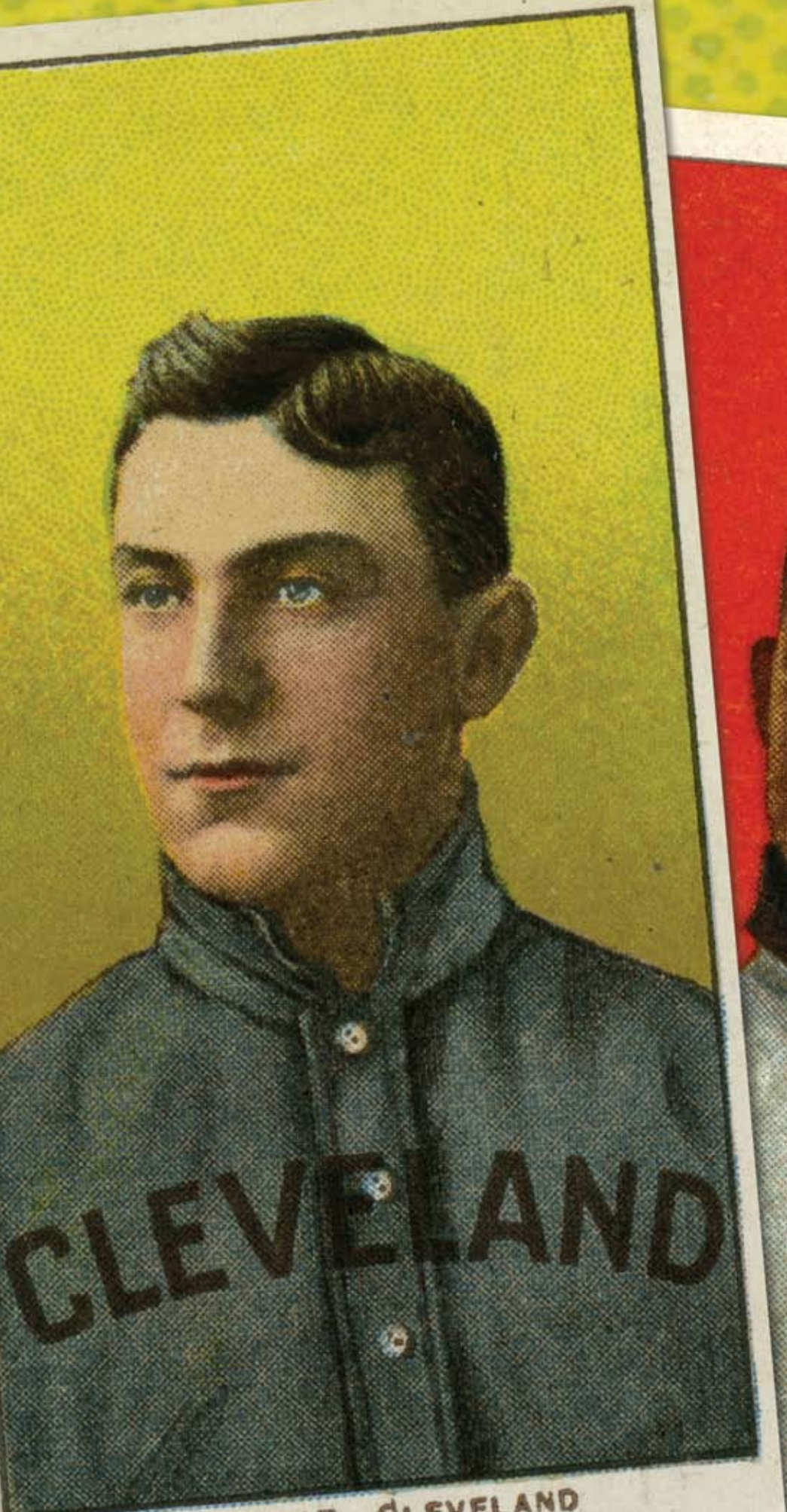


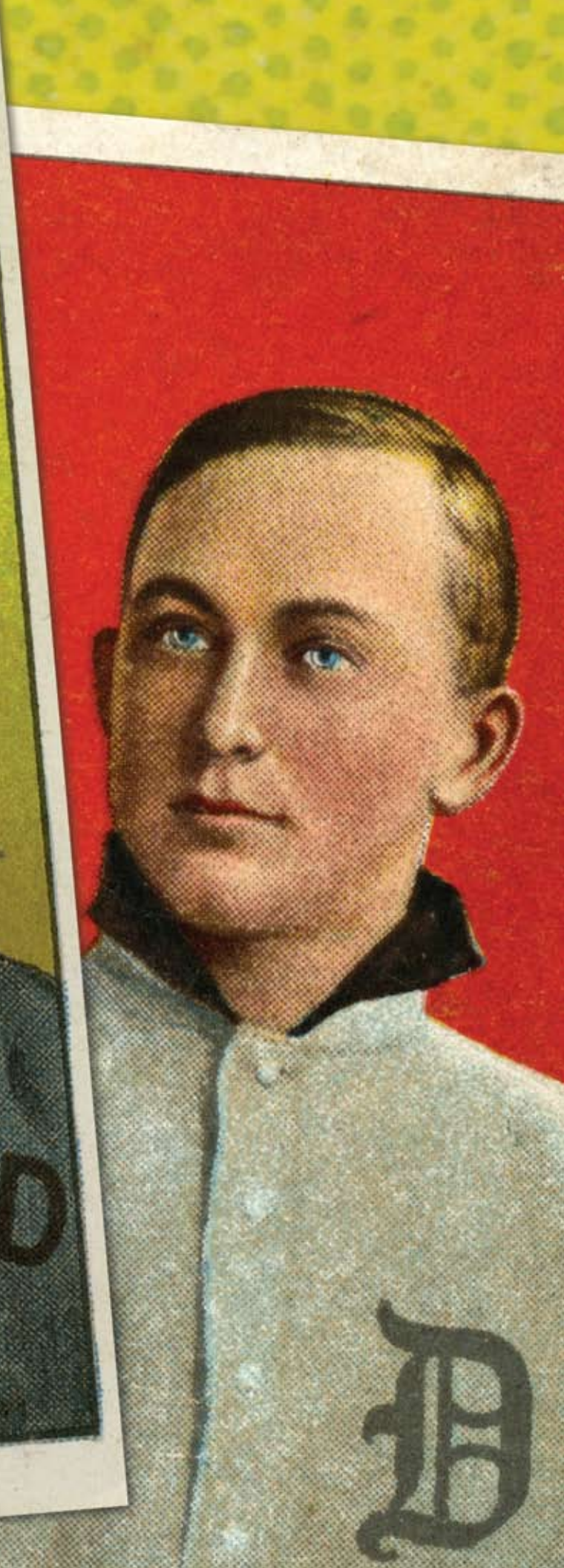
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the Confluence





LAJOIE, CLEVELAND



C O N T E N T S

C O V E R I M A G E

When duelists stood on the banks of Bloody Island, St. Louis looked somewhat like this view—a thriving western community marked by steamboats and a bustling downtown. This engraving dates from mid-century.

(Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

I M A G E L E F T

The 1910 American League batting title was a tight race between Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers and Napoleon Lajoie of the Cleveland Naps (later the Indians) that appeared to be settled in a double-header on the final day of the season against the St. Louis Browns. Or was it? Find out in “The Strange Case of the Courts, a Car, and the 1910 Batting Title.”



- 4 The Strange Case of the Courts, a Car, and the 1910 Batting Title
By *Steven Gietschier*

Ty Cobb and Napoleon Lajoie were fighting for the 1910 American League batting title right down to the end of the season. Who won was under dispute, and it landed the St. Louis Browns in court. Gietschier looks at the case files involving the Browns manager who was fired over accusations that he tried to let Lajoie win the title—and a new car.



- 16 “Barbarous Custom of Dueling”: Death and Honor on St. Louis’ Bloody Island
By *Mark Alan Neels*

Neels argues that the Army Corps of Engineers inadvertently dealt the final death blow to dueling in the region when it eliminated “Bloody Island,” a sandbar in the Mississippi River which became a favorite venue for duels.



- 28 Black Resistance to School Desegregation in St. Louis During the Brown Era
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McCulley discusses opposition to school integration by African American educators in St. Louis at the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Decision.



- 38 George Champlain Sibley: Shady Dealings on the Early Frontier
By *Tomas C. Danisi*

Danisi offers an analysis of Sibley’s time as assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine under factor Rodolphe Tillier, a man of strong political connections and elastic ethics. Tillier fired Sibley, Danisi argues, because he discovered and revealed Tillier’s shady business dealings while a government official; ultimately, Sibley was exonerated and even promoted to factor of the newly formed Fort Osage.



- 50 The Illinois & St. Louis Bridge: An Engineering Marvel
This reprint of an 1871 article from *Scribner’s Magazine* extols the new Illinois and St. Louis Bridge (Eads Bridge today) as an engineering marvel—which, incidentally, it was.



- 62 “It Don’t Look Natural”: St. Louis Smoke Abatement in 1906
By *David L. Straight*

In this regular feature about postal history, Straight examines efforts at reducing smog—smoke abatement, at the time—using a 1906 card and coal company letterhead as a springboard.

The Confluence is a regional studies journal published by Lindenwood University and dedicated to the diversity of ideas and disciplines of a liberal arts university. It is committed to the intersection of history, art and architecture, design, science, social science, and public policy. Its articles are diverse by design.

the *Confluence*

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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.”

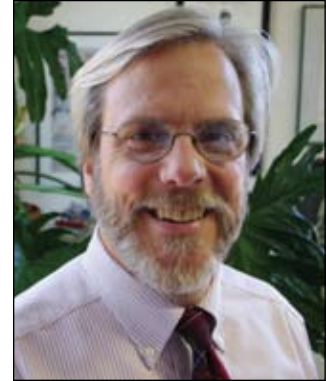
And yet, there are themes that still tie every issue—and our region—together. One such connection is that it features momentous personalities. Tom Danisi writes about the oil-and-water combination of the dubious Rodolphe Tillier and his diligent assistant George Sibley at Fort Bellefontaine. Tillier 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.”



Jeffrey Smith, PhD
Editor



The Strange Case of the Courts, a Car, and the 1910 Batting Title

BY STEVEN GIETSCHIER

Major league baseball teams fire their managers regularly. Like head coaches in other professional and college sports, managers are, as the saying goes, hired to be fired. Few resign of their own accord. Fewer retire. Most are discharged when some club official announces, seemingly innocuously, “It is time for us to move in a new direction.” When the 2010 major league season began in April, only three managers (out of thirty) had served their current teams for ten years or more. Twenty-one had no more than three seasons with their present clubs, and two were rookies. Moreover, before the season was half finished, four clubs had replaced their managers (two in their fourth year, one in his third, and one in his second), and baseball’s rumor mill had quickly elevated several other names to the top slots on the “managers hit list.”

Managers are not “at will” employees. They sign contracts that lay out their responsibilities and their clubs’ obligations. So why would a manager sue a club that had dismissed him? Why, specifically, did Jack O’Connor, manager of the St. Louis Browns a century ago in 1910, sue the club after he had been fired? What were the terms of his contract, and did he breach them? What were the Browns’ obligations, and did they meet them? And what were the circumstances—the particulars, as it were—of the doubleheader played on the last day of the 1910 season that led to O’Connor’s ouster and his cry for justice?

Organized sport, as a rule, tries to avoid courts of law. Sport’s perpetual claim is that leagues and associations are self-governing. They point to their own internal judicial procedures and ask courts to leave them alone. Occasionally, brutal acts on the playing field rise above the level of violence countenanced by a sport’s rules and elicit calls for justice from without, but in the main, justice from within is deemed sufficient. Still, a contract is a different matter from a playing rule, and its enforcement is more likely, at least in theory, to be the object of legal action. That’s the course that O’Connor pursued after Browns president Robert Lee Hedges told him that his services

would no longer be required. The fact that O’Connor sued is remarkable in and of itself. The fact that the archival record includes the case files for both the original trial and the appeal makes the study of O’Connor’s firing all the more irresistible.

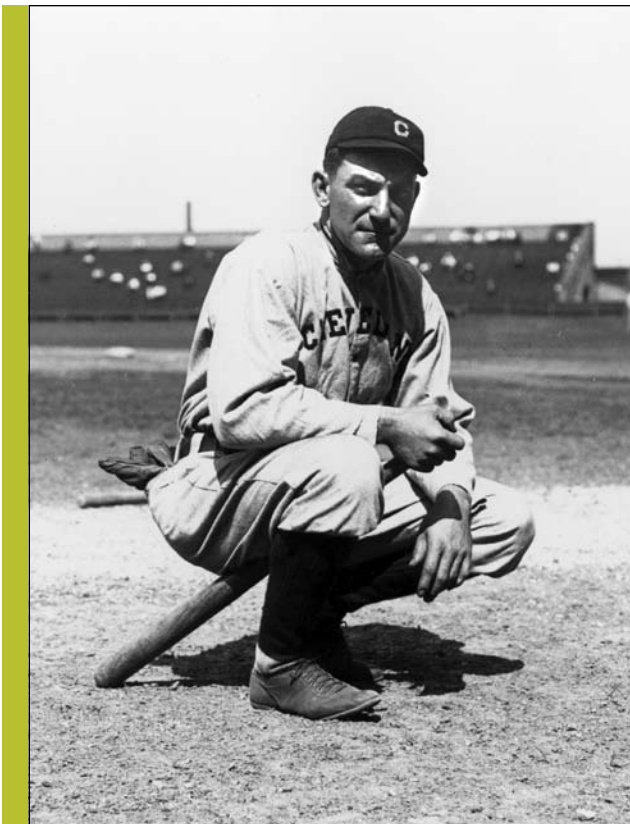
As the 1910 season wound down to its close, the Browns were firmly planted in last place in the American League. The team’s fans—and there are still some, even though the club left St. Louis after the 1953 season—will note that watching the Browns finish last was far from unusual. In 52 pennant races before they became the Baltimore Orioles, the Browns finished last or next-to-last 22 times, fourth or better (in an eight-team league) only a dozen times, and first but once, in 1944. No wonder that for years the unofficial motto of St. Louis was, “First in shoes, first in booze, and last in the American League.” In 1910, the Browns were never close to winning the pennant. They opened the season by dropping sixteen of their first twenty games, fell into exclusive possession of last place for good on May 13, and finished with a record of 47-107, 57 games behind the pennant-winning Philadelphia Athletics.

John Joseph O’Connor, a man blessed with four nicknames—“Jack,” “Rowdy Jack,” “Peach Pie,” and “Peaches”—was the Browns’ rookie manager in 1910. Born in St. Louis in 1866, he started playing professional baseball in Jacksonville, Illinois, and reached the major leagues in 1887 with the Cincinnati Reds. Originally an outfielder, he settled in at catcher, playing two seasons in Cincinnati and two more in Columbus, Ohio, then a major-league city, before joining the Cleveland Spiders, a club owned by brothers Frank and Stanley Robison. After the 1898 season, the National League, not at all opposed to what was then called syndicate baseball, engineered the sale of the St. Louis Cardinals to the Robisons, and the brothers, now holding two clubs, came close to exchanging the entire Cleveland roster for the one in St. Louis. O’Connor thus played with St. Louis in 1899 and



John O'Connor (1866-1937) spent 21 seasons as a player, primarily as a catcher, before managing his first—and last—season for the St. Louis Browns in 1910. After the scandal, “Peach Pie” O'Connor never managed in the majors again. He is buried in Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

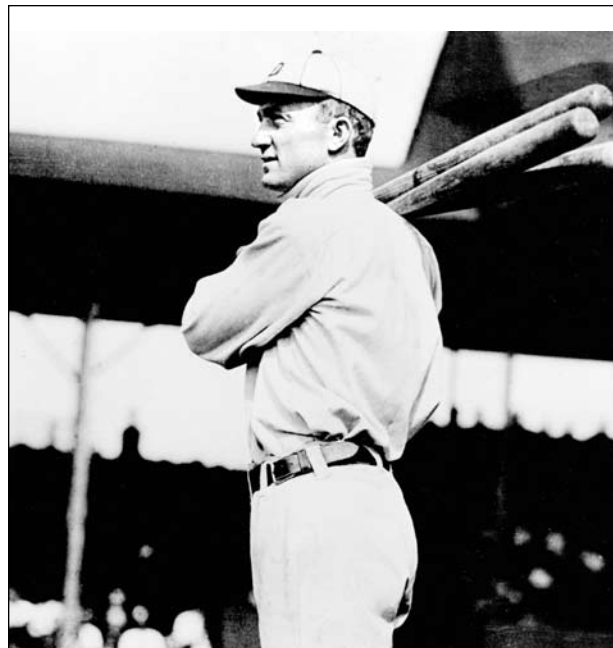
Napoleon Lajoie (1874-1959) played 21 seasons for Cleveland, the Philadelphia Phillies, and the Philadelphia Athletics, hitting over .300 in sixteen of them. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)



1900 before finishing his playing career in Pittsburgh, New York, and St. Louis again, this time with the Browns. In 1909, he was back in the minors in Little Rock, Arkansas, and after that season, Hedges hired him as manager. O'Connor had gone right from school to baseball and right from playing to managing. He was, in the sport's lingo, a lifer.¹

For baseball teams far from first place, the last games in a desultory season are often characterized as meaningless. The doubleheader on October 9, 1910, fit this bill not only for the Browns but also for their opponents, the Cleveland Naps, who were cemented in sixth place. So, how did it happen that nearly 10,000 people, the largest crowd of the season, turned out at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis, to watch two teams play out the string? The answer to this query is this: fans came to watch one player, Cleveland's Napoleon Lajoie, and to see if he could defy the odds by wresting the American League batting title from Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers. Lajoie had been the league's first superstar. While playing for Philadelphia in 1901, the American League's first season as a major league, he had won the Triple Crown, leading the league in batting average, home runs, and runs batted in. After moving to Cleveland, he had captured two more batting titles in 1903 and 1904. Lajoie was not only very good; he was popular, renowned as both a superb player and a gentleman. After the 1902 season, his first in Cleveland, the *Cleveland Press* had sponsored a contest to select a new nickname for the team. “Blues,” the color of the

Ty Cobb's (1886-1961) lifetime batting average of .366 remains the highest in modern baseball history. Cobb died a millionaire as well, thanks to investing in upstart companies such as General Motors and Coca Cola. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)





So controversial was the record-keeping for the batting title in the American League that both Cobb and Lajoie received new cars from the Chalmers Motor Car Company of Detroit. The following year, the company initiated the Chalmers Award, presented to the most valuable player in each league. Since no player could win the award more than once and there were accusations of possible cheating, the company stopped granting the award after the 1914 season. Cobb is behind the wheel of the car on the right. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

team's caps and socks, was out, and "Naps," short for "Napoleon," was in. He was that beloved.²

But all this was before Cobb. The "Georgia Peach" joined the Tigers as a rookie in 1905 and won the batting championship in 1907, 1908, and 1909, displacing Lajoie as the league's best player. Unlike Nap or Larry, as he was sometimes called, Cobb had been quickly stigmatized as a fierce ballplayer with unbridled competitive juices. "Baseball is a red-blooded sport for red-blooded men," he asserted. Even as a young player, Cobb's temper was legendary. He made few friends, clashed with teammates and opponents alike, and transformed every indignity, real or imagined, into an incident fraught with the potential for violence. Pop psychologists, aware that Cobb hailed from rural Georgia, postulated that he saw baseball as nothing less than a continuation of the Civil War. In 1910, the battle between these two stars was joined again, but this time the stakes involved more than simple prestige. The newly established Chalmers Motor Car Company had decided on a grand publicity stunt, awarding the batting champion in each league a new car, a Model 30, one of its best. Very few Americans owned cars in 1910. To win one retailing for about \$1,500 would be a treat indeed.³

Both players hit very well throughout the 1910 season. On July 9, Lajoie led the league with a .399 batting average while Cobb trailed at .377. The possibility that

he might finish second infuriated him. Cobb grouched at his fellow Tigers, sometimes reported late to the ballpark, and more than once refused to play at all. Despite this petulance, his average remained steady and he closed the gap. In early September, Lajoie's average had fallen to .372, and Cobb was only .008 behind. After that, the race for the Chalmers got even tighter.

Exactly how tight was uncertain. Ban Johnson, founder and president of the American League, ran his operation with an iron hand, but the idea of accurate, up-to-date statistics issued daily by the league office was still in the future. Since newspapers were free to print their own calculations, a close race for a batting championship could be confusing. Papers in league cities might also be willing to skew their figures just a bit to favor a hometown player. So what actually happened during the last weeks of September and the first few days of October was a matter of some dispute.

What we do know is this: Cobb had a great September at the plate. The Tigers concluded their season in Chicago against the White Sox, and when Cobb went 4-for-7 on Thursday, October 6, and Friday, October 7, he thought he was comfortably ahead of his rival. Somewhat uncharacteristically, he took the last weekend of the season off, declining to play on Saturday, October 8, and Sunday, October 9. Instead, he boarded a train for Philadelphia

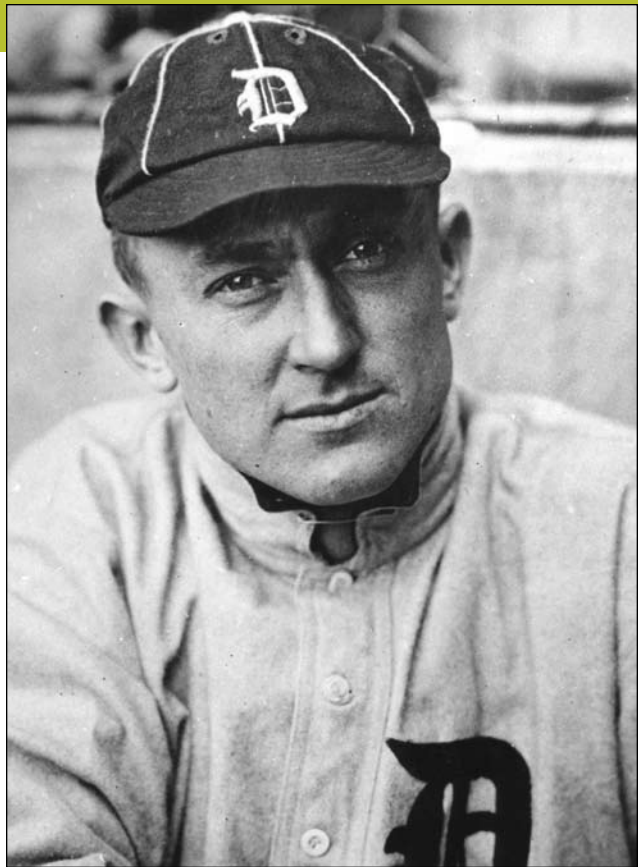


Cobb behind the wheel of his new Chalmers. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

to join a gathering of American League stars that would help prepare the Athletics for the World Series against the Chicago Cubs.

Was Cobb's lead secure? After Lajoie went just 1-for-4 in Saturday's game against the Browns, most people thought so. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* put Cobb's average at .382 and Lajoie's at .377, reasoning that "If he [Lajoie] is up eight times in the two Sunday games, and makes six hits out of eight tries, he still will be but .3817, a little short of Cobb's figures."⁴ The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* agreed. It had Cobb at .383 and Lajoie at .378. "To pass Cobb in the unofficial averages," the paper said, "he [Lajoie] will be forced to make at least six hits in eight times at bat or seven hits in nine times at bat . . . but that is scarcely possible." Or was it?⁵

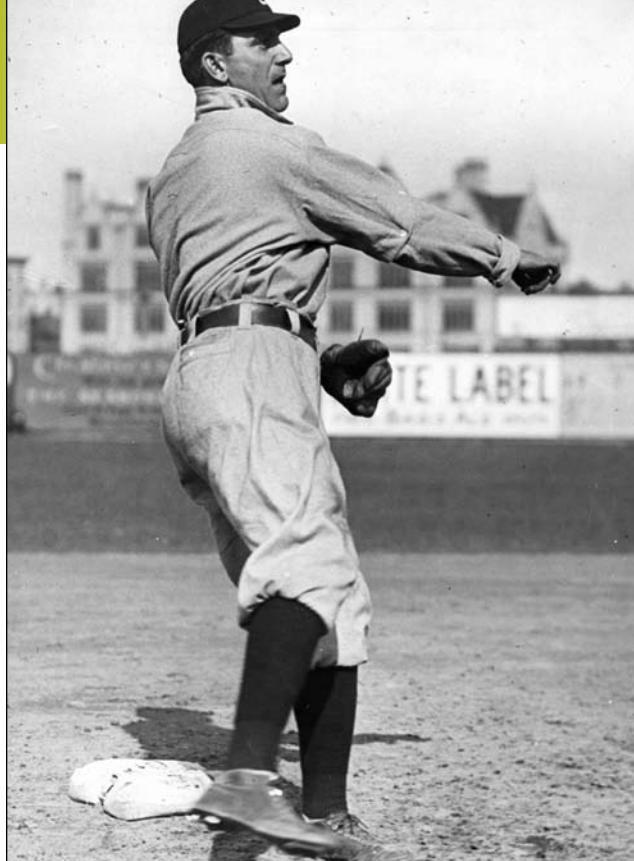
Hitting fourth for Cleveland in the first game of the Sunday doubleheader, Lajoie came to bat in the first inning. Facing rookie pitcher Albert (Red) Nelson, a Cleveland native born Albert Horazdovsky, he lined a pitch over the head of centerfielder Hub Northen, also a rookie, and wound up on third with a triple. Thereafter, for the rest of the day, the Browns "adjusted" their defense. Third baseman John (Red) Corriden, yet another rookie, played uncharacteristically deep, well behind the bag. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* put it succinctly: "Every time Lajoie stepped up to the plate, Corriden walked almost



Ty Cobb, known as the "Georgia Peach," was in the first group of players inducted into the newly formed Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

John "Red" Corriden (1887-1959) played third base and shortstop for three teams, batting a mere .205, before spending the next four decades as a coach, scout, and (briefly) manager. He died in 1959 watching the Los Angeles Dodgers and Milwaukee Braves playing in a best-of-three playoff after having finished the season tied for first place. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)





Lajoie ranks among the best second basemen of the century. He was inducted in the Hall of Fame in 1937. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

to the very edge of the grass. The Browns third sacker was virtually playing a short left field for him [Lajoie].” Acting perhaps on instructions from manager O’Connor, or perhaps not, Corriden invited one of the league’s best hitters to bunt, time and time again.⁶

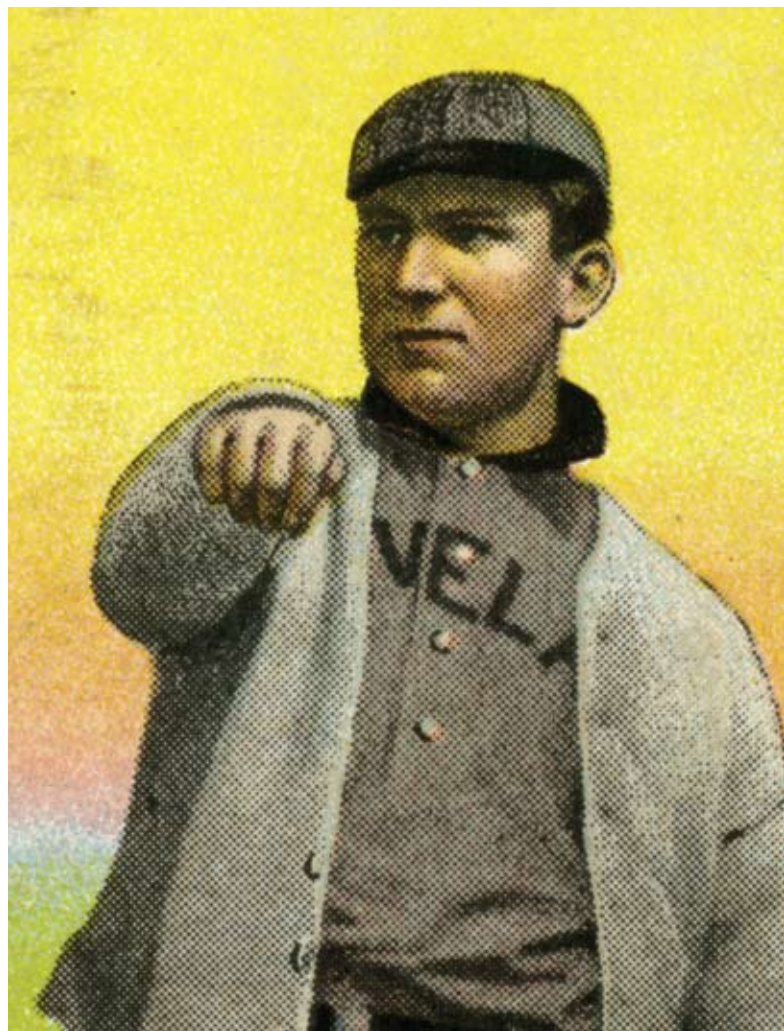
The results were fairly predictable. Lajoie came to bat eight more times on the day, and he laid down seven bunts. Corriden fielded all seven but never got an out. The official scorer credited Lajoie with six hits and one sacrifice when Corriden threw wide to first in the third inning of the second game. The only time Lajoie did not bunt, he hit a ground ball to shortstop Bobby Wallace, and he beat that one out too. Thus, Lajoie went 4-for-4 in the first game (three bunt singles and a triple) and 4-for-4 in the second (a sacrifice does not count as a time at-bat) or 8-for-8 for the day. He had done it. The Chalmers was apparently his, and the Sportsman’s Park crowd was ecstatic.

