

The Filson

A publication of The Filson Historical Society, a privately-supported historical society dedicated to preserving the history of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley Region.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Filsonians,

All of us need heroines and heroes, particularly at this time in our nation's history. That is one reason I enjoy the Gertrude Polk Brown lectures so much. By the time you read this, we will have had Caroline Fraser lecture on August 11 on her critically acclaimed biography, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Then, on September 10, the Yale historian, David W. Blight, will lecture on his monumental biography: *Frederic Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. Pioneers and prophets for their times and ours, we have much to learn from them with a national election approaching. Both authors won Pulitzers for these works. We are grateful to Dace Brown Stubbs, Garvin Brown IV, Laura Lee Brown, Garvin Deters, Polk Deters and Laura Lee Gastis for their generous support.

I've now been at the Filson since March 1, 2019. I'm really pleased with the progress we've been able to make in any number of areas, including our new website which allows virtually one-stop shopping for research, recorded lectures, and event registration. This is due to our talented staff, our excellent board, and your generosity! We stick to our knitting: preserving, collecting and telling the stories of Kentucky and Ohio Valley history. With the Pandemic, we simply have had to do so in new ways that have stretched all of us. With the racial disparities that we confront as a society, we have an institutional calling to listen and learn from communities that have been historically marginalized. I plan to use our national election as a time for serious reflection on the American dream. That dream rests on an educated citizenry of pioneers and prophets, grounded in our nation's history. Thank you for being one of those citizens!

Sincerely,



Richard H.C. Clay

President/CEO, The Filson Historical Society

FROM THE CHAIR

As I wrote in my last letter, I hope that you and your family are healthy and are successfully weathering this COVID-19 storm. In spite of the promising reports about the tremendous progress being made in the development of vaccines and therapeutics, it seems that we will have to endure this "new normal" for more months to come. We must continue to be vigilant, follow the guidelines, wear masks, and socially distance.

All of us have good reasons to complain about how the virus has impacted/disrupted our lives and businesses. Most of us know individuals who have had the virus...and we mourn those who sadly have succumbed. Nevertheless, it is important that we be positive and focus on what we can do. We must be thankful for those options and opportunities. At the Filson, advanced technology has enabled us to continue with a robust menu of virtual programming. We have been so impressed with our attendance and have reached new audiences across the nation and even in a few foreign countries! We launched our new website at www.filsonhistorical.org on June 1. If you haven't done so, we encourage you to visit. We are confident that you will find it easier to access our resources and content. The new web page also permits enhanced access via mobile devices. Members of our staff who need to be on campus started to return on a staggered, socially distanced basis on July 1. Other employees, whose positions don't require physical attendance, continue to work remotely and have proven to be very productive. Staff morale remains high as they juggle their careers and family duties in these challenging circumstances. The Board of Directors and our board committees have been able to conduct business via video conferences. I have been so impressed with everyone's positive spirit and willingness to adapt and be creative.

We are so appreciative of our members' and donors' support for the Filson. We are working hard to nurture those relationships and cultivate new ones. Please be mindful of opportunities to recommend Filson memberships to your colleagues, family and friends. Filson memberships also make wonderful gifts for special occasions, birthdays, and holidays!

In closing, it has been an honor to have served as the Board Chair of The Filson for the past six years. My term concludes at the end of this year. We have been planning for this transition and will have announcements shortly. Much has been accomplished since 2014. Certainly, we have very important work ahead of us, particularly our mission to help our communities better understand the lessons of our past.



Carl M. Thomas, *Chairman of the Board*

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The Filson

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and story ideas.
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OUR MISSION:

To collect, preserve, and
tell the significant stories
of Kentucky and Ohio
Valley history and culture.

COVER: Aerial view of downtown Louisville during the 1937 Flood. The Hotel Henry Watterson was located on Walnut and 4th Streets. (Filson photograph collection, FLO-252)

The Filson Historical Society amends reopening plan

Out of an abundance of caution and considering the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in the region, the Filson Historical Society will not be opening for research appointments in September as planned.

Filson collections staff will continue to provide remote research services and work with patrons to meet their research needs. For more information about utilizing the Filson's collections remotely, please contact the Filson via phone at (502) 635-5083 or via email at research@filsonhistorical.org. Voicemails and emails will be returned in a timely manner.

To be added to a list of individuals interested in future research appointments, please email research@filsonhistorical.org with your name and contact information. This list is being maintained by Jennie Cole, Director of Collections Access. Online collections catalogues and resources are available on the Filson's website, filsonhistorical.org/collections.

All programming will continue to be held virtually until further notice. For a list of upcoming virtual events, please visit filsonhistorical.org/events.

The Filson anticipates resuming normal operations based on current protocols and recommendations from the CDC and the state of Kentucky on January 2, 2021. More information will be released in advance of this date.

Questions about the Filson's reopening plan should be directed to Emma Bryan via phone at (502) 635-5083 or by email at emmabryan@filsonhistorical.org.

The Filson is assisting with Change Today, Change Tomorrow on their #FeedtheWest initiative. The Filson is serving as a drop site every Monday from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm. Turn right onto the first drive off of 3rd Street after Ormsby Avenue, pull up to our Owsley Brown II History Center (third building on your left), and leave fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and other necessities! Contact Emma Bryan, emma-bryan@filsonhistorical.org with any questions.

#FeedTheWest

Grocery Need List

Canvas Bags/ Grocery Bags	Fresh and Frozen Meats
Small Boxes	Bread
Cases of Water	Single Serve Desserts
Organic Fruit	Hygiene Items - Period Products,
Organic Vegetables	Deodorant, Bar Soap,
Eggs	Shampoo/Conditioner,
Oatmeal - Variety Pack	Lotion, Toothbrushes,
Canned Goods	Toothpaste, ETC.

Drop Site Information

The Filson Historical Society on Mondays
from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM 1310 S. 3rd Street



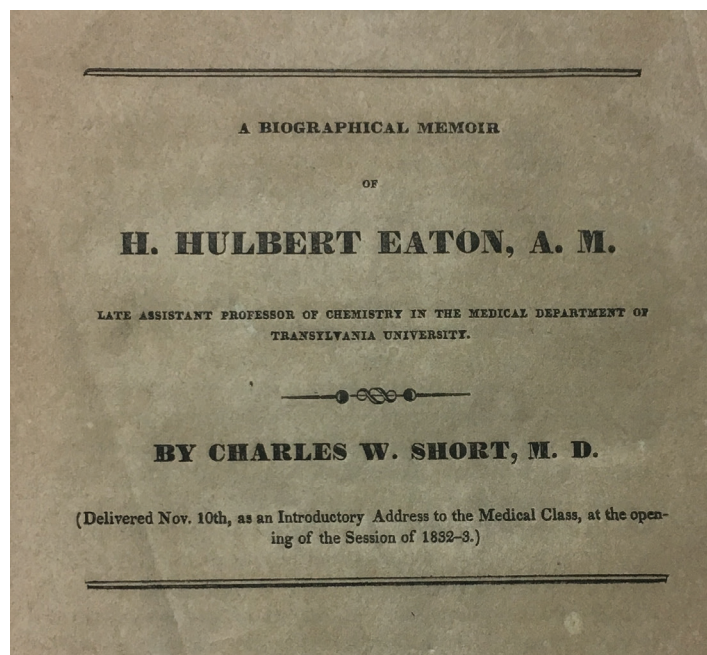
CHANGE-TODAY.ORG

Recent Acquisitions

The Filson has continued to add to its collection over the last several months despite the pandemic's disruption of normal operations. Whether meeting with donors while observing safety protocols or receiving material via the mails, desired additions have been added across all collection areas.



