

A friend read the last issue of *the Confluence* and remarked that it was “eclectic.” Well, yes it was, I said. And it’s on purpose. We work on the premise that people are interested in a wide range of issues and topics that surround the region—old and new, past and present—and see them as somehow connected. All of us are eclectic in our tastes and preferences; just think of the variety of books you read, films you watched, or events you attended just this year alone. Perhaps our slogan ought to be “Eclectic By Design.”

And yet, there are themes that still tie every issue—and our region—together. One such connection is that it features momentous personalities. Tom Danisi writes about the oil-and-water combination of the dubious Rodolphe Tillier and his diligent assistant George Sibley at Fort Bellefontaine. Tillier was connected to one of the most prominent families of the era, the Biddles of Philadelphia, which made him a shirttail relative by marriage to General James Wilkinson (arguably among the most unethical figures in American military and political history—which is quite a distinction), Nicholas Biddle (later president of the Second Bank of the United States), and Thomas Biddle (who died in a duel in St. Louis, as recounted in this issue); Sibley went on to found the institution that became Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri.

Steve Gietschier’s examination of a 1910 court case over a fired baseball manager features larger-than-life figures like Detroit outfielder Ty Cobb (who once pummeled a heckler in the stands during a game), American League founder Ban Johnson, and the hard-hitting second baseman Napoleon Lajoie of Cleveland (the one baseball team whose mention I never pass up).

Mark Neels’ look at dueling—the “honorable” fashion of settling disputes among gentlemen at one time—by definition includes the pinnacle of society. Notable names run throughout the article on famous (or should it be infamous?) duelists like Thomas Hart Benton and Andrew Jackson. The final blow to dueling in St. Louis came when Bloody Island disappeared, Neels suggests, thanks the engineering design of a young Robert E. Lee.

Jessica McCulley’s examination of African American responses to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 examines the impact of profound national events on local people. The *Brown* decision, overturning the separate-but-equal doctrine (which was always separate and almost never equal) of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, was argued before the Supreme Court by Thurgood Marshall before the Warren Court. After *Brown*, Dwight Eisenhower said privately that appointing Earl Warren as Chief Justice of the United States was “the biggest damn fool decision” he’d ever made. Ike was wrong, by the way.

Duelists, ballplayers, teachers, and dubious dealers join James Buchanan Eads and his bridge and the pervasive air pollution of the early twentieth century in this issue. We start when the Louisiana Purchase was new and end just a half-century ago. “Eclectic By Design.”



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