the Confluence®

A publication of
Lindenwood University Press

Spring/Summer 2020

VOL. 11, NO. 2

the Confluence

EDITORIAL BOARD

Mark Abbott, HARRIS STOWE STATE UNIVERSITY
Steve Belko, MISSOURI HUMANITIES COUNCIL
Lorri Glover, SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY
Andrew Hurley, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
Meredith Marsh, LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY
Robert J. Moore, Jr., GATEWAY ARCH NATIONAL PARK
Kristine Runberg Smith, LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY
Andrew Theising, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE
Kenneth Winn

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An undertaking like *The Confluence* doesn't happen without the help of many people, both within Lindenwood University and beyond. We owe particular thanks to Provost Marilyn Abbott and the Board of Trustees at Lindenwood for supporting this venture. We'd like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the following people, institutions, and companies for their contributions to this issue of *The Confluence*; we could not have done it without you.

Jaime Bourassa
Robert Cox
Chris Duggan
Nancy Durbin
Elizabeth Fleitz
Steve Gietschier
Paul Huffman
Mackenzie Kight-Fochs
Laurel Hill Cemetery
Missouri State Historical Society
St. Louis Mercantile Library Association
Lauren Sallwasser
Beth Savastana
Jason Stratman
William Tedford, Jr.
Michael Thede

STAFF

EDITOR, Jeffrey E. Smith, PhD
ART DIRECTOR & DESIGNER, Michael Thede
ARCHIVIST, Paul Huffman

SUBSCRIPTIONS

ISSN 2150-2633 *The Confluence* is a nonprofit semi-annual publication of Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri.
All rights reserved. *The Confluence* and Lindenwood University are not responsible for statements of fact or opinion expressed in signed contributions. Requests to reprint any part of *The Confluence* should be sent to Editor, The Confluence, c/o Lindenwood University, 209 South Kingshighway, St. Charles, Missouri 63301, or via email to confluence@lindenwood.edu.

© Lindenwood University 2019

Manuscripts. Any manuscripts should be sent to Editor, *The Confluence*, c/o Lindenwood University, 209 S. Kingshighway, St. Charles, Missouri 63301, or via e-mail to confluence@lindenwood.edu. Print submissions should be double-spaced, but will not be returned. For submission guidelines, citation format, and other particulars, consult http://www.lindenwood.edu/confluence.

Have you moved? Let us know if you have or will be changing your address so you don't miss an issue of *The Confluence*.

Subscription Rates. One year, $20.

Visit us on the web at: http://www.lindenwood.edu/confluence.