Mervin Aubespín with Nelson Mandela, no date (donated by Mervin Aubespín)



Biographical profile of fellow Transylvania Medical School professor H. Hulbert Eaton by Charles Wilkins Short, 1832 (donated by Hensley Peterson).



Former mayor Jerry Abramson meeting with Abby Glogower during the pandemic to donate a collection of his papers.



Portrait of Sallie Rudd Fetter Alexander by Peter Baumgras, 1858 (donated by Linda Scheffel).

COUNTRY LIFE WITHIN CITY REACH!

*The undersigned offers for sale, a
number of beautiful Lots in*

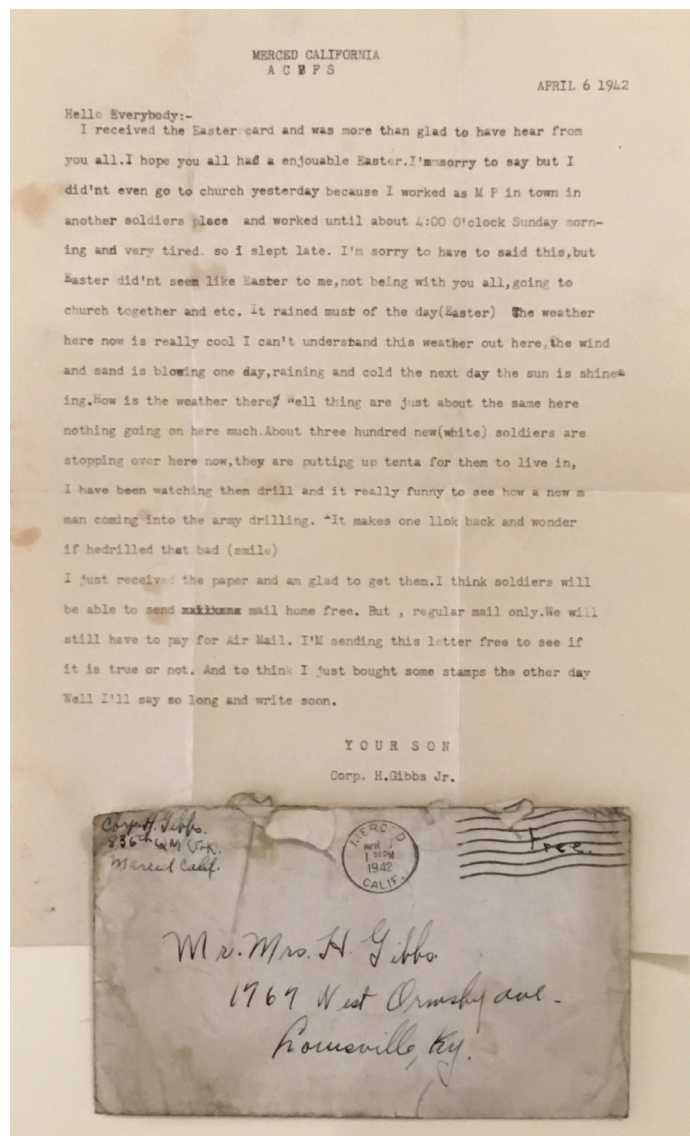
ANDALUSIA,

opposite the City of Louisville and near the Falls of the Ohio River.
This property is unsurpassed by any in the vicinity of Louisville for advantageous **GARDENING**, or delightful sub-urban **RESIDENCES**, by reason of its extreme richness of soil, its picturesque and beautiful location, and facility with which it can be reached, within thirty minutes, by the Jeffersonville, and New Albany Plank Road, on which it is situated, and about equi distant from those thriving cities, and in immediate proximity to their Rail Roads.

In full view of the Falls, and of all the delightful scenery surrounding them; this property offers such inducements to purchasers, as can be found nowhere on either side of the Ohio River.

Title indisputable and Terms made easy.
The Lots vary from 3 acres to 41²/₁₀₀ acres. Apply to
S. S. KENNEDY, General Agent,
5th Street, opposite Courthouse.

Broadside advertising the planned community of Andalusia at the Falls of the Ohio in Indiana, no date [ca. 1860] (donated by Marcella Johnson).



African American serviceman Herbert Gibbs, Jr.'s letter home to family while serving in the Army Air Force during World War II (donated by Roger Davis).



Dress by renowned Louisville designer Mary Cummings, no date [ca. early 1900s] (Historical Acquisition Fund).

Dinnie Thompson and the Sisters of the Mysterious Ten

BY JENNIE COLE, DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS ACCESS AND JANA MEYER, ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS

Prior to the mid-1800s, women's organizations were typically auxiliaries of men's groups or church-sponsored aid societies, and men usually controlled their direction and administration. However, by the 1860s, women began to establish groups under their own direction. Women's literary and civic clubs proliferated in the United States between the Civil War and World War II in what became known as the women's club movement. In 1890, a national umbrella organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), was founded to coordinate the clubs' activities. In the early 1900s, the GFWC was the largest national women's organization; its membership peaked in 1914 with 1.7 million women.

While white women organized en masse following the Civil War, the Black women's club movement did not gain momentum until the 1890s. In 1896, as southern white women resisted the inclusion of Black groups in the GFWC, middle-class Black women formed their own national organization, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Like their white counterparts, Black women's clubs were interested in education and self-improvement, but they placed an additional emphasis on racial pride and advancement. Many formed

in defense against lynching and had agendas that included efforts to uplift Black men.

The Sisters of the Mysterious Ten (SMT) was a Black women's benevolent society whose members supported one another and dedicated themselves to racial progress. The SMT was the sister organization of the United Brothers of Friendship (UBF), which formed in Louisville in 1861. The SMT and UBF expanded from Louisville, establishing their respective temples and lodges throughout the Midwest and as far south as Texas and west as California. In the 1890s, combined membership was around 250,000, making it the second largest Black fraternal organization in the country.¹

Members of the SMT were usually related to men in the UBF, though other women could be admitted upon recommendation. Applicants had to be of good moral character, between the ages of 15 and 45, and able to pass a medical exam, since the temple provided assistance in cases of illness or death. Members could be called on to nurse sick sisters and were expected to attend funeral ceremonies. The SMT and other Black women's clubs often bridged class barriers and concerned themselves with issues important to poor and working women. The SMT worked closely with children and was responsible

for running the juvenile department of the order. It was also instrumental in efforts to establish homes for widows and orphans.²

The Filson's collection includes a copy of the *Ladies' Book of the U.B.F.: Constitution, General Laws, By-laws, and rules of order, installation, funeral ceremonies and Ladies' book of the U.B.F.: Initiatory ceremony, ritual and lectures*, both published in 1880. These booklets were owned by a member of the SMT, Dinnie Thompson, and were donated to the Filson, along with an image of Thompson in her lodge uniform and her ceremonial sword. These items, along with research conducted by historian Pen Bogert, and a 1978 newspaper article, provide a personal glimpse at the life of one member of the SMT.³

Dinnie Thompson (1857-1939) was born into slavery in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1857. Her mother, Diana, and grandmother, Phyllis Thurston, were held in slavery at John Speed's plantation, Farmington. Diana was born in Kentucky in 1818, likely at Farmington. According to a deposition by James Speed during the division of John Speed's estate in 1840, the eldest Speed daughter, Mary, had "brought up and educated" Diana, and thus was allotted the 20-year-old Diana and her family (Ned, aged 27, Lot, aged 2, and Lydia,

¹ Butler, Anne S. "Fraternal and Benevolent Societies in Nineteenth-Century America" in *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and Vision* (University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 81-83.

