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NOTES ON THE POLITICAL CLUB OF DANVILLE AND ITS MEMBERS

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Twelve years after the founding of Harrod's Station, the first permanent English settlement in Kentucky, on the night of December 27, 1786, a small group of distinguished gentlemen met at the Danville, Kentucky home of Samuel McDowell. He and Harry Innes, John Brown, Thomas Todd, Robert Craddock, Chris. Greenup, and John Belli "Resolved, that the persons now present do form themselves into a society to be hereafter distinguished and known by the style and title of 'The Political Club,' to be governed by such laws and regulations as shall be hereafter agreed on" and to be "instituted for the purpose of acquiring political knowledge."[1]

Such was the modest beginning of an unusually intriguing and extraordinary society!

A political club composed of 25 to 30 men, meeting once a week to debate specified subjects. What is so unusual or fascinating about that? Schools, colleges, life in the great wide world, are full of myriad just such groups—investment clubs, debating clubs, clubs with a political connotation—we, today, are constantly hearing about them, going to them, reading about them. What sets this particular club apart, makes it worth investigating, and gives it an aura all its own?

First of all, there is the work this club did. The importance of The Political Club of Danville lay in the training of its members for the role they played in the creation of the state of Kentucky.

In The Political Club debates, men who were actually participating in the going government of Kentucky, such as it was at the moment, were able to work out and evolve what they considered would be the

best and, at the same time, the most practical form of government for their new homeland.

By discussions of pertinent questions, by the mutual exchange of ideas, by a close study of other forms of government, they were able to prepare themselves for their great task in the world around them. These men had a unique opportunity, unparalleled in history!

We will attempt to discuss certain aspects of this club and its members. In the first place, there is what might be called "the mystery of The Political Club."[2] This in itself gives a certain éclat and glamour not generally associated with political matters! With two exceptions, the existence of this Club was not mentioned or even hinted at in or out of print from 1790 to 1878. We do have two letters of Peter Tardeveau, a member, written to two other members.[3] Aside from these letters, which were not written for general consumption any way, there is only one contemporary account of the Club. A Maj. Beatty, a paymaster in the U. S. Army, wrote in his journal about being "Very much disturbed [in Danville] by a Political Club which met in the next house where we slept and kept us awake till 12 or 1 o'clock."[4] One thing seems certain, The Political Club had no idea of perpetuating their society as did the Phi Beta Kappa who carefully put away their papers during the Revolutionary War.

Nevertheless, there is no plausible explanation for the omission of all references to it or to its members, as members, from 1790 until the day in 1878 when the papers turned up in its secretary's old desk.[5] Whether the silence which surrounds the Club was intentional or accidental remains one of those tantalizing historical questions. The former hypothesis does seem the more logical. For, even when the Club began to meet at 3:30 on Saturday afternoons in the Court House —of all places and times!—and food and "grog" were brought over from Grayson's Tavern, the mantle of invisibility surrounding it and its work continued.[6]

Thomas Speed, the Club's secretary elected at the second meeting, kept careful notes for all four years of the Club's existence from 1786-1790. Motions, excuses, resolutions, points to bring out in debate were all put down meticulously, albeit on unbelievably tiny bits of paper, odds and ends of newspapers, old letters, etc.

Much space was devoted to Treasury accounts—i.e., a "list of delinquent members" to be reported. Much space dealt with rules for voting in new members. The Club's first Constitution, calling for "unanimous consent" to permit taking in new men, was lowered to a 2/3's majority in their revised Constitution. (Humphrey Marshall never made the grade, either way!) All information about this group would have been lost to posterity if the grandson, Thomas Speed II,

hadn't come upon a bundle of papers marked "Political Club papers" in clearing out his grandfather Thomas Speed's desk![7]

Happily, Thomas Speed II soon made the minutes of the Club's meetings, their Constitution and Rules, and sundry other items pertaining to the Club available through Filson Club Publications Number 9, *The Political Club.* Through the kind cooperation of Miss Mary Whitney Speed, daughter of Thomas II, one can actually gain access to the original papers themselves. A re-examination of these papers forms the backbone of this paper.

The second point which sets The Political Club apart from other such clubs is the uniqueness of its setting, Danville, Kentucky, in the year 1786.

What was going on previous to and during the four years of The Political Club's existence? The first 18 years of Kentucky's history, from 1774 to 1792, called the "romantic age" by Thomas Speed II,[8] saw a constant stream of settlers arriving from the Eastern seaboard, principally from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The people came like James Speed or Robert Dougherty with their families and worldly possessions to make homes and carve careers out of the traditional happy hunting grounds of the Indians. The latter founded Dougherty's Station in or prior to 1780.[9] The former, James Speed, came out in 1782 with his wife, five or six children ranging in age from fourteen years to a few months (among them was the future secretary of The Political Club, Thomas!), and many slaves.[10] Think of the trip they must have had!