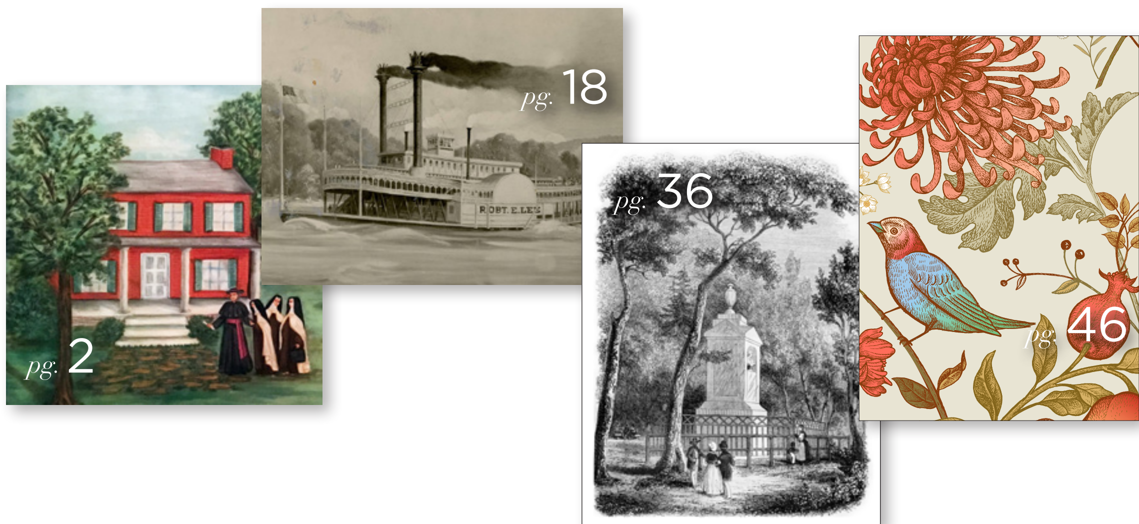
ISBN 978-0-9600179-1-1

COVER IMAGE

James Yeatman (1818-1901) moved to St. Louis from Tennessee in 1842 and became one of the city's most prominent civic leaders for six decades. He was a founder of institutions as varied as Washington University, the St. Louis Mercantile Library, and Bellefontaine Cemetery. For more on Yeatman's role in creating Bellefontaine see "Death, Civic Pride, and Collective Memory: The Dedication of Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis." *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

the Confluence
A publication of Lindenwood University Press
Spring/Summer 2020
VOL. 11, NO. 2

CONTENTS



2
"By Unexpected Means"—The Founding of St. Joseph at St. Louis, 1863-1878
by DANA DELIBOVI

Five nuns traveled to St. Louis in 1863 to create a contemplative order in the midst of the Civil War. Dana Delibovi investigates the reasons the group came.

18
Chasing the *Robert E. Lee:* Boat Races on the Mississippi River
by DEAN KLINKENBERG

Perhaps the most famous steamboat race on the Mississippi River came when the *Robert E. Lee* beat the *Natchez* from New Orleans to St. Louis in 1870. The record stood for some six decades, when a wave of races up the river started.

36
Death, Civic Pride, and Collective Memory: The Dedication of Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis
by JEFFREY SMITH

Starting in the 1830s, cemeteries in cities like St. Louis became more than just burial grounds. They became places people visited and conveyors of a city's collective memory. All this was conveyed in Truman Marcellus Post's sermon at the dedication of Bellefontaine Cemetery in 1850.

46
Otto Widmann and the Birds of Missouri
by BONNIE STEPENOFF

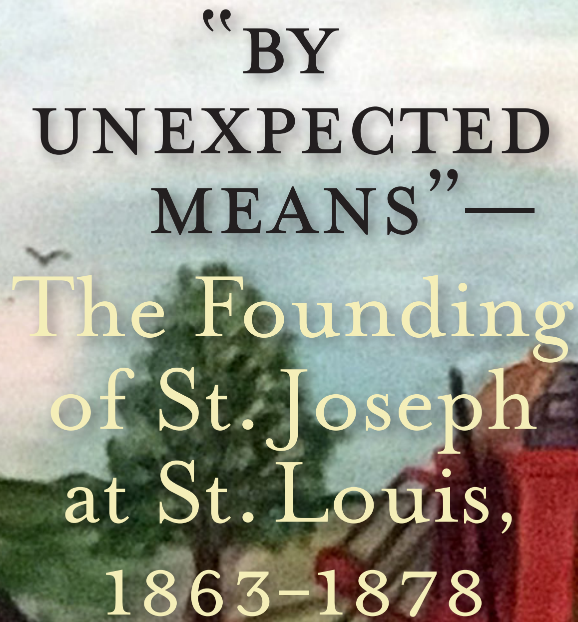
As late as the early 1990s, the only comprehensive book on Missouri's birds was Otto Widmann's *Preliminary Catalog of the Birds of Missouri,* published in 1907. Widmann documented the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, which has just one habitat in the United States—in St. Louis.

The Confluence is a regional studies journal published by Lindenwood University, 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.

"BY UNEXPECTED MEANS"— The Founding of St. Joseph at St. Louis, 1863–1878

by

DANA DELIBOVI



Today, in Ladue, Missouri, seventeen Discalced Carmelite nuns devote their lives to prayer, in a beautiful, cloistered convent. This serene setting hides a difficult founding in the turbulent year of 1863. In the fall of that year, five nuns traveled to St. Louis from Baltimore to create a "Foundation"—the Carmel of St. Joseph. They came at the behest of the first Archbishop of St. Louis, Peter Kenrick, brother of the Archbishop of Baltimore, Francis Kenrick. Their Foundation was the first branch of Carmel in America, from which sprouted eleven other monasteries.[1]

Archbishop Kenrick accompanies the Carmelites on arrival to St. Louis, painted in 1975 by Mother Virginia of the Carmel of St. Joseph. *(Image: Dana Delibovi)*

B & O Railroad advertisement from 1864 highlighting replacement and improvement of destruction wrought by Confederate attacks. *(Image: Wikicommons)*

52 ADVERTISEMENTS.

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

RE-OPENED.