² Butler, 81-83.

³ United Brothers of Friendship, *Ladies' book of the U.B.F. : Initiatory Ceremony, Ritual and Lectures* (Louisville, KY: Ohio Falls Express Printing, 1880); *Ladies' Book of the U.B.F.: Constitution, General Laws, By-Laws, and Rules of Order Installation, Funeral Ceremonies* (Louisville, KY: Ohio Falls Express Printing, 1880); Bogert, Pen, Research on enslaved people at Farmington, Historic Homes – KY – Jefferson Co. – Farmington – African Americans, Filson Historical Society Historical File; and "Slavery in Louisville," *Louisville Times*, 23 September 1978

18 months) as Mary Speed's enslaved portion from her father's estate.⁴

What happened to Diana Thompson's family is currently unknown, as the names of the enslaved people held by Mary L. Speed were not listed in census or tax records. Mary left Farmington and moved to live in the city of Louisville with family in 1845 and did not emancipate her enslaved people until 1864 or 1865. The 1860 Federal Census Slave Schedule indicates that Mary Speed owned a 38-year-old Black female (likely Diana), a 28-year-old Black female (unknown), a 5-year-old Black male (unknown), and a three-year-old Black female (likely Dinnie). After the Civil War and emancipation, "Diana Thompson" is listed in census and city directories as the "widow of Spencer Thompson." Diana's employment on the 1870 and 1880 Federal Census records is given as housekeeper and "keeping house." Jefferson County Deed records show Diana Thompson buying a house at 437 Roselane Street, from Joshua Fry Speed in 1885. Diana Thompson died in March 1895 and left her estate to her daughter, Dinnie.⁵

From 1889 through the 1920s, Dinnie Thompson worked as a laundress or domestic in private households. In the 1920s, she was the upstairs maid at Neighborhood House, a settlement home on First Street in Louisville. There she met a young social worker, Elizabeth Arterburn Wilson, who reminisced about their relationship in an article on slavery in Louisville for the *Louisville Times*, published 23 September 1978. Wilson described an initially fraught relationship with Thompson, due to Wilson's descent from the Arterburn family, notorious Louisville slave traders. Thompson informed Wilson that her mother had attempted escape from the Speeds many times with her in tow but was always caught and returned through the Arterburn slave pens. Wilson described



Dinnie Thompson, ca. 1900-1925, Filson Photograph Collection [PC200.0013].
Knights of Friendship ceremonial sword and scabbard, engraved "Dinnie Thompson" ca. 1915,
Filson Museum Collection [1954.5.3].

4 Bogert, Historic Homes – KY – Jefferson Co. – Farmington – African Americans, FHS Historical File.

5 Bogert, Historic Homes – KY – Jefferson Co. – Farmington – African Americans, FHS Historical File.

FUNERAL CEREMONY.

*At church, after the funeral sermon, the following service will be performed by the Temple. W. P. seated at head of corpse, V. P. at foot. Members seated as near in circle as possible around corpse. * * * Members rise, then the W. P. says:*

"In hope of the resurrection and eternal life we commit to the ground the body of our deceased sister. Out of the earth was it taken, to the earth shall it return."
V. P., The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Members respond, Amen! Amen! Amen! (Right hand on heart.)

SONG.

(Air: Auld Lang Syne, or C. M.)

Her gentle hand and yielding heart
Shall grace this world no more;
She chose the true and better part
Her Savior chose before.
The cross its precious load has borne,
The grave concealed its prey,
But in her triumph she has won—
We cast all tears away.

This wicked world can scarcely spare
Jewels so rich and few,
But she, most excellent and fair,
So generous and so true.
She in departing, left the earth,
A pattern of true faith;
Although a life of matchless worth,
Yet worthier was her death.

PRAYER.

Chaplain.—O merciful and loving father, who hath made our present lives but temporary, and hast decreed that the sorrows we endure shall not be perpetual. We thank Thee for a knowledge of Thy existence, and that the grave is not the end of our lives. Pity and forgive the errors of the living, so that the evil consequences of sin may not follow them when they appear before Thy bar. Aid, O Lord, we beseech Thee, these mourning friends, to feel that the ties of friendship are not broken by the power of death. Aid us in doing our duties toward the living. Comfort us in our sorrows, and take us at last to Thyself in Heaven to dwell with thee forever more. Amen.

If time will permit, members take a last view of the corpse.
W. P.—Sisters and Brethren, we have viewed our dear sister for the last time on this earth; let us so live and govern all our actions, that when we, like her, are called from this world, we may hear the welcome summons: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

AT THE GRAVE.

W. P., or some competent member selected by her.—Sisters and Brethren, we are now assembled around the grave to deposit the mortal remains of our dear departed Sister. She has yielded to the victor, whom none can resist, and entered into the sleep that knows no waking.

W. P.—Help, Lord, for the faithful fall.
Response.—Help us, O Lord.

V. P.—"The Lord redeemeth the souls of His servants, and none that trust in him shall be desolate."

Response.—Redeem us, O Lord.

W. P.—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment."

Response.—"In the twinkling of an eye."

V. P.—"Blessed are the pure in heart."

Response.—"For they shall see God."

W. P.—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, and inherit the kingdom."

Response.—Come ye blessed.

V. P.—Shall our Sister's name and virtues be ever kept in our hearts and minds?

Response three times, raising right hand to head.—We will ever remember, (bring hand to breast) and cherish them in our hearts, (let hand fall to side.)

W. P.—"I heard a voice from Heaven saying: 'Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, even so sayeth the spirit, for they rest from their labors.'"

*Members then pass round the grave dropping in a white lily or a sprig of evergreen, saying: "I deposit this flower in the grave as my last token of respect." * * * * **
(A hymn is then sung, while the grave is being filled. After which Benediction by Chaplain or attending minister. Members will then disband.)

Compiled and revised by

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Funeral Ceremony, from *Ladies' Book of the U.B.F.: Constitution, General Laws, By-Laws, and Rules of Order Installation, Funeral Ceremonies, 1880*, Filson Library Collection [Rare Pamphlet 366 U58s 1880].