These hardy souls underwent great physical toil in just making the trip to Kentucky, to say nothing of what awaited them at the end of their journey. Land had to be cleared, houses built, crops put in, water supply arranged. Such problems had to be overcome either individually, as in the case of Abe Buford who settled on a large land tract of his own in Woodford County,[11] or collectively, as in the case of the founding of towns like Danville. Besides and during all this exertion, there loomed large on the horizon the constant physical danger attendant to settling in a country still infested with Indians. As late as 1786, the presence of red men in large numbers continued to make them a serious threat to the peace of the white men who had invaded their territory.[12] Despite all such anxieties and difficulties, the population of what is now the state of Kentucky had become that of between 80,000 and 90,000 people by 1786.[13]

The Kentucky lands were filling up and civilization was being introduced into the erstwhile wilds, and Danville was the important center for all this new and rapidly expanding activity and, to all intents and purposes, the Capital of Kentucky at that time.

From the beginning, Danville played an important part in the state's history. More pioneer stations were found within a radius of 20 miles or less of that town than in any other area of like size in Kentucky.[14] It was just 21 miles from Crab Orchard, the traffic center on the Wilderness Road for all travelers to and from the newly-discovered rich lands of central Kentucky, the first portion of our state to be occupied. In 1779, the Virginia Land Committee held their sessions in Danville. 1783, the year Kentucky became a District of Virginia, Harrodsburg, 9 miles from Danville, was chosen as a site for the newly-created District Court. However, there being no suitable building for the purpose in Harrodsburg, the Attorney General and his Clerk were ordered to select a safe place to erect a Court House and a Jail.[15] They chose a place near Crow's Station which had become Danville. The following year, 1784, Col. Benjamin Logan called out the militia officers of the District of Kentucky to consider what should be done about the menacing attitude of the Indians and Danville was selected for their meeting place. Nine state constitutional conventions were held in Danville.

Danville was certainly a fitting setting for The Political Club's activities from the point of view of being on the spot where most events of importance to Kentucky at that time took place. It was fitting, too, as most of this Club's members were involved, in one way or another as we'll soon see, with many of those activities. Yet, one would never dream of forming a sedate, political debating club in such a setting at such a time, it seems to me. It would be like sitting down to hear a learned address with cannibals leering over one's shoulder!

Not only was the choice of location and year extraordinary for the formation of a political club, but the composition of the Club's membership was also extraordinary. Thirty men belonged at one time or another to the Club.[16]

They were:

Harry Innes	Willis Green	Benjamin Sebastian
Thomas Todd	Stephen Ormsby	John Brown
Abraham Buford	Matt. Walton	Wm. McDowell
George Muter	Thomas Allin	John Belli
Robert Dougherty	Peyton Short	Peter Tardeveau
Chris. Greenup	Gabriel Jones Johnson	Robert Craddock
Sam McDowell	Joshua Barbee	James Nourse
Wm. McClung	John Overton, Jr.	David Walker
James Speed	Baker Ewing	James Brown
Thomas Speed	James Overton	Wm. Kennedy

Thomas Speed II wrote that full and complete biographies of the Club's members would constitute a history of Kentucky from its inception to the beginning of the 2nd quarter of the 19th century and would show that the members participated in all events of importance in Kentucky for over 50 years.[17] How right he was! Consider some of the other activities and interests of sundry Political Clubbers which required their attention before and during the years of the Club's existence.

Robert Dougherty, founder of Dougherty's Station (1½ miles below Danville) mentioned above, Chris Greenup, and Wm. Kennedy must have had the greatest pioneering interest in Kentucky. John Filson wrote an inscription on his first map of Kentucky as "a Monument of the Gratitude of the Author to . . . Captn. Christr Greenup. . . . & Wm. Kennedy Esqr. of Kentucke: for the distinguish'd Assistance, with which they have honor'd him, in the Composition: & a testimony, that it has received the Aprobation of those whom he justly Esteems, the best qualified to Judge of its Merit."[18]

Let me remind you of one pertinent fact, Kentucky (or rather the western part of Virginia) was in a unique position. When people first settled in what has become our state, the only government which applied to the territory was at Williamsburg, Virginia, five hundred miles away by air, and many more by land, and that across the mountains. As more and more people moved in, the need for local self-government became more and more acute. Virginia tried to alleviate the situation by creating a Kentucky District in 1783, and, later, by splitting up this District into three, and, finally, nine counties.

Political Clubbers, as individuals, immediately leapt in to help with this situation. One was a clerk of the Virginia Court for the District of Kentucky. Another a Justice of the Peace of the first County Court at Danville, in 1786. Still another served as that Court's first clerk. The first three judges of the new District Supreme Court, created in the Kentucky District by Virginia, were Political Clubbers. Harry Innes was made Attorney General of the Kentucky District in 1787. He went on to become a U. S. District Judge for the Kentucky District in 1789.

Samuel McDowell was President and Thomas Todd was Secretary of the Constitutional Convention of Kentucky held in Danville in 1792, which considered the same questions that had been before the earlier nine conventions, where they held the same jobs. Seven out of a total of twenty-eight men in the first convention of 1784 were Club members: Willis Green, Wm. Kennedy, Benj. Sebastian, James Speed, Matt Walton, besides Samuel McDowell and Thomas Todd. Thomas Allin and Harry Innes were among the men in the second convention.

