

FROM THE EDITOR

Ideas about place and our sense of it represent an interesting notion. Why is it that some people have such a strong affinity for place, while others don't? How do our ideas about place and its ownership change so much?

This occurred to me anew in a recent visit to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home. It's a striking place with a beautiful view that Jefferson loved. One historian has suggested that the home is the real biography of Jefferson. Perhaps, although I hope that my cluttered office and desk isn't my parallel (although, I'm reminded of Albert Einstein's observation on such matters—the assertion that a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind led Einstein to wonder what an empty desk suggested). But what about place?



This issue of *The Confluence* is also about place. B. J. McMahon's article examines the contested nature of place in the region. How, McMahon asks, do people change their views about place as they see newcomers moving in and altering it, as did Native Americans in the early nineteenth century in St. Louis? And how did those newcomers, who were taking a greater sense of ownership, respond and see their new place?

This interchange in contested space and claiming it is also part of Bonnie Steppenof's article on vertical-log buildings in Ste. Genevieve. For transplants like me, log houses are supposed to be built with horizontal logs—you know, like log cabins and Lincoln Logs. But those cabins, and the vertical-log buildings in these parts, suggest that the built environment tells not just about this space, but also the spaces people came from. These different ways of creating vernacular structures in the United States hearken to earlier forms in Europe, telling us much about where people came from.

Adam Stroud's interesting work on fraternal organizations deals with people—almost exclusively men—creating new social structures and relationships in the new social space created by industrial America. As they created fraternal organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they also created places that were restricted to members of those organizations. Part of that sense of place included new gadgetry as well, including the organizational paraphernalia manufactured by DeMoulin Brothers in Greenville, Illinois.

Lastly, we are publishing Frederick Law Olmsted's account of his visit to St. Louis in 1863. Olmsted is best known for his design of New York's Central Park and his role in the creation of landscape architecture as a profession, but he also served as administrator for the United States Sanitary Commission early in the Civil War. That's what brought him on a western tour that included St. Louis. His observations about St. Louis at the time of the war are fascinating. It didn't seem like a very western place to him, a notion St. Louis leadership would have been pleased with, since an emerging generation of movers and shakers worked hard to make St. Louis a "modern" city rather than a frontier outpost.

All these different places, different periods, different outlooks—and different identities with place.

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