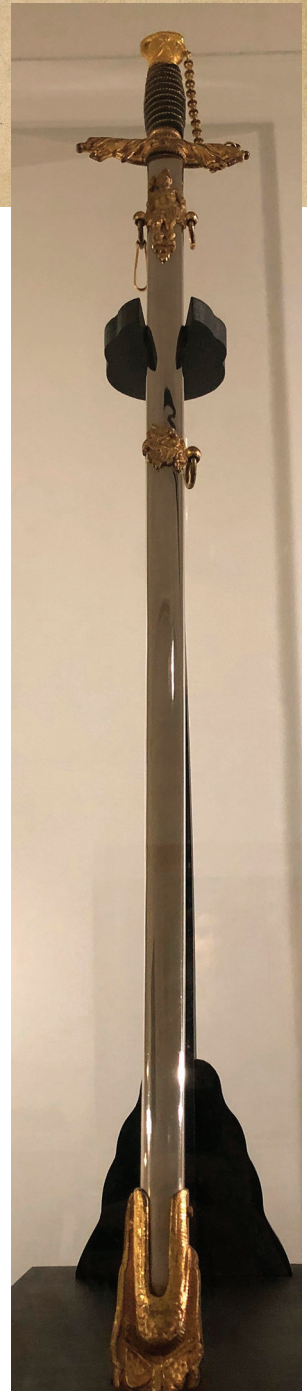
Dinnie and Diana Thompson's feelings for the Speed family as a love-hate relationship, stating "Dinnie always revered them – but she [Diana] also wanted to be free." Wilson described sewing Thompson a "costume for a ball given by a fraternal organization," which could have been the Sisterhood of the Mysterious Ten and the costume Thompson wears in the image in the Filson's collection. Wilson remembered, "She was an individualist of the first order. I don't want that to sound patronizing or paternalistic. Dinnie

Thompson invented women's lib long before Betty Friedan."⁶

In the SMT, Thompson, who never married, likely found a social support network and opportunities to do charitable work. In the Knights of Friendship, a related branch of the organization, she participated in patriotic demonstrations and competitive drills and was given a sword engraved with her name. Dinnie Thompson died 7 March 1939 and was buried in Eastern Cemetery, in the lot of St. Mary's Temple #2, Sisters of the Mysterious Ten.⁷

6 Bogert, Historic Homes – KY – Jefferson Co. – Farmington – African Americans, FHS and "Slavery in Louisville," *Louisville Times*, 23 September 1978

7 Bogert, Historic Homes – KY – Jefferson Co. – Farmington – African Americans, FHS Historical File.



COVID-19 Update

How the Filson is utilizing grant funds to enhance the virtual experience

At the beginning of 2020, no one could have imagined how this year would turn out. In late February, the novel coronavirus started making waves in the news, and by March 14, the Filson closed its doors to the public. Staff switched to a completely remote work environment, and work began to postpone all in-person programming through the end of the year. It quickly became apparent that the coronavirus was not going anywhere soon, so in response, the Filson began offering programming virtually via Zoom, an online, cloud-based platform, free of charge to the public.

In addition to moving all programming to a virtual platform, the Filson launched an updated website on June 1, which features a “Bringing History Home” page with activities for all ages. These activities include digital exhibits, educational activities, and access to recordings of our past lectures. Lectures are now posted on YouTube after the live recording has ended.

All in-person research at the Filson was also suspended in early March. In lieu of in-person research, the collections department has been working remotely to add more content digitally. Twenty-nine collections and 14 exhibits are now available online and content is being added weekly. The Filson is locally and nationally renowned for its contributions to Ohio Valley history. The collections at the Filson document the lives of people in the Ohio River Valley from early European settlement through the 20th century.

Since the pandemic, the Filson has seen an increase in exposure to its collections related to previous pandemics and our work during the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has put the Filson in a unique position to reach populations both inside and outside our traditional geographic boundaries. Our new approach has taken this moment of crisis and allowed staff to pivot to new forms of engagement that provide exciting paths for the organization to explore in the future, while leveraging its more than 130 years of history, reputation, and connections.

Because of the unique needs that the Filson fulfills, we have applied for and received the following Covid-19-related grants in 2020:

- Kentucky Humanities Council CARES grant*—General operating support, subaward of Federal money from the National Endowment for the Humanities as appropriated by Congress.
- Delta Dental of Kentucky Foundation—Operating funds to help defray costs of staff switching to remote work environment. This relief fund committed \$1.7 million to Kentucky non-profits who serve communities in the Commonwealth, even if they were outside the Foundation’s normal funding priorities
- Fund for the Arts Cultural Lou Recovery Grant—provides mission-based operating support to charitable arts and culture organizations whose programming supports the priorities of Imagine Greater Louisville 2020 in order to ensure the Filson’s ongoing capacity to drive community impact.

The Filson’s access to all communities and neighborhoods is continuing to grow. With all our content and programs free to the public through the rest of the year and possibly into 2021, more diverse and broad communities from across the region and nation can access our shared history. As schools juggle the uncertainties of traditional in-person learning experiences and switch to more virtual settings and nontraditional instruction, the Filson has an opportunity to share more resources and collaborate with educators.

* This project is partially funded by Kentucky Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or Kentucky Humanities.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



KENTUCKY
HUMANITIES



 DELTA DENTAL

“A Stranded Crew on a Desert Island”

The Hotel Henry Watterson during the 1937 Flood

BY HANNAH COSTELLE | RESEARCH SPECIALIST

On January 25, 1937, Richard Hansen, manager of the Hotel Henry Watterson in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, sent a letter to Colonel Smith of the U.S. Army: “Conditions of sanitation and order in our hotel are such that military supervision in aid of the hotel management has become imperative. It is our opinion that martial law should be declared immediately.”¹ Two days later, Hansen sent a telegram to his boss: “Conditions better than expected. Order and health of hotel population as well as food condition for the next ten days all right.”²

At the end of January 1937, a great flood brought the Ohio River streaming into the streets and homes of Louisville. In a matter of hours, the Hotel Henry Watterson,

a 10-story, 250-room high-rise on Walnut Street, became a refuge camp for hundreds of Louisvillians looking for relief from the rising waters. Their experience over the next week and half is documented in a small collection of papers in the Filson’s manuscript collection.

In his written account of how the hotel survived the flood, Hansen stated: “On Friday, January 22, there was a great inrush of refugees, from the West End especially, and the house was filled to capacity within two hours.”³ He wrote that on the first day of the crisis, rooms intended for two were packed with six or eight people—and in one room, fourteen. Hansen and the few staff members not stranded in other parts of the city

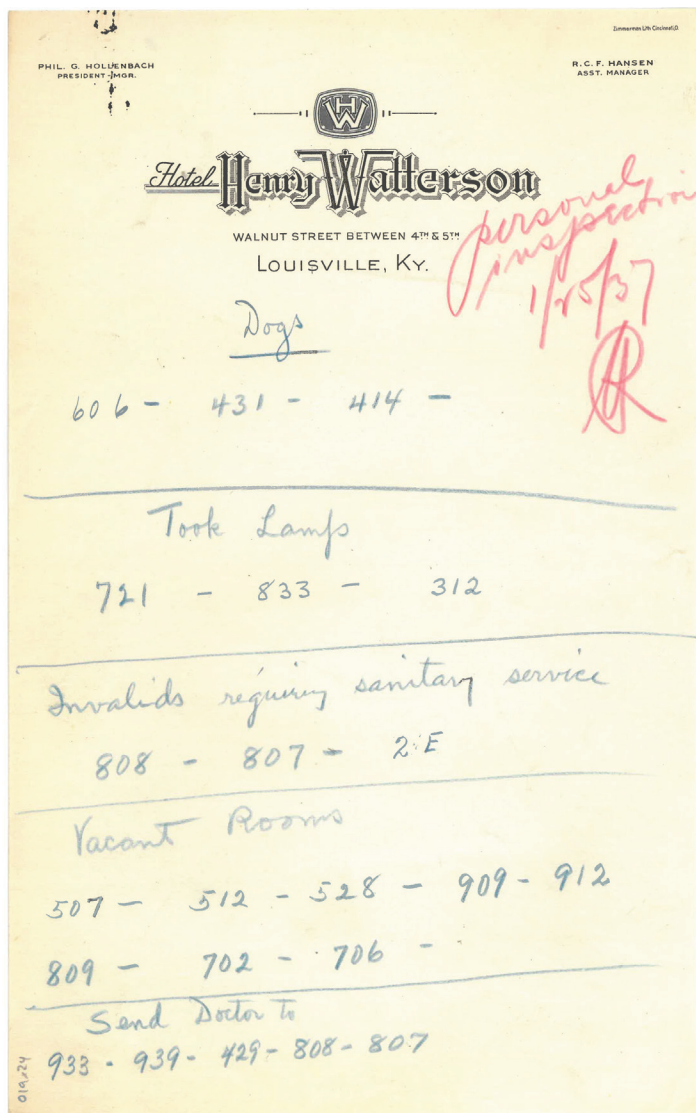
suddenly had to figure out how to provide food, order, and sanitary conditions to hundreds of people in a building quickly filling with water. Hansen wrote it was “just as if we were a stranded crew on a desert island, which we were in fact; the Ohio River was within two squares of us in every direction.”