THIS GREAT NATIONAL THOROUGHFARE

IS AGAIN OPEN FOR

FREIGHTS & TRAVEL.

The Cars and Machinery destroyed are being replaced by

NEW RUNNING STOCK,

With all recent improvements; and as the

Bridges and Track are again in Substantial Condition,

The well-earned reputation of this Road for

SPEED, SECURITY and COMFORT

Will be more than sustained under the re-organization of its business.

In addition to the *Unequalled Attractions of Natural Scenery* heretofore conceded to this route, *the recent Troubles upon the Border* have associated numerous points on the Road, between the Ohio River and Harper's Ferry, with painful but instructive interest.

CONNECTIONS

At the Ohio River, with Cleveland and Pittsburg, Central Ohio, and Marietta and Cincinnati Railroads; and through them with the whole Railway System of the Northwest, Central West and Southwest.

At Baltimore with Five Daily Trains for Philadelphia and New York.

TWO DOLLARS ADDITIONAL ON THROUGH TICKETS

To Baltimore or the Northern Cities, give the

Privilege of Visiting WASHINGTON CITY en route

This is the ONLY ROUTE by which Passengers can procure *Through Tickets and Through Checks to or from* WASHINGTON CITY.

W. P. SMITH, Master of Transportation, Balt.

Map created in 1860 showing train routes between Baltimore and the West. The sisters would most likely have taken the B & O from Baltimore to Parkersburg, West Virginia, then crossed the Ohio River to Cincinnati on the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad, and finally onto the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad to St. Louis. Riverboat service was also available starting in the Wheeling or Parkersburg, West Virginia, termini of the B & O. *(Image: Library of Congress)*

Why did these nuns risk founding a monastic convent at such an inauspicious time and place?

These nuns made their mission at the height of the Civil War. They traveled on the Baltimore & Ohio (B & O) Railroad, a line often subject to Confederate attacks. They settled in St. Louis, a city still threatened by cholera outbreaks following the devastating epidemic of 1849, where anti-Catholic aggression still smoldered after its zenith in the mid-1850s. They endured fifteen years of hardship in their quarters at the Clay Mansion, on the grounds of today's Calvary Cemetery. The sisters tried farming and crafts to support themselves, rarely succeeding in these efforts. Despite the poor conditions, the Carmel of St. Joseph hung on, finally moving in 1878 to its first, true Carmel monastery in Soulard.[2]

Why did these nuns risk founding a monastic convent at such an inauspicious time and place? That question recurred in the research process for this article, articulated by Sister Constance Fitzgerald, archivist at the Carmelite Monastery of Baltimore, the cloister from which the sisters set forth in 1863. "The interesting thing in the archived materials on the foundation is that they say nothing about the Civil War," notes Sister Constance. "But why?"[3]

Why did the Civil War not worry, or not matter, to the Carmelites? Although this question has no definitive, single response, one practical reason appears to be the zeal of Peter Richard Kenrick, first Archbishop of St. Louis, and Mother Mary Gabriel Boland, first prioress of the St. Louis Carmel. Another practical reason may have been conflict at the Baltimore monastery from which the Carmelite sisters hailed. In addition, the search for an answer elucidates three aspects of social and intellectual history.

First, it illuminates the role of religious women as workers in the relatively new, often troubled Archdiocese of St. Louis under the leadership of Peter Kenrick.

Second, it evokes the experience of life in the border states of the Civil War—Maryland and Missouri included. Of special note are implications for what has been termed the public "posture" of neutrality in the borderlands.[4] It is certainly true that, when the issue is slavery, neutrality is immorality, but a neutral public stance was an expedient chosen by many, including Peter Kenrick. An aspect of this posture was a focus on church business as usual, which could include the founding of a convent in 1863.