But had the Browns played fairly? Had their defense respected the game, or had manager O’Connor’s presumed orders benefited Lajoie unethically? Should the Chalmers really be his? Ty Cobb, after he learned what had happened, voiced no objection. Seven of Cobb’s teammates, though, showed where their feelings lay. They sent Lajoie a congratulatory telegram. The *Plain Dealer* called him “the champion batsman of America,” but admitted that his “triumph is tinged with a charge of illegitimacy.” St. Louis newspapers pulled no punches. The headline in the *Post-Dispatch* read: “BASEBALL GETS BLACK EYE WHEN BROWNIES PULL.” The *Globe-Democrat* agreed: “POOR EFFORT OF ST. LOUIS PLAYERS TO CUT OFF HITS CAUSES [LAJOIE] TO

MAKE EIGHT AND DEVELOPS OPEN SCANDAL.” The *St. Louis Star* was even blunter: “IN ‘FIXED’ GAME BROWNS LOAF AND LET LARRY WIN.” Somewhat astoundingly, the loudest protest came from Lajoie himself. He complained that the official scorer had called that one bunt a sacrifice. “I should have had nine safe drives put to my credit in that many trips to the plate,” he grouched.⁷

The season thus came to an end, but the controversy did not. Ban Johnson sprang into action. He wore two administrative hats in baseball’s hierarchy, and he donned both simultaneously. As chairman of the three-man National Commission, the governing body for the major leagues, he announced an immediate end to awards like the Chalmers. As league president, he declared that no one would know for sure who had won the batting title until league secretary Robert McRoy completed his review of the statistics for the entire season, a process that would take several weeks. Johnson met with Browns President Robert Lee Hedges in the league’s Chicago office on Tuesday, October 11. Hedges had watched the doubleheader on Sunday, and he had left after the second game without saying even one word to O’Connor. After conferring with Johnson, Hedges stuck by his club. According to the *Globe-Democrat*, “the Mound City

This was one of no fewer than five poses of Lajoie featured on American Tobacco baseball cards printed in the three seasons surrounding the Lajoie-Cobb batting race. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)



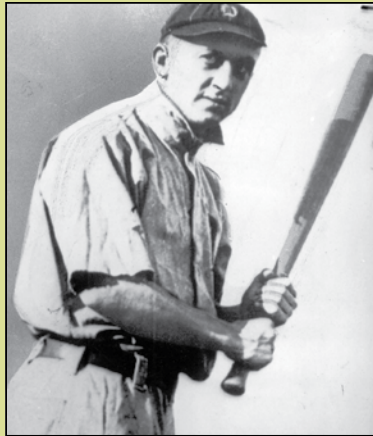
magnate supported King Larry, asserting that the latter was entitled to each and every one of the eight hits credited to him According to Hedges, infielder Corriden played way back on the grass every time Larry went to bat, as if fearful lest the Cleveland slugger might line drive in his direction.”⁸

Johnson also summoned Corriden and O’Connor to his office to explain, from their points of view, exactly what had happened during the games in question. Did the Browns act in a way that favored Lajoie in the batting race? Had O’Connor ordered Corriden to play unusually deep? If so, did this instruction violate the spirit of fair play that underlies baseball’s rules? Johnson met with the

pair on successive days. After interviewing the rookie third baseman, he exonerated him. “I found that Corriden had a perfectly logical and, as I believe, an absolutely truthful explanation of the reason why Lajoie made so many hits,” Johnson said. “There has been some misrepresentation over the character of the hits. One that was represented as a bunt was a low drive which it would have been dangerous to field. Others were cleverly placed bunts that a veteran fielder would have difficulty in getting and a player new in major league company might be excusable for missing them.” Johnson concluded, “I give Corriden a clean bill and do not think any suspicion of blame should attach to him.”⁹

WHO WON THE BATTING TITLE?

After Lajoie went 8-for-8 on the season’s last day, most observers believed that he had raised his batting average enough to pass Cobb and win the batting title. Compiling the official statistics for the American League was the responsibility of league secretary Robert McRoy, but before he had a chance to finish his calculations, league president Ban Johnson upstaged him. He issued a report on October 16, just a week after the season ended, in which he said, “A thorough investigation has satisfied me that there is no substantial ground for questioning the accuracy of any of the base-hits credited to player Lajoie of the Cleveland club” But then Johnson dropped a bombshell, finalizing Lajoie’s average at .384095 and Cobb’s at .385069. “We will certify,” he said, “that Cobb has a clear title to the leadership of the American League batsmen for 1910 and is therefore entitled to the Chalmers”



How could this be? How had Lajoie’s 8-for-8 not been good enough? In fact, McRoy’s official statistics would have given the Clevelander the title except for a complex bookkeeping error. Here’s how that happened. For each player in the league, McRoy maintained ledger sheets recording all offensive and defensive statistics accumulated on a day-by-day basis. When McRoy did his review of Detroit’s games, he believed he discovered a game that had been omitted from the ledger sheets for every Tiger. Detroit had played a doubleheader on September 24 followed by a single game on September 25. The clerk who entered these three games did so incorrectly, listing them as a single game on the 24th and a doubleheader on the 25th. McRoy apparently saw only one game for the 24th on the ledger sheets, so he ordered the clerk to add in the second game of the doubleheader without seeing that it was already there, albeit in the wrong place.

Cobb had come to bat three times in the second game on September 24 and gotten two hits. This extra—and

incorrect—2-for-3 was enough to push Cobb back in front of Lajoie, .385 to .384, despite the 8-for-8. That’s what prompted Johnson’s proclamation, and that’s how the record stood for seven decades.

In the late 1970s, a group of independent baseball researchers led by statistician Pete Palmer reviewed these handwritten data while inputting them into computers. They discovered the extra Detroit game and Cobb’s incorrect 2-for-3. But they also found a more mysterious error. At some point, the extra game had been crossed out for every Tiger—except Cobb. Had McRoy discovered his own mistake and corrected it? If so, when? Did Johnson order that Cobb’s two extra hits be retained as a way to redress what had happened in St. Louis? Or was the clerical error not found until later, perhaps as the statistics were being prepared for publication? No one knows. Palmer told *The Sporting News*, then

an authoritative baseball weekly, what he had discovered, and *TSN* approached the Baseball Records Committee, a group whose job it was to review proposed corrections to supposedly final statistics. The committee discussed the Cobb-Lajoie situation in December 1980, but Commissioner Bowie Kuhn announced that the records would not be revised. “While we appreciate the devotion of various statisticians in researching this case,” Kuhn said, “the league presidents and I have determined that the recognized statistics on Cobb and Lajoie in 1910 should be accepted. . . . The passage of seventy years, in our judgment, also constitutes a certain statute of limitations as to recognizing any changes in the records with confidence of the accuracy of such changes.”

Baseball researchers are not bound by any such folly as a statute of limitations on the search for statistical truth. Today’s baseball record books deftly list Cobb as the recognized batting champion (.383) but Lajoie as the statistical leader (.384). The Chalmers Company was equally adroit, deciding to give a car to both players. This decision pleased Cobb, but not Lajoie. He accepted his car only after his wife insisted he do so.

Looking ahead to his meeting with the manager, Johnson seemed willing to bring the entire matter to a swift conclusion. "From all the testimony I have been able to secure, all of which agrees with that of Corriden, I think that O'Connor can give explanations which should satisfy the most prejudiced fan that there was no intentional wrongdoing." Indeed, after Johnson spoke with O'Connor on the following day, he cleared him, too. According to the *Post-Dispatch*, "He [O'Connor] told the League executive that every man on the Brown team was out to win in last Sunday's game[s]. He added that Corriden played every ball as he should and that there was no collusion. The League president was apparently impressed that everything

was on the square ... At the conclusion of the interview, Johnson announced that he was convinced that the Browns manager did not intentionally give Larry a hit."¹⁰

Yet within hours, Hedges fired O'Connor. The *Post-Dispatch* printed the owner's lengthy statement in its entirety revealing, at least to some, its contradictory nature.¹¹

Hedges re-asserted O'Connor's dismissal in a letter dated November 29, 1910: "This is to confirm what you have understood for more than a month past, viz.: that the St. Louis American League Baseball Company has elected to terminate its contract with you as a member of the St. Louis American League Base Ball Club for the season of

STATEMENT OF ST. LOUIS BROWNS PRESIDENT ROBERT LEE HEDGES UPON FIRING MANAGER JACK O'CONNOR:

Since I have been connected with organized baseball, dating back to the year of 1902, the name of the club that I have directed has never directly nor indirectly been used in connection with any baseball scandal.

The closing games of the season last Sunday were attended by deplorable incidents. I deplore them as much as do any of the baseball patrons who witnessed the games, and I have not permitted them to go unnoticed. Much has been said in the newspapers, both at home and abroad, and nearly everyone has had his public say. I have made as careful and exhaustive an analysis and investigation of the situation as I believe is within my power.

I have not found the slightest evidence of crookedness in last Sunday's games. If I had, I would never stop until I succeeded in putting every man connected with it outside of the pale of organized baseball, even though it cost me every penny I possess. I want it distinctly understood that after a thorough investigation I am making no accusations of dishonesty of any kind against any one.

The vast majority of those who witnessed the games were partisans of Lajoie. They gave unmistakable demonstrations that could lead to no other conclusion. They wanted Lajoie to get hits. Lajoie got hits. The same public the very next day cried "Shame" to that which they the day before desired.

Baseball, while conducted by a private corporation, is at the same time a pastime sport of the public. No one ever committed anything crooked in baseball of recent years and no one has dared to attempt it. The man in the grand stand or the bleacher keeps his eyes fastened on every act of every player. Every "fan" knows the fine points of the game. You cannot fool him. Baseball is an open book. Every page is easily read and no suspicious act, however honest the player may be, should ever be permitted to besmirch it; and none will be, if within my power to prevent.

That is the reason that baseball today is the one clean sport for the amusement of millions. It is up to every club owner in every league to realize the responsibility

he owes to the sport-loving public. It is up to every club owner to keep the game clean and free from any taint of suspicion or scandal, and every player should recognize this. Fairness and openness in baseball are the secret of its success. Suspicion, gambling, crookedness, hippodroming or faking of any sort would be its downfall.

I am satisfied that there is no misconduct on the part of Manager O'Connor or player Corriden and that scout Howell did nothing wrong in asking the question of the official scorer; and yet, because there has been so much criticism in the newspapers, I have decided on the grounds, irrespective of any other reasons if I had any before last Sunday's games, to discontinue the services of O'Connor as manager or player, and of Howell as a scout or otherwise.

Corriden is still young in age and experience in the game. This is his second year in professional baseball. His judgment of play is not matured. I have seen him quoted as being afraid that he would have had his teeth knocked out if he played in on Lajoie. I have read interviews in which O'Connor is quoted as having said he instructed Corriden to play back. Why should this young Corriden, with a brilliant future before him, attempt anything which would bar him from public favor and consequently from organized baseball? Such a supposition is silly and absurd on its face.

The investigation has proven beyond a doubt that none are guilty of misconduct or dishonesty. But I positively will not permit anything to occur at my park, even though through error of judgment alone, that would allow the finger of suspicion to be pointed against anyone connected with the St. Louis Browns in any capacity.

As for O'Connor, he is hereby tendered his unconditional release. As for Harry Howell, no man ever worked harder for the success of the St. Louis Browns than he. He threw his arm out in the services of this club two years ago, and for that reason I have kept him in my employ and might have so continued him had it not been for the unfortunate notoriety given him.

R.L. HEDGES

Reprinted from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 16, 1910

1911, and that you have been tendered your unconditional release.” We know this much is true because the letter was included in O’Connor’s petition when he filed suit against the Browns in the City of St. Louis Circuit Court on October 12, 1911, just a bit more than a year after the games in question. This case has come down to us as *John J. O’Connor v. St. Louis American Baseball Company, October Term 1911, Series A (No. 74234)*. After much legal to-and-fro, the case went to trial on May 12, 1913, with the jury rendering its verdict the same day. The Browns, who lost at trial, appealed to the St. Louis Court of Appeals, and the appellate case is now designated *O’Connor v. St. Louis American League Baseball Co., 193 Mo. App. 167, 181 S.W. 1167 (1916)*. Because of the work of dedicated public servants employed by the City of St. Louis and the Missouri State Archives, the case file for the original trial is retained permanently by the records manager for the circuit court, while the case file for the appellate judgment is part of the records of the state appellate court housed in Jefferson City. Both files are open to researchers.¹²

The two case files complement one another. The file for the original trial does not contain a transcript of witnesses’ testimony, but it does include a 28-page typewritten version of the Mandate of Judgment (the decision of the Court of Appeals). The appellate case file includes printed copies of the briefs for both the Browns and O’Connor and a printed copy of the “Appellant’s Abstract of the Record” (the transcript of the original trial). From these documents, we can determine exactly how this case proceeded and how it was decided.

O’Connor’s petition was rather straight forward. He declared that he had signed a contract in October 1909 to manage the Browns for two seasons, 1910 and 1911, at a salary of \$5,000 per season, that he had been discharged “without just cause or reason,” and that the St. Louis American League Baseball Club, “although often thereto requested, has failed, refused, and neglected to pay plaintiff the balance due under terms of said contract.” O’Connor asked the court to award him the \$5,000 he said the club owed him plus “his costs in this behalf expended.” Counsel for the defense filed a perfunctory answer on November 21, 1911, but it wasn’t until May 1913 that the case truly began to unfold. Even a century ago, the wheels of justice ground slowly.¹³

The Browns’ first answer was standard and automatic, a general denial signifying nothing: “Comes now the defendant in the above entitled cause and for answer to plaintiff’s petition herein denies each and every allegation therein contained.” It was their amended answer, filed on May 8, 1913, that contained the essence of the club’s intended defense. The Browns made two arguments. First, they alleged that O’Connor had signed a contract, “which expired on or about the 15th of October, 1910,” that is, a contract for one year, not two. Second, they declared that O’Connor had “failed to render faithful performance to the defendant of his duties under said contract.”¹⁴

The amended answer directly contradicted what Johnson and Hedges had said in 1911. It explained the

“keen rivalry” between Lajoie and Cobb in fine detail and then claimed that the plaintiff, who “was desirous of favoring the said Lajoie, . . . instructed one Corriden, who played the position of third baseman for the defendant club, to play so far back of his regular and ordinary position as third baseman as to allow the said Lajoie to make what are known as ‘base hits,’ which the said Lajoie could not and would not have made had it not been for said instructions by said plaintiff to said Corriden.” The answer continued, “By giving said instructions to said Corriden, the plaintiff violated his contract with the defendant and brought the game of professional baseball into disrepute in the City of St. Louis and throughout the country; and because of his unfaithful act under said contract, the plaintiff was given his unconditional release from the employment of defendant.” The Browns asserted that O’Connor was not under contract for 1911, but if he was, “which defendant denies, the conduct and behavior of said plaintiff as above set out forfeited his further right to employment by the defendant and entitled the defendant to dispense with the further services of the plaintiff.”¹⁵

Four days later, the trial began before a jury of twelve men (Messrs. Allard, Goerisch, Guest, Hartog, Hassbaum, Koerdt, Marsh, Mueller, Ralls, Reise, Rowberry, and Smith), the Honorable George C. Hitchcock presiding. The only witness for the plaintiff was Jack O’Connor himself. He testified that he and Hedges had signed a two-year contract, but his attorney, Horace L. Dyer, said that O’Connor did not have a copy. “It was not executed in duplicate,” Dyer said. Resolving this deficiency proved somewhat confusing. O’Connor’s original petition had included two typewritten pages, “as near as I could [to] what this contract called for,” Dyer said, but it was both incomplete and unsigned. Judge Hitchcock then asked the defense to produce the original contract, but the Browns’ attorney, George H. Williams, was unable to do that either. “We can’t find it,” he said. Instead, Williams delivered “the best thing I can,” an unsigned contract form with some blanks filled in and some clauses inked out to replicate, Williams said, the contract executed by club and manager. O’Connor testified that this approximation was accurate, and the court admitted it into evidence, even though Williams, who had produced it, objected.¹⁶

This perplexity aside, the version of the contract thus introduced as Plaintiff’s Exhibit B contained language that spoke to the heart of the case. Paragraph 1 defined O’Connor’s compensation, namely that “the said party of the first part [the Browns] agrees to pay unto second party [O’Connor] the sum of **Five Thousand Dollars** per season, **for 1910 and 1911.**” But Paragraph 2 defined the life of the contract, “beginning on or about the **1st** day of **April, 1910**, and ending on or about the **15th** day of **October, 1910**, which period of time shall constitute the life of this contract [boldface in original to indicate words and numbers handwritten in ink].” Thus, it seemed from the evidence that O’Connor and the Browns had signed a contract that was simultaneously a two-year contract and a one-year contract.¹⁷



So popular was second baseman Lajoie that Cleveland changed its team name from the Broncos to the Naps—its fifth team name in four seasons. The team became the Cleveland Indians in 1915. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

Cross-examining O'Connor, Williams ignored the contract and bore in on the manager's conduct during the doubleheader:

- Q. What instructions did you give Corriden that day?
 A. I gave them all instructions to play back for Lajoie; my whole infield and outfield.
 Q. Had you given Corriden any special instructions that day?
 A. No, sir; I hadn't given Corriden any special instructions that day.
 Q. And Corriden played back for Lajoie?
 A. Yes, sir.
 Q. How far back?
 A. About eight feet.
 Q. You mean eight feet further back than the ordinary and regular position?
 A. Yes.¹⁸

Williams then asked O'Connor if he had instructed his pitchers to walk certain batters or hit them so that Lajoie could maximize his times at-bat. "No, sir," O'Connor said. He then continued, "I played that game of ball the same as any other game of baseball I was ever in in my life." Williams countered, "But suppose that you had arranged with your own pitchers to pass batters on the other team so as to get Lajoie up the greatest number of times?" O'Connor objected, "That was never done in baseball; I never heard of it."¹⁹

Dyer took the opportunity for re-direct examination. He asked his client, "Who has the reputation of being the hardest hitting batsman in baseball?" O'Connor replied, "Lajoie."²⁰

After a break for lunch, the defense began its case with testimony from Hedges, the Browns' owner. Williams

asked him what he did immediately after the conclusion of the doubleheader. "After the game was over, I immediately left the city—I was compelled to go away. Before I returned, I went to Chicago. I told Mr. Johnson how the game appeared to me." Williams asked, "Did Mr. Johnson, as president of the American League, give you any instructions in regard to Mr. O'Connor?" "Yes," Hedges answered, "he told me to get rid of O'Connor; he wasn't good for baseball."²¹

Dyer cross-examined Hedges and tried to ask him about the length of O'Connor's contract. Williams objected, saying "The contract was signed, and it speaks for itself," but Judge Hitchcock, aware that the contract before the court did not exactly "speak for itself," allowed Dyer to continue. He asked, "In regard to the seasons 1910 and 1911, in the first clause of the contract, who wrote that in the original contract, Mr. Hedges?" "I did," said Hedges. "I also wrote October 14 [*sic*], 1910, too, at the

Cigarettes weren't the only tobacco product promoted on the backs of baseball cards. Polar Bear chewing tobacco, "now and always will be the best scrap tobacco," carried this image of Nap Lajoie. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

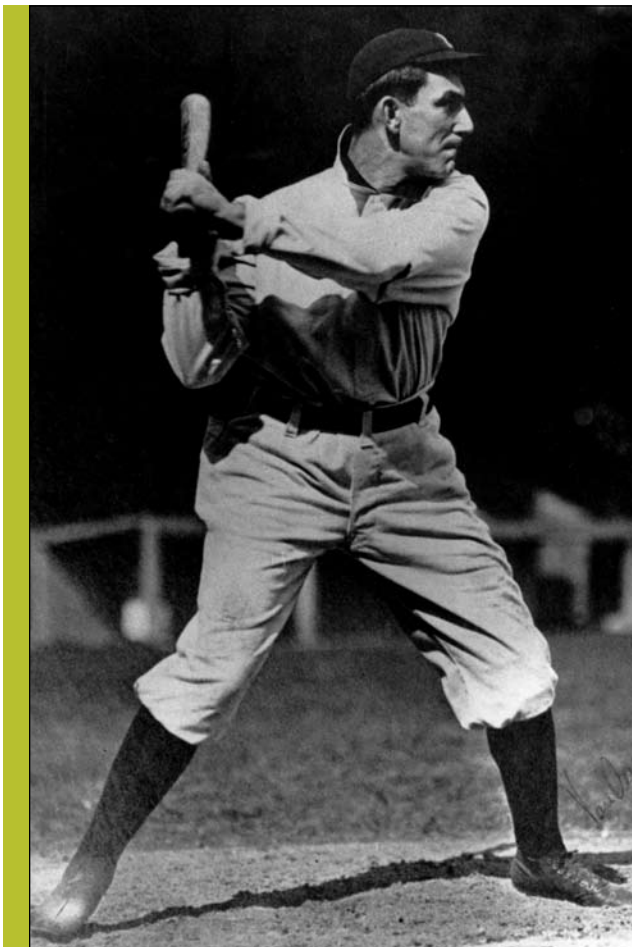


signing of the contract.” Dyer then asked if O’Connor had indicated to Hedges that he would not sign a contract unless it was for two years. “I don’t think he said that,” replied Hedges. “I think he wanted a two-year contract, but I don’t think he refused to sign a one-year.” Dyer continued, “Did you finally agree to give him a two-year contract with the team?” Hedges answered, “I gave him a contract which states in the body of that contract that the contract terminates on or about the 15th day of October, 1910. I gave him that contract.” Dyer persisted, “Why did you write in the first clause of the contract, ‘For 1910 and 1911’?” Hedges responded, “Why, the chances are it was a mistake.”²²

Dyer then asked Hedges if he had said anything to O’Connor after the doubleheader about the way the Browns had played the games. “I did not. No; I have nothing to do with the ball club on the field,” Hedges answered.²³

The next defense witness was Richard J. Collins, a newspaperman for the *St. Louis Republic* and the official

lajoie had a lifetime batting average of .338; he was one of only four players in the modern era to be intentionally walked with the bases loaded (the other three are Del Bissonette, Barry Bonds, and Josh Hamilton). (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)



scorer for the second game of the doubleheader, but his testimony added little, if anything, to the Browns’ case. “There was a ball game played—nine innings of baseball,” Collins said. “I didn’t see anything out of the ordinary; they were playing ball; that is all I can recall about it.” A second sportswriter, Clarence F. Lloyd of the *Post-Dispatch*, added that “My recollection is that he [Corriden] played pretty deep during the second game.”²⁴

At this point, the defense introduced into evidence a deposition Corriden had given in St. Louis on April 19. At the start of the deposition, Dyer had objected to any questions about the game itself. O’Connor’s suit, he said, alleged that the Browns had breached his two-year contract, and testimony about the games was “incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial.” Williams countered that O’Connor’s conduct under the contract was relevant, and the commissioner handling the deposition allowed the questioning to proceed. Corriden said that his manager had told him to play back for Lajoie, “back to the edge of the grass.” But in cross-examination, Dyer asked Corriden if O’Connor had told him to play back for others on other teams. Corriden said, “Yes, sir.” Dyer then asked, “Do you think it was anything strange in Mr. O’Connor telling you to play back when Lajoie came up?” Corriden answered, “No, sir.”²⁵

Two fans at the doubleheader, Sidney Cook and Julius B. Croneheim, testified next. They said they had heard O’Connor instruct his pitchers to walk and hit various Cleveland batters and that O’Connor had upbraided Corriden for playing defense too aggressively. But Dyer, in cross-examination, questioned exactly what they had heard and whether they could be absolutely sure they could recognize O’Connor’s voice.²⁶

The plaintiff had deposed Ban Johnson in Chicago on May 8, and at this point, the defense introduced his testimony, even though it seemed to favor O’Connor. Johnson had written to O’Connor in February 1911, nearly three months after Hedges’ letter to O’Connor, saying that “I find upon investigation that you were not signed [for 1911] to manage the St. Louis ‘Browns,’” but Dyer had gotten Johnson to admit that managers’ contracts were not filed with the league office. Thus, said Johnson, “I couldn’t tell you the time or the amount of the contract,” and when Dyer asked, “You don’t remember if it was for one year or two years,” Johnson said, “I could not tell you.” Johnson’s conclusion that O’Connor was not signed for 1911 came from “some correspondence that I had with Mr. Hedges on the subject.”²⁷

In cross-examination, Williams asked about Johnson’s investigation that led, despite his public utterances, to his demand that the Browns discharge O’Connor. “Corriden said emphatically that O’Connor had instructed him to play back,” Johnson answered. “In my talk with O’Connor, he denied that he had instructed him to that effect.” In rebuttal, Dyer asked Johnson if third basemen on other teams also played deep for Lajoie. “No, I don’t think so,” was the answer. But when Dyer asked if it was a manager’s duty to position his players “where he thinks they will be able to make the best play,” Johnson said,

“Exactly.” At that point, the defense rested, but its case, one must say, seemed extremely tentative and confused.²⁸

Dyer offered one rebuttal witness, recalling O’Connor to the stand. He refuted Sidney Cook’s claim that he had ordered his pitchers to walk or hit any batters, and he contradicted Cook’s assertion that he had criticized Corriden’s fielding. O’Connor also repeated that he and Hedges had talked about the length of the contract before it was signed and that they had agreed on two years. He gave details of their conversation. “Why,” asked Hedges, “do you want a two-year contract?” O’Connor replied, “Your club is way down, and it [one year] would not give me a chance—by taking a one-year contract it would not give me a chance to show what I could do.”²⁹

After the conclusion of all the testimony, Judge Hitchcock gave his instructions to the jury. If they found that O’Connor and the Browns had signed a two-year contract and that O’Connor had been fired “without just cause or reason,” the verdict must be for the plaintiff. The burden, said the judge, is on the defendant to prove that O’Connor “was desirous of favoring Lajoie.” If they found that Lajoie was such a superior batter that O’Connor had exercised his best judgment in ordering his fielders to play deep, the verdict must be for the plaintiff. However, Hitchcock continued, if the jury found that O’Connor had instructed Corriden to play deep “as to allow the said Lajoie . . . to make what are known as base hits . . . and that as a result of the giving of said instructions to said Corriden . . . Lajoie succeeded in making base hits which otherwise he would not have made . . . then you should find that the acts of the plaintiff were in violation of his duty to the defendant . . . and your verdict should be in favor of the defendant.”³⁰

The members of the jury deliberated for just a bit more than thirty minutes and decided the case for O’Connor. We do not know the substance of their discussion, but it is reasonable to suggest that they were unconvinced that Hedges, who had been unable to produce the original contract, had signed O’Connor for one year only and were uncertain that O’Connor had done anything wrong in managing his club on that October day. Or perhaps they rebelled at the high-handed authority Johnson had exercised when he ordered O’Connor fired. Or perhaps the jurors were simply happy that Lajoie had gotten the hits he had, irrespective of how that happened.³¹

The Browns moved for a new trial, which was denied, and then filed an appeal on September 8, 1913. The appellant’s brief listed twelve alleged errors arising from the original trial, but the gist of its argument was two-fold: first, that the weight of the evidence introduced at trial, especially the testimony of Sidney Cook, proved that O’Connor was fired for good and sufficient cause; and second, that the contract signed by O’Connor and Hedges was so full of mistakes that the court should have regarded it as defective and, therefore, inadmissible.³²

Dyer’s brief to the appeals court answered both allegations. He argued that “the right to discharge . . . is for the jury” to decide and that the signed contract was ambiguous, not defective, that it was admissible, and that



Ban Johnson (1864-1931) founded the American League as a second major league as a contrast to the rough-and-tumble National League. Johnson left the league as its president after the 1927 season, when he battled Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis over Landis’ granting amnesty to Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker for alleged game-fixing in 1919. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

Baseball cards like these of Ty Cobb and Napoleon Lajoie from 1909-1911 helped promote the “national pastime.” These were distributed through purchases of tobacco products by American Tobacco, a trust broken up by the federal government in 1911. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)



the jury had the power to decide what it meant. Further, he wrote that “It is an elementary rule of law that if two clauses of a contract are so totally repugnant to each other that they cannot stand together, the first shall be received and the latter rejected.” In other words, the paragraph setting the length of the contract at two years should be accepted, while the paragraph giving its expiration after one season should be ignored.³³

The court of appeals did not file its opinion until January 4, 1916, more than five years after the doubleheader in question. The court ruled, 3-0, for O'Connor. On the question of O'Connor's conduct, the decision said, "There is no substantial evidence that plaintiff was desirous of favoring Lajoie in his contest for batting honors over Cobb" and so there was no good cause for O'Connor's discharge. The justices then addressed the conflicting clauses in the contract. The court said:

It is to be remembered that this contract was drawn up by the president of the defendant corporation, and, as in all like cases, is to be construed most strongly against the person drawing it. The question then is, which of these clauses is to control? Both cannot stand together. We are not without what we think conclusive authority on this question. . . . If the agreement in the prior clause is antagonistic to the agreement in the later clause, one must yield to the other. But it is a well-settled principle of construction that if two clauses are repugnant, and cannot stand together, the first will stand and the last will be rejected.³⁴

Finally, the appeals court drew this conclusion:

If plaintiff was not then under contract for the season of 1911, why go to all this trouble and expense, for Johnson says he paid the expenses of O'Connor and the others to get them to Chicago, to inquire into the conduct of O'Connor in a season which had ended? There is no pretense that this inquiry was with a view to employ O'Connor for another season; it was to determine whether his then contract for the season of 1911 should remain in force. . . . If the contract of employment ended with the season of 1910, all this was uncalled for. . . . By its course of conduct alone, if for no other reason, defendant put a construction upon the contract by which it is bound.³⁵

The Browns had lost at trial and had not been vindicated in the appeal. The last item in the case file indicates that on May 24, 1916, the judgment against the Browns was satisfied. O'Connor got his \$5,000, but he never again managed in the major leagues.³⁶

NOTES

¹ O'Connor's major league statistics can be found at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/o/o%27conja01.shtml>. His minor league statistics can be found at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/player.cgi?id=oconno006joh>. His statistics as a manager can be found at <http://www.baseball-reference.com/managers/o%27conja01.shtml>. On the history of the Cardinals in the 1890s, see Frederick G. Lieb, *The St. Louis Cardinals: The Story of a Great Baseball Club*, Reprint (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 21-23.

² The best biography of Lajoie is J. M. Murphy, "Napoleon Lajoie: Modern Baseball's First Superstar," *National Pastime*, Spring 1988.

³ Charles C. Alexander, *Ty Cobb* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), especially chapters 1-6.

⁴ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 9, 1910.

⁵ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 9, 1910.

⁶ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 10, 1910.

⁷ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 10, 1910; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 10, 1910; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 10, 1910; *St. Louis Star*, October 10, 1910;

⁸ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1910; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 12, 1910.

⁹ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 14, 1910.

¹⁰ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 16, 1910.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Hedges' letter to O'Connor is in the case file for *John J. O'Connor v. St. Louis American Baseball Company*, October Term 1911, Series A (No. 74234).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; case file for *O'Connor v. St. Louis American League Baseball Co.*, 193 Mo. App. 167, 181 S.W. 1167 (1916).

¹⁷ Case file for *O'Connor v. St. Louis American Baseball Co.*, 193 Mo. App. 167, 181 S.W. 1167 (1916).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Globe-Democrat*, May 13, 1913.

³² Case file for *O'Connor v. St. Louis American Baseball Co.*, 193 Mo. App. 167, 181 S.W. 1167 (1916).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Case file for *John J. O'Connor v. St. Louis American Baseball Company*, October Term 1911, Series A (No. 74234).



“The Barbarous Custom of DUELING”

Death and Honor on St. Louis’ Bloody Island

BY MARK NEELS

For the student of the Antebellum South, the drama is a familiar one. Two men, most likely prominent members of society, have an argument. One man publicly insults the other. Perhaps the altercation becomes physical. The victim of the assault feels that his pride is injured, and later sends a close confidant to the home of the assailant

to demand an apology. When one is not forthcoming, the matter is settled between the two men on “the field of honor.” Such was the story of the American duel—an occasion occurring countless times throughout Antebellum America, and one that earned an otherwise useless sandbar, directly opposite the city of St. Louis, the nickname

(Above) Even as late as the eve of the Civil War, dueling was still a method of settling political disputes in California, as seen here in a depiction of the Broderick-Terry duel in 1859. But even then, the *Code Duello* was followed. In this case, the mortally wounded David Broderick became something of a martyr after his deathbed claim that “They killed me because I was opposed to the extension of slavery and the corruption of justice.” (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

(Below) Since it was in neither Illinois nor Missouri, the wooded sandbar island in the Mississippi River became the site for St. Louis’ most notorious duels, earning it the name “Bloody Island,” as seen on this map. Today’s Poplar Street Bridge spans the south edge of the site. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



“Bloody Island.” Situated between the state boundaries of Illinois and Missouri, for over fifty years Bloody Island was the setting for altercations between some of the most famous people in the history of the region and the nation.