Besides serving in the first convention, Willis Green and Wm. Kennedy served in one other convention apiece. (The exact date of which convention each man served in is not necessary for our purposes—such lists are given fully in Collins' *History of Kentucky.*)[19] James Speed served twice more. He was beaten as a candidate for the 1792 convention which framed the First Constitution of Kentucky because he was an emancipationist! General Walton and Judge Sebastian served in two other conventions and in the 1792 Constitutional Convention. Harry Innes, James Brown, and Wm. McClung are other Political Club members, not mentioned before, who served in at least one other convention.

Such participation in Kentucky government, and in the problems of government from a legislative point of view, was no novelty to many Political Club members. Quite a number, including Harry Innes, Samuel McDowell, and James Speed, had had a great deal of political experience in government back in Virginia. Perhaps Samuel McDowell's work in Virginia as an active and able co-worker with such men as Patrick Henry, George Mason, and George Washington in the Virginia House of Burgesses, was one reason for his becoming President of all our Kentucky conventions! Other members continued their Virginia associations after they had moved out to Kentucky. At least five served in the Virginia legislature as representatives of various counties in the Kentucky District. John Brown further distinguished himself as a delegate to the Continental Congress of 1789-1791.

Political Clubbers were interested not only in the budding government of Kentucky. Representatives of their club seemed to be found in every movement which would benefit and which had the good of their new homeland at heart. "The Kentucky Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge" (1787) claimed more than ten Political Club members by name.

In 1789, Christopher Greenup helped to organize the "Kentucky Society for Promoting Manufacturers." Thirteen out of the twenty-nine members in that society were also Political Clubbers.

Educational interests of Political Club members were varied: James Speed, Harry Innes, and Christopher Greenup were trustees of Transylvania Seminary which opened in May, 1785. General Walton was among the incorporators of Salem Academy in "Baird's Town," November, 1788. Peter Tardeveau taught the slaves and white children at the School on Robert Craddock's place, in what must have been the first free school in Kentucky!

Last, but not least, mention must be made of at least three Political club members who were most interested in the opening of the Mis-

sissippi Valley, despite the fact that this interest led to very cloudy and mysterious dealings with French and Spanish agents.

Aren't the individual acheivements and accomplishments of members of this club staggering to the imagination? Yet, in this period of feverish activity, these busy men determined to add one more time-consuming project to their heavy schedules, namely The Political Club. What's more, the founding fathers, from the outset, deliberately invited "gentlemen of merit non-resident of the neighborhood to become members," since their admittance "will tend to the promoting of political knowledge."[20] Only about half of the Club's membership actually lived in what is now Mercer or Boyle counties.

A marvel to me is the importance Political Club members themselves attached to their club. The non-resident members must have gone to great lengths simply to be present at the weekly meetings. Distances involved and difficulties of the road were paid not the slightest attention by these hardy souls! On the contrary, fines were imposed for tardiness, for leaving meetings before eleven o'clock, for staying away from meetings without a legitimate excuse. Wooing a lady was among the few permissible excuses for absence, and then only if the proceedings took the gentleman actually far from the neighborhood! Bent on such business, Christopher Greenup was excused for months when he went all the way back to Virginia!

From our point of view, the Club's serious attitude toward courting draws attention to another unusual feature of this club—the extreme youth of the members! From the fifteen members' birth dates, of which we can be fairly certain, Thomas Speed was the baby of the crowd, being only eighteen years old the year the Club began. James Brown was twenty and Todd and Ormsby just beat him by a year. William McDowell was twenty-four and Short and Barbee, twenty-five. John Brown and Nourse were twenty-eight and Craddock probably twenty-nine. Greenup was thirty-six and Sebastian forty-one. The old men of the crowd, as far as our records go, were James Speed, a little under fifty, and Samuel McDowell at fifty-one. What youth to discuss such serious questions so soberly! How much quicker the tempo of life in those days!

Still another unusual attribute of this Political Club, with regard to its membership, was its surprising sense of "togetherness" and its being a closed corporation. As in almost any Kentucky group from that day to this, several of the members were related to one another. There were two sets of fathers and sons, the McDowells and the Speeds. There were likewise two sets of brothers: the Browns and the Overtons. There was at least one father-in-law, son-in-law connection; and, also, an uncle and nephew one, that of Sam McDowell and Wm.

McClung. Thomas Todd was a cousin of Harry Innes. Yet over and beyond ties of actual kinship among certain members, the bonds of friendship went far beyond the norm one would expect in any casual club group.

When George Muter finally retired from the bench, he retreated to the home of his old friend, Thomas Todd. Muter lived there until his death when he left the land, received by him for his military services, to his friend, Todd, and to Todd's family.[21] Peter Tardeveau, after he'd lost his money, around 1800, went to live with Robert Craddock at his place, "The Hermitage," in Mercer County.[22] Only in one or two rare instances during the course of years did such intimacy and mutual esteem break down. When Judge Benjamin Sebastian was investigated in 1806 about his relations with the Spanish, Judge Harry Innes apparently produced evidence against him.[23]

Some of this extreme cliquishness must have come from a similarity of background, education, ambitions, and experiences. This supposition is more than borne out by fact. Twenty-four men out of the thirty were Virginians by birth. Of the remainder, James Nourse was born in England, Samuel McDowell in Pennsylvania but removed to Virginia at the tender age of two, Thomas Allin was from Rhode Island, and Peter Tardeveau was presumably born in France. Baker Ewing and McClung were probably Virginians. The Browns and Harry Innes were sons of clergymen, the former Presbyterian, the latter Episcopal, and Innes and Craddock are known to be of Scottish descent. I would wager that careful and systematic research would reveal that the large majority were of like Scottish descent and either Presbyterians or Episcopalians. Samuel McDowell's father was a strict Calvinist.