In the first few days Hansen took decisive action. Surplus refugees were evacuated to other refugee camps in the city, an internal policing system was set up, and no one was permitted to leave or enter the hotel without a pass. Tasks were assigned to every guest: the men bailed out floodwater in the basement, the women kept the rooms tidy and clean. Two physicians were among the refugees, and they began seeing to the medical needs of about a dozen sick occupants. The building lost electricity on the 24th, shutting down telephones and elevators and causing the distribution of candles and kerosene lamps as well as a 9:30 pm curfew. Food became another concern, and a kerosene cooking stove was used to provide two meals a day on paper plates in the style of an army field kitchen.

When conditions in the hotel stabilized, Hansen recognized that martial law could not continue. “Of course,” he wrote, “These measures were a little bit strong for the average American citizen and some remarks came to my ears, such as: Does that guy think he is Hitler?”³ Hansen quickly formed a Citizens Committee made up of seventeen of the hotel’s guests, one man and one woman from each occupied floor. The committee was given an office where guests could register complaints or make requests, and the



Aerial view of downtown Louisville during the 1937 Flood. The Hotel Henry Watterson was located on Walnut and 4th Streets. (Filson photograph collection, FLO-252)



Note initialed by Richard Hansen on January 25, 1937, one of the earliest days of the flood. The note lists which rooms required special attention. At that point in the crisis, five rooms had need of a doctor and three rooms were keeping dogs against the manager's orders. (Filson manuscript collection, Mss. C H)



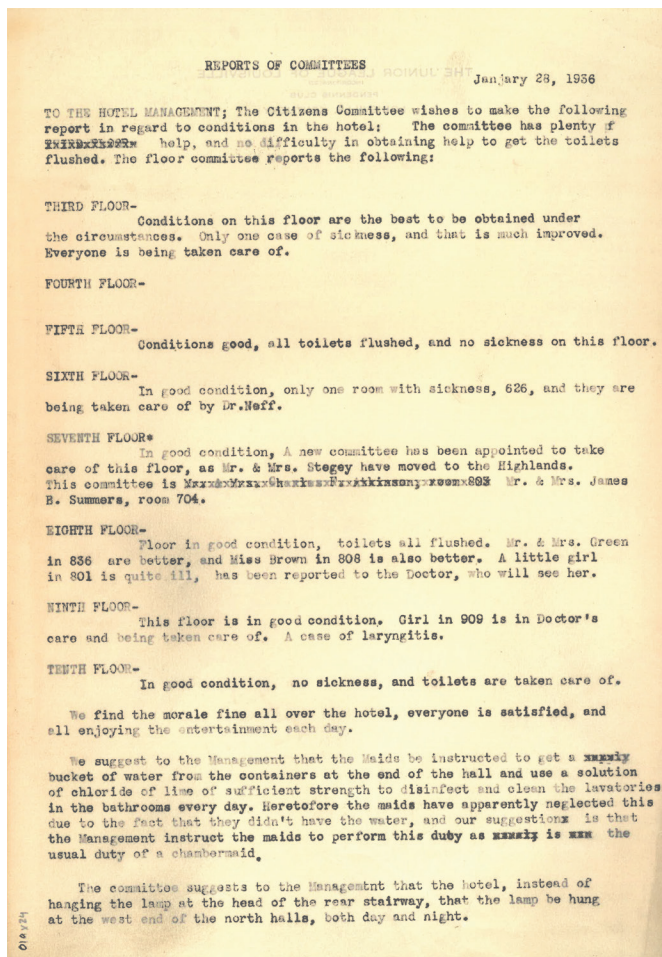
Full-color postcard of the Hotel Henry Watterson from 1912, long before the flood came to Louisville. (Filson print collection, HOT-46)

hotel management received reports from the committee three times per day. A blackboard was set up in the lobby where the committee posted announcements to the hotel's occupants. Hansen wrote, "It was very surprising how quickly and how cheerfully the entire hotel population fell in line."

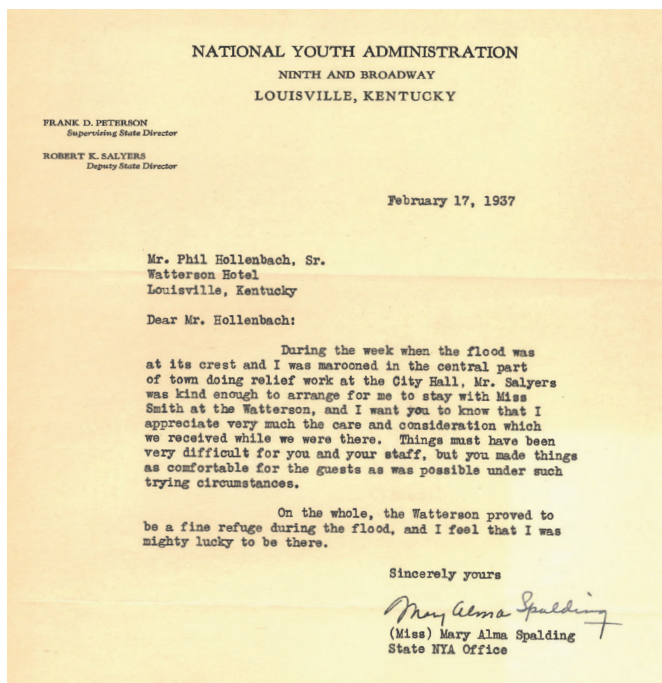
As the days went on, the Hotel Henry Watterson became not just a makeshift society with rules and committees, but also a makeshift community, with social gatherings and nightly entertainment. "We had a show every night... supplied by the talent of the hotel population," Hansen wrote in his report. "And on Sundays

devotional moments and hymn singing."³ A notice posted on January 26 announced, "A committee has been appointed to arrange for community singing in the large Dining Room and any other entertainment that can be provided for the children. Miss Carolyn Shorter, room 1002, is Chairman of the Entertainment Committee and would like for EVERYONE to gather in the Main Dining Room at 4 o'clock for entertainment purposes."⁴ The Citizens Committee reported to the hotel management on January 28, "We find the morale fine all over the hotel, everyone is satisfied, and all enjoying the entertainment each day."⁵