By the mid-nineteenth century, St. Louis had achieved status as a bustling river city with a blossoming commercial district extending some nine or ten city blocks west from the riverfront; west of the commercial district began the residential area.¹ Presumably, citizens living there would rise with the dawn and travel the few miles to the commercial center, where they would practice their trades. And while the residential area was surrounded by large, open, dispersed plats of land, the denseness of the commercial district clearly indicated the importance of river transportation to the city’s economic prosperity. Located in the river, halfway between Illinois and Missouri not far from this center of commerce, was Bloody Island.²

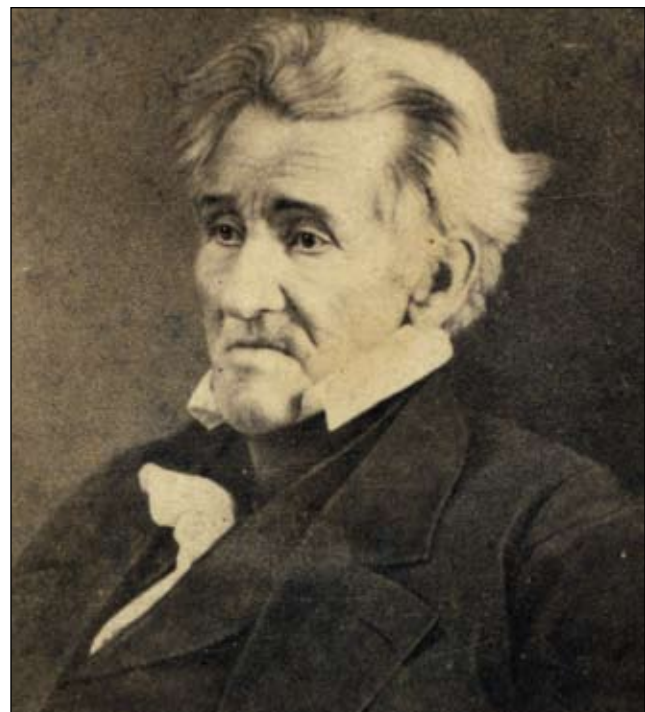
Along with the occasional violent encounter with their Native American neighbors, St. Louisans also suffered from the volatile nature of frontier politics. “In Missouri, lawyers, judges, politicians, and newspaper editors competed to be recognized as frontier aristocrats and found themselves forced to abide by the rigid gentleman’s code of honor.”³ The “code of honor”—dueling—began in the Old World. According to British historian Jeremy Horder, “In England the practice of duelling, private combat *suel a suel* upon a point of honour, was engaged in with more or less vigour from the latter part of the sixteenth until well into the nineteenth century.”⁴ Possibly the most famous testament to the practice of duelling was a set of guidelines drafted by a group of Irishmen entitled the *Code Duello*. Written down in 1777, this compilation of 26 steps answered questions such as how many shots should be fired by principals for certain offenses. Step IX, for example, stated that if a person was cheated during a card game, satisfaction could be achieved after the exchange of a single shot. Step VII, however, dictated that satisfaction for a physical assault required firing no fewer than two shots. Never mind that the first shot might be all that was needed to incapacitate an opponent!⁵

Soon, the *Code Duello* was in use throughout most of the English-speaking world. Following the War for Independence, Americans adapted the *Code Duello* for a whole new generation of American aristocrats. In 1838, former South Carolina governor John Lyde Wilson—himself a champion of the duel—even printed a revised *Code Duello* for future generations. Although it is not clear whether any of the participants actually read Wilson’s text, it is this set of revised guidelines that most of the St. Louis duels followed. Entitled *The Code of Honor or Rules for the Government of Principals and Seconds in Duelling*, Wilson’s text attempted to provide a more detailed set of guidelines than the original *Code Duello*—encompassing every foreseeable situation that might culminate in a duel. Consequently, the *Code of Honor* provided an entirely new section dictating the actions of seconds in transmitting a challenge (such as commanding seconds to attempt, if possible, to *prevent* principals from demanding

satisfaction), paired down the *Code Duello*’s list of acceptable reactions to various insults, and spelled out the proper actions of principals and seconds on the actual field of honor. Noticeably absent from both the original *Code Duello* and the later *Code of Honor* is any mention of principals standing back-to-back and then counting out the distance in steps before firing at one another as we often picture them from popular culture. This melodramatic scene appears to be mainly legend—used to provide a sense of drama in retellings—and probably only occurred in European duels.⁶

Duelling was no stranger to American politics. As the 1804 confrontation between Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton and Vice President Aaron Burr attested, some duels had long-lasting national consequences.⁷ On the frontier, the advancement of a man’s political career sometimes *depended* on his prowess on the dueling ground. This perhaps explains why so many duels involved men of high society. According to historian Ryan Dearing, “Superior status did not automatically transfer from the regions of provenance, but had to be earned all over again on the frontier.”⁸ As such, up-and-coming elites in frontier society were unwilling to suffer any setbacks to their prospective fortunes—if they had the ability to control them—and therefore saw the protection

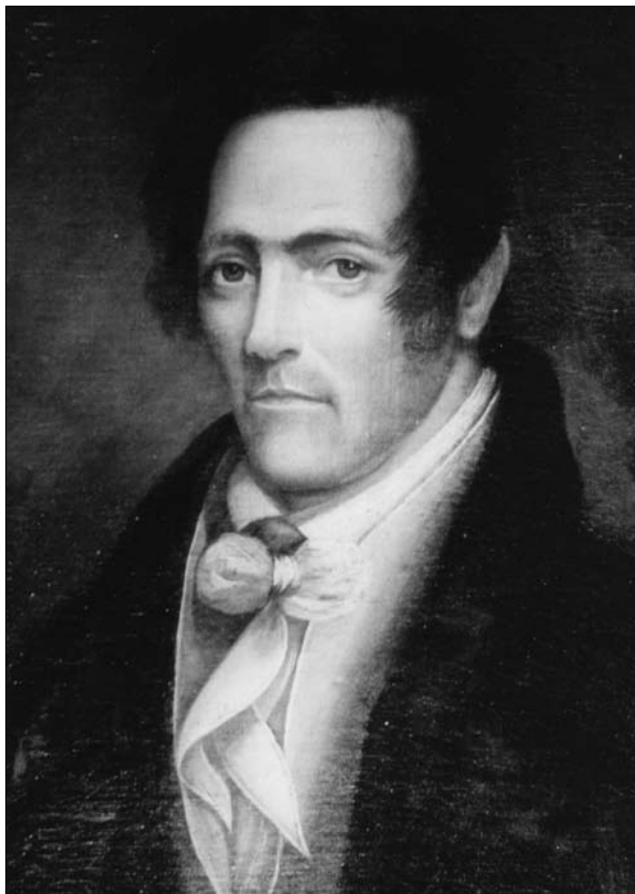
The election of Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) to the presidency in 1828 represented a shift in American politics. Not only did far more people vote in the election, but Jackson was also the first president from the rough-and-tumble West, which included a reputation for violence, heroism, and dueling. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



of honor in association with the protection of their own futures.

The underlying emotions that culminated in duels were not class-exclusive. A lower-class man was just as interested in protecting his honor as an elite. Still, it was the wealthy that were more likely to settle disputes through duels (a type of combat that historian Bertram Wyatt Brown called “a prescribed form” of violence). “Just as lesser folk spoke ungrammatically,” Brown explained, “so too they fought ungrammatically, but their actions were expressions of the same desire for prestige.”⁹ While the lower class man defended his honor by demonstrating his strength in a brawl, those from the upper classes were compelled to prove their worthiness by participating in a more elaborate display of refined violence.¹⁰ Indeed, Andrew Jackson, arguably the most prominent western politician of his age, fought several duels before he was elected president. He was no stranger to street brawls,

The promising life of Joshua Barton (1792-1823), an attorney who was Missouri’s first Secretary of State, ended early when he died instantly in a duel on Bloody Island. It wasn’t his first experience, though. His first duel ended without harm against Thomas Hempstead, whose second was future Senator Thomas Hart Benton. He and Benton nearly met again a year later, in 1817, when he was a second to Charles Lucas, who was killed in his duel with Benton. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



either—giving credence to Jackson’s later claim to be a true man of the people. One such brawl occurred in Nashville in 1813 between General Jackson and his subordinate, future Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton.

Benton discovered that Jackson had been second in a duel that resulted in the humiliation of Benton’s brother, Jesse. In an effort to recover his brother’s honor, then-Colonel Benton resigned his commission in the army and publicly denounced Jackson’s character. No one insulted Andrew Jackson—especially not in public. Seeing the Benton brothers exit a building on a Nashville street a few weeks later, Jackson lunged at Thomas, chasing him back into the building. Jesse, preceding his brother inside, turned on Jackson as the general crossed the threshold and shot him in the upper arm. After Jackson’s friends joined the fray, Thomas was knocked down a flight of stairs. No one was killed in the altercation, but Jackson carried the bullet in his arm for the rest of his life, and the affair served as an example of how the defense of a man’s honor could command his interactions with others.¹¹

Just as the Nashville incident was not Jackson’s last violent encounter, so too it was not the last for Thomas Hart Benton. Fearing that Jackson’s newfound national popularity after the Battle of New Orleans would lead to further retribution from the general and his allies, Benton left Nashville in 1815. Landing in St. Louis, it was only a matter of time before he once more revealed his rugged frontier character.¹² Just a year later, Benton was involved as a second in a duel between St. Louis attorneys Thomas Hempstead and Joshua Barton. In a bloodless confrontation, both parties met on Bloody Island on August 10, 1816, and fired their weapons, but failed to meet their mark. The two “principals,” having achieved satisfaction, shook hands and promised each other no further ill will.¹³

It was not at all rare for duels to end peaceably. Indeed, aside from a few scrapes and bruises, Benton had emerged unscathed from his altercation with Jackson. And even though Jackson had taken a bullet in his upper arm, he too lived through the ordeal. The case of the Barton-Hempstead duel, however, illustrates how bloodless duels could be detrimental to a man’s reputation and career. So that the personal honor of Hempstead and Barton would not be called into question, both Benton and Edward Bates, a successful St. Louis attorney who served as Barton’s second, drafted and signed an account of the duel in which they swore “that the conduct of both gentlemen was perfectly honorable and correct.”¹⁴ Testimonials by the seconds in a duel were not unusual. The records of most of the confrontations included such accounts. In the case of the Benton-Bates testimonial, having two successful and professional men attest to the honorable actions of both Barton and Hempstead also assured that no further duels resulted from future accusations of cowardice.

None of Benton’s subsequent duels ended so smoothly. One year later, Benton—now himself a prominent attorney—became involved, first hand, in another public quarrel. Benton had recently come out in support of St. Louis property owners in their struggle against Judge Charles Lucas, who questioned whether land



Before moving to St. Louis, Senator Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858) was something of a noted duelist. He wounded Andrew Jackson in 1813, and was either a principal or a second in several duels in St. Louis, including one in which he mortally wounded fellow lawyer Charles Lucas, Jr. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

claims made while St. Louis was under Spanish rule could be recognized under United States jurisdiction. A conflict between Benton and Lucas' son, Charles, Jr., erupted while both were opposing counsel in a land case. In the St. Louis Circuit Court, Lucas accused Benton of intentionally misstating the truth in order to achieve a ruling in his favor. Benton, in response, accused Lucas of publicly defaming him in front of their colleagues at the bar—an accusation not dissimilar to the one General Jackson made against Benton three years earlier.¹⁵

While Benton demanded satisfaction, cooler heads prevailed and nothing came of this initial confrontation. However, the nature of their occupations as attorneys forced Benton and Lucas into frequent contact. Persons so opposed to one another, professionally and personally, were bound to come to blows eventually. On Election Day 1817, Lucas suggested to his close associates that Benton was not qualified to vote because he had failed to pay his taxes. Learning of Lucas' accusation, Benton dismissed it, saying that he was not about to allow some young "puppy" to "cross [his] path."¹⁶ On August 11, a letter arrived from Lucas at Benton's residence. "I am informed you applied to me the day of the election the [insult] 'Puppy,'" wrote Lucas. "If so I shall expect that satisfaction which is due from one gentleman to another for such an indignity."¹⁷ Benton promptly accepted the challenge.

On August 12, both men, their seconds, and two surgeons rowed out to Bloody Island; even then a fairly large sand bar covered with small cotton trees and shrubbery. At a distance of thirty feet, Benton and Lucas took aim at one another and fired their pistols. Benton was hit in the knee, while Lucas received the more painful wound of a ball through the throat. The wound was not mortal, however, and while Lucas claimed that satisfaction was achieved, Benton demanded that the pistols be reloaded for another shot.¹⁸

Why Benton was not satisfied with the wound he had inflicted on his opponent is unknown. However, by

In 1817, Thomas Hart Benton shot and killed Lucas in a duel on Bloody Island. This is a photo of Benton's dueling pistol, used in Lucas' demise. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)





The St. Louis levee from Illinois near the site of Bloody Island, c. 1847. By the time dueling ended in St. Louis, the city was a thriving commercial center. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

recalling his previous visit to the dueling grounds during the Barton-Hempstead duel of a few years previous, a likely reason can be surmised. As revealed by the testimonial from that duel—which Benton co-wrote—duelists who walked off the field of honor (regardless of the wounds they suffered) struggled afterwards to guarantee their honor in the minds of those who were not witness to the actual event. Perhaps Benton did not fully trust the testimony of his second, and felt that more was needed to ensure his honor.

Regardless of his motives, Benton was eventually persuaded to retract his demand. Lucas, however, failed to let matters rest. A few weeks later, he circulated a rumor that, instead of being politically motivated, Benton's flight from Tennessee was actually an escape from criminal charges. In response, Benton renewed his demand for justice. Replying to this second challenge, Lucas professed his innocence and suggested that the accusations attributed to him were more likely the fabrications of Benton's close friends and allies. "A respectable man in society cannot be found who will say that he ever heard any of the reports alluded to from me," wrote Lucas. "I think it more likely they have been fabricated by your own friends than circulated by any who call themselves mine." Nonetheless, because Benton had presented a formal challenge, Lucas concluded, "I shall give you an opportunity of gratifying your own wishes or the wishes of your news carriers."¹⁹

On September 27, after retracing their previous route to the dueling ground, both men faced off at the more dangerous distance of ten feet. This time, Benton's bullet was more accurate, piercing Lucas's heart, killing him instantly and silencing him forever.²⁰

In the following decades, duels such as those already described became common occurrences on Bloody Island. This increasing streak of violence pressed lawmakers to outlaw "the barbarous custom of dueling" and charge murder on any person who killed another in the name of honor.²¹ Unfortunately, the statute had little effect. Bloody Island existed in the "no man's land" between Illinois and Missouri. Regardless of its proximity to the Missouri side, the island remained outside of the state's jurisdiction, and this loophole in the anti-dueling statute paved the way for the most devastating duel in St. Louis history.

The more duels that occurred on Bloody Island, the more sensational they became. By the late 1830s, duels in St. Louis were citywide events. With the greater part of St. Louis society eagerly following reports of these quarrels in the local papers, the stakes in affairs of honor grew higher than ever before. Why did society at large become so interested in these duels? It was not uncommon in an age when political contests were reported with colorful description in the local papers for the local population to serve in what Brown described as, "a Greek chorus in [a] Sophoclean drama."²² The intricate process

by which satisfaction was sought, and the dramatic steps (almost stage directions) by which the duel was followed were as entertaining as anything likely to be seen on the stage. In some ways, these altercations—with their public displays of bravado and melodrama—resembled scenes straight out of *Hamlet* or *MacBeth*.

In some cases, violent interactions on the St. Louis dueling ground even attracted national and international attention. In *American Notes for General Circulation*, novelist Charles Dickens described a visit to the American Midwest. While crossing the Mississippi River from Illinois to Missouri near St. Louis, he recorded, “passing,

Thomas Biddle (1790-1831) moved to St. Louis as a paymaster for the United States army in 1820, but he already had ties to the West. He served under Zebulon Pike in the War of 1812. His brother Nicholas, who was president of the Second Bank of the United States at the time of his brother's death, was hired by William Clark after the death of Meriwether Lewis to transform their journals of their western expedition into a book. He came from a prominent Philadelphia family; one aunt married James Wilkinson and another Rodolphe Tillier (see “George Champlain Sibley: Shady Dealings on the Missouri Frontier”). Biddle died in a duel on Bloody Island in 1831 at the hand of Spencer Pettis. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



on the way, a spot called Bloody Island, the dueling ground of St. Louis, and so designated in honour [sic] of the last fatal combat fought there, which was with pistols, breast to breast.” Both combatants, he continued, “fell dead upon the ground; and possibly some rational people may think....that they were no great loss to the community.”²³ The duel to which Dickens referred occurred on August 27, 1831, and stands as the best example of how a person's perceived honor and masculinity could be connected to national events, and how those events sometimes had calamitous results on the local level.

On that August day, owing to the political turmoil eventually known to history as the “bank war,” Major Thomas Biddle, brother of Second Bank of the United States President Nicolas Biddle, faced Congressman Spencer Pettis, a Jacksonian Democrat from St. Louis. Pettis had been elected to Congress two years earlier, and was running for reelection at the time of the confrontation. After Pettis scathingly criticized Nicolas Biddle and the Bank (which Jackson opposed, culminating in his famously vetoing the renewal of the bank's charter in 1832), a series of editorials by an anonymous author using the pseudonym “Missouri” appeared in the *St. Louis Beacon* angrily accusing the congressman of being “a dish of skimmed milk” and a “plate of dried herrings,” concluding that Pettis was unfit to occupy his office.²⁴ Although such insults were certainly not uncommon in Antebellum politics (especially during an election year), they were enough to bruise the congressman's ego and he promptly responded to them in the paper under his true name.

Recalling this exchange more than forty years later, St. Louisan Edward Dobyns, a close associate of Pettis, recalled the congressman as “a refined gentleman, mild and affable, not given to bitterness or vindictiveness in his intercourse with gentlemen.”²⁵ However, Pettis failed to live up to his friend's posthumous description. He was certainly *not* above publicly accusing Biddle of authoring the original defamatory editorials. Furthermore, wrote Pettis, hiding his true identity with the use of a pseudonym forced Pettis to question Biddle's manhood.²⁶

This affront enraged Biddle. Barging into Pettis' hotel room where the congressman was laid up by an illness, Biddle physically beat Pettis with a cowhide whip. The attack caused such a commotion that Senator Benton, whose residence was directly opposite the hotel, rushed out to investigate. By then, Biddle had fled the scene and Pettis' pride seemed more hurt than his person.²⁷ Pettis threatened to seek retribution through the *Code Duello*, but Benton managed to calm his wrath. Interestingly, although he always regretted his own duel with Charles Lucas (in an argument that was more concerned with politics than for the life or peace of mind of his own friend), Benton suggested that the congressman's possible injury or death before the upcoming election would allow Biddle or one of his pro-bank partisans to steal the Congressional seat. For the present, then, Pettis should bring Biddle before a justice of the peace. Then, after the August election, Pettis could seek “such [a] course as [he] may deem proper to



The outcome of the duel between Spencer Pettis and Thomas Biddle in 1831 was almost certain, since the two men stood just five feet apart, as seen here with their seconds looking on. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

vindicate [his] honor as a gentleman.”²⁸

Despite the peculiarity of Benton’s advice, it is nonetheless in accordance with a crucial clause in Wilson’s *The Code of Honor*, which directed the actions of seconds. Rule Number 2, under the subheading “Second’s Duty Before Challenge Sent,” suggested that a person acting as a second in a duel was obligated to “use every effort to soothe and tranquilize your principal.” Furthermore, the rule stipulated that it was the responsibility of the second to remain objective, and to “endeavor to persuade

him [the principal] that there must have been some misunderstanding in the matter.”²⁹ Because Benton’s advice to Pettis so coincides with Wilson’s guidelines, it is possible that Benton might have thought that he would be second in a duel to occur in the near future. Likewise, it may also be possible that Benton was familiar with Wilson’s pamphlet—although there is no evidence that he owned a copy. Regardless of whether he read Wilson’s pamphlet or not, it is clear that by advising Pettis not to immediately seek retribution from Biddle, Benton was

complying with a socially prescribed idea of how the close confidant of an injured party should act in such a situation.

Reluctantly, Pettis yielded to Benton's advice and had Biddle arrested on the very same day as the attack. Pettis' friend Dobyns was present at the hearing. When the case was brought before Judge Peter Ferguson on a peace warrant, Dobyns recalled, "Judge Ferguson very reasonably supposing in view of the outrage on Mr. Pettis that he might commit a breach of the peace by an attack on Major Biddle, very properly bound both parties to keep the peace."³⁰ Ferguson's injunction doubtlessly haunted Pettis. For the rest of the campaign, his constituents persistently reminded him of it whenever he attended a public event. Dobyns recalled of one such meeting, "here was an immense crowd from far and near in attendance to hear what a man might have to say who had been caned and had not asked for satisfaction."³¹ Instead of the political issues, the injury to Pettis' honor became the story of the election.

This failure, in the eyes of the people, to properly defend his honor was not enough to cost Pettis his seat. In August, he won reelection. One biographer even suggests that sympathy for this dishonor done to him might have helped Pettis' cause.³² Nonetheless, the long and arduous defense of his character during the campaign convinced Pettis that justice for Biddle's insults was still a necessity. Also, just as Benton's advice to postpone a duel coincided with a certain stipulation in Wilson's *Code of Honor*, so too Pettis' persistence in demanding satisfaction—even though delayed—also complied with the protocol on the proper course of action for an insulted party. In Wilson's pamphlet, the second step under the subheading "The Person Insulted, Before Challenge Sent," stipulated that if the insult came from a physical assault, regardless of whether a postponement was achieved by the second, the injured party was "bound still to have satisfaction, and must therefore make the demand."³³ After spending several days training with an expert duelist, Pettis authorized Captain Martin Thomas to present an official challenge to Biddle.

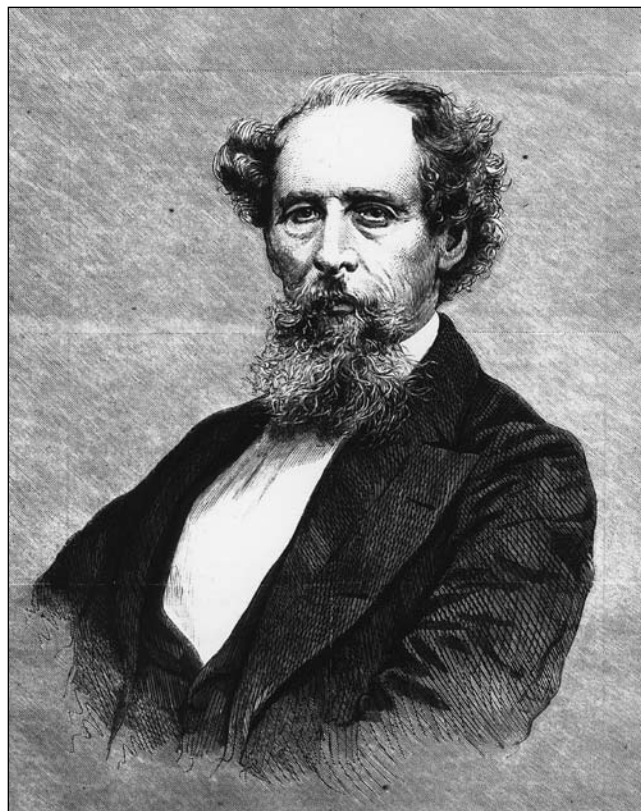
Being the challenged party, Biddle was given the option of choosing the method of the duel under the original *Code Duello*.³⁴ He chose pistols and set the date for August 27, but then surprised all persons involved by setting the distance at five feet. According to one of Biddle's biographers, the distance related to his nearsightedness.³⁵ With no objection from Pettis, on the afternoon of Friday, August 27, the two parties—consisting of Pettis and Biddle, their seconds, and two surgeons—rowed the short distance to Bloody Island. Given the publicity of this ongoing quarrel, it is no surprise that news of Pettis' challenge proliferated throughout St. Louis society. As the men rowed across the Mississippi, a large crowd of onlookers (Dobyns estimated over a thousand people) assembled along the Missouri shore to witness the culmination of nearly two months of political banter. Dobyns, ever the attentive witness, was among the crowd that day: "I saw the parties....pass over and heard very distinctly the report of the pistol; saw the friends running to the river for water—both were mortally wounded."³⁶

The results of this duel were devastating. All the eyewitness accounts from that day testify that both men fell simultaneously. Pettis' ball lodged in Biddle's abdomen, while Biddle's passed through Pettis' side. The attending physicians declared the wounds to be mortal, and both men remained conscious just long enough to forgive one another. Most likely concerned with their posthumous reputations, even on the verge of death both men clearly saw it necessary to complete the steps of the *Code Duello* by declaring that satisfaction was achieved. After being carried back to the city, both lingered in agony. Pettis survived until the afternoon of August 28, Biddle a short time longer.³⁷

By the mid-1830s and 1840s, political feuding made duels a common occurrence in St. Louis. However, the prominence of Biddle and Pettis in local society and the consequence of their altercation made this particular duel unique. According to Dickens and subsequent historians, it was this duel that ultimately earned Bloody Island its notorious nickname.³⁸

Likewise, this engagement had a deep and long-lasting impact on the political and social culture of the city. With the violent deaths of these men, it is as if St. Louisans came to their senses and no longer saw the logic in defending one's honor and masculinity at the

By the time Charles Dickens (1812-1870) came to the United States in 1842, he was already a literary celebrity. In his *American Notes for General Circulation*, he commented on the island in St. Louis which the gentry called its "field of honor." (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



muzzle of a gun. In the days following the deaths of these two prominent citizens, the populous turned out *en masse* for their respective funerals. Surprisingly, considering the politics involved in the culmination of the duel, the city newspapers reported that party loyalties were transcended, and men from all political backgrounds mourned their losses equally.³⁹

Duels continued to take place on Bloody Island for several years after the Biddle-Pettis affair. In 1842 Abraham Lincoln may have become the most famous person to step foot on the island's shore. After Lincoln wrote a scathing editorial in the Springfield newspapers against fellow Illinoisan James Shields, Shields challenged Lincoln and both parties made their way to the Missouri-Illinois border. Accounts of this confrontation are somewhat unclear as to where the duel actually took place, but most put the meeting somewhere south of Alton, Illinois. The popularity of Bloody Island and its proximity to Alton, makes it a viable candidate for the location. Either due to his unfamiliarity with the *Code Duello* or because he thought himself a bad shot with dueling pistols, Lincoln chose to fight with sabers. The duel was averted at the last minute, by most accounts, when Shields realized that the length of the saber, combined with the length of Lincoln's arm significantly hampered Shields' chances of leaving the field of honor unscathed. Immediately settling their affairs and declaring no further ill will toward each other, the Lincoln-Shields affair became, in the history of Bloody Island, the most famous duel that never was.⁴⁰

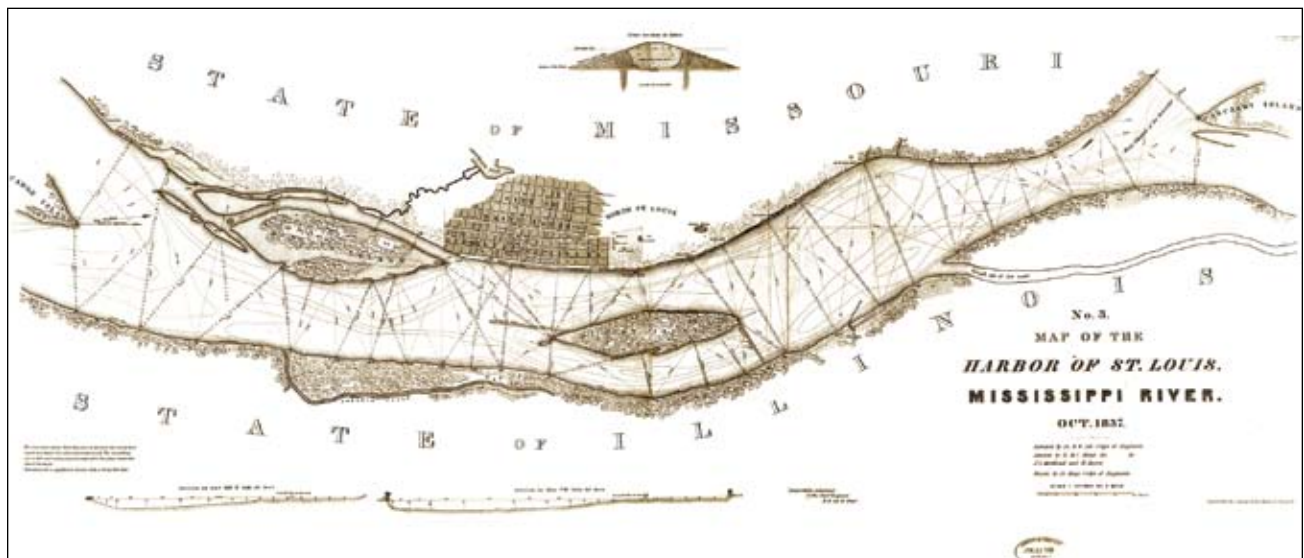
Although a few duels did occur after 1842, the Biddle-Pettis and Lincoln-Shields altercations marked the beginning of the end of the island's notorious history. Around the time of the earlier duel, a massive effort was

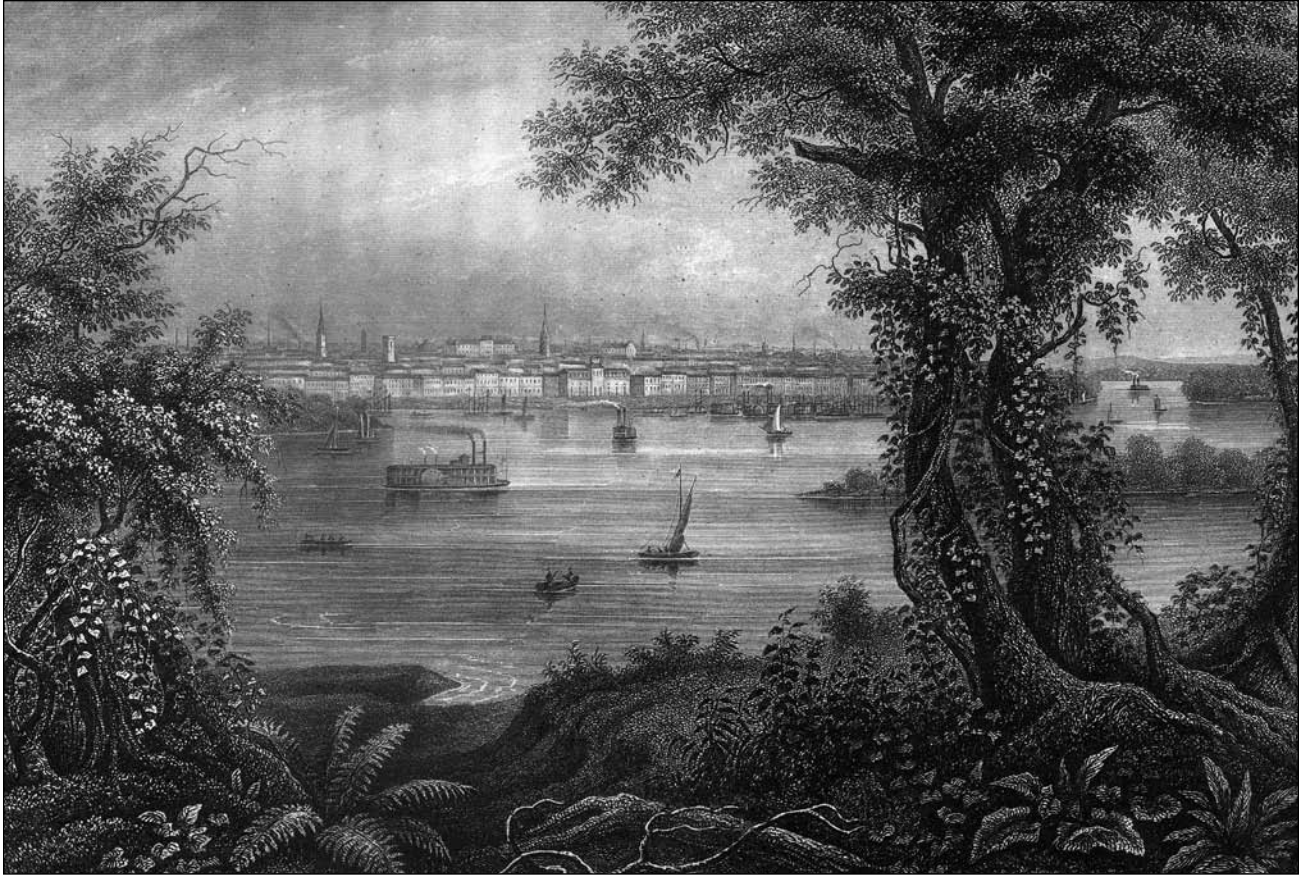
undertaken involving a collaboration of municipal, state, and federal authorities to merge Bloody Island with the Illinois shore. Whereas the island had for many years been accepted as a natural part of the river facade, in the mid-1830s, it suddenly began to grow in size. As an increasing amount of sediment collected in the channel between the island and the river's western shore, a massive portion of the riverbed began to emerge when the water level was low, impeding the ability of riverboats to dock at the St. Louis wharf. Realizing that it lacked the necessary resources to confront this problem on its own, in January 1834 the Missouri legislature forwarded a memorial to Congress requesting federal aid to remove this growing threat to the city's economy. To further enhance the necessity of federal intervention, the memorial added—almost as an afterthought—the suggestion that the rising riverbed might also impede delivery of vital supplies at the docks of the federal arsenal just south of the St. Louis harbor.⁴¹