No doubt, the statement that George Muter was born into a family "of refinement and education" would apply to most of the families of Political Club members.[24] Speed says their families were "of substance and education, being of the best stock and having the refinements of society."[25] He goes on to say that the Kentucky settlers on the whole were not from overcrowded districts nor from surplus population. Willis Green, as an example, was born and reared in the Shenandoah Valley; Peyton Short at "Spring Garden," in Virginia. When Samuel McDowell's father died in Virginia, the estate he left his eldest son was largely in land. A record in the county files of Prince George County, Virginia, shows that a petition of David Walker's to acquire 1,000 more acres of land which joined his original property was granted. The Political Club members knew and their families before them knew the best people in Virginia. James Speed wrote to Governor Harrison of Virginia because "of my personal acquaintance with you."[26] Harry Innes was a schoolmate of James Madison.

John Brown read law in Thomas Jefferson's office. Thomas Speed was recommended to Governor Randolph of Virginia by George Muter. Peyton Short and John Brown were in college with John Marshall.

Most of the members themselves were beautifully educated. Benjamin Sebastian was educated for the ministry and actually went back to England to take orders. Peyton Short went to William and Mary College. John Brown started college at Princeton, left it for the Revolutionary War, and ended up at William and Mary. Harry Innes went to Scot Donald Robertson's school and later read law and "was admitted to the bar."[27] James Brown attended an academy in Virginia which became Washington and Lee, and then he more than likely attended and graduated from William and Mary. James Speed was well educated and taught his son, Major Thomas, English, Greek and Latin. Thomas went on to study with someone in Danville, just known as "the doctor."[28] Samuel McDowell was taught in Virginia by another Scot, Archibald Alexander, who in turn had received his education in the old country. McDowell's son, William, and his fellow Political Clubber, was supposedly the best educated of the elder McDowell's children and went to the best schools of Virginia. Thomas Todd received a good education and quite a knowledge of Latin before his guardian, Dr. McKenzie, had dissipated his patrimony. Stephen Ormsby was well educated according to Appleton.[29] Speed mentions Barbee and Buford as having good educations. May I some day find where the other men received their education!

Another bond, and one of the strongest that can be, I have learned from personal experience since originally working on these notes, was that which binds one old soldier to another. There are few Political Club members for whom we have no military records. Among them were Dougherty and Kennedy. They were probably fighting individual wars with the Indians in the backwoods of Kentucky at the time of the Revolutionary War. If time had permitted a more thorough search, the six remaining non-soldiers, McClung, Johnston, James Overton, Ewing, Belli, and Walker, undoubtedly would have been included in the ranks of the military. Seventeen members of the Political Club saw service in the Revolutionary War. Of these, twelve were officers: Peyton Short, Matthew Walton, Abe Buford, Willis Green, George Muter, James Speed, who was permanently wounded, Robert Craddock, Joshua Barbee, John Overton, Jr., Samuel McDowell, Christopher Greenup, and Thomas Allin. Tardeveau, Todd, Sebastian, James Overton, and John Brown don't seem to have been officers. John Brown served under Lafayette. Harry Innes worked for the Committee of Public Safety in Virginia during the Revolu-

tionary War, superintending the working of certain lead mines in that state. Four members at least served in the Indian Wars of 1790 and 1791, Ormsby, James Brown, Barbee, and Nourse. Nourse was the only private in those compaigns, whereas Ormsby was a Brigadier General. Major Thomas Speed was in the War of 1812.

Before getting into what Mr. Mallalieu in his critique of this paper, written so many years ago, called the true purpose of the paper, i.e., its political theories, let us pause for a moment to glance at the way the Club was run. The Political Club emerged in a constitution-making era, and it fully reflected the spirit of the times! At the very first cold December meeting, among other things, it was resolved that: "Harry Innes, John Brown, Christopher Greenup and John Belli be a committee to form a constitution for the regular government of the club, and also a set of rules and regulations for proceedings therein, and report the same to the next meeting."[30] In highly civilized and mature Athens, Plato and his followers discussed all phases of political life quite happily, as far as we know, without any such formal apparatus to make their discussions valid! Such slipshod organization would never be countenanced by Kentuckians in the frontier town of Danville in the year of our Lord, 1786! Constitutions were the thing, and their club had to have one too. From the very beginning, as one can well see, every phase of their club's life was taken seriously and received its due share of formality and importance.

At the second meeting, "Mr. Brown, from the committee appointed to draw up the form of a constitution . . . presented, according to order, a constitution or form of government, which he read in his place and then delivered the same in at the clerk's table, where the same was read twice and debated by paragraphs, and several amendments made."[31] The rules for the Club were also adopted at the same time. Both documents and the method of procedure at this second meeting loudly attest to the Club's clear knowledge of and strict adherence to the most formal type of parliamentary procedure.