Finally, the founding of the convent at such a difficult time and place shows how practical history synergizes with the intellectual history of the Carmelites, particularly the virtues of detachment from worldly concern and the spiritual determination extolled by the order's architect, St. Teresa of Ávila.

In the words of the prioress of the fledgling St. Louis Carmel, Mother Mary Gabriel, "We must only be patient & remember that this earth is not our home. When God wishes he will give us a Carmel by unexpected means."[5]

"I Want an Order to Pray for Priests"

Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick founded the Carmel in St. Louis in communication with his brother, the Archbishop of Baltimore, Francis Patrick Kenrick. Peter Kenrick became Archbishop in 1847, the initial year of the newly constituted and vast Archdiocese of St. Louis, which ranged from the Mississippi to the Missouri River plains. By 1863, he already presided over an area well populated with religious women, including several orders installed under his tenure.[6] Yet, the Archdiocese lacked the presence of a contemplative order, which Kenrick wanted to remedy. As described in the archdiocesan record, "Our own Archbishop Kenrick, thorough man of the active life, yet at the same time, a lover of quiet meditation, is reported to have answered the query: Why introduce an Order that does nothing but pray: with the words: 'I have a number of Orders for the works of charity and education, but I want an Order that will pray forever for my priests.'"[7]

Although priests surely needed prayers in the early 1860s, it was not an ideal time to start a monastery in St. Louis. Anti-Catholic bigotry, a nationwide problem, had peaked in St. Louis in 1854 with rioting triggered by the nativist Know-Nothings. This group was hostile to immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and "Romanist" cultures, which the Know-Nothings believed defied the Protestant-American principles of individualism and private prayer. Among the

Of course, these difficulties were compounded by the looming war.

mischief wrought in the 1850s by nativists was a threat to the Old Cathedral by the riverfront, thwarted by an Irish-Catholic immigrant.[8]

Cholera remained a scourge in the Mississippi Basin following the disastrous St. Louis epidemic of 1849, reported to have killed 145 victims per day during June and July alone. Conditions in St. Louis did not change after 1849, and the city remained what Father Pierre-Jean De Smet called a "natural 'slop-bowl'," around which "you find breweries, distilleries, oil and white lead factories, flour mills and many private residences of Irish and Germans—into this pond goes everything foul—this settles the opinion as to the real cause of all the dreadful mortality here." Outbreaks continued to plague the city until the start of the twentieth century, including another major epidemic in 1866. Cholera strained the resources of the clergy, who were already pushed to the limit by the hemorrhaging finances of the Archdiocese, which Peter Kenrick could not staunch until around 1869.[9]

Of course, these difficulties were compounded by the looming war. The Archdiocese was forced to adjust the war's affect on projects and communications. Diocesan plans for a regional synod in 1860 were scrapped out of concern for the "unfavorable atmosphere" of pre-war Missouri and other border states, where division existed between pro-slavery secessionists and anti-slavery unionists. Communication between St. Louis and other states grew more arduous. Sectarian violence, and eventually battles of war, erupted in the Archdiocese, which at that time still contained all of skirmishing Missouri and Kansas. Peter Kenrick, like his brother Francis in border-state Maryland, refused to take sides in the war, although his ownership of several slaves belied his public neutrality.[10]

Despite the circumstances, Peter Kenrick maintained a strong will to bring the Carmelites to St. Louis as soon as possible. He corresponded with his brother in 1860 or 1861 to discuss the St. Louis Foundation.[11] But Kenrick's was not the only formidable will involved. Mother Mary Gabriel Boland, prioress of Baltimore's Carmel, championed the mission with a zeal to match the St. Louis Archbishop's.

