so similar that they become repetitive. Excerpts in some chapters, such as in the chapter “Getting In,” seem to have been included merely because they depicted a different period or point of view, rather than because they offered any new insight into the volunteer experience.

The Wilsons’ organization at the chapter level, however, is much less effective. Other works of collected oral histories, such as Remembering Jim Crow (2001) by William Chafe and others, and Catherine Fosl and Tracy E. K’Meyer’s Freedom on the Border (2009), have successfully navigated the difficult task of presenting a collection of oral histories by utilizing a clear organizational style. Generally, this involves author-written introductions to each chapter, followed by excerpts that illustrate the chapter’s themes. Here, the Wilsons intersperse their commentary among their excerpts almost haphazardly. Each chapter begins with excerpts from interviews with six volunteers across five decades, followed by additional excerpts and summaries of interviewees’ comments on the key themes of the chapter. Sometimes, the Wilsons present excerpts in paragraph quotation; other times they present them as blocked text. The result is not so much confusing as jarringly without momentum. Most unfortunate, the effect distracts the reader from the interviews, the true stars of the book. The Wilsons would have served their material better by allowing more of the interviews to stand on their own, apart from the editorial voice.

Regardless of the book’s shortcomings, historians of Kentucky, twentieth-century social movements, and U.S. foreign policy should be grateful to the Wilsons for the oral histories they have conducted. Future scholars who seek to study the Peace Corps as an organization or a phenomenon will likely benefit from the Wilsons’ interviews. General readers interested in the Peace Corps will no doubt find Voices from the Peace Corps an instructive and enjoyable read. Historians intrigued by the relationship between the complex web of post-1945 social movements and Cold War foreign policy of which the Peace Corps was an integral part, however, should consult the source material that stands as the Wilsons’ most welcome and significant contribution.

Jonathon Free
Duke University
A Day in Pompeii Exhibition
Opens March 2

On August 24, 79 A.D., Mount Vesuvius erupted for the first time in seventeen hundred years with a force ten times more powerful than the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. For the next two thousand years, the people of Pompeii and all of their treasures, tools, and daily items were lost, preserved by the same volcano that destroyed them.

Cincinnati Museum Center’s blockbuster exhibition, A Day in Pompeii brings together more than two hundred fifty artifacts to tell the story of life in Pompeii as it was before time stopped. Thirteen wall-sized frescos, gold coins and jewelry, marble and bronze statuary join body casts of the volcano’s victims, eerily preserved in their final moments. Rarely has an ancient city been found so complete and intact, free from centuries of change and modernization. That makes A Day in Pompeii a must-see.

TICKET INFORMATION
Individual tickets for A Day in Pompeii are $19.50 for adults and $12.50 for children. Tickets for Cincinnati Museum Center Members are $12.50 for adults and $8.50 for children. Discounts are available for groups of fifteen or more. To complement the exhibition, we recommend picking up an audio tour for $4 ($3 for members). Visit cincymuseum.org or call (513) 287-7021 for more information and to make your reservations.

Double Lamp Stand, Bronze, Pompeii.
This stand represents three branches with a centaur in the middle. In his right hand is a scythe; his left hand is now empty. The two discs supported by the tree branches would have held lamps, probably also made of bronze.