The importance of their Constitution is emphasized by the fact that all new members had to read and sign it in a sort of ceremony, vaguely reminiscent of taking an oath before assuming a public office. For instance, the minutes for the meeting of March 3, 1787, read: "Whereupon the Constitution was read, and Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Speed, who was also elected a member, signed the Constitution and took their seats."[32] Other features of the Club's Constitution included voting by ballot, holding positions by rotation, having power to change their Constitution under certain conditions, etc. All were important aspects of democratic government and reflect the spirit of the times.

The Club's rules smacked strongly of a cross between rules maintained in the British House of Commons and those followed in our own National Congress. They deal mostly with regulations to expedite gentlemanly and well-bred discussion and are aimed at the mutual protection of one and all the members.[33]

Politeness was required from each person speaking but any member could request the President to call to order "when he shall think necessary." "Nor (could) any member name another in debate." No member was to speak more than twice without permission from the Club. "While the President (was) putting any question, no member (should) entertain private discussion, stand up, walk into, out of, or across the room or read any private book." All motions had to be written, seconded, couldn't be interrupted by another motion unless it was to amend or postpone the original one. Method of voting could be left up to the members' desire and any member possessed the right to protest.

One may marvel at such rapid organization and such apparent decisiveness of purpose on the part of the Political Club's original members, from the word go. The key to their immediate success and their seemingly pre-fabricated setup, Constitution, and rules, lies at the feet of one very distinguished member, the Hon. John Brown. Not only was he one of the Club's original seven members, but also he was on the committee which wrote the Club's Constitution. Ten years before John Brown had been a member of the first Phi Beta Kappa chapter in the United States at William and Mary. Brown simply borrowed from the set-up of that Society when he helped create The Political Club.[34]

The Political Club followed the Phi Beta Kappa Society in more ways than one. Brown had seen the former society serve as a training ground for budding statesmen in Virginia. Undoubtedly, Brown helped to found The Political Club of Danville with the same reason in mind, that of training future statesmen of Kentucky. The Political Club became just that.

No wonder they took their Political Club and its meetings and debates seriously! Here intelligent and dedicated leaders were studying and doing at the same time, where deed was truly applied theory. As these debates of The Political Club went forward, certain of the debators were actually sitting in conventions which determined Kentucky's form of government, while other debators at the same moment were establishing rules of justice, etc., in the Kentucky District's newly-created courts of law.

The political questions they debated followed a logical order.[35] The meeting after they examined and voted in the affirmative for an im-

mediate separation from Virginia they went on to discuss the terms of "An act concerning the erection of the District into an independent State." There followed the question "Whether representation by counties or by members is most eligible and whether any other election is to be preferred." This question was of such importance that the names of the men and whether they voted for representation by members or by counties were recorded in the Journal; Innes, Greenup, Belli, Ormsby, Allin, Speed, and Tardeveau, 7 voting for the former, Brown, Craddock, Johnston, and Todd, 4 for the latter.[36] Would that the members' names and the way they voted had been included every time in the minutes! To our loss, the general rule was to record the decision by indicating which side carried and by stating only the numerical division. To return to the sequence of subjects, "whether annual or other elections are to be preferred" was the next topic for debate. Other than annual elections carried, and the next question to be considered was "What period of election is more agreeable to the spirit of free government?"

We are lucky to find among the Club's papers a few of the arguments used in discussing the best period of elections.[37] They throw a light on some of the members' ideals and beliefs, though it is difficult to know which member wrote these particular notes. A gentleman, whoever he was, first asked and answered his own question, "What is the spirit of free government?" The following points are direct quotations: "It is that the people should be governed by just, equal and wise laws." The member does not conceive that their (the people's) freedom and happiness consists so much in their governing themselves as in the laws by which they are governed. "We shall not be so well represented by annual as by longer elections. If we are better represented, our laws must certainly be better. If our laws are better, are we not more happy and more free?" In other words, one gentleman, at least, in the group believed in the good old tradition of the supremacy of law! His idea of the supremacy of law was more in the Hobbes tradition than that of medieval times. He desired "Laws to secure my property and defend my person."

Part of Thomas Todd's ideas on election periods are preserved, too, and are given here.[38] He felt it was a matter which definitely touched the "Rights and Privileges of the people" which were, at all events, "to be preserved." Todd pointed out that Julius Caesar made himself a dictator for life. Also he remarked that the Parliament of England elected themselves for extremely long terms. (He must have had the Long Parliament in mind.) Those two examples were used undoubtedly to point out how legally elected men can grasp a terrific lot of power, and even total sovereignty, when not hampered by such

checkups as frequent periods of election. Todd ended by stating that there were two aims to be achieved by government which bore an intimate relation to election periods and the intervals of time between them. These two aims were Liberty and Freedom. To preserve Liberty, periods of election should be frequent. To preserve Freedom, one should determine that period "that will produce the wisest laws." He hoped that a workable balance between the two would be achieved by "Experience, [their] own best bet."