Mary Gabriel of the Immaculate Conception was born Ella Boland in Virginia in 1834. In 1863, she was only 29 years old, but she had been serving as the prioress of the Baltimore Carmel since her election to a three-year term in 1861. This testifies to the drive that propelled her to St. Louis and enabled her to steer the Foundation cheerfully despite years of infectious illness in this "slop-bowl" city. During her time in St. Louis, Mother Gabriel suffered from tuberculosis, which was complicated by malaria, bouts of cholera, and probably mercury poisoning from the drug calomel, a nineteenth-century panacea that she took for years. Her letters, however, even at life's end, remain hopeful, sometimes ebullient. Three weeks before dying, Mother Gabriel wrote to her brother John: "Our dear Lord is so good. He comes every day, & your lovely flowers are on the altar. . . . Be of good heart—God can raise me up." According to Mother Mary Joseph Freund, current prioress of the St. Louis Carmel in Ladue, a convent anecdote backs up Mother Gabriel's spirited character: "Mother Gabriel would say that, when she was a girl, she prepared for life as a Carmelite by going to dances all the time."[12]

Then and now, electing a Carmelite prioress under age thirty was a curiosity, requiring special dispensation. Sr. Constance Fitzgerald notes, "Mother Gabriel was elected prioress in 1861 with only ten years in the convent. . . . I have to stress that this is very unusual." This election came after several years of leadership instability in the Baltimore Carmel, which followed the closing of a convent school and the controversial, forced resignation in 1858 of a beloved prioress, Mother Teresa Sewall.[13]

These events, along with others in the archival records, suggest that discord as well as devotion may have inspired the founding of the new Carmel in St. Louis.[14] Although the idea of mission motivated Mother Gabriel and her four companions, so did the need to resolve tension. A historical analysis prepared by the Baltimore Carmel states that "a sad peculiarity of this foundation, made during the Civil War, was that a period of community conflict and unrest was resolved when the five foundresses, led by Mother

The Carmelites *Leave for St. Louis*

— " —

On the Feast of St Micheal 29th September. 1863. Five Sisters left
this Convent of Mount Carmel Baltimore. for a Foundation given
by the Most Rev Arch Bishop Kenrick. of St Louis. —
For the new Convent of St Joseph. near St Louis. we gave the
following members. Rev Mother Gabriel. (alias Ella Boland.
Mother Alberta. Mary Jane Smith. Sr Bernard Elizabeth Dorsey.
Sr Agnes - Jane Edwards. — Sister Catherine (out sister) Mary Kearney.
Our Community gave them $3000. with a liberal supply of clothing.
this was more than they could well afford, or was thought necessary
when the Foundation looked so promising — but they wished to strengthen
all they could this first branch of our Order in America.
This Foundation took place during the time that Rev. H. B. Coskery
was Administrator of our Diocese.

— 4 —

"On the Feast of St. Michael 29th September 1863. Five Sisters left this Convent of Mount Carmel Baltimore, for a Foundation given by the Most Rev. Arch Bishop Kenrick of St. Louis—For the new Convent of St. Joseph, near St. Louis. We gave the following members, Rev. Mother Gabriel (alias Ella Boland), Mother Alberta Mary Jane Smith, Sr. Bernard Elizabeth Dorsey, Sr. Agnes Jane Edwards—Sister Catherine, our sister Mary Kearney. Our Community gave them $3000, with a liberal supply of clothing. This was more than they could well afford, or was thought necessary, when the Foundation bodes so promising—but they wished to strengthen as they could this first branch of our Order in America. The Foundation took place during the time that Rev. H. B. Coskery was Administrator of our Diocese."[1] *(Image: Sr. Constance Fitzgerald)*

Gabriel . . . departed Baltimore."[15] A good deal of circumstantial evidence exists for this, plus two valuable supporting documents.

The first of these is the written record from sisters' departure day, September 29, 1863 (see the sidebar, *The Carmelites Leave for St. Louis*). In the record, resentment is palpable. Money and supplies were given grudgingly to the sisters, not for their welfare, but the greater good of strengthening the St. Louis Foundation.[16]

The second is a letter, dated October 19, 1861, from Francis Kenrick to his brother, regarding Peter's request for a Carmelite Foundation. Francis wrote: "As to the Carmelites [women], I do not wish to bar them, though I hardly dare praise them where they do not agree in their plans and aims. As to the rest, they are generally fervent [religious], and serve God sincerely. In the present state of things it is hardly practical to think of introducing new institutes into a diocese."[17] With this letter, Francis Kenrick tapped the brakes on a Carmelite convent in St. Louis. He warned his brother of the disagreement among the Carmelite sisters, withholding his recommendation from those involved. He stressed the impracticality of a St. Louis Foundation given the "present state of things" in 1861, which most likely alludes to both the Civil War and the conflict among the Carmelite sisters.