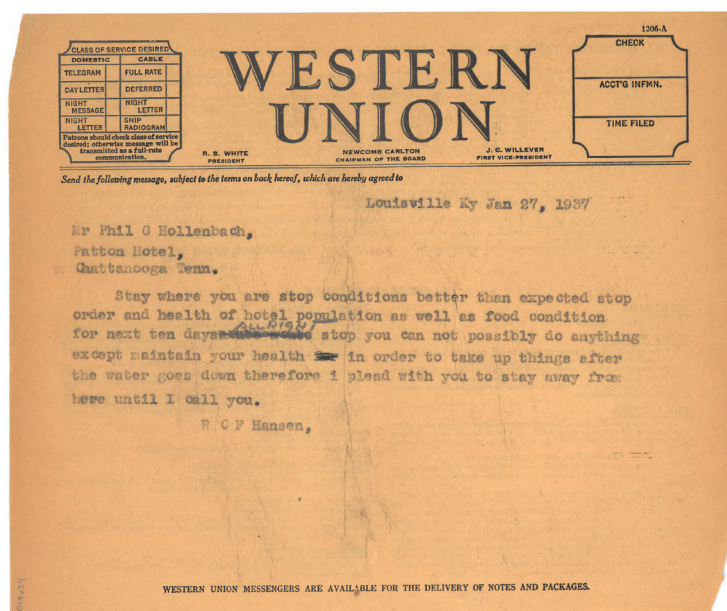
The Hotel Henry Watterson served as a refugee camp for at least 11 days, from January 22 to February 1. Hansen wrote of the end of the crisis, "the waters flowed off and our island became a part of Louisville once more."³ After the refugees were evacuated to assess the damage of their own flooded homes and begin rebuilding their lives, the hotel staff received at least four letters of thanks. One letter by Loretta Smith reads: "When I was forced from my home on January 24 because of high water, I had no place to stay...I want to take this opportunity to tell you how much we appreciate the fine



One of several daily reports to the hotel management from the Citizens Committee, dated January 28, 1937. The report lists conditions of sanitation on each floor and makes suggestions for improving order and comfort in the hotel. (Filson manuscript collection, Mss. C H)



Letter to the Hotel Henry Watterson from Mary Alma Spalding thanking the management for taking care of her and other refugees during the flood. (Filson manuscript collection, Mss. C H)



Telegram from manager Richard Hansen to Phil Hollenbach, owner of the Hotel Henry Watterson, dated January 27, 1937. Hansen asks his boss to stay put in Tennessee, assuring him that the situation in Louisville is under control. (Filson manuscript collection, Mss. C H)

way we were taken care of under such trying circumstances...I have only words of praise for the Watterson.”⁶ Mary Alma Spalding wrote, “The Watterson proved to be a fine refuge during the flood, and I feel that I was mighty lucky to be there.”⁷

The story of the Hotel Henry Watterson is not unique. Whenever a disaster strikes a community, there are always groups of people who band together and help one another. In the year 2020, it's hard to read the documents left behind from the people stranded in the Hotel Henry Watterson and not be reminded of our own lives in quarantine. Though we have been trapped by a microscopic virus, not by the ferocity of rising flood waters, in many ways during the past few months we have also been stranded crews on desert islands. Perhaps we can learn something from this crisis 83 years ago, from these people who took the limitations of their situation and created an experience for which to be grateful.

Endnotes

1. Richard C.F. Hansen to Colonel Smith, January 25, 1937. Hotel Henry Watterson Papers (Mss. C H), Filson Historical Society.
2. Richard C.F. Hansen to Phil G. Hollenbach, January 27, 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).
3. “How the Watterson Hotel Lived Thru the Flood,” 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).
4. “General Instructions,” January 26, 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).
5. “Reports of Committees,” January 28, 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).
6. Loretta Smith to Phil Hollenbach, Sr., February 16, 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).
7. Mary Alma Spalding to Phil Hollenbach, Sr., February 17, 1937. HHW Papers (Mss. C H).

Digital Exhibits Update

BY DANIELLE SPALENKA | ASSOCIATION CURATOR OF DIGITAL PROJECTS

On March 13, 2020, the Filson Historical Society was set to host the opening of our exhibit entitled **“Women at Work: Venturing into the Public Sphere.”** The exhibit explores women’s professional roles during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, women of the Ohio Valley region—mostly upper-class whites—stepped outside their homes to seek new roles as professionals and advocates in business, art, education, and the club movement. They were predecessors, colleagues, compatriots, and

sometimes opponents of their sisters agitating for women’s rights and women’s suffrage. Nevertheless, they all ventured into the public sphere, redefining the roles women were expected to play. Whether working to affect social change, realize their creative potential, or simply provide for their families, these pioneers changed what it meant to be a woman at work.

Unfortunately, it was during the week leading up to our exhibit opening that COVID-19 became a pandemic and hit Kentucky, forcing us to cancel our exhibit opening. It’s also a bit ironic that “Venturing into the Public Sphere” would now have to wait to have its public debut. While the last wall panels were being mounted, the curators quickly ventured into the digital sphere by creating an online exhibit. We are pleased to share the results of this effort to turn a

massive exhibit featuring over 75 manuscript items, photographs, portraits, dresses, and artwork. The exhibit focuses on the amazing stories of these women from the Ohio Valley who took on new roles and ventured out into a new sphere. We are not sure when we will safely be able to open-up the exhibit for in-person viewing, but we are thrilled you can enjoy the exhibit virtually by visiting <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/exhibits/show/women-at-work>

We now have 14 digital exhibits and 29 collections on our website and would like to highlight just a few.

From September 26th, 2019 through February 28th, 2020, the Filson mounted an original exhibit in the Nash Gallery called *Evolving Inspiration: The Art and Design of Julius Friedman*. Artist and graphic designer Julius Friedman (1943-2017) was



While the “Women at Work” exhibit opening is on hold, visitors to our online exhibits can still enjoy parts of the exhibit, like this lovely dress made by Madame Mulvaney.

TOUR THE EXHIBIT



Screenshot from the Julius Friedman online exhibit.

Louisville's beloved and renowned image maker and cultural advocate. Throughout his fifty-year career, Friedman embraced a vast range of media and methods to delight viewers with his visual artistry. An enthusiastic collaborator and dedicated member of Louisville's arts community, Julius Friedman is widely and deeply missed. In 2018, the artist's sister and longtime manager, Carol Abrams, generously donated works from his estate to the Filson's collection and the donation served as the basis for the exhibit. The online exhibit features highlights from the exhibition and a digital tour through the phases of Julius Friedman's rich and multifaceted career. It also includes a few additional posters that were not featured in the gallery. <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/exhibits/show/julius-friedman>

The Filson's Notable Neighborhood Series for 2020 was set to feature a set of programming around the Butchertown neighborhood. Originally Louisville's meatpacking district, butcher shops dominated the area in the 1800s. Today, the neighborhood is home to many restaurants, bars, a distillery, and more, along with unique shotgun style houses and architecture and is a Preservation District in Louisville. The online exhibit features maps, photographs, and other historic material from the Filson's special collections. <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/exhibits/show/butchertown>

For the past few years, the Filson has participated in the city-wide Cultural Pass, an innovative initiative to promote art and culture and improve summer learning in greater Louisville. When Cultural Pass became a virtual event, the Filson was able to quickly adapt to the new platform. Of the many offerings for this year's virtual cultural pass is the "Create Your Own Paper Doll" featuring images from a unique collection of hand-drawn and painted paper dolls created by Kentucky artist



Paper doll of Lu Ann Melverton from the online exhibit "All Dolled Up: The Handmade Paper Dolls of Carrie Douglas Dudley Ewen."