The federal government responded to this request by directing the Army Corps of Engineers to draw up a plan for improving river conditions at St. Louis. The solution, presented a few months later by Charles Gratiot, Chief Engineer of the Army Corps of Engineers, called for building a series of wing dams along various islands surrounding Bloody Island and reinforcing its western shore with "braces" to keep the current directed between the sand bar and the St. Louis wharf. Redirecting the current of the river toward the western shore, he hoped, would wash away the island and deepen the riverbed in front of the pier.⁴²

In response to Gratiot's plan, Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers deployed Lieutenant Robert E. Lee

Since it first appeared in 1798 as a sandbar, what came to be called "Bloody Island" was becoming a hazard for the growing steamboat trade at the St. Louis levee. Currents in the river created (or removed) such sandbars, but it was the work of army engineer Robert E. Lee that removed the dueling site for good. Lee was sent to St. Louis as an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers in 1837 to design a system to keep the river's channel deep and hugging against the levee at St. Louis. In the process, Lee's design also ended duels by flooding the site of them. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)





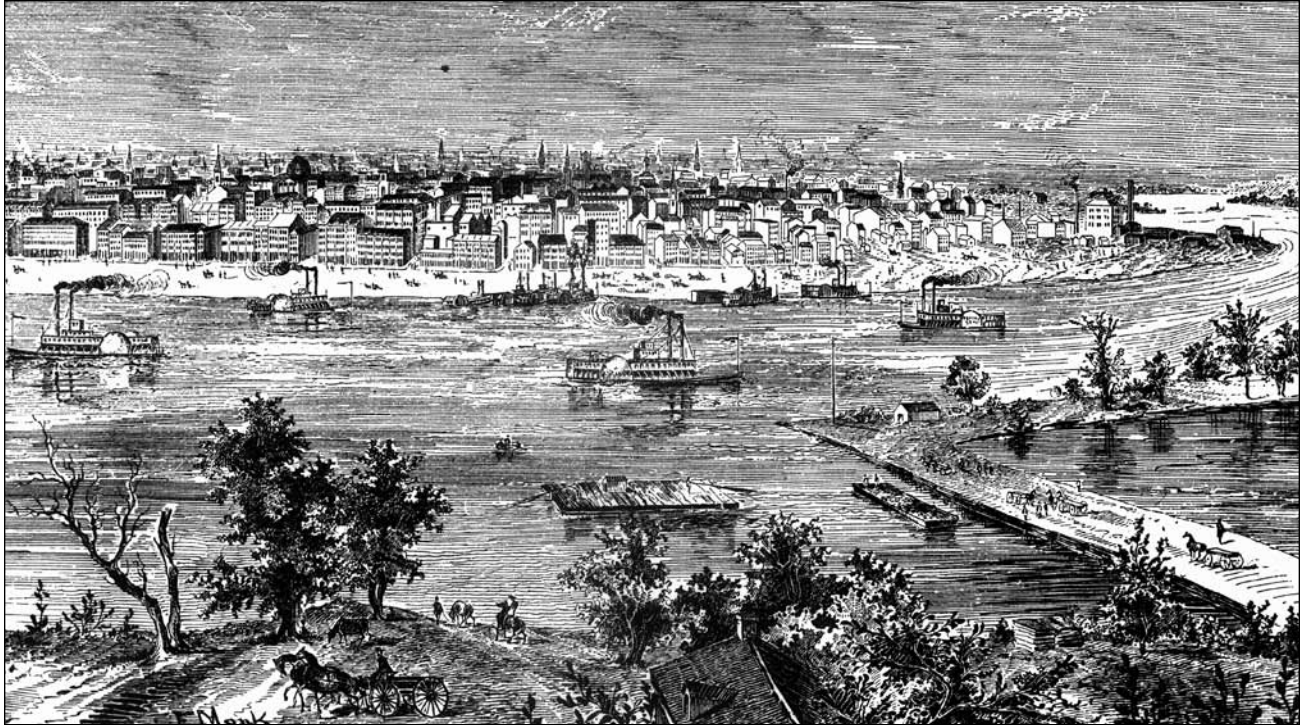
This idyllic view of St. Louis at mid-century belies the activities that took place near the foreground on the east side of the Mississippi River. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

(the future Confederate general) to oversee the project. Arriving in St. Louis in early 1838, Lee first undertook a new survey of the Mississippi from the confluence with the Missouri to south of St. Louis and proposed revisions to Gratiot's original plan. These revisions called for the fortification of the entire eastern channel of the Mississippi—from the Illinois shore to the northern tip of Bloody Island. Likewise, a wing dam would be constructed at the southern end of the island, extending into the channel parallel with the Missouri shore. Both structures, Lee explained, would be built from columns driven deep into the mud. A series of angled struts would connect and reinforce the main columns, and a planked wharf would then cap the structures. Finally, brush would be packed tightly between the columns, so as to collect sediments flowing south in the current and thus further reinforce the skeletal frames. This design, he hoped, would redirect the river current to the west—deepening the channel opposite the St. Louis wharf and causing the gap between the island and the Illinois shore to shallow.⁴³

Although Lee devised a program with the assistance Henry Kayser (a German-born St. Louis cartographer and employee in the office of the U.S. Surveyor-General) to keep costs low by utilizing local supplies, labor, and transportation, the final plan cost hundreds of thousands

of dollars, and took more than a decade to complete. Likewise, the project was constantly set back by bad weather, changes in municipal governments, and even an injunction from the court in Madison County, Illinois (which sought to capitalize from St. Louis' plight, and thereby attract river traffic to the Illinois side of the river). Nonetheless, by 1853, the project had achieved its desired goal. Within a few years of completing a final set of dikes and dams along the island's western front, the gap between the island and the Illinois shore shrank to a trickling brook. Additionally, the channel in front of St. Louis remained sufficiently deep, even when the water levels were low, to allow large steamboats access at all times of the year. By the mid-1850s, for all intents and purposes, Bloody Island ceased to exist.⁴⁴

What remains of Bloody Island today? Not much. The small brook separating it from the Illinois shore continued to fill with sediment until the island eventually lost all semblance of its former identity. As a traveler reported to the *New York Times* in 1869, the former St. Louis dueling ground was now a mere shadow of its former self. After the ground was laid with railroad tracks, the new village of East St. Louis appeared along its banks.⁴⁵ Today the eastern stanchions of the Eads Bridge stand where once stood such influential citizens as Thomas Hart Benton



By the time St. Louis was a bustling commercial center seen in this c. 1851 view, dueling had fallen completely from favor—perhaps in part because the site for it had disappeared. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

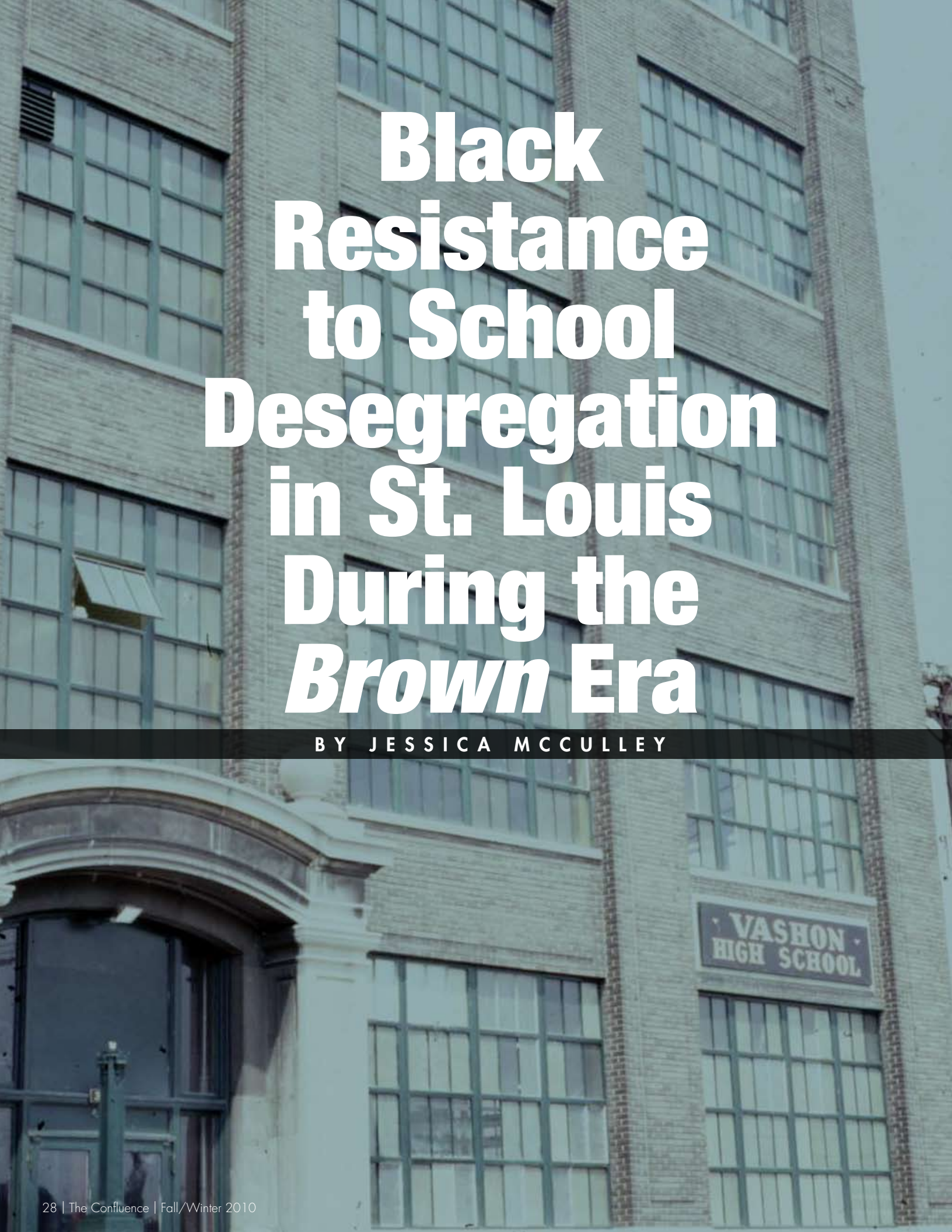
and Abraham Lincoln. An observer perched on the grounds of the St. Louis Arch facing west would never know that directly across the river once stood an island that, while harmless upon first glance, provided the rich

and influential an outlet for defending their honor and masculinity, becoming nationally renowned for the duels fought there.

NOTES

- ¹ 1853 Map of the City of St. Louis and Vicinity, Missouri State Archives, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/dueling/mapofstlouis1853.pdf>.
- ² No. 3. Map of the Harbor of St. Louis, Mississippi River, Oct. 1837. Surveyed by Lt. R.E. Lee, Corps of Engineers, assisted by Lt. M.C. Meigs, J.S. Morehead, and H. Kayser. Drawn by Lt. Meigs, Corps of Engineers, Washington D. C.: Executive Department Publications, 1838.
- ³ Missouri State Archives, “The Age of Political Duels,” *Crack of the Pistol: Dueling in 19th Century Missouri*, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/dueling/political-duels.asp>.
- ⁴ Eric Horder, “The Duel and the English Law of Homicide,” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 12 (1992): 419.
- ⁵ In his history of dueling in Europe and America, Robert Baldick transcribed the entire text of the *Code Duello*. It can be found in Robert Baldick, *The Duel* (New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1970), 33-36.
- ⁶ John Lyde Wilson, *The Code of Honor or Rules for the Government of Principals and Seconds in Duelling* (Charleston: James Phinney, 1858), 11-33.
- ⁷ For a very good recounting of the Hamilton-Burr duel, see Thomas Fleming, *Duel: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and the Future of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- ⁸ Ryan L. Dearing, “Violence, Masculinity, Image, and Reality on the Antebellum Frontier,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, 100 (March 2004): 29.
- ⁹ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 353.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 356.

- ¹¹ Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 54-57; Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2008), 29-30, 38.
- ¹² Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 57; Perry McCandless, "Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858)" in *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*, Lawrence O. Christensen, William E. Foley, Gary R. Kremer, and Kenneth H. Winn, eds. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 59.
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- ²¹ Missouri State Archives, "1822 Anti-Dueling Statute," *Crack of the Pistol: Dueling in 19th Century Missouri*, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/education/dueling/1822Anit-DuelingStatute.pdf>.
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- ²⁶ *Ibid.* Dobyys is likely quoting directly from the actual article. However, I was unable to procure a copy of this edition of the newspaper, along with the accompanying article. Still, secondary depictions of this duel (mainly retold in the biographies of Biddle and Pettis in the *Dictionary of Missouri Biography*) indicate the phrasing of these insults as genuine.
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Black Resistance to School Desegregation in St. Louis During the *Brown* Era

BY JESSICA MCCULLEY

The following article is the 2010 recipient of the Jacqueline Tatom Award, granted by the St. Louis Metropolitan Research Exchange in conjunction with the Sam Fox School of Washington University, the Des Lee Collaborative Vision at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and the East-West Gateway Council of Governments. This award commemorates Jacqueline Tatom, an architect, urban designer, and teacher whose work explored the metropolitan landscapes of St. Louis and its environs. The award is presented to a student paper at an area university or college that offers new insights about St. Louis and/or its surrounding region in Missouri and Illinois. Jessica McCulley is a graduate student in the History Department at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Even today, Americans are aware of the remarkable inequalities in the segregated society of the Deep South prior to the civil rights movement and the mass resistance that it confronted. The discriminatory practices and disproportionate funding of the educational system resulted in a movement to overturn the existing *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896 that deemed separate-but-equal facilities constitutional and replaced the ruling with legislation mandating integration. The renowned case that resulted in a federal step toward dismantling legal segregation was the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision of 1954.

As with any groundbreaking court decision intended to completely reorganize society's hierarchy, *Brown* was met with severe resistance. The majority of this resistance originated from white segregationists of the South, but there was significant resistance from black Americans as well. With the mandate for public school desegregation, members of the African American society responded with varying reactions and views. Those who were victims of the inferior education system in the South or other parts of the country were strong supporters of the *Brown* case in most instances. However, there were members of the pre-*Brown* black society who managed to build separate-but-equal communities, some of which were the most successful at maintaining a separate-but-equal society with equivalent but segregated public school systems. Despite common misconceptions, communities such as these existed; St. Louis was one of the most thriving examples, whose black members were less accepting of integration as segregation continued to offer them particular opportunities.¹ That is, a large number of black St. Louisans did live in a separate-but-(more or less)-equal society, where public schools were less discriminatorily funded in comparison to their Southern counterparts.

This essay discusses the reaction to the *Brown* decision within the St. Louis black community and explores the actions of a group of St. Louis Negro Teachers² that openly resisted public school desegregation. This group of St. Louis Negro Teachers' main objective was to pass a bill in Missouri's legislature that would have given each school district local option regarding integration.³ Even though not successful, this group had a specific position within the St. Louis debate about

school desegregation. Among the massive amount of deliberation concerning school desegregation between white segregationists and black integrationists, another debate coexisted among black integrationists and black educators, not about whether school desegregation was a moral obligation or a necessary step toward civil rights, but rather the intangible cost of integration. What aspects of the black community were African Americans willing to forfeit in exchange for the promised equality of *Brown*? Was employment of African American teachers one of those aspects?

Two main ideas emerged from this debate. First, there was significant resistance to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision within the St. Louis black community; the resistance was led by a group of educators who fought to maintain their employment and therefore the mildly lucrative establishments that the separate-but-equal practices legalized by *Plessy v. Ferguson* starting in 1896, and was strictly adhered to in Missouri. Second, this resistance to public school desegregation in St. Louis was met with considerable counter-resistance among other members of the St. Louis black community, especially those involved with the St. Louis black press and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Missouri as a Separate-but-Equal Leader

At the time of *Brown*, St. Louis was home to half of the 300,000 African Americans who lived in Missouri, with the other half distributed throughout the state and with heavy concentrations in Kansas City and the Southeast.⁴ St. Louis sustained the largest and arguably the most prosperous black community in the state of Missouri at this time.⁵ As compared to the South, Missouri was regarded as an impartial and prosperous environment for African Americans even during the height of the civil rights movement. One author in 1956 put his finger on the dual nature of Missouri in an article in the *Journal of Negro Education*, noting that while Missouri is often regarded as a southern state, it "is so closely allied in its interests with the Midwest that the Negro has not fared as poorly as he has in some southern states."⁶ Even George Lipsitz, author of Ivory Perry's biography, *A Life in the Struggle*, regards St. Louis as a city that "had long enjoyed a reputation as a vital center for Afro-American life and culture."⁷ Lipsitz goes on to explain that St. Louis had this reputation mostly because of its successful black high school, Charles Sumner High School, the first black

(Photo left) When completed in 1931, Vashon High School was originally Hadley Technical High School for African Americans in St. Louis. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

secondary school west of the Mississippi River, and black community hospital, Homer G. Phillips Hospital.⁸ Both institutions were located in one of St. Louis' most prominent black neighborhoods known as "The Ville."⁹

Priscilla Dowden-White introduces the idea of the manipulation of public culture by St. Louis African Americans between the world wars. Despite legally mandated segregation, St. Louis blacks successfully developed an equal community by the 1950s.¹⁰ Not only did privately owned black businesses flourish, but so too did institutions that directly involved the public realm such as schools and hospitals.¹¹ Clarence Lang reiterates the importance of Dowden-White's argument of the manipulation of public culture by stating, "black St. Louisans used clientage, racial pragmatism, and interracial negotiation to stake claims on a continuing share of educational and health care resources."¹² In general, the mobilization toward available and more equal institutions caused the St. Louis black community to become more successful and prosperous, more specifically aiding the growing educational opportunities of the St. Louis black community.

To accommodate this large community, St. Louis City controlled the second largest segregated public school district in the United States prior to *Brown*, and even though segregated, all schools within the St. Louis Public Schools, both black and white, were funded comparably.¹³ According to a metropolitan St. Louis survey conducted in

1955,¹⁴ the average amount spent per pupil in the larger St. Louis metropolitan area was \$12,229.¹⁵ With this in mind, every student within the St. Louis City boundaries, which included some of the white and all of the black schools, was allotted between \$12,000 and \$18,000, which was at or well beyond the average.¹⁶ In comparison, every other state that mandated segregated schools gave significantly less funding to black schools with the only exceptions being Delaware, Oklahoma, and the rest of Missouri.¹⁷

Missouri was even considered a leader among other states that mandated segregated public school systems in regards to the equal educational opportunities that the state provided to black students.¹⁸ Prior to *Brown*, all Missouri students, regardless of color, attended school for the same term length and were taught using the same curriculum organized by a biracial committee of educators.¹⁹ Each Missouri school district spent an equal amount of money on each pupil despite the student's race.²⁰ Both black and white students in St. Louis and Kansas City were provided with the same textbooks chosen by a biracial committee of teachers.²¹ At the time of *Brown*, all the teachers in the St. Louis and Kansas City school districts were evenly qualified and paid; every teacher had a college degree and all were paid in accordance with the same salary scale.²²

Many black teachers and administrators of St. Louis Public Schools who attended St. Louis' all-black schools prior to the *Brown* decision regarded their schools as adequate or better.²³ The executive vice president of

When completed in 1937, Homer G. Phillips Hospital was one of the most prominent institutions in the segregated Ville neighborhood of St. Louis. It became one of the few nationally recognized, fully equipped hospitals for training African American doctors, nurses, and technicians. In 1955, St. Louis Mayor Raymond Tucker mandated that patients of all colors and creeds living in the western part of St. Louis must be admitted. Homer G. Phillips Hospital closed in 1979. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)





J. Milton Turner School, pictured here, was the most prominent public building in the Meacham Park community (later annexed by the City of Kirkwood). Meacham Park was a predominantly African American neighborhood in St. Louis County; in 1925, Kirkwood Public Schools completed Meacham Park School to replace the aged and substandard Booker T. Washington School. It was renamed J. Milton Turner School in 1932, commemorating James Milton Turner (1840-1915), a former slave who became a prominent politician after the Civil War. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

St. Louis' Harris-Stowe State College, Dr. George Hiram, had attended Simmons Elementary School in the prominent black St. Louis neighborhood known as The Ville.²⁴ In an interview, he characterized his early educational experience at Simmons as one with "remarkably fine teachers" and an abundance of books and supplies.²⁵ Doris Carter, principal at Carver Elementary School in St. Louis, was also educated under the segregated system, attending Lincoln Elementary School from 1945 to 1954. In addition to never recalling a shortage of books or supplies, she remembered being taught by a talented and involved faculty that would frequently visit their students' homes.²⁶ She even gave credit to these teachers for inspiring her to become an educator.²⁷

Equality Instead of Integration

In the mid-twentieth century, at the pinnacle of the civil rights movement, many African Americans, even those living in the Jim Crow South, expressed that they would live in a separate-but-equal society as long as it was truly equal.²⁸ They were even willing to accept segregation in exchange for access to decent jobs, housing, and education. Social scientist Gunnar Myrdal's findings reveal that even though southern whites were most concerned with thwarting social equality, blacks were least concerned with social inequality and were most troubled with the availability of jobs, housing, and education.²⁹ With this

in mind, African Americans, in general, were definitely not interested in integration. Many blacks thought that society's principal problem was racial equality and the availability of equal facilities, not racial integration.³⁰ Even NAACP representatives struggled to persuade members that integration would provide a better education for their black children than attempting to equalize the present segregated system.³¹

Throughout Missouri, integration remained unpopular even after the 1954 *Brown* decision. In Columbia, a town located in central Missouri, only six out of 110 African American students chose to attend a formerly all-white high school while the other 104 chose to continue at their all-black high school.³² In addition, 72 out of 78 African American junior high students in Columbia chose to remain at the all-black junior high school.³³



This science lab at Douglass School in Webster Groves, Missouri, was still segregated until the system integrated in 1956. That year, the district closed Douglass, originally named for abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

A similar situation resulted in the southeastern Missouri town of Poplar Bluff. In 1955, an article in the *Journal of Negro Education* discussing the status of integration in Missouri schools stated, "all Negro children chose to continue at the Negro school" in Poplar Bluff.³⁴ This fact was reiterated on February 13, 1956, when the *Poplar Bluff Daily American* featured an article with the headline "Both Races Appear Satisfied with Separate Schools in S.E. Mo."³⁵ Al Daniel, the author of the article, expressed that there was no demand for public school integration and since no African American students had applied for admission to any all-white schools, none had been refused.³⁶

Daniel also reported that similar circumstances existed in other southeastern counties such as Pemiscot, New Madrid, Dunklin, Stoddard, Scott, and Mississippi.³⁷

Clarkton, a small town located in Dunklin County, also observed instant resistance to integration. After the Clarkton Public School Board voted to desegregate the schools in 1954, white parents were not the only group to begin resisting immediately.³⁸ African American parents were uncertain and apprehensive about integrating their children into the white schools, fearing that they would be subjected to racial violence.³⁹

In St. Louis City, nine high schools were in existence in 1954, seven white and two black.⁴⁰ Of the 4,275 black students enrolled in St. Louis' only two black high schools, Sumner and Vashon, less than fourteen percent (only 591) integrated after the *Brown* decision.⁴¹ Of those 591 students, 425 left Vashon and Sumner in order to attend Soldan-Blewett High School, a high school in the Cabanne area of St. Louis located just a mile or so southwest of The Ville neighborhood.⁴² The Cabanne neighborhood had already been experiencing a growing black population after World War II when many large single-family homes were converted into apartment buildings.⁴³ Therefore, integration allowed a more convenient high school location for the Cabanne black community who were obligated to send their children to either Sumner or Vashon prior to *Brown*. In addition, because the area was already in the process of being introduced to residential integration, the community was most likely more adaptable to educational integration.

Blacks were also concerned that forced racial integration within the education system could produce feelings of isolation or estrangement among black students.⁴⁴ A lawyer representing the NAACP responded to this particular fear by announcing that if integration led to an increase of black student dropout rates, it was a necessary consequence since there are always casualties in any form of social change.⁴⁵ This was not the only fear among African Americans, though. Throughout the country, even in the Deep South, blacks simply did not want their children to unite with white people.⁴⁶ Many were suspicious that integration would influence desertion of their own culture and impose assimilation into the white culture.⁴⁷ However, the most common cause of anxiety, particularly in St. Louis, was the *Brown* decision's impact on black schools, principals, and teachers.⁴⁸

Resistance and Counter-resistance

African American educators served as leaders of the black community during the pre-*Brown* years.⁴⁹ African Americans, especially those who benefited from flourishing black neighborhoods such as those in St. Louis, were proud of their schools and educators. Even after the *Brown* decision, the first black students who chose to transfer to previously all-white schools were accused of disloyalty to their black schools and neighborhoods.⁵⁰ Many black educators and black parents were apprehensive of desegregation because they feared it would demolish successful black institutions such as schools.⁵¹ When these fears were expressed to the NAACP's executive secretary, Walter White, who



A crucial step in breaking down codified segregation took place surrounding this house at 4600 Labadie in St. Louis in 1948. J. D. Shelley, an African American, purchased the house in 1945, but the family of Louis Kraemer, who lived on the street, sued Shelley to keep him from moving in, citing a 1911 covenant prohibiting the sale of any house to anyone of the "Negro or Mongolian race" for fifty years. The trial court ruled in Shelley's favor, but the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the decision. In May 1948, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that such restrictions violated the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

supported the NAACP's main intention of integration, he stated that "blacks needed to give up the little kingdoms that had developed under segregation."⁵²

In Missouri particularly, fear for the lack of employment opportunities for black educators was at the heart of the overall concern for the loss of black institutions.⁵³ Throughout Missouri, African American citizens began expressing concern for the loss of their schools and teachers. For example, in Poplar Bluff, black residents "wished to preserve the 'social and economic status of the negro teacher.'"⁵⁴ The principal fear was that in the event of desegregation, "there will be a lowering of general standards resulting from the loss of Negro teachers who would not have teaching positions."⁵⁵ What would happen to the black educators, deemed the leaders of

many black communities, when black schools were forced to close as their students were integrated into the white schools? When this fear surfaced as a national concern, NAACP lawyer Robert Carter responded that the NAACP and its legal team “really had the feeling that segregation itself was evil—and not a symptom of the deeper evil of racism.”⁵⁶ He also indicated that the box that blacks were forced into was segregation itself, and the majority of the nation would come to realize this as well.⁵⁷

While national leaders of the NAACP were speaking out against anti-integration efforts, the St. Louis branch of the NAACP reaffirmed its stance against segregation. In a 1953 issue of the *St. Louis Argus*, an African American newspaper, one article discussed the St. Louis NAACP’s views on anti-integration attempts, noting that the local chapter “deplored the efforts of ‘selfish interests who would perpetuate segregation unless a particular job can be guaranteed.’”⁵⁸ Also included was a statement made by the St. Louis NAACP branch blatantly singling out black teachers who condoned and worked toward maintaining segregation, stating that any black teacher fitting this profile “contributes little of value to any child” and that the African American public “should not assume that integration will mean the loss of jobs for black teachers in Missouri.”⁵⁹ This statement was followed by the *Argus*’ reports of “a small group of African American leaders working in the state to safeguard black teachers’ jobs in the event segregation in education is abolished...working quietly to weaken the chances of the anti-segregation bills in education now before the Missouri Assembly.”⁶⁰

Throughout a series of articles, the *St. Louis Argus* referred to this “group of Negro teachers.” However, the *Argus* failed to mention any specifics about the group itself or the individuals involved. The origin of the secrecy about the group could be derived from the group itself or from the *St. Louis Argus*. The group of teachers could have been attempting to conceal their identities to maintain respect within their community. Alternatively, the *St. Louis Argus* was closely allied with the NAACP and regularly highlighted its positions. It could also be that the *St. Louis Argus* purposely excluded detailed information about this group in an attempt to refrain from promoting them. Or, it may be that no one was entirely certain who these “Negro teachers” were.

One attempt to fight desegregation surfaced with the anti-segregation House Bill 112, otherwise known as the Tyus-Jones Bill. House Bill 112, supported by representatives Leroy Tyus and A. Clifford Jones, was intended to break down mandated segregation in the five Missouri state-supported universities and colleges.⁶¹ It required that “any otherwise qualified citizen of the state of Missouri who complies with entrance requirements, shall be admitted to any state supported institution of higher learning without regard to race, color, or religion.”⁶² This bill received obvious support from Missouri integrationists but was met with resistance by “an organized group of Negroes that had expressed strong opposition to the bill’s passage.”⁶³ It was thought that if Bill 112 passed, then the desegregation of all of the lower levels of public

education would soon follow. The *St. Louis Argus* quoted Representative Tyus: “the legislator said the group was made up of those persons who stand to ‘gain by segregation’ and so would stymie progress in the state.”⁶⁴ As suggested by the *Argus* in an article a few weeks prior, this group was associated with an organized group of “Negro leaders” from Jefferson City and St. Louis and led by a St. Louis elementary school principal fighting “to safeguard Negro teaching jobs.”⁶⁵ According to the *Argus*, the group was “working toward an amendment or bill which would safeguard Negro teachers’ jobs in the event segregation is abolished.”⁶⁶

The St. Louis NAACP branch and the *St. Louis Argus* both referred to support of a bill by the Negro teacher group. This bill is presumably House Bill 114 that, if passed, would have granted local option to all school districts on the question of segregation,⁶⁷ which according to the *Argus* would have ensured that schools would admit any student who resided within the school district.⁶⁸ Although this bill could be viewed as another anti-segregation bill, as it was in the *Chicago Defender*,⁶⁹ the legislation itself did not mention negating segregation and essentially relied on school district boundaries and *de facto* residential segregation. Even though the anti-segregation Bill 112 only affected higher learning institutions, Bill 114 was concerned with all school levels; therefore, the *Argus* presumed that proponents of this piece of legislation were clearly fighting for African American teachers.⁷⁰

What demographic of the St. Louis black community did the group of Negro Teachers represent? Representative Walter Victor Lay of the tenth district and John Wilson Green of the seventeenth district, both of St. Louis City, introduced House Bill 114. In 1953, districts ten and seventeen of St. Louis City collaboratively covered the area between Natural Bridge Road and Market Street (north to south) and Kingshighway Boulevard to the Mississippi River (west to east).⁷¹ Enclosed in this area are the Ville and Greater Ville neighborhoods, which were bastions of St. Louis’ black society.