Other subjects of a political nature discussed by the Club further enlighten us as to the political philosophy of these men.[39] The question "whether it is not more to the interest of a commonwealth that the legislative branch should consist of two branches than one?" —decided in favor of the first proposition—preceded the discussion of "what ought to be the powers of the Second branch of legislature in a commonwealth?" Another evening was devoted to discussing the perennially difficult problem—"In a free government, ought there to be any other qualification required to entitle a right of suffrage than that of freedom?" It is interesting to note that these men, as sold on the idea of gaining freedom and liberty as they were, voted that "some other qualification ought to be required."

Getting back to debates on the problems at hand, one debate asked "would it be to the interest and true policy of this District, should a separation from the State of Virginia take place, to invite the inhabitants of Cumberland [i.e., Tennessee] to unite with them in government?" The Club voted yes to the question! Another asked "Whether the inhabitants of the District of Kentucky ought to submit to the impressment of their arms and accouterments?" "No" was the resounding answer. "Whether the immediate navigation of the Mississippi will contribute to the interests of the District or not?" was answered in the negative despite certain members very definite interest in this project!

Other questions debated held interest of a more national scope and, indeed, these issues are still being reappraised by successive generations. Too bad there is no answer in the Club's papers to the question "Are the present existing laws concerning citizenship founded on principles of sound policy?" Another question: "If an Act of Assembly should be contrary to the constitution, which ought to govern a judge in his decision?" The Club resolved that the constitution should be followed. Another ticklish question: "Has a member of any government a right to expatriate himself without leave" was answered in the affirmative; and later settled for us for all time in the War of 1812. Two other questions are still of concern today: "Ought capital punishment be inflicted for any crime than that of murder

or treason." The Club's answer was "no." We have no answer to whether, in a political view, polygamy ought to be tolerated in a free state!

There were evenings devoted to discussions of local problems which were of an economic and social nature rather than a political one. "Whether the culture of tobacco in the District of Kentucky will be beneficial to the citizens of the District" was decided to our amazement in the negative! However, tobacco was a factor in Kentucky economy even then, despite the discussion, and some of the Club's members raised it themselves, like General Walton and General Buford! Later, more in tune with the facts, the Club discussed "Whether the admission of tobacco as a commutable for a discharge of taxes in the District of Kentucky will not prove a real injury to the inhabitants at large, provided no other commutable is admitted." The vote is not recorded. Two questions throw light on the humane and just way in which the Club felt about their frequently bitter foes, the Indians. "Is the exclusive right of the Indian tribes to the territory claimed by them founded in the laws of nature and nations, and, can they consistently, with said laws, be divested of such right without their consent?" The Club's answer to the first part was "yes" and to part two, "no." They showed their English background by deciding definitely in the negative the question about whether they should encourage mixed marriages with the Indians.

On one economic question debated, whether or not a paper currency would be a good thing for the District, some of the arguments pro and con have been preserved. The juiciest reason for not wanting such currency was Thomas Speed's. He simply stated paper currency was "hated like the devil!" One of Innes' reasons for desiring such currency was at least more logical. He realized that the District was without a circulating medium and something had to be done to support the government. Yet, the majority agreed with Speed!

At last, we come to a fascinating part of the Political Club's work! It was resolved that "the Federal Constitution be debated by articles."[40] Among the Club's papers is a copy of the Federal Constitution adopted by the Constitutional Convention of 1787. It was printed on a folio size sheet of paper at Alexandria, Virginia, for general distribution, followed, on the same sheet, by a plea made by the President of the Convention, George Washington, for the people of the United States to consider carefully the import of the document which the Convention had just written. On the sheet in the Club's possession, some member has written an "assent" or "rejected" at the side of every clause of every article throughout the whole document. The debates on the Constitution took place during the winter and spring of 1788

and, in the minutes of May 17, 1788, it is stated simply that "the Federal Constitution is finished." A committee consisting of 7 members, Muter, Innes, Greenup, Dougherty, William McDowell, Todd and one of the Overtons, was chosen in May, 1788, to revise the resolutions made by the Club about the Federal Constitution and to make a report. The report is written out in long hand, apparently by Christopher Greenup, and is called the "Constitution of the United States of America as amended and approved by the Political Club."

A comparison of the Federal Constitution and the one amended by the Club, together with the discussions pertaining to this work wherever they have been preserved, is well worth while. Suffice it to say that the Political Clubbers' study was thorough to an extreme. In planning and working out a Constitution for Kentucky, they had the advantage of being completely familiar with its federal counterpart. Their study closed with one outstanding recommendation made on Feb. 23rd, 1788, on the motion of George Muter, "that it is the opinion of this club that the Federal Constitution ought to be preceded by a Declaration of Rights!"[41]

How did members of the Political Club actually translate their theories into fact? There is a tantalizing resolution put to the Club on February 17th, 1787, even before they started studying the Federal Constitution. It was resolved "that a committee be appointed to prepare a Bill of Rights and Constitution or form of government which they shall think agreeable to and convenient with the local situation of this District, and make report."[42] The Constitution-making Mr. Brown was one of the six eminent members on the committee so charged. The others were Innes, Greenup, Belli, Craddock, and Todd. Unfortunately, no report of this project, if carried out, has been preserved.

We do, of course, have the concrete fact of the first Constitution of Kentucky, 1792.[43] Political Clubbers in that Constitutional Convention certainly must have put their weight behind the clause which decreed the legislature would consist of two branches, and the one which stated that both bodies would elect their own leaders.