Carrie Douglas Dudley Ewen (1985.10.2-6). These detailed and beautiful dolls were often created as gifts to the children in her family. These dolls and their many detailed accessories indeed display the skill and spirit of the artist. To view digital images of the originals, visit <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/exhibits/show/paper-dolls>

This August will mark the 100th anniversary of women securing the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th amendment. The Filson has loaned some of the few suffrage-related materials in our collections to the Frazier for their exhibit *What is a Vote Worth? Suffrage Then and Now*, and we wanted to highlight some of the materials we have throughout our collections

related to the suffrage movement. The online exhibits shares items from the Filson's collections that document the suffrage movement in Louisville. <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/exhibits/show/womens-suffrage>

Nothing can certainly replace the in-person experience of visiting our exhibit galleries, but we hope you enjoy our digital exhibits until we can have you safely visit again. Be sure to get online and check out more collections and exhibits as we add them! Digital Collections and Exhibits can be found on our website <https://filsonhistorical.org/collections/digital-collections/or> directly at <https://filsonhistorical.omeka.net/>

“Do Whatever You Can”

The Civic Ethics of Louisville’s Rabbi Dr. Martin Perley

BY ABIGAIL GLOGOWER | CURATOR OF JEWISH COLLECTIONS

The long career of Louisville’s Rabbi Dr. Martin Perley (1910–2003) offers an extraordinary case study in professional and spiritual growth, as well as commitment to the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) through a life of civic service. Perley’s path took him from army chaplain and pulpit rabbi to civil rights advocate and leader in local government. A look at the Filson Historical Society’s Rabbi Dr. Martin Perley Papers helps us remember a Louisville legacy that is needed now more than ever.

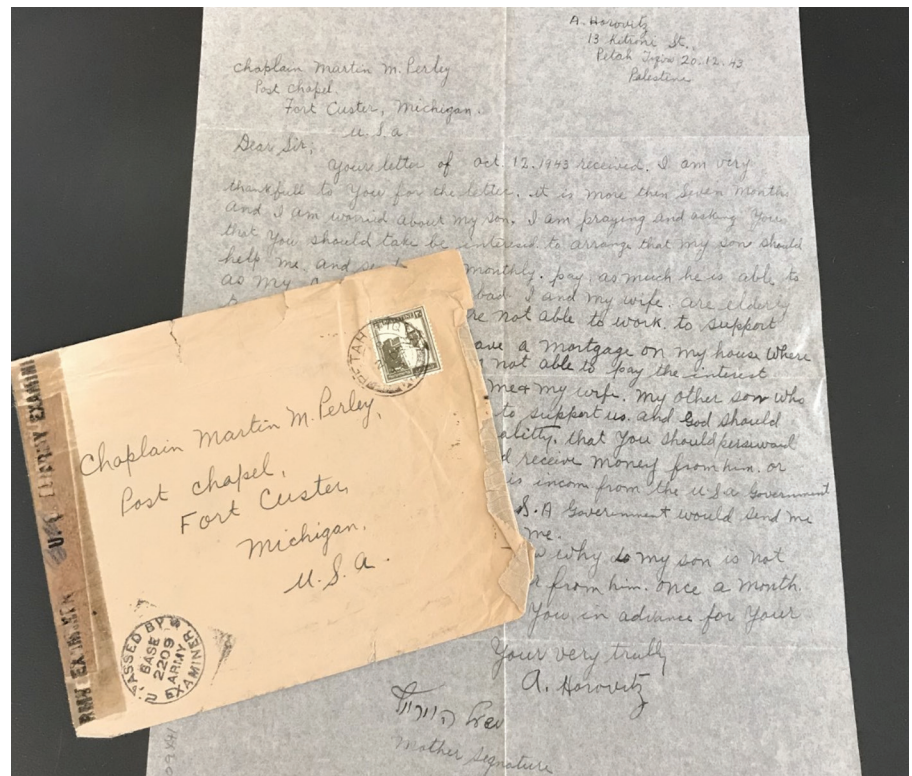
Rabbi Perley was born in Philadelphia to Russian Jewish immigrants and raised in Montreal. After graduating with a PhD and rabbinic ordination from New York’s Jewish Institute of Religion in 1934, he assumed his first synagogue pulpit in Melbourne, Australia. There he met and married his wife, Maei, a talented author and painter. In 1936, the young couple relocated to Bloomington, Indiana, where Perley served Jewish students as Hillel director at Indiana University from 1937 to 1941, and then to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he became both director of the Leo N. Levi Memorial Hospital and rabbi of Congregation House of Israel.

In 1942, Rabbi Perley was recruited to serve as an army chaplain by the Jewish Welfare Board, a national organization formed to support Jewish American soldiers during World War I. The early portion of the Filson’s Perley Papers document Perley’s experiences providing religious, spiritual, and logistical support to Jewish soldiers between 1943 and 1946 at Fort Benjamin, Indiana, Fort Custer, Michigan, and Iwo Jima in the Pacific. Perley

hosted regular Sabbath services for soldiers and consulted with them individually, often working to secure them official passes away from camp to observe major Jewish holidays such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

Constituting slightly more than 4 percent of the US armed forces during World War II, Jewish soldiers often felt like lonely minorities. The correspondence preserved in the Perley Papers documents these soldiers’ struggles to maintain Jewish dietary practices, find a sense of Jewish community, and navigate both overt and casual antisemitism in their new surroundings. Soldiers unburdened themselves to Perley of fears and laments ranging from physical

inadequacy to homesickness. “You know what it would mean to any Jewish parents to have at least one of their soldier sons home present at the [Passover] Seder,” implored one wounded soldier in 1944. “Would you please do whatever you can for me ... as you are the only person of influence to whom I could appeal and speak so frankly.”¹ In an era predating modern mental health care, Perley’s role as spiritual advisor and bureaucratic intercessor enabled him to fill crucial care gaps in the established military system. This early advocacy for people struggling to navigate inflexible and often unfair systems would become the bedrock of his work in the clergy and beyond.



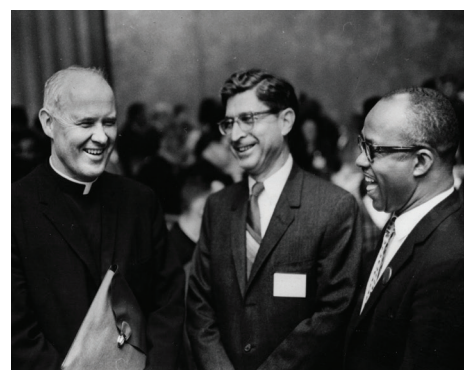
1943 letter to Rabbi Perley at Fort Custer, Michigan, from the Horovitz family of Petach Tikvah, Palestine, inquiring after their son in the US armed forces [Rabbi Perley Added Papers MSS A P451a]



Rabbi Perley (center right) with congregants at the groundbreaking for the new Brith Sholom building at 1649 Cowling Avenue, 1951. Photo by Gus Frank [Filson Photo Collections]



Rabbi Perley with the Brith Sholom confirmation class of 1955. Photo by Gus Frank [Filson Photo Collections]



Left to Right: Rev. Alfred Horrigan, Rabbi Martin Perley, and Rev. W.J. Hodge at an October 1964 meeting of the Louisville Council on Religion and Race. Courtesy of the *Courier Journal*.