Considering that representatives of the larger Ville neighborhood introduced this anti-integration bill and primarily because this community flourished under a self-regulated, self-reliant, and segregated system, the Ville neighborhood most likely also housed the group of Negro educators in question. This notion provides some insight about this group of educators and the reasons they were fighting against integration. The Ville offered St. Louis black society a refuge within the larger segregated society. With control of their own major institutions such as schools, black St. Louisans were in most cases not forced to accept substandard services like other black communities in much of the rest of the nation. Segregated schools, as did other facilities and businesses, contributed to a secluded job market that in turn directly benefited the community since most people confined by segregated communities remained there. Segregation, in this case, was a guarantee for the St. Louis black community that a white teacher would not be hired over a black teacher and that black parents would opt to send their children to black



Sumner High School was the first high school for African Americans west of the Mississippi when opened in 1875; it moved to this building in 1908. It was named for the noted abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner (famously attacked and severely beaten on the floor of the Senate by South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks), who had died the previous year. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

schools instead of white. This type of system ensured that success would be tied to their community. However, when desegregation became an alternative, this guarantee faded.

According to an article in a 1957 issue of the *Journal of Negro Education*, one out of every five teachers in segregated states was an African American whereas one out of every 72 teachers was African American in the remaining 31 non-segregated states.⁷² Small wonder that black St. Louis teachers feared that integration could lead to a decline in available teaching positions. However, black teachers had other concerns in addition to losing their jobs. Some expressed the fear that integration would bring an end to cultural leadership provided by African American teachers and in turn cause black students who wanted to become teachers to lose incentive.⁷³ In addition to hindering racial pride, there was a general concern among black teachers that white teachers would simply not be able to teach black students due to meager toleration or lack of understanding.⁷⁴

Despite the genuine concerns of African American teachers, the black integrationists in St. Louis had larger concerns. The *St. Louis Argus* represented this view by stating its position that “desegregation should not be jeopardized by the fear that Negro teachers would be jobless...we favor desegregated faculties...we view dimly any organized teacher resistance to desegregation... it would appear uncalled for and entirely in poor judgment.”⁷⁵

An editorial in the *Chicago Defender* blatantly identified the fear of the loss of black teachers’ jobs as a fallacy, agreeing that because African Americans had limited employment opportunities, the education field was

more concentrated with African Americans; therefore, more African Americans are likely to get hired.⁷⁶ Another result of this, it noted, was that “many Negro teachers [would] be absorbed into jobs of greater remuneration and scope.”⁷⁷

Results of Desegregation

Bill 114 died quickly in the Missouri State Assembly, but Bill 112 passed on March 12, 1953.⁷⁸ Although Bill 112 opened all Missouri state-supported universities and colleges to African Americans, the bill left the larger school system segregated. At this time, the *Brown v. Board of Education* case was becoming the focus of a national debate. The United States Supreme Court had already decided that it would hear all of the school desegregation cases collectively, therefore making *Brown* a national issue.⁷⁹ Even though bills 112 and 114 failed to integrate all students, St. Louis integrationists hoped that *Brown* would. However, when the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* on May 17, 1954, not much changed in regard to segregation in St. Louis. *Brown* gave the same results as Bill 114 would have. The problem, of course, was that school districts were drawn according to the already standing neighborhoods, giving almost no actual desegregation results.⁸⁰ Many historians have also debated that *Brown’s* desegregation policies were partly to blame for the “white flight” phenomena that occurred in St. Louis and other cities throughout the country shortly after the case was implemented, causing cities to remain segregated and vacant.⁸¹

In the end, *Brown* did not result in the mass firing



Segregated schools like this one in Kinloch, Missouri, were the norm until the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954. Even then, a number of school districts did not desegregate immediately. (Photo: Western Historical Manuscript Collection, St. Louis)

of black St. Louis educators, mostly because St. Louis, home to half of the African Americans in Missouri, had a large community to fall back on.⁸² The majority of black students remained within their original school districts, and most of the previously all-black schools remained open. In this instance, the vibrant community that African Americans had made for themselves acted as a safety net for black teachers' jobs. However, this was not the case throughout Missouri or the nation.

Even in *Brown's* birthplace of Topeka, Kansas, several black teachers did not receive contract renewals for the next year on the March 15, 1953, deadline; moreover, throughout Kansas most teacher vacancies had been filled with white teachers as the school boards had been anticipating desegregation for several years.⁸³ In Kansas City, home to the second largest concentration of African Americans in Missouri at the time, 59 percent of black teachers lost their jobs while Kansas City school districts were maintaining the practice of only hiring African American teachers in formerly all black schools.⁸⁴ St. Charles and St. Louis had only desegregated elementary schools by fall of 1955, and as a result five out of seven black teachers at Franklin Elementary school were dismissed.⁸⁵ Similar cases were reported in almost all

other parts of Missouri, especially in smaller towns. In the northeastern Missouri town of Moberly, the school board closed its black schools and cut fifteen total positions, eleven of which were black teachers.⁸⁶ Similar cases resulted in Hannibal (north of St. Louis) and Slater (west of Moberly).⁸⁷ In Springfield, only one African American teacher had been hired to an all-white school as of fall 1955.⁸⁸

As the nation was pressed with the *Brown* case and public school desegregation was becoming more of a possibility, a debate among black integrationists and black educators emerged within the black community of St. Louis. Although there is evidence of similar debates throughout the nation, St. Louis is an interesting case study. The prominent and self-sufficient black communities of St. Louis give historians a different scope in which to view the effects of segregation and desegregation. Segregation in St. Louis for the most part did not cause an upheaval of mass black resistance during the civil rights movement; neither did the prospect of public school desegregation. However, black resistance to school desegregation in St. Louis did exist.

NOTES

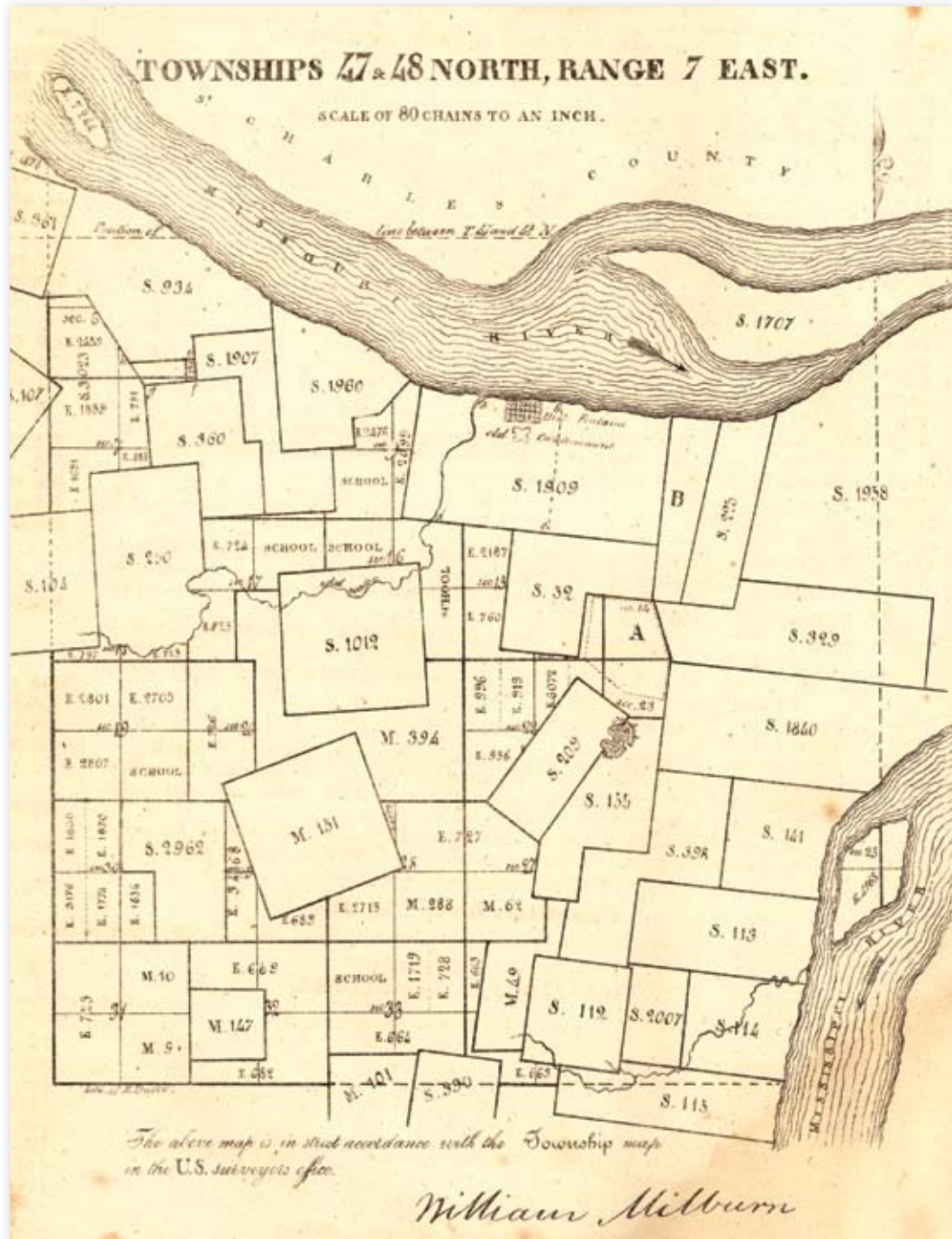
- ¹ Brian J. Daugherty, ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 177.
- ² For the entirety of this essay, I will refer to this group of African American teachers that resisted school desegregation as the “group of Negro Teachers” or the “Negro Teachers,” as this is what the group was referred to by several newspaper and journal articles of this time period. The group did not have a formal name that I have found.
- ³ House Bill 114; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House.
- ⁴ Daugherty, *With All Deliberate Speed*, 177.
- ⁵ George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 66.
- ⁶ Albert P. Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri,” *Journal of Negro Education* 25, no. 3 (1956): 289.
- ⁷ Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle*, 66.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.
- ⁹ “The Ville” is also known as the Grand Prairie area of St. Louis. The Ville is located south of Fairground Park and north of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, west of North Grand Avenue and east of Newstead Avenue.
- ¹⁰ Priscilla Dowden-White, “‘Over this point we are determined to fight’: African-American public education and health care in St. Louis, Missouri, 1910-1949” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1997), 5.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ¹² Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 11.
- ¹³ Gerald W. Heaney and Susan Uchitelle, *Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis* (St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2004), 64; Daugherty, *With All Deliberate Speed*, 177.
- ¹⁴ Although the survey was conducted after the *Brown* decision, I am still validating these numbers as constitutional steps that had not yet been taken toward public school integration in Missouri at this time.
- ¹⁵ Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 58.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Daugherty, *With All Deliberate Speed*, 177.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 177-178.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Heaney and Uchitelle, *Unending Struggle*, 11.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 37.
- ²⁹ Charles M. Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (June 2004): 89.
- ³⁰ Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, xxvi.
- ³¹ Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race”: 90.
- ³² George D. Brantley, “Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri,” *Journal of Negro Education* 24, no. 3 (1955): 306.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri”: 291.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri”: 292.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Cited in Brantley, “Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri”: 305.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*

- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race”: 90.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*: xxvi.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race”: 89.
- ⁵¹ Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 7.
- ⁵² Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race”: 90.
- ⁵³ Daugherity, *With All Deliberate Speed*, 180.
- ⁵⁴ Brantley, “Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri”: 306.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Payne, “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race”: 90.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ “NAACP Scores Teachers Who ‘Condone’ Bias,” *The St. Louis Argus*, April 24, 1953, page 1.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ House Bill 112; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ “Anti-Segregation Bills-Mo. ‘Political Footballs,’” *The St. Louis Argus*, May 1, 1953, page 1.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ “Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers,” *The St. Louis Argus*, April 17, 1953, page 1.
- ⁶⁶ “Anti-Segregation Bills-Mo. ‘Political Footballs,’” *The St. Louis Argus*, May 1, 1953, page 1.
- ⁶⁷ “Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers,” pages 1 and 6.
- ⁶⁸ “Bills Hit Jim Crow In Missouri Schools,” *Chicago Defender*, February 7, 1953, page 2.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ “Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers,” pages 1 and 6.
- ⁷¹ Missouri Secretary of State, *State of Missouri Official Manual for the Years 1953-1954*, 1953, 1078.
- ⁷² Jonas O. Rosenthal, “Negro Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Desegregation,” *Journal of Negro Education* 26, no. 1 (1957): 63.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 70.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ “Negro Teachers and Desegregation,” *The St. Louis Argus*, May 8, 1953, page 14.
- ⁷⁶ Walter White, “Writer Notes Fallacies In Thinking About Education,” *Chicago Defender*, January 1, 1953, page 11.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁸ House Bill 112; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House; House Bill 114; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House.
- ⁷⁹ The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, “Timeline of Events Leading to the *Brown v. Board* Decision, 1954,” U.S. Archives. <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-boardtimeline.html>.
- ⁸⁰ “Map of New City High School Districts Set Up to End Segregation,” *The St. Louis Argus*, November 16, 1954, page 1-8D.
- ⁸¹ For examples, see Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Segregation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Gordon, *Mapping Decline*; Daugherity, *With All Deliberate Speed*; Heaney and Uchitelle, *Unending Struggle*.
- ⁸² Rosenthal, “Negro Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Desegregation”: 64; Hurley H. Doddy, “Desegregation and the Employment of Negro Teachers,” *Journal of Negro Education* 24, no. 4 (1955): 405-6.
- ⁸³ “Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers,” page 6.
- ⁸⁴ Rosenthal, “Negro Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Desegregation”: 66.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁶ Daugherity, *With All Deliberate Speed*, 180.
- ⁸⁷ Doddy, “Desegregation and the Employment of Negro Teachers”: 406.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.* However, no information was given on the state of black schools in Springfield.

George Champlain Sibley:

SHADY DEALINGS ON THE EARLY FRONTIER

BY THOMAS C. DANISI



Investigations into early trade on the frontier involving the “factory system” have been few in recent years, and even rarer has been the study of corruption within the factory system from a time when oft-repeated charges were common and were usually denied by the U.S. government. In the case of Rodolphe Tillier, Factor at Fort Belle Fontaine in the Louisiana Territory, we now actually have proof of misappropriation of funds in office. Without the official correspondence of George Sibley, the Assistant Factor at the same fort, we might not even know of this story today. The working relationship between Tillier and Sibley was a difficult one, and it appears that Sibley’s integrity resulted in his dismissal. New evidence reveals that in order to conceal his illegal activities, Tillier resorted to deceptive measures which included, at the beginning of November 1807, the dismissal of his subordinate Sibley, and in 1809, a letter written to officials in Washington accusing both Meriwether Lewis and William Clark of abusing government funds.

On April 18, 1796, at the suggestion of President George Washington, Congress instituted the “factory system” to trade fairly and without profit with the Indians, using “factors” (that is, traders appointed by the President) as official agents of the government. Factories were embedded in military forts on the edges of the frontier, ostensibly to be more convenient for Indian trade. In fact, the creation of official traders was an attempt to remove evils resulting from unscrupulous private traders and their high prices, shoddy goods, and liquor as well as to destroy British influence with the Indians and gain native friendship for the United States. A total of 28 posts served as factories between 1796 and 1822, when the factory system was abolished, primarily because of pressure from fur traders led by John Jacob Astor and aided mightily by Senator Thomas Hart Benton. William Clark, who oversaw the factory system in the West, lost the 1820 election as the first governor of the State of Missouri largely over Indian policies that included trade at western factories.¹

What appeared on the surface to be a method of fostering good relations with native populations was seen in a different, Machiavellian light by U.S. government officials. To them, the goal of the factors was “to make the Indians dependent on government trade goods...and to win the Indians’ friendship.” President Thomas Jefferson, who established several factories, believed that the factory system worked to his advantage because “there is no method more irresistible of obtaining lands than by letting them get in debt [at factories; and when debts] were too

(Left) Fort Belle Fontaine was established in 1805, just a year after the “three flags ceremony” finalizing the transfer of Louisiana to the United States. Originally, it was a military fort with a trade factory for Native American tribes embedded in it. The Sauk and Fox tribes were the primary customers, who were already in the habit of bringing furs to St. Louis to sell to the Spanish before the United States took control of the area. When the factory closed in 1808, factor Rodolphe Tillier was out of a job and his assistant, George Sibley, became factor at the new Fort Osage. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

heavy to be paid, they are always willing to lop off by a cession of land.”²

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the U.S. factory system had posts in several territories, but the Louisiana Territory would add only four more posts to that number, despite its vastness. The first factory in upper Louisiana was built in 1805 at the site of a new fort on the Mississippi River near the mouth of the Missouri. Dr. John Sibley, a Revolutionary War physician and an expert on Native American tribes living in Lower Louisiana, introduced his eighteen-year-old son, George Champlain Sibley, to a friend in the Jefferson administration in 1803. He felt that George, while still “a lad,” was familiar with Native Americans and would prove an asset to the government if he worked among them.³

Jefferson appointed U.S. Army General James Wilkinson as the first governor of Upper Louisiana

James Wilkinson, by Charles Willson Peale, 1796-7. General James Wilkinson (1757-1825) ranks among the most notorious figures of the early republic. As United States Senior Officer (the highest ranking officer in the army), Wilkinson was also a secret agent on the Spanish payroll for a time. Around the time he accepted the appointment as the first governor of the Louisiana Territory, he became an accomplice of Aaron Burr; eventually, Wilkinson wrote a letter to President Thomas Jefferson that led to Burr’s arrest, trial, and acquittal on treason charges. (Photo: Independence National Historical Park)



in March 1805.⁴ Wilkinson was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and the Indian campaigns in Ohio under the command of General Anthony Wayne in 1794-1796. Many inhabitants and settlers in the Louisiana Territory were unhappy with General Wilkinson's appointment because its intent was to restore order militarily and not democratically.⁵ One aspect of Wilkinson's job was to select a site for a new fort and factory near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. He chose a lowland site below some bluffs along the Missouri River about eighteen miles due north of St. Louis, naming it Fort Belle Fontaine after a nearby natural spring. Two months later, Rodolphe Tillier of New York was appointed as the fort's first factor.⁶

Like many young men in the United States with ambitions to work on the frontier, George Sibley was eagerly looking for opportunities. He heard that two factories were being established in the Louisiana Territory and immediately applied to the Jefferson administration for a position. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn sent Sibley good news in August 1805:

In answer to your letter...I have to remark that as the Factory to be established at Natchitoches will be on a small scale compared with the one at St. Louis, there will be no assistant at the former... on a salary from two to three hundred dollars a year. You will herewith receive an appointment as Assistant Agent...[at Fort Belle Fontaine].⁷

Dearborn also offered Sibley an advance on his salary and ordered him to procure a bond and "two sufficient sureties."⁸ The Secretary projected that Sibley would arrive in St. Louis by October 10 and told him to report to Tillier, although if he had not arrived by then to check in with Governor Wilkinson.⁹

Tillier was a native of Berne, Switzerland, who came to the United States in the 1780s. Tillier brushed elbows with nearly all of the Founding Fathers, procuring letters of recommendation from John Adams at The Hague in 1783, serving as the Philadelphia agent for the Dutch firm DeVinck and Company by the mid-1780s, and being received by Thomas Jefferson in Paris in 1789. He became the third husband of Sarah Biddle Penrose Shaw of Philadelphia and was a business partner of her brothers Owen and Clement Biddle, both of whom were prominent during the Revolutionary War. Tillier's connection by marriage to one of the most important families in the United States extended to those who could protect him in political and personal wrangles. Ann Biddle Wilkinson, who was married to James Wilkinson, was his sister-in-law; Clement Biddle Penrose, appointed by President Jefferson as land commissioner at St. Louis in 1805, was his stepson. After his wife's death in 1794, Tillier administered a budding French land development interest in upstate New York (called Castorland) designed for the resettlement of refugees from the French Revolution. He was accused of mismanaging the Castorland company's accounts and in a famous civil suit was defended by

Alexander Hamilton. Within a few years Tillier resigned from the Castorland post but stayed on in America only to gain further notoriety stemming from his misdealing at Belle Fontaine.¹⁰

Before Rodolphe Tillier departed New York for his new appointment at Belle Fontaine, he proposed rather grandiose personal designs for the St. Louis factory building. He sent his drawings to William Davy, the principal agent for all U.S. factories in Philadelphia, who then forwarded them to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn. Dearborn rejected the proposal, arguing that

Mr. Tillier ought to be instructed on the subject of the buildings to be erected for the Factory. His ideas appear to be extravagant... You know that our system is a commercial one; and that we want no assistance from Engineers, as the

George Sibley (1782-1863) moved to St. Louis to become assistant factor at Fort Bellefontaine. After the federal government closed the factory there, Sibley was appointed factor at the newly established Fort Osage in present-day Jackson County, east of Kansas City. Later, Sibley was part of the Santa Fe Trail Commission to mark the trail and establish treaties with native tribes there; upon his return, he and his wife Mary founded Linden Wood Female College. (Photo: Lindenwood University)



buildings are to be constructed of logs.¹¹

Davy sent a letter to Tillier mirroring Dearborn's message and adding that "the appropriation for [the] establishment... is small, we are under the necessity of studying economy in our expenditures."¹²

When George Sibley arrived in St. Louis in October, he took the oath of office. Wilkinson described him to Dearborn as "a very young, but a very decent young man."¹³ Tillier, along with his wife and five children, arrived on December 3.¹⁴ Construction of the fort had commenced in September and was completed a week after Tillier's arrival, writing:

Mr. Tillier is about to take his Quarters at the Cantonment, to attend to the finishing of the house for his goods which He [sic] finds too small, but it may readily be enlarged if necessary—It is thirty six, by twenty eight feet with a twelve foot gallery all around it—I hear nothing of the goods and it grows too late in the season for us to expect them before the opening of Spring.¹⁵

By January, the factory had been established, but Tillier had to wait through the winter before trade goods could be delivered; they finally arrived in mid-April 1806.¹⁶

Factory duties were detailed and revolved around the subtraction and addition of a vast quantity of numbers that were reflected in trade goods. These government-procured goods had to be painstakingly enumerated with a value and then graded and stored. Pelts procured from the Indians were bundled in packs of a hundred and rigorously inspected for damage, worms, moths, and other vermin. The inventory of goods coming and going had to be counted, money had to be safely stored and handled, and ferriage to New Orleans had to be properly packed and stored for the six-week trip. Lastly, a plethora of accounting ledgers was maintained and regularly sent to Washington for examination by government accountants. How Tillier and Sibley divided the work is unknown, and how much money and goods traded hands would not be known until the first year of business was completed. In the meantime, seeds of conflict were being sown—had already been sown—that would profoundly affect both Tillier and Sibley as their work together unfolded.

In 1804, President Jefferson still had to honor annual gifts to tribes until land treaties could be exchanged for goods, and the Louisiana Purchase increased the sheer number of tribes for whom the U.S. had to provide gifts. Wilkinson realized even before the factory was built at Belle Fontaine that its location was too far from thriving Indian populations, and that it would eventually have to be moved upriver.¹⁷ The War Department agreed to establish another branch of the factory on the Mississippi but, at the time, the territory lacked a large military presence. A sizeable army detachment was needed to build it while the other half remained in St. Louis, and thus a much smaller branch was set up in June.¹⁸

The factory and fort at Belle Fontaine functioned separately from the civil government in St. Louis, and being eighteen miles north of St. Louis (a day's comfortable ride) it might as well have been considered a distant outpost. These were troubling times for the territory, and the chain of command had been broken by civil unrest. Settlers coming into St. Louis could not procure land. The only parcels for sale were privately owned and had not been officially surveyed by the American government. This led to illegal squatting or what Governor Wilkinson described as "pettifoggers who begin to swarm here like locusts."¹⁹

In June 1806, Governor Wilkinson had been ordered to New Orleans and departed two months later. The following month, the Lewis and Clark expedition returned from western explorations—arriving at Fort Belle Fontaine on September 21, 1806, with the Mandan chief Sheheke-shote and his family. President Jefferson had asked Lewis to encourage Native Americans to meet with their new "white father" in Washington:

If a few of their influential chiefs... wish to visit us, arrange such a visit with them, and furnish them with authority to call on our officers, on their entering the U.S. to have them conveyed to this place at the public expence [sic].²⁰

This encouragement had already led to two Indian delegations, including one of Osage chiefs, visiting Washington prior to Lewis and Clark's arrival with the Mandan.

In 1804, the first year of Lewis and Clark's expedition, the explorers wintered in present-day North Dakota near the three Mandan villages. Upon the Corps' return from the Pacific coast, Lewis and Clark invited one of the tribe's principal chiefs, Sheheke-shote, to travel with them to Washington. The entourage arrived in the nation's capital at the end of December and returned to St. Louis in February 1807. A military outfit had been prepared to take them back to their village, but a warring Indian tribe, the Arikara, had ambushed them. In May 1809, the Mandan, under military escort with orders from Governor Meriwether Lewis, departed St. Louis and safely arrived in September—three years after their departure.

At the end of September 1806, when Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery rested at Fort Belle Fontaine, George Sibley took copious notes of Meriwether Lewis' recounting of the upper Missouri fur trade. Sibley wrote a voluminous letter to his brother explaining his first year as an assistant factor and the sudden arrival of Lewis:

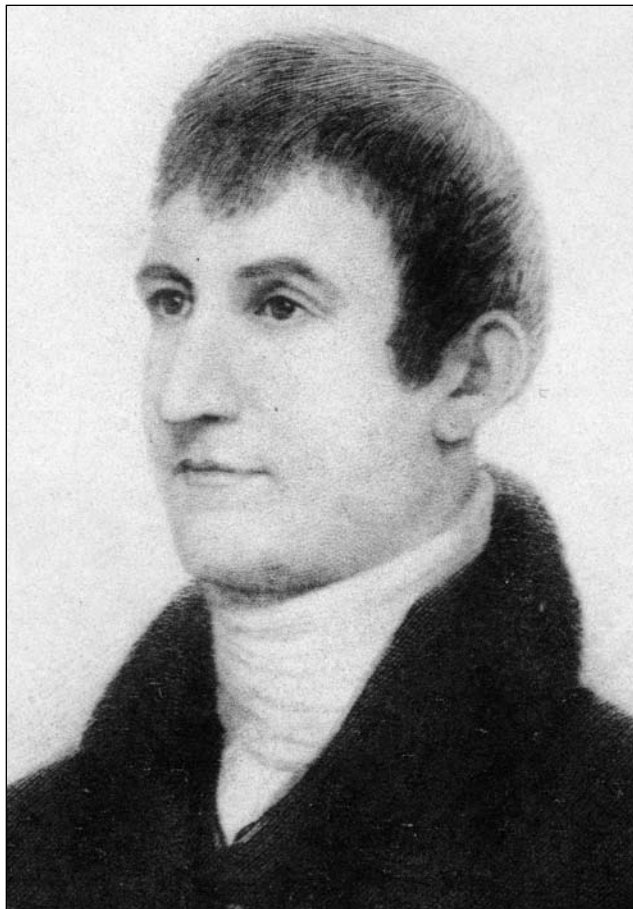
As matters now stand, I can say...my business has been principally with the natives, some of whom are from distant parts of the country and are very intelligent and communicative... I have not neglected to reap every advantage that a participation in their knowledge might afford... At present, I do not know of anything worth your attention, except what may result from the

discoveries of Captain Lewis whose safe return you will have heard before this can reach you.²¹

Sibley continued by excitedly referencing likely changes to come and the impending upper Missouri trade:

Perhaps nothing of so great importance has ever happened (as respects the Commercial interests of the United States, & particularly the Western Country) as these discoveries. It would be useless for me now to enter minutely into the subject, the limits of a letter would not allow it. Suffice it to say that in a few years the most Rich & Luxurious field for Young men of spirit and enterprise will be opened. Then we shall see floating down the Missouri, valuable cargoes of merchandise: I need Say no more, this bare hint will be sufficient for you to build on for weeks & months. I cannot predict what effect these things

A year after he returned from the West in 1806, Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) was appointed governor of Louisiana Territory as a reward for his work sharing command of the Corps of Discovery with William Clark. Lewis, who was a close friend of President Thomas Jefferson, died in 1809 along the Natchez Trace. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)



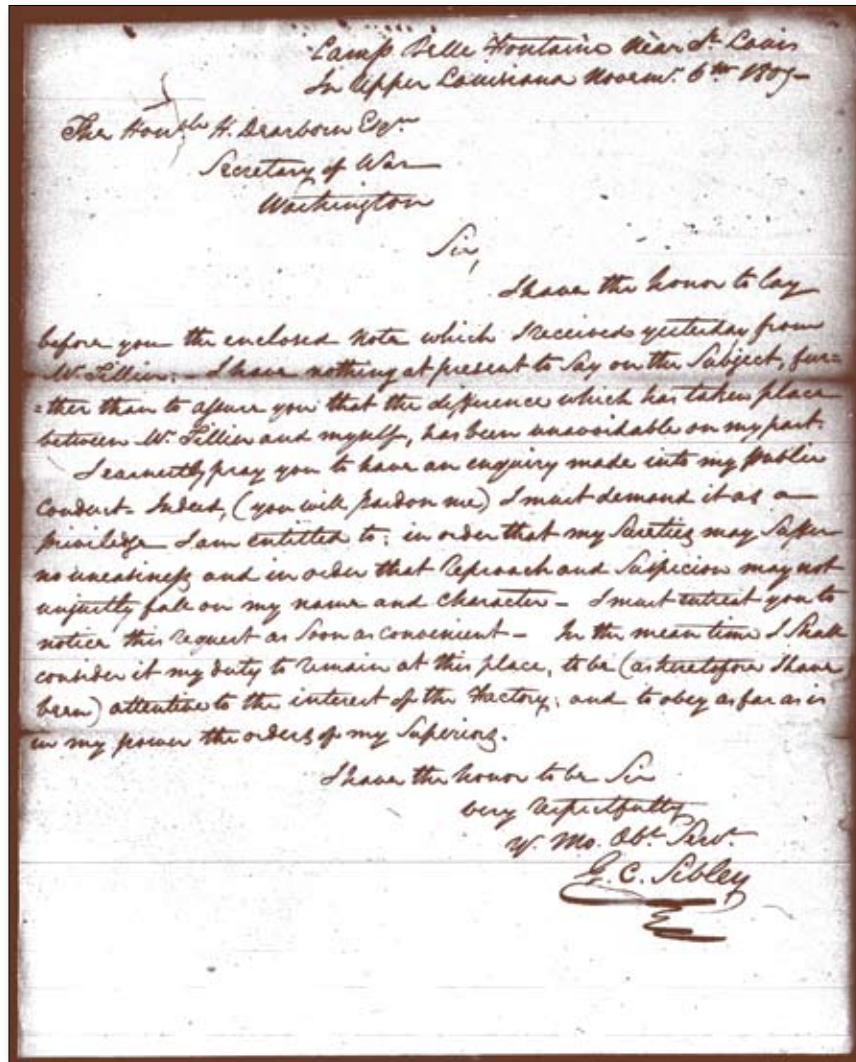
will have on my fortunes, tho' certain it is they will have a material one. It has been hinted by Captain Lewis, who it is supposed will have the management of our Indian Affairs...that several trading houses will be established by Govt pretty high up this river & the Mississippi, next Spring; and that this house will most probably be broken up...²²

Sibley had recently received a letter from Washington approving his conduct and believed he would be retained in the service and sent upriver. He concluded the letter to his brother by announcing that he had decided not to join the army – a position that his father had disapproved of at an earlier date.²³

Once the Lewis and Clark entourage departed for the east, winter set in, the river froze, and for a few months the cold weather slowed the pace of St. Louis to a crawl. Virtually no trading occurred at the factory, giving personnel time enough to ready themselves for the upcoming new year of 1807. It was going to be busy: President Jefferson had made sound appointments, with Lewis as the incoming Governor of the Louisiana Territory and William Clark as the Agent of Indian Affairs (excepting the Great and Little Osages) and Brigadier General of the militia.²⁴ Still acting as partners, Lewis sent Clark to St. Louis while he hurried to Philadelphia to begin implementing the long process of preparing the journals of the expedition for publication.