The Bill of Rights of the First Constitution of Kentucky is written as Article Twelve.[44] How reminiscent of Locke it seems: It opens with the statement "that all men, when they form a social contract, are equal . . ." "That all power is inherent in the people. . . . And all governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness. . . ." "For an advancement of these ends, they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish their government in such a manner as they may think proper." Freedom of religion, free and equal elections,

trial by jury, right of private property, freedom of the courts, and right of assembly were all in it. Section Twenty-four stated firmly "that no standing army, shall, in time of peace, be kept up without the consent of the Legislature, and the military in all cases and at all times be in strict subordination to the civil powers." Soldiers weren't to be quartered in private homes during times of peace without the consent of the owners of the houses. Lastly, "everything in this [the Twelfth] article shall forever remain inviolate." The Political Club members in the convention undoubtedly were responsible for this Bill of Rights, and they got in many a good lick there!

The Second Constitution of 1799 changed a few items, some must have had Political Club members' backing, others its disapproval.[45] The Senators were divided into different classes, one-fourth to be chosen annually. The governor was to be ineligible for the next seven years after his term of office. Both these changes would be greeted with approval by Political Club members. The last important change, provision for a Lt. Governor as speaker of the Senate and as a Vice-Governor, had never been advocated by the Political Club, but experience might have taught them the necessity for such an officer.

Representatives of the Political Club, after its disbanding in 1790, continued to be found in every branch of the government of the new state of Kentucky. Peyton Short, Wm. Kennedy, Samuel McDowell, 3 members, were representatives and electors for the Senate in the first legislature under the Constitution of 1792. Peyton Short was elected a Senator for the same legislature. Other state Senators, who had been Political Club members, included Judge Wm. McClung, General Matthew Walton, Robert Doughterty, Hon. John Brown, and Wm. McDowell. Major Thomas Speed served in the House of Representatives at one time or another, as did Wm. McDowell, Ewing Baker, Matthew Walton, Willis Green, and Robert Dougherty. Matthew Walton was one of two chosen to ratify the Federal Constitution for Nelson County. Seven former Political Club members further distinguished themselves as members of the new national Congress. These included Thomas Speed, Stephen Ormsby, David Walker, Willis Green, Matthew Walton, Christopher Greenup, and John Brown. John and James Brown were U. S. Senators as well, the latter from the State of Louisiana. Stephen Ormsby and General Walton were presidential electors, the former in 1797, the latter in 1809.

Christopher Greenup became our third Kentucky Governor. Wm. McDowell was the first state auditor. Peyton Short was a Trustee of Lexington; Ewing Baker served as first registrar of the land office of Kentucky and James Brown distinguished himself as U. S. Minister to France and one of two preparers of Louisiana's civil code completed

in 1806. Like Harry Innes, Judge Wm. McDowell became a U. S. District Judge and served for years, too. George Muter and Benjamin Sebastian served as judges of the state appellate court when Kentucky became a state, the former until he retired, the latter until he resigned. Samuel McDowell, Christopher Greenup, and Stephen Ormsby were among the first circuit court judges. Ten other Political Club members were connected with various courts in one way or another. They were: Willis Green, James Speed, Major Thomas Speed, Judge John Overton, Jr., Ewing Baker, Wm. McClung, and Thomas Todd. Todd served 19 years on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Thus, we come to the end of our notes on the Political Club and its members. Major Beatty's brief mention of the club, in his journal or diary as a paymaster in the U. S. Army, is a good summation of it and the part it played in the life of early Kentucky. He wrote, "This club is very commendable in a new country. It is composed of members of the most respectable people in and near Danville, who meet every Saturday night to discuss politics. Some pretty good speeches and some tolerable good arguments made use of last night. The dispute was: One side insisted that an Act of Assembly was not law when it did not perfectly agree with the Constitution of the State. It was opposed by the other party, and a very long debate took place."[46] Think of hearing all that through two sets of house walls, for the Major slept "in the next house" and was a stranger and a Political Club rule stated "nor shall strangers be admitted into the room on any pretense whatsoever!" Maj. Beatty must have gotten up and eavesdropped at the window!

We have investigated the club's members from many different angles, from their backgrounds to their achievements in later life, from their schooling to their businesses. We have found that each and every one of them played an important part at the beginning of our state but, at the same time, only meager data about them has been preserved for future generations to analyze and study. We have found, when Peter Tardeveau wrote he had had an "honor done me in receiving me as a member of the Society,"[47] he was voicing the sentiment of all the members. Incidentally, Peter Tardeveau also wrote of the "union and harmony" which seems to have existed among the club members,[48] even though their debates centered around political questions with one or two religious questions thrown in—both ticklish subjects to discuss with gentlemanly calmness and detachment! We have realized what the Club felt it gained from each of its members when, in discussing Muter's and Ormsby's removal from the neighborhood, a club note said the Club wanted to keep

them as members because it had "experienced their aid in discussing the subjects that have been debated in the club."[49] We have discovered how The Political Club and the work of its members helped to bring "into intelligent order the original and elementary material of a State."[50]

The Political Club has great interest for a student of political philosophy. In the first place, the men involved were eager "to advance those Ideas"[51] and ideas, mind you, with a capital I, for which they had just fought an honest-to-goodness war and about which they were determined to build their governmental structures, local as well as central. These ideas included those of Liberty and Freedom for the people as a whole, of happiness as an end for man, of the sacredness of private property, the validity of the social compact, the belief in the supremacy of law and in the law of nature, the necessity for a workable synthesis between the government and occupation of a district with the unique possibilities of that territory, and, most important of all, the belief in the possibility of workable constitutions supplemented by Bills of Rights which forever would remain inviolate.