In 1946, the Perleys arrived in Louisville, which they would call home for the rest of their lives. From 1946 to 1968, Rabbi Perley served as the leader of Congregation Brith Sholom, a Reform synagogue founded in 1880.² In 1949, Brith Sholom relocated to the Highlands, becoming the first synagogue to leave Louisville's urban center.³ Believing that "religion cannot be lived in a vacuum," Perley became increasingly involved in Louisville community affairs. From 1957 to 1961, he served on Mayor Bruce Hoblitzell's Advisory Committee on Human Relations. Throughout 1961, Black youth led a campaign of coordinated sit-ins and boycotts against segregated businesses in downtown Louisville. The campaign demonstrated that if Louisville's business owners and elected officials would not voluntarily enact meaningful policies ensuring desegregation and equal rights, then other community bodies would pressure them to do so. In the early 1960s, Perley became a founding member of two important local civil rights organizations. One was the Louisville Area Council on Religion and Race, an interracial, interdenominational body of religious leaders working to address racial discrimination in education, employment, and housing. The other was the Louisville and Jefferson County Human Relations Commission (LJCHRC), a new body within local government to design and uphold policies for the city and county to safeguard citizens from discrimination.

As the decade progressed, Rabbi Perley also emerged as a powerful voice against the war in Vietnam, with Congregation Brith Sholom housing the Louisville chapter of Negotiation Now!, a national citizens' signature campaign for new initiatives to end the war in Vietnam. Perley's congregants were split over his civil rights and peace activism. Some felt their leader's civic ethics embodied the highest ideals of Judaism and joined his efforts. Others determined their rabbi was too politically outspoken. At the end of 1968, after twenty-two years with Brith Sholom and two months after becoming head of the Kentucky Board of Rabbis, Perley resigned his pulpit.

In the spring of 1968, he became director of the LJCHRC. Rabbi Perley's second set of papers at the Filson documents his nine years in this role and comprises meeting minutes, reports, speeches, research material, and even racist and antisemitic hate mail he received. One of Perley's first acts as director was to appoint as his associate director Eugene Robinson, a dedicated Black civil rights activist with deep connections to Louisville's West End. In the words of the commission, Perley's and Robinson's arrivals were "almost providential." In May 1968, civil unrest erupted in the Parkland neighborhood in response to police violence, resulting in two deaths, including a fourteen-year-old Black child killed by a store owner who suspected him of looting. Commission staff worked "day and night" during the crisis, and Perley's report

underscored "the important task that confronts the commission" and called for "action and action now."⁴

Rabbi Perley's records from the LJCHRC document the bitter struggles throughout the 1970s to integrate Louisville public schools; secure fair wages, housing, education, and business opportunities for Black Louisvillians; and create police oversight and accountability. His legacy poses difficult questions without easy answers: In the past forty years, how has the city changed, and how has it remained the same? What determines a community's expectations of its leaders? And finally, when faced with injustice, how must each individual answer Rabbi Perley's call to "do whatever you can"?

This essay is part of the author's more extensive research project on Rabbi Perley, which is currently in progress.

Endnotes

- 1 Letter to Rabbi Perley, April 14, 1944, Rabbi Dr. Martin Perley Added Papers, MSS A P451a, folder 3.
- 2 Rabbi Perley's papers from his tenure at Congregation Brith Sholom are housed at the archives of the Temple Adath Israel Brith Sholom of Louisville.
- 3 In 1977, Brith Sholom formally merged with Louisville's other Reform congregation, Temple Adath Israel, forming the Temple Adath Israel Brith Sholom. In 1979, the Temple moved to its current home at the intersection of Brownsboro Road and Lime Kiln Lane. Rabbi Perley's papers from his years at Brith Sholom are housed in the Temple archives.
- 4 Louisville and Jefferson County Human Relations Commission meeting minutes, June 6, 1968, Rabbi Dr. Martin Perley Papers, MSS A P451, folder 2.

James Prichard

Manuscript Cataloger



Jamie Evans: Pritch, tell us about your background and what led you to the Filson.

James Prichard: I earned a B.A. and M.A. in History from Wright State University near my hometown of Dayton, Ohio. I minored in Archival Studies, and given the realities of the job market in the 70's I decided not to pursue an academic career. I joined the Archival Services Branch of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives in 1985 and served as Research Room supervisor from 1985 until I retired in 2008. In addition to my reference duties I was the principle speaker for KDLA's outreach program and gave public presentations throughout Kentucky.

During my KDLA years I also served as an adjunct professor of History at Kentucky State University, the Commonwealth's historic black college, in Frankfort (1990-1996). I was also a member of the Governor's Underground Railroad Advisory Committee and participated in KET's Underground Railroad documentary which aired in 2000. Other pursuits included membership in the Kentucky Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau from ca. 1995 to 2008. I gave dozens of presentations on Kentucky history around the state.

JE: What kickstarted your interest in Civil War history?

JP: Although a native of Ohio I spent many childhood summers with my maternal grandparents at their home in Carter County, Kentucky. They belonged to the generation whose grandparents endured the Civil War era and the stories I heard fired my interest in not only in that epic conflict but history in general. My fascination with the history

of the nation, the South and Kentucky has not waned with the passage of 50 years and I never tire of researching, writing about and speaking on historical figures and events.

JE: What are you currently working on at the Filson?

JP: I am currently cataloging the Joyes-Coleman papers. Both families were prominent in 19th century Louisville. Ann Mary Crittenden Coleman (1813-1891) was the daughter of Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. Her daughter Florence married Patrick Joyes (1826-1904). The bulk of the letters I've reviewed thus far pertain to Mrs. Coleman's sojourn in Europe during the 1850's. Taking up residence in Stuttgart she sends numerous letters to Flory and Pat describing the people and countryside of Germany as well as activities at the court of King William the First of Wurttemberg. My goal is to select subject headings for researchers that might find this collection valuable for numerous reasons such as 19th century family life, gender norms and European travel to name a few.

JE: Tell us about Prich outside of the Filson

JP: I am a serious classical music lover whose taste ranges from Bluegrass, Folk and Psychedelia to the Blues, and Jazz. I am also an avid reader of works about film, music, history and thought. I am a lifelong fan of classic films, particularly Film Noir. I enjoy traveling to, no surprise here, historic sites and museums around the nation.

JE: What's the most interesting place you've been to recently?

JP: One of the most interesting places I've visited recently was the William Whitley Historic Home in Lincoln County, Ky. Col. Whitley (1749-1813) was a colorful member of Kentucky's pioneer generation. A tough Scots-Irish frontiersman, Whitley participated in numerous campaigns and engagements with Native American warriors seeking to prevent the settlement of Kentucky. His death in battle, at the age of 63, is a historical mystery. Some accounts claim he killed the noted Shawnee Chief Tecumseh at the battle of the Thames during the War of 1812. Other accounts claim that the great chief killed Whitley. The answer to the mystery lies buried forever in the unmarked graves of both men on that Canadian battlefield. Known as "Sportsman's Hill," Whitley's fortified residence included the first horse racing track in Kentucky.

JE: What would you like to tell our members about your job?

JP: My part-time position gives me the opportunity to preserve valuable historical sources, and through articles and public talks, share important, meaningful and inspiring information about our shared past. Now more than ever, we need to help researchers to explain and understand the past in a serious, factual, reasoned manner.

Filsonian listing reflects membership gifts received May 2, 2020 through July 24, 2020

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