From the time that the Belle Fontaine factory had officially begun trading, Rodolphe Tillier sent reports and correspondence to John Shee, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, located in Philadelphia. For the year 1806, his reports revolved around the unauthorized sale of liquor to the Indians, problems with interpreters who wanted more pay or who had not been paid for more than a year, and quarterly returns. But beginning in January 1807, a new problem arose that Tillier described as a conflict of “military power & etiquette.” He felt that some of the military “officers have acted with Spite more than with a frank military urbanity toward the Factor and Factory...”²⁵ The following month he complained that his clerks (not including Assistant Factor Sibley) were “extremely discontented at their present salaries.”²⁶ His remedy was to deduct \$200 from the trading goods for salaries, but the new Superintendent, intent on recovering the unauthorized deduction, refused to pay two bills sent by Tillier six months later. The two bills added up to two hundred dollars.²⁷ Several weeks after his first complaints, Tillier complained in another letter about Osage Indian Agent Pierre Chouteau’s conduct toward the factory.²⁸ Clearly Tillier’s letters reflected his disgruntled attitude.

General William Clark, now Agent of Indian Affairs, arrived in April 1807 to a bustling St. Louis just awakening from the bitterly cold winter. There was still much strife in the region of Upper Louisiana, but Lewis and Clark’s governing of the unruly territory eased President Jefferson’s mind. As Indian agent, Clark spent time at Belle Fontaine readying the members of the

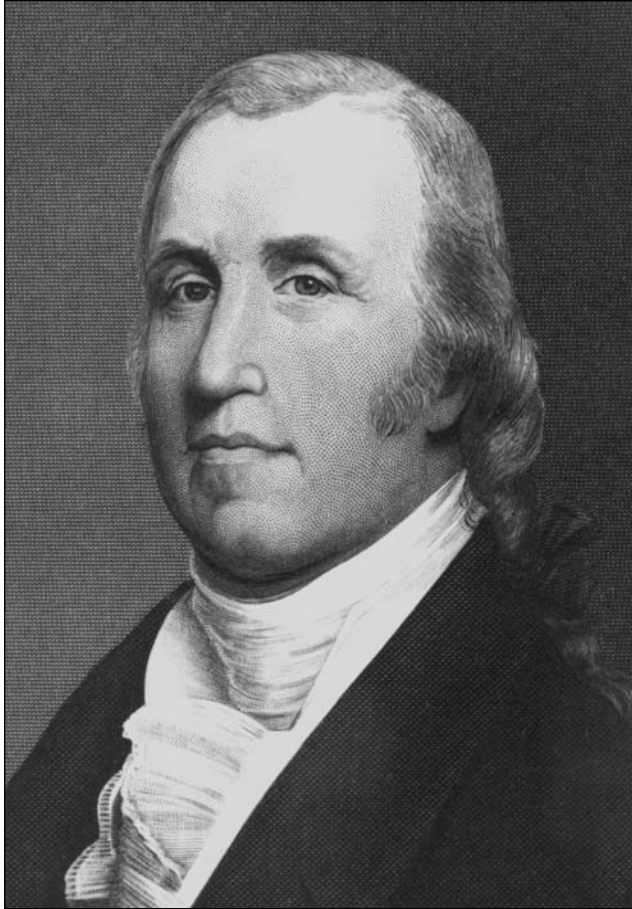


In November 1807, Sibley wrote to war secretary Henry Dearborn to defend himself, noting that the problems “between Mr. Tillier and myself, has been unavoidable on my part.” Sibley requested—demanded, in fact—an inquiry to restore his reputation. (Photo: George Sibley to the Secretary of War, November 6, 1807, National Archives and Records Administration)

Mandan entourage for their return trip up the Missouri River to their home in present-day North Dakota. Clark needed a contingent of soldiers for a military escort, but Col. Thomas Hunt, the commander of Fort Belle Fontaine, was short of manpower. Nevertheless, Hunt lent Clark fourteen men including Ensign Nathaniel Pryor, who had accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition. The rest of the escort would have to be recruited from the private sector, which was fortunately accomplished with the help of Pierre Chouteau’s trading party.²⁹ At the end of May when the escort departed, Clark believed that a total of seventy men would be “fully sufficient to pass any hostile band,” but Clark had no idea that 650 Arikara awaited the party upriver and ambushed them.³⁰ Ensign Pryor straggled into Belle Fontaine on October 16 with grim news; four men were killed and five wounded. George Shannon was one of the wounded, another Lewis and Clark Corpsman, whom Col. Hunt described to Dearborn

as “a young man by the name of Shannon that went with Mr. Prior and was wounded had his leg taken off a few days since. There are no amputating instruments at this post. I had to borrow.”³¹

General Clark departed St. Louis in July; he was heading east this time to get married. Territorial secretary Frederick Bates was placed in charge until Meriwether Lewis’ arrival. Up to this date, there is no record from Sibley regarding any problems with Tillier, but in September he wrote to his brother stating that he had been thinking once more about joining the army. He really didn’t want to go—he even outlined the positions he would accept and then sent an official request to Secretary of War Dearborn.³² Two weeks later, he spoke to James House, a captain at the fort, and asked him to speak with Bates about an ongoing dispute he was having with Tillier. House hastily wrote Bates blaming Tillier for the problem:



Soon after William Clark (1770-1838) returned from the West in September 1806, Thomas Jefferson appointed him Indian Agent, overseeing Native American relations in this region. On the way back from the Pacific, the Corps of Discovery invited a Mandan chief Sheheke and his family to travel back with them to meet Jefferson. The captains stopped at Fort Belle Fontaine with the chief's entourage, where they almost certainly met both Rodolphe Tillier and his assistant, George Sibley. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

I have...felt for the age and character of Mr. T. it would be justice to say...that he is extremely subject to gusts of passions and splenetic humours which renders it morally impossible for any young man to be connected with him as Mr. S. was without having his feelings, frequently mortified and I believe, that there are few young men that would have conducted themselves with more discretion, on similar occasions than Mr Sibley has done – I well recollect at the time... Mr. S...apprized me of the storm that was brewing – and expressed his determination... to avoid its effects – and I have reason to believe that he pursued this prudential plan... consistently with his duty -- I cannot withhold my opinion...that there is no young man that can be found, that will fill the situation... [better

than] Mr. Sibles, with more propriety, & with more interest to the factory than he has done –³³

Less than two weeks passed before Bates wrote to the Secretary of War, siding with Sibley:

I cannot know precisely the causes of misunderstanding; but from the standings, the intelligence, the persevering attention to business...there is no person who is not entirely convinced, that those misunderstandings have arrived solely from the impatient temper of Mr. Tillier.³⁴

The smoke these early letters unveiled broke out into fire when Tillier dismissed George Sibley from his position as assistant factor on November 5. Sibley immediately wrote to Dearborn a letter of protest:

I have the honor to lay before you the enclosed note which I received yesterday from Mr. Tillier – I have nothing at present to say on the Subject, further than to assure you that the difference which has taken place between M. Tillier and myself, has been unavoidable on my part.

Sibley asked Dearborn to initiate an official inquiry:

I earnestly pray you to have an inquiry made into my public conduct – Indeed, (you will pardon me) I must demand it as a privilege I am entitled to; in order that my Sureties may Suffer no uneasiness and in order that Reproach and Suspicion may not unjustly fall on my name and character – I must entreat you to notice this request as soon as convenient – In the meantime I shall consider it my duty to remain at this place, to be...attentive to the interest of the Factory; and to obey as far as is in my power the orders of my Superiors.³⁵

The correspondence of the day is shrouded in politeness, and the conflict that led to Sibley's dismissal is difficult to discern. Moreover, the one man who was in a position to help Sibley, William Clark, was absent from the territory. Sibley was wise to be cautious when he wrote, "the difference...has been unavoidable on my part." Those words may suggest an internal struggle: his duty to the country and the truth versus his loyalty to his superior. On the one hand, Tillier's bellicose attitude was incongruous with his complaints that everyone around him was not exercising polite etiquette. It is very possible that Tillier used that superficial wording as a diversion so that he could continue his clandestine activity unabated. It was later discovered that Tillier had indeed misappropriated funds during the years that Sibley was the Assistant Factor.³⁶

When Dearborn received Bates' letter he immediately

Sundry Charges in Tillier's Day Book which appear to be unauthorized as Sundries furnished Indians as presents

Year	Date	Description	Amount
1807	Nov 9	Factory Capt to R. Tillier, provisions & to Indians	8.50
	20	Do to M. Madra - present to mandan chief. a comb	0.20
	Dec 30	Do to Do - Trumillion, Thread, etc. present to Indian	4.90
		Do to R. Tillier - for provisions for Do	9.50
1808		Do to Do - present - 1 Bottle	2.50
		Do to M. Madra - as looking shops	.20
Feb	11	Do to Do - Sundry presents	4.25
	27	Do to Do - Provisions for for extra entertainment feed for Rogers, his son & 6 horses Indians who came to traps	1.50
	29	Do to Do - feed & for mandan chief &	.50
March	1	Do to Do - Do for Rikapous	1.75
	13	Do to Do - provisions for 8 Rikapous	1.75
	31	Do to Do - Do for sundry Do	5.00
April	8	Do to Do - Do for Do	1.75
	12	Do to Product. & Caly. Brandy for sundry Indians	5.00
	13	Do to Tillier - for 2 1/2 lbs. presents &	3.50
		Do to Do - for provisions to Indians	3.50
	18	Do to Product. for 1 half. Brandy	1.00
		Do to Do - Tobacco & presents to Indian	1.75
	30	Do to Tillier - provision & to Do	2.00
May	27	Do to Do - Do	.75
June	2	Do to Do - Do	2.75
	3	Do to Product. 2 3/4 lbs lead present to an Indian	2.75
		Do to Tillier - presents to Do	1.00
	6	Do to Do - feed & presents to Do	10.00
	15	Do to Do - Do for 2 lbs. by chief &	1.50
		Do to Product. - present 1 lb. Honey to price the artificer	.35
	17	Do to Tillier - provision, presents & to Indian	.75
	24	Do to Do - provision for Do	2.40
July	4	Do to Product. - 1 half. Honey, present to Mr. Duman	1.50
	10	Do to Tillier - 1 lb. Bread & for Indian	2.75
	17	Do to Do - Do - Do for Do	1.50
	27	Do to Do - Sundry furnished Do	5.75
Aug	17	Do to Product. Sundry had by Mt. Johnson for Labourers & - tillier receiving this Do	4.50
	18	Do to Tillier - provision for Indian - 2 lbs 10 bottles wine at 10c Hunt's Funeral	10.00
1809	Mar. 7	Do to Tillier - provision to Indian	14.00

52
 416
 797
 25,822.105,827

List of the "Sundry charges in Tillier's Day Book which appeared to be unauthorized as Sundries furnished Indians as presents, 1807-1809," prepared by government officials in Washington detailing the shady dealings at Fort Belle Fontaine. (Photo: National Archives and Records Administration)

wrote to Bates and Tillier. In his December 9 letter, he asked Bates to forward the letter to William Clark so that Clark could “transmit a full and candid statement of the facts in relation to the dispute between Tillier and Sibley.” Bates replied a month later and said that Clark had not returned from the east, but upon his arrival, Bates would forward “without delay” the statement.³⁷ Clark arrived in St. Louis on July 1, 1808, but did not subsequently send any report, since Tillier had never cooperated.³⁸

John Mason, the new Superintendent of Indian Affairs, previously a lawyer, may not have known what the dispute entailed but he quickly learned about Tillier’s character. His exchanges were direct, and in his April 1808 letter, he acknowledged Sibley’s behavior and also criticized Tillier’s role:

As to the affairs of Sibley, I am satisfied as I have told him that his conduct as a young man and as your Clerk was indecorous toward you. At the same time it is proper...to say that you should not have taken on yourself to dismiss him from the employment of the Government until you had lodged your complaint with the Secretary of War. [Sibley] admitted the correctness of your statements and that you have nothing to charge against his assiduous capability or integrity and he likewise made no charge against you but on the contrary spoke of you with respect and attachment and confined himself to the complaint of personal warmth on your part & haste in withdrawing your confidence from him. From the statements of both of you, it appears that personal differences dictated your disagreement. He will be employed at some other post and is on furlough...³⁹

Mason also advised Tillier to start packing his belongings:

From the little business the Factory at Belle Fontaine has done and that its position is not favourable to the Indians the President has determined to break it up and divide the goods to two smaller establishments, one on the Osage and the other up the Mississippi at Le Moin probably in the Spring...⁴⁰

Sibley was transferred to Baltimore to assist at a trade depot and remained there until a position was located for him. Tillier was completely unsupervised for a few months, but received a bombshell when Mason’s May 20 letter arrived:⁴¹

I have now to inform you that the Sect. of War has made final arrangements on the subject of the Factory in your quarter, and that he has appointed John Johnson of Maryland to carry out & direct that to be established at Le Moin and Mr. Sibley to take charge of that to be located on the Osage...I shall write more fully as to

the distribution of the Goods now under your charge.⁴²

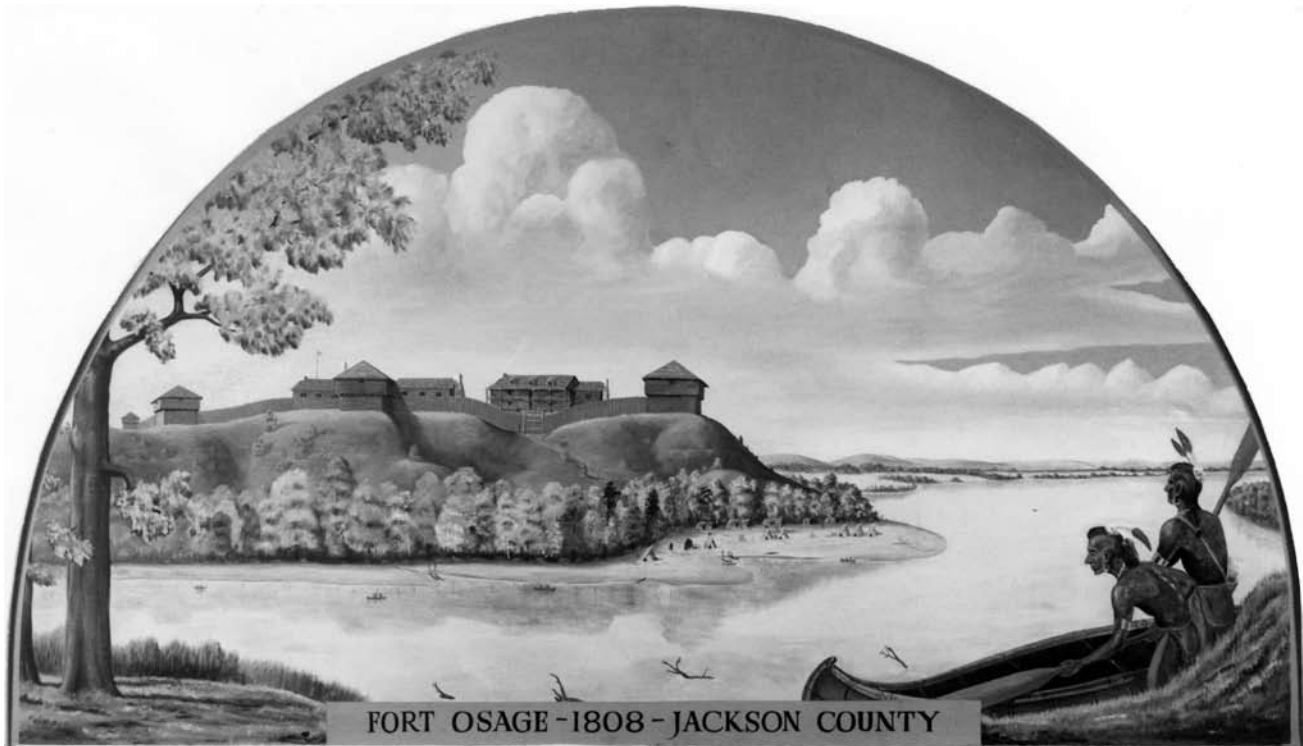
Tillier had asked to be reassigned to the Osage or Le Moin posts, but Mason said the salary was two-thirds of his present salary and there would be no clerks, only an interpreter.⁴³ A week later, Mason outlined how Tillier should divide the goods and implements between Johnson and Sibley and stated that the two newly appointed factors would arrive in July.⁴⁴

Mason wrote Tillier on July 8 and admonished him for not sending the last quarterly reports as well as the general accounts and inventories. Mason said that this letter was a duplicate, the first was sent on May 20 and again on May 28.⁴⁵ In a previous letter dated December 19, Mason acknowledged receiving some of the reports but added they “were so imperfect that I held them a considerable time in the hope I should receive some further evidence from you on the subject.” Mason also charged Tillier with not providing any proof of signature from the persons who took the merchandise from the factory. Mason doubted other transactions, too, and stated that when he closed the factory he must ensure that the accounts were accurate. Mason stated that the Secretary of War had made an exception and allowed Tillier to continue to draw a salary until the end of December.⁴⁶

When Mason did not hear from Tillier for several months, he wrote to General William Clark and informed him of the problem and asked him to intervene and do all that was required. He wanted to spare the feelings of Tillier “who from all accounts I consider a man of great honor and respectability and who has seen better times.”⁴⁷ Under pressure to close the Belle Fontaine factory, Mason came up with a work-around: he could store the furs and peltries from the Le Moin and Osage posts there.

But, on May 19, 1809, Mason’s letter to Tillier began with a surprise. “I am really mortified to find...that...no copy of my letter of 19th Dec. a triplicate...had reached you.”⁴⁸ In short, Mason was obliged to allow Tillier to remain at the fort. Mason’s June 21, 1809, letter was more vehement, and he dropped any niceties owing to Tillier’s relationship to other important personages: “I can’t help expressing my surprise to you Sir, on seeing in your letter of 20th April that you...consider yourself...an agent of the United States and on salary from this office.”⁴⁹ Mason said that he would reject any bills drawn after December 30. He also referred Tillier to the fact that when he let go of the clerks at Belle Fontaine, Tillier still drew money for them. Moreover, Tillier had been drawing money for rations even though it was not part of his contract.⁵⁰ Mason then ordered Tillier to send him all of the accounts.

Reading the exchanges from Mason to Tillier, a reader must conclude Mason avoided charging the latter with embezzlement. And if Mason, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, could not bring himself to condemn Tillier’s deceit, how much more daunting would such accusations be to young George Sibley, who was merely the assistant factor? To make matters worse, Sibley’s proof of Tillier’s wayward business practices was buried in the factory’s



The site for the future Fort Osage was first identified by Lewis and Clark in 1804. As a Brigadier General in the Missouri Territorial Militia, Clark commanded the group that traveled to the area and constructed the log fort, just east of Kansas City. Sibley arrived in the early fall of 1808 with trade goods valued at more than \$20,000. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

ledgers. Firing Sibley was Tillier's way of ensuring that proof remained dormant. So does that mean that Tillier was never charged with any crimes? No.

Surprisingly, in May of 1809, Tillier finally sent the ledgers to Mason. Government accountants uncovered his fraudulent bookkeeping records and wrote a report entitled, "Sundry charges in Tillier's Day Book which appeared to be unauthorized as Sundries furnished Indians as presents, 1807-1809."⁵¹ The report showed imbalances in the profit from trade goods. Sibley had purposely pressured Tillier to extricate himself from a bad situation. If Sibley had done nothing to rectify his supervisor's wrongdoings, he would have been implicated in Tillier's crimes, too.

After Sibley's departure, the unrepentant Tillier created a new diversion so that he could continue to reside at Fort Belle Fontaine, free of charge, regardless of Mason's orders. As the records show, Tillier told Mason that he never received his correspondence ordering Tillier to leave his post, but by April 1809, that story was wearing thin, especially when Mason asked Clark to intervene.⁵² Unhappy that his empire was dissolving, Tillier struck on a novel idea and wrote several letters to Mason maligning Gov. Meriwether Lewis and Gen. William Clark!

In his April 27 letter, Tillier criticized Clark's role

in the first attempt to take the Mandan chief back to his village:

Two years ago an Expedition [sic] has been made here under the command of Lieut. Pryor to take back the Mandan Chief & family, it failed on account of being coupled with a private expedition [sic], it was attacked by the Riccaras [Arikara]; by this combination the result has been Two Soldiers wounded & four or five lost on board Chouteau's boat & a vast & needless Expencc [sic], as no inquiries have been made of the real cause, tho' the Public has suffered no fault can be laid and ascertained either to the Commander or Chouteau.⁵³

Tillier's May 12 letter deplored Lewis' well-thought out plan to safely transport the Mandan family, which was about to depart under the command of Pierre Chouteau but "afearcd not a creditable one."⁵⁴ Tillier's other letters ran the gamut of accusations, from criticizing Lewis' partial chartering of the Missouri Fur Company with government funds to charging improprieties and rewarding friends with contracts.⁵⁵ "Is it proper for the public service that the U.S. officers as a Governor and Super Intendant of Indian Affairs & U.S. Factor at St. Louis should take

any share in Mercantile and private concerns?"⁵⁶ Tillier falsely claimed that Lewis threatened "helpless" Indian nations and ordered militia men to defend St. Louis while Colonel Hunt's soldiers dallied.⁵⁷ In his final letter, Tillier baited Mason to forward the correspondence to President Madison:

I intended to send the enclosed to his Excellency the Pres. After mature deliberation I have changed my mind, & submit to your judgment if the Facts alledged may be interesting to him, or the U. States or if it will be better to bury them in oblivion in either case, disclaim any personal motive of ill will, or interested motive of courting favour at the expence of another.⁵⁸

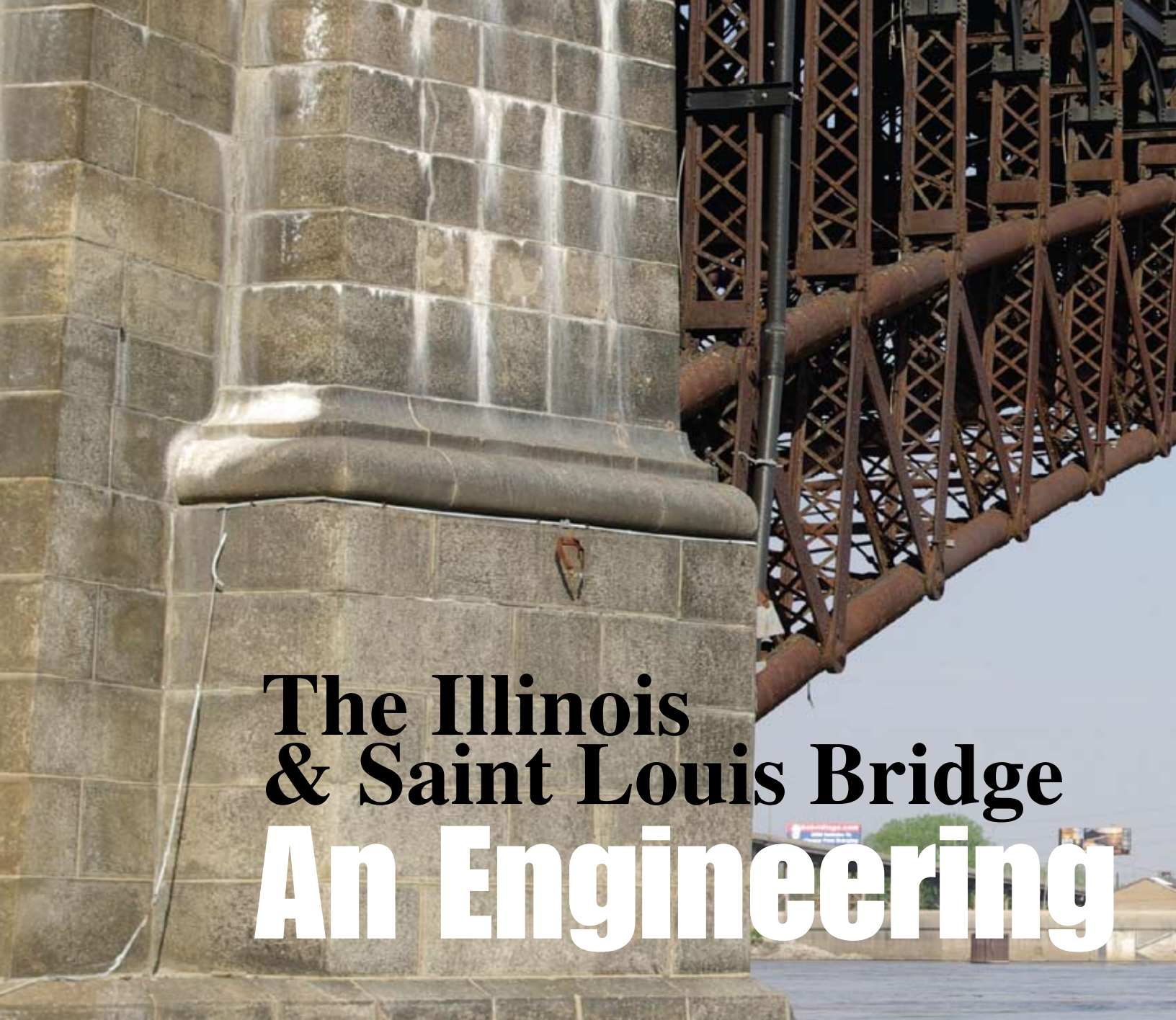
Mason dutifully sent the letter to Madison, which may have played a role in the President's decision to reject Lewis' drafts.⁵⁹ Tillier was clearly the type of person to

spread ill will, as evidenced by several lawsuits against him that spanned a seventeen-year period; the last suit ended a few months before he departed for St. Louis.⁶⁰ Thankfully Sibley's plight was short: since Tillier had lacked authority to fire him, the U.S. government was still bound to pay Sibley a salary. For a few short months Sibley was furloughed, then reappointed as factor for a new fort and trading factory at the confluence of the Missouri and Osage rivers. Sibley had exhibited the type of restraint expected of him and had demonstrated the qualities that were inherent in young, educated gentlemen of that period. As demonstrated by the remainder of Sibley's career, the faith placed in him by influential government officials in this crisis was warranted, and a promising career was not brought to an untimely end by a crooked superior at Fort Belle Fontaine.

NOTES

- ¹ Robert L. Fisher, "The Western Prologue to the War of 1812," *Missouri Historical Review* 30 (April 1936). For more information on the Indian Factory System see Edgar Bruce Wesley, *Guarding the Frontier: A Study of Frontier Defense from 1815 to 1825* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935), 31-54, and Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, the Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 84-93.
- ² Jeffrey E. Smith, ed., *Seeking a Newer World: The Fort Osage Journals and Letters of George Sibley, 1808-1811* (St. Charles: Lindenwood University Press, 2003), 6; Wayne Morris, "Traders and Factories on the Arkansas Frontier, 1805-1822," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 28 (Spring 1969), 28-29.
- ³ John Sibley to Benjamin Morgan, October 8, 1803, RG59, Department of State, Letters of Application and Recommendation during the Administration of Thomas Jefferson, 1801-1809, microfilm M418, roll 10, frame 0261, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter abbreviated as NARA.
- ⁴ Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, vols. 13 and 14 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 13: 98. Hereafter cited as Carter, *TP*.
- ⁵ The House of Representatives condemned the appointment because it was "repugnant to the Constitution" that an Army officer could hold a civil office at the same time. Carter, *TP*, 13: 504-05, n. 6f.
- ⁶ RG75, Letters sent by the Superintendent of Indian Trade, microfilm M15, roll 2, p. 107, NARA.
- ⁷ Henry Dearborn to George Sibley, August 17, 1805, Carter, *TP*, 13: 187.
- ⁸ A surety was a type of bond that guaranteed the payment of Sibley's debts should he fail to pay.
- ⁹ George Sibley had been living in Fayetteville, North Carolina.
- ¹⁰ Alfred Donaldson, *History of the Adirondacks* (New York: The Century Company, 1921); Harold C. Syrett, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-87), vol. 26, 41, n. 4. Tillier defended his administration of Castorland in an 1800 pamphlet he authored, entitled *Memoire pour Rodolphe Tillier, commissaire-gérant de la Compagnie de New-York. Rodolphe Tillier, Translation of a memorial of Rodolphe Tillier's justification of the administration of Castorland, County of Oneida, State of New York* (Rome, New York: Thomas Walker, 1800); U.S. Supreme Court, *Tillier v. Whitehead*, 1 Dallas 269 (1788).
- ¹¹ Henry Dearborn to William Davy, September 25, 1805, RG75, M15, roll 2, p. 106; Carter, *TP*, 13: 191.
- ¹² William Davy to Rodolphe Tillier, RG75, M15, roll 2, p. 110, NARA.
- ¹³ James Wilkinson to Secretary of War, November 26, 1805, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, microfilm M566, roll 1, frame 0067, NARA.
- ¹⁴ RG107, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, M22, roll 2, p. 299, frame 0249 and M222, roll 1, T154, NARA.
- ¹⁵ James Wilkinson to Henry Dearborn, December 10, 1805, Carter, *TP*, 13: 299.
- ¹⁶ RG107, M222, roll 1, T155 and M22, Roll 3, T12, NARA.
- ¹⁷ Secretary of War to Governor Wilkinson, October 16, 1805, Carter, *TP*, 13: 239.
- ¹⁸ RG107, M22, roll 3, T20, NARA.