These ideas were the results of the assimilation of many different political theories. The belief in the supremacy of law came from the middle ages, that of the law of nature from the Greeks. The synthesis idea was Aristotelian. The ideas about a social compact and the sacredness of private property came from Hobbes. The ideals of Liberty and Freedom and workable Constitutions and Bill of Rights were pretty modern ideas in their day. That the members could mix so many varied schools of political thought, and include first one and then another theory in their arguments, attests their knowledge of political thought of all types prior to their own day. That they were ready to embrace any idea or principle which would be "conductive to the safety of a republic" is an important point, for, above all, they were convinced that a republic was the only form of government possible for them and theirs.

In a last word (or is there ever actually such a word?) let us remember that these men were mostly either of English or Scottish extraction. The candidness of the Scot is frequently apparent in their sound common sense. They were never so carried away in their efforts to give everyone Freedom and Liberty and eternal happiness as to feel that they could sweep away all law and order. They felt Freedom and Liberty were only won by and through proper laws and restrictions, and never without them. Nor did they feel everyone was capable of taking part in their own government, for one must remember that they advocated a property qualification of some sort for all voters. Furthermore, they were not eager to surrender but the

fewest governmental privileges to the central government. Whether one agrees with these Political Club members or not, one is bound to come away stimulated by a perusal of the Political Club papers. If such a one is a Kentuckian, he must be eternally grateful that the fathers of our state were willing to take such pains in conceiving and working out the best course for their and our happiness.

I give you the Political Club of Danville! Thank God for it and its work!

FOOTNOTES

[1] Original Papers—*The Political Club,* courtesy of Miss Mary Whitney Speed, Louisville, Ky.
[2] Speed, Thomas, *The Political Club,* Danville, Ky., 1786-1790, Filson Club Publications Number 9, 1894, pp. 32, 33.
[3] Tardeveau, Peter, 1. Letter to Col. Innes; 2. Letter to "Mr. President" of The Political Club. Political Club Papers, *op. cit.*
[4] Speed, *op. cit.,* p. 33.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 33.
[6] Political Club Papers, *op. cit.*
[7] Speed, *op. cit.,* pp. 34-36.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[9] Collins, Lewis, *History of Kentucky,* revised by R. H. Collins, Covington, Ky., 1874, Vol. II, pp. 18, 35.
[10] Speed, Thomas, *Records and Memorials of The Speed Family,* Louisville, Ky., 1892, p. 58.
[11] Starns, E. C., *German, French and Dutch Settlers,* Lexington, Ky., 1931, p. 33.
[12] Speed, *Records* etc., *op. cit.,* p. 59.
[13] Speed, *Political Club, op. cit.,* p. 164.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 25.
[15] *Ibid.,* pp. 25-27.
[16] *Ibid.,* passim.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 99.
[18] Filson, John, Map of Kentucky, 1784, 2nd Ed.
[19] Collins, *op. cit.,* passim.
[20] Speed, *Political Club, op. cit.,* p. 152.
[21] Collins, *Ibid.,* Vol. II, p. 276.
[22] Cherry, T. C., "Robert Craddock and Peter Tardiveau," *The Filson Club History Quarterly,* 1930, Vol. 4, p. 86.
[23] "Sebastian, Benjamin," *Dictionary of American Biography,* Vol. XVI, pp. 543-544.
[24] "Miscellaneous," *Register* of Kentucky State Historical Society, (1929), Vol. 27, p. 468.
[25] Speed, T., *Political Club, op. cit.,* p. 2.
[26] Speed, T., *Records, op. cit.,* p. 59.
[27] "Innes, Harry," *Dictionary of American Biography,* Vol. 9, p. 485.
[28] Speed, T., *Records, op. cit.,* p. 62.
[29] Appelton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography,* Vol. 4, p. 590.
[30] Speed, T., *Political Club, op. cit.,* p. 101.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 102.
[32] *Ibid.,* p. 120.
[33] *Ibid.,* passim.
[34] "Original Records of The Phi Beta Kappa Society," *William and Mary College Quarterly,* Historical Magazine, 1896, Vol. 4, pp. 213-259.

[35] Original Political Club Papers, *op. cit.*
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*, passim.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Speed, T., *Political Club, op. cit.*, p. 118.
[43] Young, B., *History & Texts of The Three Constitutions of Kentucky*, Louisville, 1890, passim.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Speed, T., *Political Club, op. cit.*, pp. 33, 34.
[47] Original Political Club Papers, *op. cit.*
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Speed, T., *Political Club, op. cit.*, p. 7
[51] Original Political Club Papers, *op. cit.*