- ¹⁹ Governor Wilkinson to Secretary of War, July 27 and July 28, 1805, Carter, *TP*, 13: 164-172, 173 -174. Pettifoggers, a generalized term for opportunists, included land speculators, squatters, and persons claiming to be lawyers.
- ²⁰ Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 1: 64.
- ²¹ George Sibley to Samuel Sibley, October 25, 1806, Sibley Papers, Lindenwood College Collection Transcripts, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Commission of Meriwether Lewis as Governor, March 3, 1807, and Secretary of War to William Clark, March 9, 1807, Carter, *TP*, 14: 107-09. Clark's unabridged title as Indian Agent was "Agent of Indian Affairs to the Several Nations of Indians within the Territory of Louisiana excepting the Great and Little Osages and their several divisions and detachments."
- ²⁵ RG107, M221, roll 12, S265, frame 3674, NARA.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, roll 12, S277, frame 3693.
- ²⁷ John Mason succeeded John Shee on November 21, 1806. RG107, M22, roll 3, T39.
- ²⁸ RG107, M22, roll 3, T82 and T119.
- ²⁹ Stan Hoig, *The Chouteaus: First Family of the Fur Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 38-41. George Shannon, a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, was one of the men from Chouteau's party.
- ³⁰ William Clark to the Secretary of War, May 18 and June 1, 1807, Carter, *TP*, 14: 122 and 126.
- ³¹ Thomas Hunt to Secretary of War, November 20, 1807, RG 107, M221, roll 8, H327, frame 2601, NARA.
- ³² George Sibley to the Secretary of War, September 19, 1807, RG107, M22, roll 3, S420.
- ³³ Thomas M. Marshall, ed., *The Life and Papers of Frederick Bates*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1926), 1: 224-25.
- ³⁴ Frederick Bates to the Secretary of War, November 7, 1807, Carter, *TP*, 14: 151.
- ³⁵ George Sibley to the Secretary of War, November 6, 1807, RG107, M221, roll 12, S442, frame 3925, NARA. Sibley expressed concern over his dismissal and the effect it would have on his reputation and the reaction from his Sureties. The Sureties were persons who initially contracted with Sibley when he became employed with the government. Sibley was concerned that the Sureties would wrongfully liquidate his bond unless a full enquiry was initiated.
- ³⁶ RG75, Microfilm T58, roll 1, frame 0083.
- ³⁷ Marshall, *Frederick Bates*, 1: 272.
- ³⁸ Thomas C. Danisi and John Jackson, *Meriwether Lewis* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2009), 197.
- ³⁹ John Mason to Rodolphe Tillier, April 12, 1808, RG75, M16, roll 1, pp. 154-55, NARA.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, John Mason to George Sibley, 21 March 1808, roll 1, p. 103.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, John Mason to Rodolphe Tillier, 20 May 1808, 155.
- ⁴³ Tillier was paid an annual salary of \$1250 and an additional \$365 for clothing.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, M15, roll 1, p. 158, NARA.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 287-290.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 377 and 379.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, M16, roll 2, pp. 13-17.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁵¹ RG75, Microfilm T58, roll 1, frame 0083. Tillier remained in St. Louis until 1811.
- ⁵² In March 1809, William Clark took an accounting of the factory buildings at Fort Belle Fontaine "on the spot," at Mason's request and noted a dwelling house, store house, two small out houses or kitchens "all in perfect repair." Tillier had estimated their value at \$1000 in his 1808 inventory. RG75, M16, Roll 2, p. 22, Instrument 131.
- ⁵³ Robert J. Brugger et al., eds., *Papers of James Madison*, Secretary of State series, 8 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), 1: 141; Danisi and Jackson, *Meriwether Lewis*, 280-81.
- ⁵⁴ Rodolphe Tillier to George Mason, May 12, 1809, RG107, M221, roll 32, T273, frame 0719.
- ⁵⁵ Danisi and Jackson, *Meriwether Lewis*, 269-70.
- ⁵⁶ Robert Rutland et al., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, 5 vols. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984), 1: 141-42
- ⁵⁷ Brugger, *Papers of James Madison*, 1: 142.
- ⁵⁸ Rodolphe Tillier to George Mason, June 9, 1809, RG107, M222, roll 4, T1809, frame 1582, NARA.
- ⁵⁹ Secretary of War to Governor Lewis, July 15, 1809, Carter, *TP*, 14: 285-86.
- ⁶⁰ Early American Imprints, first series, 1639-1800 (New York: Readex Microprint, 1955-1969), no. 38637. See the 1799 Gouverneur Morris letter to Tillier from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: http://www.gilderlehrman.org/search/display_results.php?id=GLC00087.05.



The Illinois & Saint Louis Bridge An Engineering



(Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

By the end of the Civil War, accelerated westward expansion required better means of crossing the Mississippi River. The Chicago & Rock Island Railroad had already completed one bridge across the Mississippi in 1856, giving Saint Louis' northern competitors an added edge in building western commerce. Saint Louis businessmen, still reliant on the Wiggins Ferry to float rail cars across the river, started the process of building its own bridge just after the war and hired the Keystone Bridge Company, under the leadership of future robber baron Andrew Carnegie, as the construction firm; James Buchanan Eads (1820-1887) was to be the engineer designing it.

As early as 1842, Eads was known for his invention of a diving bell, which was used to retrieve the cargos of



Marvel

steamboats that frequently sank because of snags in the river, or whose boilers had exploded. Thanks to his success at this enterprise, Eads was perhaps the most knowledgeable man in America about the Mississippi riverbed and currents. This, along with his friendship with Attorney General (and fellow Saint Louisan) Edward Bates, later relayed into government contracts to create iron-clad steamers for the Union during the Civil War.

Two years after the War, the Illinois and Saint Louis Bridge Company began work on the momentous project. Eads was able to use his diving bell (also called a caisson) to assist in the construction of pylons upon which the Mississippi bridge rested on bedrock. This helped prevent the problem of decompression sickness that resulted from workers rising too quickly from great depths. When the Illinois and St. Louis Bridge (later dubbed the “Eads Bridge”) was completed in 1874, it was the longest arch bridge in the world at 6,442 feet.

Not long after the completion of the bridge, Eads was awarded another contract that set out to make the Mississippi navigable year-round near its mouth. By 1879, Eads succeeded in satisfying the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and, as a result, became one of the wealthiest men in the United States.

What follows is an article originally published in 1871 in *Scribner’s Monthly Magazine*, describing a visit to the next engineering marvel yet under construction.

— Paul Huffman



The St. Louis Bridge, later named for engineer James Buchanan Eads, as it appeared about the time of publication of this article in *Scribner's Magazine*. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

The feeling of admiration with which one surveys the rapidly advancing work of bridging the Mississippi at St. Louis is blended with a certain poetic sadness—a sentiment excited by the contrast between the present and the past.

Twenty years ago this mighty river was mistress of the West; her levees were crowded with merchandise seeking transportation; and eager throngs, hurrying up and down the land, depended upon her aid in reaching their destination. A queenly superiority seemed to be the natural right of this noble river, and with her importance to the commerce of the country constantly increasing, it was supposed that no rival could possibly appear.

But there was something of the usurper in the Mississippi, even from the first. People said her very name was stolen and that her magnificent claims were all pretence. They declared that the Missouri had the prior right to the homage paid to the Mississippi, because it furnished the greater volume of water pouring through this channel to the Gulf, and also gave its own color, its mud, and its fertilizing properties to the majestic stream.

To all this the river in possession has never deigned to give an answer, but superbly rolling on her way, had exulted until now in her undisturbed supremacy. Sometimes, to show her power, she wrested a forest or a hamlet from its hold upon her banks; or turning uneasily in her bed, swept new channels for her course, regardless whether the being who made unrequited use of her energies, survived her pleasantries or perished in her remorseless arms.

This queenly river, however, happens to slow southward. Had her direction been east or west, her sway might have continued for a longer time; but Providence, by cutting out her course, cut short the term of her

supremacy. Westward flows the stream of human life upon this continent. No highways leading north or south can possibly compete in the race for fortune with those tending towards the setting sun.

When, then, the Railroad appeared, running wherever it would, and able to overcome on land the resistance of gravity—not so easily mastered on the water—it at once became the autocrat of western transportation, overthrowing all rivalry, distancing all competition, and making the water-courses tributary to its advancing domination.

It was early seen that the struggle would be a stern one and that the river would yield only to the prowess of a master-mind; to find the man able and willing to cope with such an adversary, on the gigantic scale needed for the consummation of a permanent success, was no easy task. At last, fortunately, the choice was made of Chief Engineer James B. Eads.

The country is already indebted to his skill and perseverance for many important works. He built the vessels “Benton,” “Baron de Kalb,” “Cincinnati,” and others used so effectively by Admiral Foote before the fight of the Monitor and Merrimac. Afterwards, he constructed 14 ironclads for the United States and had invented various improvements in naval and military defenses. He was the first man in Europe or America to devise successful means for operating heavy ordnance by steam. Mr. Stevens of Hoboken devised a means, never since used, for sponging and loading the gun by steam, the muzzle being turned down to a hood on the deck, thus bringing the bore in line with a steam cylinder beneath the deck, the piston of which carried the sponge or shot into the bore of the gun. Mr. Ericsson, by the rotating turret, trained the guns by steam; but in the turrets designed by



The upper roadway of the recently completed bridge looking east, c. 1874. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

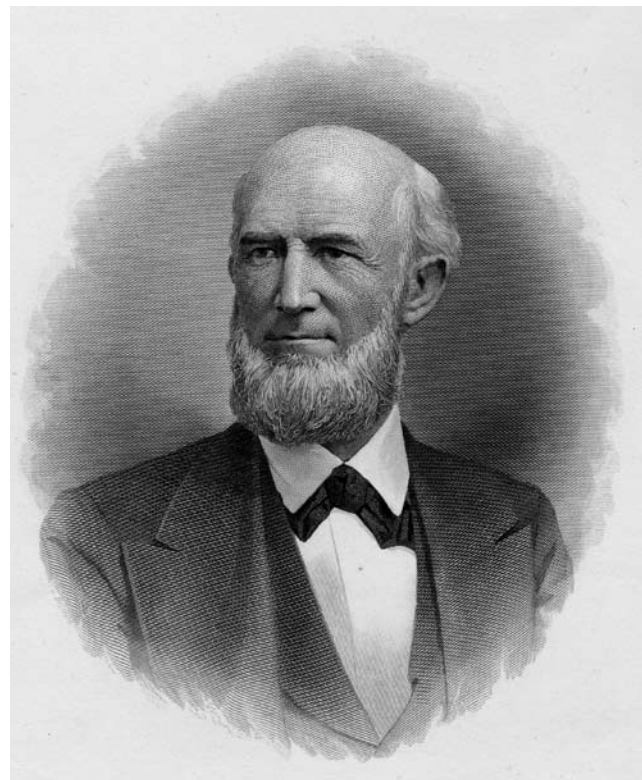
Captain Eads, not only was this done, but the guns were lowered below deck for loading, raised again for firing, run into the ports, and the recoil checked, all by steam, and so rapidly that 2 eleven-inch guns were each loaded and fired every 40 seconds in each turret. The government is today making trial of a gun-carriage, of novel construction, invented by Captain Eads, generously allowing him to pay the cost of the carriage if it fails, with nothing but reputation as a reward if it succeeds.

When Capt. Eads visited Europe after the war, with a Government Commission to examine naval construction, he was most cordially received by Count Bismarck and General von Roon, the Prussian Minister of War; and commissions of officers visited his apartments to examine his models. Many of these officers have distinguished themselves in the late war. To show the difference between French and Prussian military management, it may be mentioned that when the Captain was at Paris, although Mr. Dayton, our minister to France, informed the Imperial authorities of the arrival of plans and models of such importance, they merely replied that if the inventor would carry them to a certain office, a report would be made upon them. Of course, no notice whatever was taken of this ungracious answer to a most generous offer on the part of the owner of the inventions, who had no idea of acting the part of a vendor of patent rights.

Having, then, introduced our readers to the Chief Engineer, to who they will be mainly indebted for the pleasure and information given in the remainder of this article, let us step aboard a tug with the Captain and steam out from the west shore of the Mississippi to see what has thus far been done in the great work we are considering.

Three problems are to be solved in carrying out the gigantic scheme. The first is a question of engineering

James Buchanan Eads started his career on the Mississippi salvaging sunken steamboats, and designed ironclad riverboats during the Civil War. When the bridge was completed, Eads probably knew more about the Mississippi and its patterns than anyone alive. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)





Construction of caissons allowed Keystone Bridge Company, the construction company hired to build Eads' design, to reach all the way to bedrock below the riverbed. Here, workers are sinking the east abutment, laying masonry on the floating caisson. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

skill: How can the bridge be constructed so as to overcome the obstacles presented by the width, depth, and shifting sands of the great river? The second is a question of commercial importance: How can the bridge be made to accommodate the greatest amount of transit, at the same time obstructing navigation as little as possible? The third question is financial: How can this bridge be built so as to pay the largest dividends to stockholders?

As we are not, however, to attempt a problem in Euclid, but only to take a pleasure excursion of an hour, picking up such information as we can by the way, we will answer the above questions by looking at, rather than by computing the scientific data of the structure, taking as a sample of the whole, the pier on which the little tug now lands the party, ladies and all.

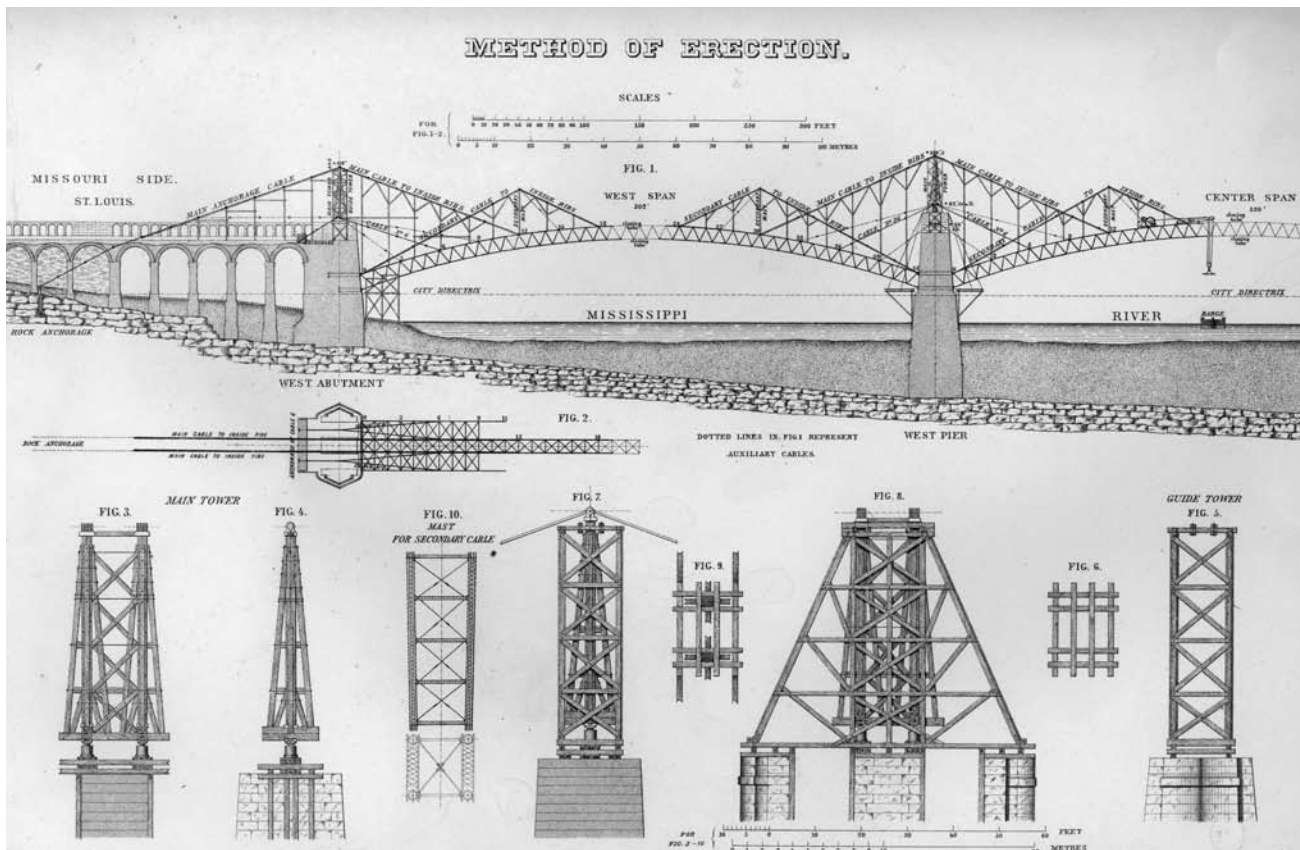
This pier (of which you have a view in the accompanying picture, from a photograph taken Sept. 20, 1870) looks modest enough as it rises out of the river, now as placid as a lake. But let us see what it costs of brain and courage and life to achieve this work.

There are to be two piers in the stream and two abutments. The height of the eastern pier, when completed, 10 feet above low-water mark, will be 97 feet and that of

the other, 69 feet above the rock. About 78 feet in depth of sand will be encountered in sinking the one and 50 feet in the other, with about 20 feet of water on the site of each pier. The base of each pier is 82 feet long—the eastern being 60 feet wide, and the other 48 feet wide. The larger one will cover an area of 4,020 square feet and the other 3,360 square feet.

Glancing at the drawing of the “Section of east pier and caisson,” the reader will be able to follow a brief explanation of the magnitude of the enterprise.

A coffer-dam, or diving bell is constructed and floated to the place where the pier is to be built. This coffer-dam is to be loaded above the water with the masonry for the pier and is to be allowed gradually to descend to the bottom of the river, carrying with it the superstructure which is to form the pier. In this way, all the stone for the structure is laid in cement above the water and is kept from the water, till the pier is finished by iron water-tight sides extended above the water as the floating pier sinks deeper and deeper, with its increasing burden of stone and cement. The gradual descent of the pier is managed by screws, supported on false works, erected around and over the site of the pier.



Engineer's detail drawings of bridge construction. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

It is intended that the pier shall sink clear through the sand, to the rock bed of the river. When the sides of the caisson touch the sand, that sand must be removed in order to let down the pier. This is done by sand-pumps, which carry off the sand as fast as men in the air-chamber can shovel it to the mouths of the tubes. For these operations, as well as for others of which we shall soon speak, it is necessary to provide tubes through the masonry, leading down into the air-chamber, for the passage of the workmen; and also through which air may be forced to expel the water from the chamber; and eventually by which the sand may be pumped out. These tubes must have airlocks or valves in them, to be closed behind the workmen and materials in their passage, to prevent the escape of the compressed air in the chamber.

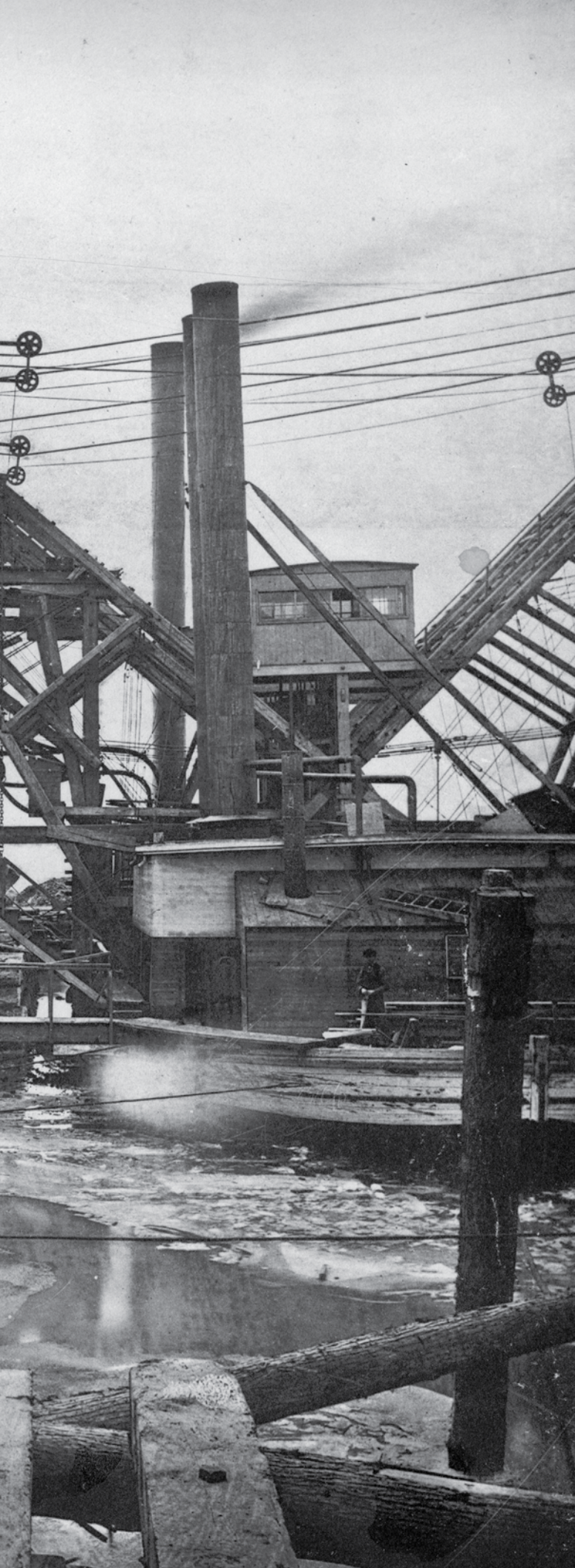
With these explanations given you by Captain Eads, as you stand on the pier, you are prepared to descend down the "Main Entrance Shaft." You go down a winding stairway, and experience little inconvenience until you enter the air-valve where, if the compressed air from the air-chamber is let out rapidly, you will feel a painful pressure in one ear or both. If this is your first visit, it may be 15 minutes before it will be safe to let you pass into the air-chamber where the men are at work; but by gradually admitting the compressed air, no permanent ill effect will be received.

If the painful pressure continues more than an instant after entering the valve, you will be told to close the nostrils between the thumb and finger, shutting the lips tightly, and inflating the cheeks, thus opening the Eustachian tubes and equalizing the pressure of the inner and outer surfaces of the tympanum. These tubes are a provision of nature to relieve the ears of such barometric changes as occur in the atmosphere in which we live, but are too minute to meet an unusual outer pressure of air with a counter-current of air from the lungs. But passing through the airlock you can remain safely in the air-chamber for a considerable length of time. These air-chambers, even after they had reached the bed-rock, 60 to 80 feet below the surface, were visited by thousands of persons, including many delicate ladies, without any of them experiencing the slightest ill effects from the pressure.

It is, however, somewhat startling to find one's self so far underground, in a dim light, with the consciousness that too long a visit would turn this chamber into a tomb. About 30 workmen, out of 352 employed in a single air-chamber, were affected with more or less muscular paralysis; and 12 cases out of the 30 proved fatal. Nearly or quite all of these deaths happened to men unaccustomed to the work; several of them to men who had worked but one watch of 2 hours.



OMEGA



Sinking of the west pier; note the ice breaker in the foreground. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

Down in this dungeon, 9 feet high, and which, filled with concrete, by and by, is to be the base of the solid pier, you will see some very startling phenomena. Blow out the flame of a candle and it immediately returns to the wick. At the depth of 100 feet, candles are consumed in about three-fifths of the time required in the open air. Large quantities of smoke are emitted from the flames; and the air is filled with particles of floating carbon, which can only be thoroughly removed by placing a rose-jet on the nozzle of a water hose in the chamber and discharging the spray in every direction.

There is great difficulty in extinguishing fire in an atmosphere of such density; and the clothing of one of the men, although of a woolen fabric, having on one occasion taken fire, it was exceedingly difficult to quench the flame. A kind of glove has therefore been invented by which a candle will burn under the normal pressure of the atmosphere. Another curious phenomenon, observed at 108 feet below the surface, is the reappearance of flame, by placing the unquenched sparks of two wicks in contact, when separately, each fails to possess sufficient heat to restore the flame. One is pleased to hear, in the midst of these unusual appearances, the familiar click of the telegraph, putting the solitary band of men, working far under the bed of a mighty river, in connection with the outer world. The wires communicate with the derrick-boat and central office in St. Louis, so that directions can be given to the workmen; and progress reported by them at any instant.

But retreating from this somber visit to the lower depths, somewhat after the fashion of the ascent one makes in crawling up into the ball of St. Peter's at Rome, and feeling a little exhausted as the passage through the air-valve is made, we climb the stairway, glad to know that a "lift" is to be put into the east abutment pier to avoid the labor of walking up a circular stair of 120 feet in height. This, it is believed, will greatly relieve the workmen from the exhaustion consequent upon the change from a pressure of air of 45 or 50 pounds extra to that of the natural atmosphere.

We now stand under the open sky, resume our ordinary self-assurance, and, considerably elated (especially the ladies) with our experience underground, listen submissively as Captain Eads explains the derrick-boats and the operation of their immense traveling gear stretching high above our heads. This is tame business compared with the descent into the shades below, and yet the machinery for this part of the enterprise is as wonderful in its complications and adaptations as that of any other portions of the work. The accompanying representation of the construction works and machinery for sinking the caisson and laying the masonry of the East Pier will give an idea of the process.

Here you see the caisson in position; the guide piles driven into the sand to steady in its descent; derrick boats moored on either side, having engines for working the machinery and driving the air- and sand-pumps. Outside these derrick-boats barges are lying with the stone on board.

Frameworks 50 feet high support, as you observe, strong wire cables along which "travelers" with wheels are arranged to run for hoisting and transporting the stone. In the picture, the "traveler" on the right is just lifting a block of granite; the one on the left is depositing a block on the roof of the caisson; and the beauty of the thing is, that a single man, stationed in one of those small cabins above the derrick-boats controls the "traveling" process by which 12 stones, each of 7 tons weight, can be raised and placed in position at one and the same time. An average of 10,000 cubic feet of masonry can be laid in a day. Three minutes only are required to make fast to the largest stone on a barge and to place it in the hands of the mason over the spot that it is to occupy in the pier. These "travelers," 24 in number, employ 14,780 feet of wire rope in this work.

A complete picture of this machinery is given in the annexed view of the construction work of the East Pier, from a photograph taken in August of last year.

The sand-pumps, used for removing the sand from the caissons as the piers descend, must not be forgotten. They are of a simple but novel and ingenious construction, never having been in use before.

One of these, of 3-inch bore, discharges 10 cubic yards of sand in an hour; and gravel stones 2-1/4 inches in diameter are discharged by it with as much facility as sand. A stream of water is forced down through one pipe and caused to discharge near the sand into another pipe in an annular jet and in an upward direction. The jet creates a vacuum below it, by which the sand is drawn into the second pipe or pump, the lower end of which is in the sand. The force of the jet drives the sand up to the surface as fast as it enters the second pipe.

The superiority of this pump consists in the fact that the requisite supply of water for keeping the sand in a fluid condition is constant, while the suction-pipe is inserted directly in the sand. It is scarcely possible for the pump to become clogged; and it works admirably, even with the end of the pipe 19 feet deep in the sand.

After witnessing the satisfactory operation of the derrick-boats and the sand-pumps, the only item left about which to ask for information is the method of filling up the air-chamber after the structure has reached the rock-bed.

The whole pier must be solid, and the method of making it so is simple enough to be readily explained. Of course, it is understood that the air-chamber is of immense strength, braced and girded in every part, with a roof of iron plates half an inch thick, and strong timber girders, intended to rest upon the sand or rock, to support the roof from below.

As soon, then as the iron edge of the caisson (projecting downwards a little below its wooden interior walls) has struck the rock, the space remaining between these wooden walls and the rock is thoroughly concreted. The chamber is then ready to be filled up. In the channel

piers, the rock was cleared of sand; and layers of concrete 9 or 10 inches in thickness were placed directly upon it. The closing courses under the roof of the chamber were stoutly rammed in place, and then the air-locks and finally the shafts were filled with the same material.

But for the east abutment pier, the necessity of this very tedious process was obviated by using sand instead of concrete for filling the air-chamber. The wooden walls of this chamber are strong enough to resist the pressure of the sand with which it is to be filled, even should the iron used in its construction corrode entirely away. The sand upon the outside also exerts a counterbalancing pressure, it being scarcely possible that the sand surrounding this pier should ever be scoured away by the action of the stream.

To make the filling of sand compact, the air in the chamber is allowed to escape and water is introduced, after which sand is shoveled down through the vertical shafts or pipes; when the chamber is nearly full of sand and water, the air is again forced in, expelling the water and enabling the workmen to go down and fill the remaining space with concrete, ramming it under the roof of the chamber. When this is done and the shafts and pipes filled up, the whole thing is as solid and substantial as if built of granite from the top to the bottom. Nothing but an earthquake will be able to dislodge the massive structure from the rock on which it rests.

Just at this point the younger members of the party descry the camera of a photographer, at work 60 feet above water from a frame-work on the shore. They immediately climb the frame-work and get a bird's-eye view of the caisson of the east abutment, on which our party is assembled.

We give the result of the photographer's skill in the accompanying cut. It allows you to look down upon the top of the pier in process of construction. You see the iron-plated walls of the caisson, the large round entrance of the main shaft, the projecting ends of the tubes for the sand pumps, and the India-rubber hose and wire tubing, conducted over several wheels, conveying the compressed air from the air-pumps on the derrick boats to the air-chamber of the caisson. You will also observe several blocks of stone just lowered into place at the end of iron chains. The workmen, seated on a long board, having come up to lunch in the open air, do not look as if they have suffered very severely from their subterranean (or rather "subfluvial") exploits. But lest it should be supposed that these operations, described so easily on paper, are as easy in practical performance, let Captain Eads give a brief chapter of his experience, before we leave the piers to speak of the other parts of the work on the bridge.

"This is a very fickle and unstable stream," said he. "I had occasion to examine the bottom of the Mississippi below Cairo, during the flood of 1851, and at sixty-five feet below the surface, I found the bed of the river, for at least three feet in depth, a moving mass, and so unstable, that in endeavoring to find footing on it beneath my diving bell, my feet penetrated through it until I could feel the sand rushing past my hands, although I was standing erect at the time." He added, "About thirty-three years ago a

steamboat, the 'America,' was sunk one hundred miles below the mouth of the Ohio; an island was formed on it by the deposits of the river, and a farm established on the island. Cotton-wood trees grew there, and became large enough to be cut down and sold for fuel to the passing steamers. But two floods removed every vestige of the island, uncovering the wreck of the 'America,' and leaving it forty feet below low-water mark. When the wreck was recovered, about thirteen years ago, the main channel of the Mississippi was over it, and the shore had receded from it, by the abrasion of the stream, nearly half a mile."

To deal with such a fickle, headstrong antagonist is no child's play, as the bridge company found out to their cost in two instances. In one case, the sand was scoured away outside the caisson, causing the sand inside (put there to equalize the pressure) to burst the walls; and in the other case, the strength of the current forcing out some bolts, the friction of the sand prevented the dam, with the pier, from settling properly in its place.

These disturbances, which were disastrous, owing to the failure of a contracting party to deliver granite in time, were indulged in by the river, at a cost to the company of not less than \$50,000. Another habit of the river, of impinging upon any disagreeable obstructions with a battering-ram of ice, extending upstream a good many miles towards the Arctic regions, has proved a source of inconvenience to the company. This way the river has of trying, when chilled through, to get to a warmer climate has made it necessary to construct enormous breakwaters, having ice aprons of strong oak timber to protect the work at the channel piers.

Even at the banks, difficulties of a tedious and perplexing sort were encountered, especially at the site of the west abutment. This site had been for over 60 years a part of the steamboat wharf of the city; and all sorts of

useless material had been thrown from the boats, forming a deposit averaging 12 feet in depth over the rock. Old sheet iron, grate-bars, parts of smoke-stacks, stone-coal, cinders and clinkers, formed the mass at the bottom, over which the hulls and machinery of two steamers, burnt in 1849, lay imbedded in the stones and rubbish from the city, with which a few years ago, the authorities had widened the wharf at this place.

The coffer-dam, constructed to enclose this site, had to be put down through these obstructions; oak beams armed with huge steel chisels were forced down by a steam pile driver, and then withdrawn to allow sheet piles to be driven down permanently.

The first attempt only served to make a good enclosure for the water to enter, and a double course of sheet-piles was needed to make the dam at least water-tight. Even then the structure proved to have its foundation on a water-wheel of one of the wrecks (the crank of an engine, attached to the head of the shaft of the wheel, being just within the enclosure), as if the old forces, fast losing ground before the swifter mode for railway transportation, were making a last attempt to hinder the triumph of the rival power. The excavation, as it progressed, unearthed wrecks of barges of a kind in use before steam was employed, which thus joined in the efforts of submerged machinery to delay the work.

But resistance was in vain; and now underneath that mass of masonry (of which you have a view in the picture of the western abutment), lies the iron driving-beam of the last steamboat that will ever dare to contend for the inland supremacy of the paddle-wheel over the iron track.

We now turn to an imaginary sketch of the completed structure. In the drawing, stretching up and down the page, you have a general view of the great work as it will be, it is hoped, within a year.

The newly opened St. Louis Bridge was portrayed as the pinnacle of progress, complete with commerce on the levee, people gathering, and belching smokestacks. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)





The railroad platform as seen by the railroad engineer driving across the bridge; today, this level is used by Metrolink. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection; Photo: Christopher Duggan)



The bridge as you perceive, will have 3 spans, each formed with 4 ribbed arches made of cast steel. The center span will be 515 feet, and the side ones 497 feet each, in the clear. The form adopted for the spans is what is usually termed the ribbed arch. You observe 2 curved members or ribs, to each arch, extending from pier to pier. This double rib arrangement enables the arch to preserve its shape, under all circumstances of unequal pressure upon its parts, while obviating the necessity of a spandrel bracing. A moving load has no effect on the curve of this double arch, however unequally distributed its weight may be.

The upper roadway (as seen in the engraving), is for carriages, horse-cars if desired, and foot passengers. It is 50 feet wide between the railings, the roadway being 34 feet wide and the foot-walks each 8 feet wide.

The railway passages below the carriage-way will be each 13 feet 6 inches in the clear and 18 feet high and will extend through arched openings of equal size in the abutments and piers. The railways will be carried over the wharves on each side of the river on 5 stone arches, each 20 feet wide and will be enclosed throughout this distance by a cut-stone arcade of 20 arches, supporting the upper road way.

After passing over those stone arches, the railways will be carried through the blocks between the wharf and the third street parallel to it, on brick arches, into a tunnel.

The city of St. Louis rises from the river to a considerable elevation, affording an excellent opportunity to tunnel under that portion of the city which fronts on the levee to a more central part where, in a depression, will be built an immense Union Depot.

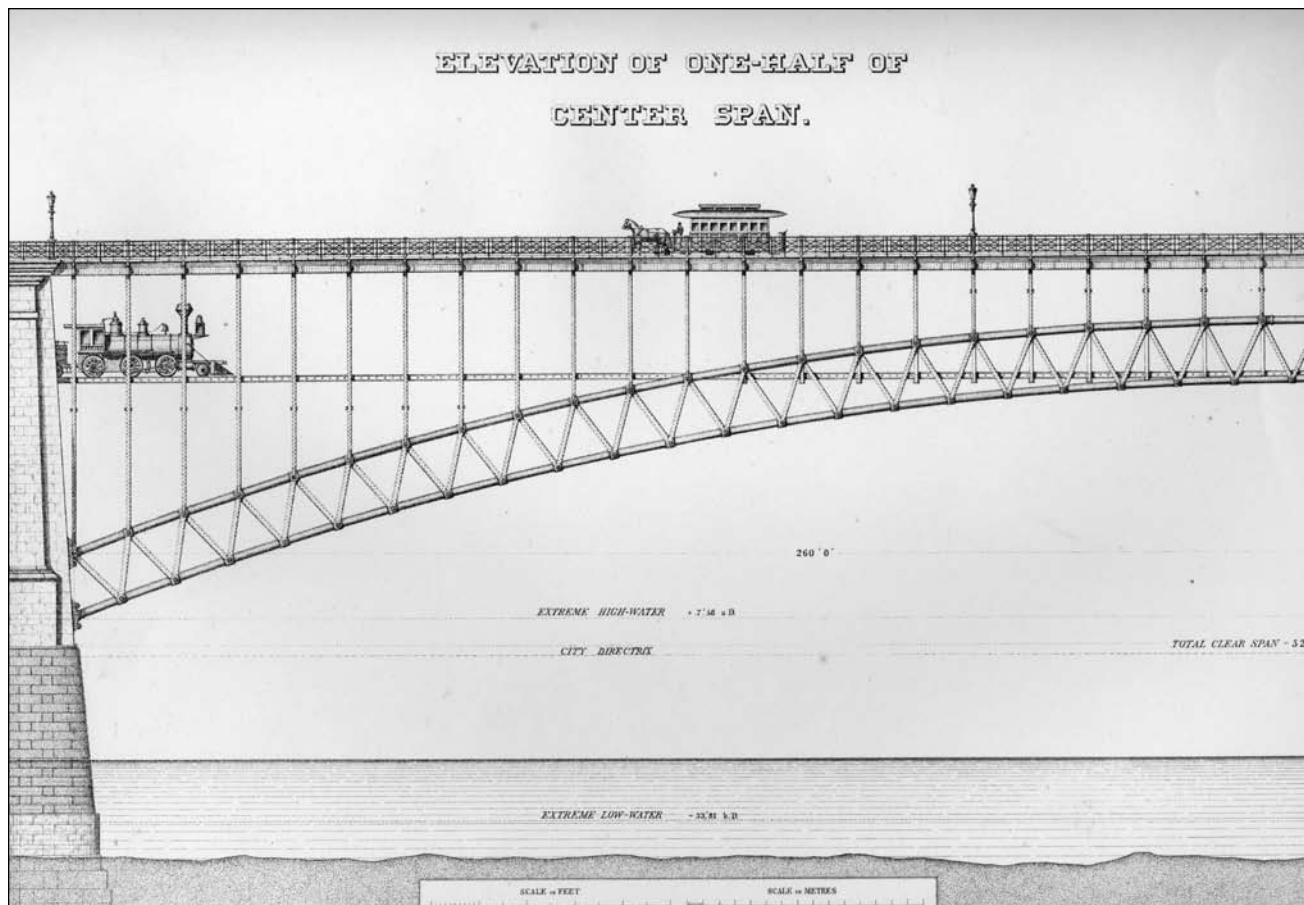
On the Illinois shore, the railways will curve off to the North and South, immediately after crossing the last one of the stone arches; and with a descending grade of 1 foot in 100, extending about 3,000 feet and supported on trestle-work a part of the way, they will reach the grade of the railways on the Illinois side. The carriage road will begin to descend with a grade of 5 feet in 100, at the eastern end to the bridge, immediately after the railway tracks curve away from the latter; and on the Missouri side, the carriage-way will be continued on a level grade over the railway tracks from the bridge to the third street of the city parallel with the river.

These details are necessary to give our readers an idea of the completed work; and here we finish our answer to the engineering problem: "How can the bridge be constructed so as to overcome the obstacles of the breadth, depth, and shifting sands of the mighty river?"

The remaining commercial and financial problems are more easily disposed of, at least on paper, and not having any stock invested in the enterprise ourselves, we go gaily back to the engineer's office to look over some statements and figures, that we may give our readers the results in a brief and compendious form.

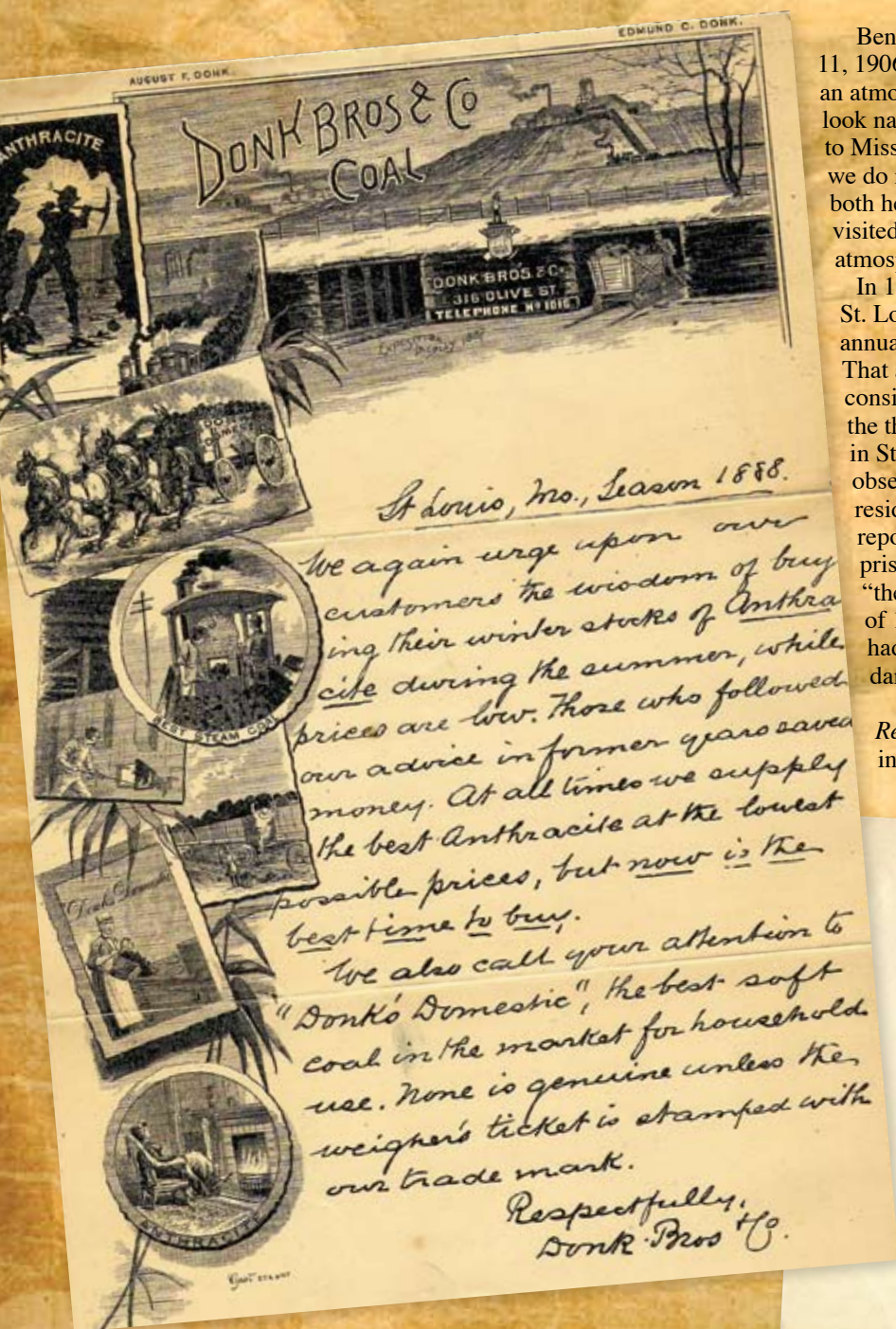
Let us stand, however, for a few moments, on the wharf of the western shore of the Mississippi and take a general survey of the work. Our readers can follow our description by the aid of the picture. On the opposite Illinois shore are seen the depots of several railways, a couple of hotels, and the woody landscape beyond. In the stream are the derrick-boats, machines, and breakwaters, marking the positions of the piers. On this shore, that which seems to an Eastern eye a beach, with gangways resting upon it near the water's edge, is the St. Louis wharf, or levee. On a busy afternoon, at any other season but winter, across these gangways porters may be seen carrying boxes and bales, while passengers are embarking on the scores of steamers advertised to sail promptly for every landing on the river, but seldom getting off within a day or two of the appointed time.

This drawing depicted the future of progress for St. Louis, with horse-drawn wagons on the top level and a locomotive on the bottom, removing the need for ferries across the river. (Photo: C. W. Woodward, *A History of the St. Louis Bridge*, 1881, Western Historical Manuscript Collection)



"It don't look natural": St. Louis Smoke Abatement in 1906

BY DAVID STRAIGHT



Beneath a view of the St. Louis skyline on February 11, 1906, Curt penned, "Did you ever see St. Louis with an atmosphere as clear as shown on this picture? It don't look natural." He mailed the postcard with his question to Miss Bess N. Morgan at Fort Riley, Kansas. While we do not know her reply, Curt's question suggests that both he and Bess were St. Louis residents, or at least visited the city frequently enough to be familiar with its atmosphere.

In 1906, coal was the most commonly used fuel in St. Louis. Of the approximately 7,250,455 tons burned annually, almost 95 percent was bituminous coal.¹ That a clear sky during the winter of 1906 would be considered unnatural gives testimony to the severity of the thick, black smoke produced by burning soft coal in St. Louis homes, offices, and factories. Curt's smoke observation no doubt echoed the experiences of many residents. For example, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported in March 1905 that thick smoke prevented prisoners from being put to work in the quarry due to "the risk that many of them would escape"; in the fall of 1906, the *Globe-Democrat* noted that coal smoke had closed many public schools "on account of the darkness."²

As early as January 1823, the *Missouri Republican* reported that "smoke has been in some instances so dense as to render it necessary to use



candles at midday.”³ When the great hardwood forests surrounding St. Louis and in the American Bottom across the Mississippi River were exhausted in the 1820s, St. Louis began burning soft bituminous coal, readily available from Illinois mines. Coal smoke plagued St. Louis for more than a century until burning soft coal was banned in 1940. Smoke abatement crusades ebbed and flowed with periods of activity disrupting long stretches of resigned acceptance that coal smoke was a necessary by-product of progress as well as an emblem of growth. The year of Curt’s post card, 1906, was one of public debate in St. Louis about the best tactics for controlling coal smoke.

The first St. Louis smoke ordinance, passed in 1867, required that smoke stacks be at least twenty feet higher than the adjacent structures. Most likely, this was prompted by a successful lawsuit which awarded a Mr. Whalen \$50 in damages from his neighbor, a Mr. Keith, for a stovepipe pouring smoke onto his property.⁴ By the 1880s, the Engineers’ Club of St. Louis had taken up the smoke question and concluded that the obvious solution—banning the burning of soft coal—was impractical, as it would be too costly to St. Louis industry and risked destroying the growth and prosperity of the city. They advanced two solutions: educating boiler operators in the proper methods of combustion to burn soft coal without smoke, and inventing a device that would capture or eliminate coal smoke. This engineering approach to smoke abatement framed the debate until the late 1930s.

In 1893, St. Louis enacted its first ordinance prohibiting “the emission into the open air of dense black or thick gray smoke.” However, language drafted by the Engineers’ Club exempted most firms because none of the anti-smoke devices market actually worked as well as their exaggerated claims. Furthermore, the Missouri Supreme Court overturned the ordinance as unconstitutional because the city had exceeded its authority.⁵ After the Missouri legislature declared smoke a nuisance in cities over 100,000 people, St. Louis passed a series of smoke ordinances between 1901 and 1904 that declared the “emission or discharge into the open air of dense smoke” to be a misdemeanor, carrying a fine of \$25 to \$100 each day that smoke was discharged. The city created a Smoke Abatement Department consisting of the Chief Smoke Inspector, paid \$150 per month, and five Deputy Smoke Inspectors, each paid \$100 per month. Again, the ordinance contained a crippling loophole exempting those who could show “that there is no known practicable device, appliance, means or method” that could have prevented their discharge of smoke.⁶

As St. Louis prepared for the World’s Fair, there was considerable emphasis on making the whole city a modern

Born in Germany, August and Edmund Donk immigrated to Peoria, Illinois, as boys. In 1863, August, the older, began his own coal company in St. Louis. His younger brother joined the firm five years later; together they became one of the largest coal merchants in St. Louis. This 1888 advertisement was printed on the inside of a post office letter sheet. (*Author’s Collection*)

urban showcase for the millions who would visit. Speaking to the Engineers’ Club in 1901, William H. Bryan concluded, “I am in hopes that the World’s Fair authorities will handle this problem [smoke] in an effective manner. What could be more interesting and valuable than to show an immense power plant developing thousands upon thousands of horse power burning our own smoky fuels with perfectly clear stacks? We can do this successfully, and with a wide choice of apparatus. In so doing we would give an object lesson to the world.”⁷ With the World’s Fair located a few miles west of the industrial parts of the city and mostly during summer months when heating was not required, smoke was not a notable problem on the Fairgrounds.

A late addition to the World’s Fair exhibits included the nation’s first coal testing plant operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). As the Fair was opening, Congress appropriated \$60,000 for testing “the coals and lignites of the United States, in order to determine their fuel values and the most economical method for their utilization,” but required that all the machinery used and coal samples tested be donated. With this restriction,

The traveling link grate, one of the “wide choice of apparatus” to prevent smoke that William H. Bryan discussed in his 1901 report to the St. Louis Engineers’ Club. (*Journal of the Association of Engineering Societies, December 1901, p. 228.*)

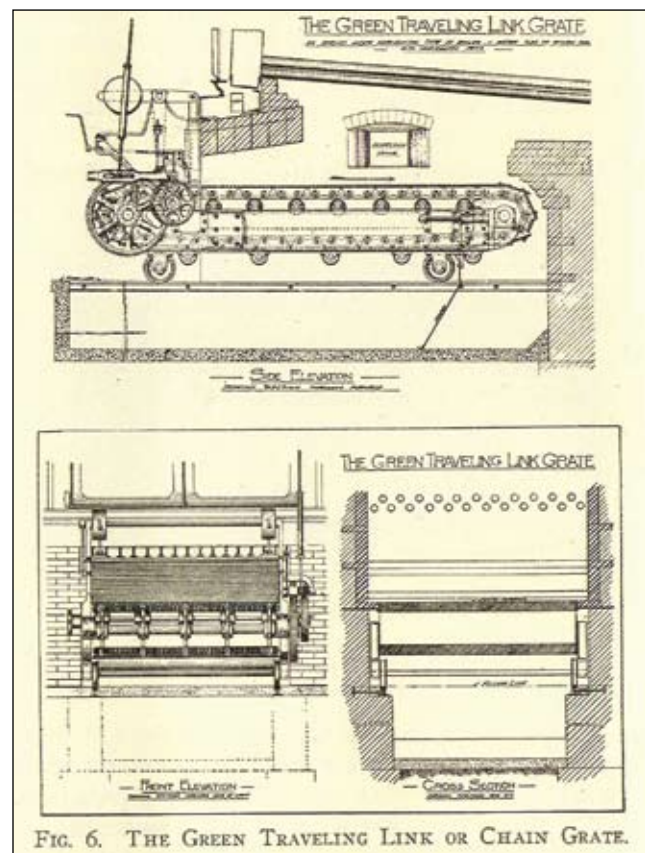
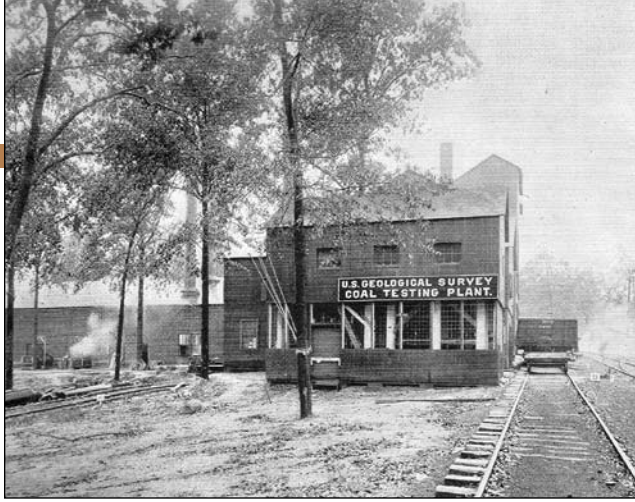


FIG. 6. THE GREEN TRAVELING LINK OR CHAIN GRATE.



The U.S. Geological Survey Coal Testing Plant was built in the back part of the World's Fair Grounds. (Plate from *Report on the Operations of the Coal-Testing Plant on the United States Geological Survey at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Mo., 1904.*)

testing did not begin until September 1904 when the World's Fair was half over. The initial USGS report, published in 1906, concluded that coal gasification was more energy efficient than simply burning bituminous and lignite coals under steam boilers.⁸ Although smoke abatement was not discussed directly, engineers understood that fuel economy and smoke abatement were two sides of the same coin. Another report, *The Burning of Coal without Smoke in Boiler Plants*, was published in 1908. Washington University mechanical engineering faculty members were active in the USGS research and the department became a leader in smoke abatement and coal combustion research.⁹

Reading the Chief Smoke Inspector's May 1906 annual report, one could easily conclude that St. Louis would soon have clear skies. It listed 983 "manufacturing concerns and other plants" that had installed "smoke consuming devices" since 1901. It is interesting to note that only about ten percent of that number had switched to smokeless fuel or electric power; the balance were still burning soft bituminous coal. Additionally, there were 228 heating plants, that had reduced their smoke output by following instructions for the proper firing of a coal furnace supplied by the department. C. H. Jones estimated "that there has been a decrease of 80 to 85 percent in the emission of dense smoke from boiler plants in this city."¹⁰ These findings seem incongruous when contrasted with Curt's observation.

Knowing that the Civic League had spent the summer studying smoke, Jones published a preemptive rebuttal in October 1906 asserting that "a large majority of plants in the city are complying with the law." He claimed that the diary kept by his department showed only four smoky days since the first of the year, and two of these had east winds. Jones identified four sources for the remaining smoke in St. Louis: railroads, brick kilns, and blast furnaces, which have "no known smoke device that can be used"; furnaces in private residences whose smoke is "sufficient to cover the entire city"; remaining smoke from manufacturing plants due to "improper use of devices and careless stoking"; and smoke from East St. Louis, which

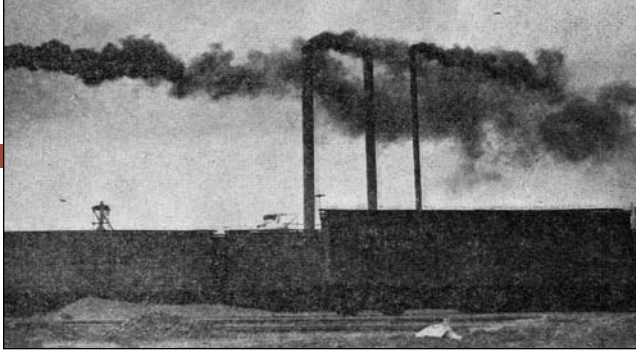
"is sufficient to cover the downtown district as far west as Twelfth Street" when the wind is blowing from the east. He viewed prosecution as a last resort to be used only when violators refused to cooperate and were making no efforts to remedy the situation. Jones recommended new ordinances to license and regulate stationary firemen so that coal fires would be properly stoked and to regulate boilers to ensure that they were not overcrowded, poorly ventilated, or insufficient to their task.¹¹

The Smoke Nuisance, published by the Smoke Abatement Committee of the Civic League in November 1906, began with a quote on the front cover—"The way to abate smoke is not to make it"—and offered a highly critical view of the St. Louis Smoke Abatement Department:

It does not require the testimony of an expert to convince the people of St. Louis that the smoke nuisance has by no means been satisfactorily abated. The dense clouds of smoke that daily hang over the city, the layers of soot that filter into office, parlor and sleeping rooms, the throat irritation due directly to the sulfur fumes in the smoke-laden air, the injured trees and plants, the soiled linen and damaged merchandise are all good and sufficient evidence of the continued prevalence of this exasperating nuisance.¹²

Despite the aggressive tone and their condemnation of Jones for being too lenient in his prosecution of offenders, the recommendations of the Smoke Abatement Committee did not differ significantly from the solutions proposed by the Chief Smoke Inspector. After acknowledging the vast coal supplies within 100 miles of St. Louis and the substantially higher cost of anthracite coal, the committee concluded, "It is obvious that soft coal is and must continue to be the chief fuel of this city."¹³

Their report differed primarily in rejecting Jones' arguments that residential furnaces and East St. Louis were significant sources of smoke in St. Louis. "The amount of smoke received from East St. Louis, even when the winds are favorable, does not exceed ten per cent of the total amount produced on this side of the river."¹⁴ Having interviewed coal dealers, the committee found that only ten percent the soft coal sold in the city was consumed in "domestic plants, open grates, stoves, ranges and furnaces."¹⁵ Like Jones, the committee placed considerable emphasis on proper combustion. "Smoke is nothing more nor less than 'carbon in the wrong place.' The secret to smoke prevention is to secure complete combustion of the fuel so that there will be no smoke to consume."¹⁶ In addition to the ordinances proposed by Jones, they added one governing proper chimney height for boiler capacity and draft. The committee also suggested that railroads should be required to use smokeless fuel or electric power if devices could not be found to control locomotive smoke, and that if brick kilns could not be abated, they should be driven from the residential parts of the city. The real



Photos such as this were used to strengthen the call for smoke-abatement laws to be enacted in "Annual Report of the Smoke Abatement Department for the Fiscal Year 1905-1906," included in Mayor Rolla Wells' annual message in 1906. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

complaint against the Smoke Abatement Department was that, unlike the Smoke Abatement Committee, it was not "filled with men who are qualified, by training or experience, in the field of engineering."¹⁷

Stung by the criticism of his office, Jones replied with his own pamphlet in December, directing his counterattack towards the two-faced behavior of selected members of the Smoke Abatement Committee and the Civic League. He pointed out that the same engineers who had recently acknowledged his progress and praised the Smoke Abatement Department now attacked him. Regarding Washington University, he noted that the professors on the committee had made no effort to persuade their own institution to abate its smoke and that he had twice taken the university to court. Moreover, a Civic League officer was among the major violators of the smoke ordinance.

"He, while condemning us for not being more aggressive in the prosecution of other people, not only did not think we should bring him into court, but even resented the fact that an inspector had the temerity to go into his office and tell him he was violating the law."¹⁸

Enforcement of anti-smoke ordinances by prosecution continued to be a political issue until burning soft coal was banned, because the civic leaders were indeed also the business owners who created jobs and brought prosperity to the city. After urging by the Civic League, the offices of smoke inspector and inspector of boilers and elevators were merged in 1910, and a mechanical engineer was appointed to lead the new agency. Smoke inspectors (engineers employed by the city to instruct owners in the proper installation and operation of their coal-fired equipment) embodied the Progressive Era values of efficiency and education. They also signaled a growing role for engineers and other technical experts in American public life. Three visionary ideas in the 1906 Civic League report accurately foreshadowed developments during the next forty years that would provide viable alternatives to burning soft coal. Centralized generation and distribution of electricity provided an alternative to individual coal-fired boilers. Central steam loops, replacing individual heating plants, still operate in the St. Louis central business district. While the report suggested large scale coal-gasification plants, the completion of a natural gas pipeline to St. Louis in 1949 accomplished the residential switch from coal to gas.¹⁹

NOTES

¹ *Report of the Merchants' Exchange* quoted in *The Smoke Nuisance: A Report of the Smoke Abatement Committee of the Civic League* (St. Louis: Civic League, 1906), 9.

² Quoted in Frank Uekoetter, "Divergent Responses to Identical Problems: Businessmen and the Smoke Nuisance in Germany and the United States, 1880-1917," *Business History Review* 73 (Winter 1999): 655.

³ Quoted in "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 26 (April 1970): 180.

⁴ Lucius H. Cannon, "Smoke Abatement: A Study of the Police Power Embodied in Laws, Ordinances and Court Decisions," *St. Louis Public Library Monthly Bulletin*, 1924: 210.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 211-212.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 216-217; *Smoke Abatement in St. Louis: Report to the Mayor* (St. Louis: Smoke Abatement Department, 1909), see the last three pages [unnumbered] of this pamphlet.

⁷ William H. Bryan, "Smoke Abatement in St. Louis," *Journal of the Association of Engineering Societies* 27 (December 1901): 228. His talk reviewed the merits of various boiler designs and anti-smoke devices.

⁸ *Report on the Operations of the Coal-Testing Plant on*

the United States Geological Survey at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Mo., 1904 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1906) pp. 23-30.

⁹ Uekoetter, 645; David Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1999), 96-98.

¹⁰ "Annual Report of the Smoke Abatement Department for the Fiscal Year 1905-1906," *Mayor's Message with Accompanying Documents, to the City Council* (St. Louis, 1906) pp. 187-188.

¹¹ C. H. Jones, *Smoke Abatement Department* (St. Louis, 1906).

¹² *Smoke Nuisance*, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸ C. H. Jones, *A Reply to the Civic League Report on the Smoke Nuisance* (St. Louis: Smoke Abatement Department, 1906), 8.

¹⁹ *Smoke Nuisance*, 28-32.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Thomas C. Danisi (“George Champlain Sibley: Shady Dealings on the Early Frontier”) is an independent scholar and coauthor of a new biography *Meriwether Lewis*, which was published by Prometheus Books in 2009. When researching various aspects of Meriwether Lewis, Danisi discovered exciting new information on George Sibley and his first job in St. Louis during 1805-1807. Sibley and his wife Mary were the founders of Lindenwood University.



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Born and raised in Missouri, **Mark Alan Neels** (“‘Barbarous Custom of Dueling’: Death and Honor on St. Louis’ Bloody Island”) is intensely interested in that state’s involvement in the American Civil War. After receiving his MA in History from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, he immediately entered into the PhD program at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, where his research focuses on the conservative Whig philosophy of Abraham Lincoln’s attorney general, Missouri native Edward Bates.



After 32 years with Washington University Libraries, **David Straight** (“‘It Don’t Look Natural’: St. Louis Smoke Abatement in 1906”) recently retired to devote full time to his postal history research and writing. His article “Cheap Postage: A Tool for Social Reform” was published this fall in *Smithsonian Contributions to History and Technology, No. 55*. He is currently co-chair of the annual Postal History Symposium, a member of the Museum Advisory Council for the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, and vice-president of the Postal History Society.

IMAGE INSIDE BACK COVER

Coal smoke such as this from 1906 was a common sight in St. Louis by the turn of the twentieth century, leading to “midnight at noon” days in the city. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

All uncredited plant photos in “How Natural is Nature?” (Spring-Summer 2010) are by Frank Oberle, found in John Madden, *Tallgrass Prairie* and *Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers*, both published by the Nature Conservancy and Falcon Press.



Wilson's Creek, 1861. (Photo: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

Julia Ward Howe Called it “a Fiery Gospel Writ in Burnished Rows of Steel”

A century and a half ago, the United States elected Abraham Lincoln as its sixteenth president. Before the year was out, South Carolina seceded from the Union; ten more followed in subsequent months, starting the War of the Rebellion. And Julia Ward Howe wrote the above famous words as part of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

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Lindenwood College Library, c.1910. (Photo: Mary Ambler Archives, Lindenwood University)

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