But Francis Kenrick's voice of caution would soon be silenced. He died during the night of July 6, 1863. Within three months from that date, a determined Mother Gabriel would write to Archbishop Peter Kenrick, obtain his invitation to create a Foundation in St. Louis, get the approval of Baltimore's diocesan administrator, Father H.B. Coskery, and board a westbound train with four other sisters to start the Carmel of St. Joseph.[18] Mother Gabriel would have her will, and Peter Kenrick would have his contemplative order.

"From How Many Dangers He Saved Us"

The sisters who journeyed to St. Louis were diverse in age but universally unaccustomed to worldly risks. In addition to Mother Gabriel were three Carmelites: Sr. Mary Alberta of St. Alexis (1829–1879), who was so sheltered even before taking her vows that she "appeared to know absolutely nothing" about the wider world; Sr. Mary Bernardine of St. Teresa (1835–1907); and Sr. Agnes of the Immaculate Conception (1814–1883), a Philadelphian, with "all the proverbial characteristics . . . all that steady reserve of manner" of the city's scions. Also along on the mission was Sr. Mary Catherine of the Sacred Heart (1820–1916), a non-cloistered "out-sister" who could leave the convent enclosure to attend to the material needs of the other sisters. Accompanying the sisters was the chaplain of the Baltimore Carmel, Father J. Dougherty.[19]

After departing on September 29, it took two days for the sisters to travel from Baltimore to St. Louis, arriving on October 1, 1863. "There is no diary of their trip," says Mary Ann Aubin, archivist of the Carmel of St. Joseph and librarian of the Kenrick-Glennon seminary in St. Louis. "They took the B & O railroad part of the way, but whether they crossed the Mississippi by rail or by ferry is uncertain." In 1863, a likely route from St. Louis would be to take the B & O from Baltimore to Parkersburg, West Virginia, and switch there for a patchwork of trains to Cincinnati and onward to St. Louis.[20]

Taking the B & O during the Civil War was dangerous, though the owner of the B & O, John W. Garrett, tempered the risk as much as possible. A hybrid of Southern Democrat and Unionist and a practical border-state businessman, Garrett kept his political opinions to himself and maintained a laser-like focus on protecting his railroad. Nevertheless, the Confederacy or its guerrillas attacked, damaged, and looted the B & O frequently throughout the war. "The rupture of the B & O railroad . . . would be worth to us an army," General Robert E. Lee said. In 1861, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and his troops began marauding on the B & O in Maryland; later in the war, Confederate regular and guerrilla attacks continued, including attacks on passenger trains. The year 1863 saw several major raids on the B & O, including a springtime raid conducted by Confederate commanders William "Grumble" Jones and John Imboden.[21]

Violent activity targeting the railroads was well known, the subject of sensationalized accounts in some of the Northern press as well as more temperate coverage in the *New York Times*. Attacks were such common knowledge that the B & O ran advertising trumpeting the replacement of "Cars and Machinery destroyed" on the line. "Living in 1863," suggests archivist Mary Ann Aubin, "the nuns, being cloistered, didn't know all that was occurring outside. But they did have a priest [Father Dougherty] accompany them from Baltimore to St. Louis. You'd think he would have known more of what

The Colonel Henry Clay Mansion at Old Orchard Farm, 5239 West Florissant Avenue, St. Louis, was the summer house of Archbishop Peter Kenrick and the first home (1863-1878) of the Carmel of St. Joseph. The mansion was built in 1836 (demolition date not published). *(Image: Library of Congress)*

was going on."[22] Despite this known risk, the five sisters went ahead with their travel to St. Louis. A quarter of a century later, Mother Gabriel would write to her brother in hindsight: "As you journey along, you can think of our journey through life—how we 'pass by' everything, sorrows and joys, darkness and light. And of the happy meeting that will be when our good Father, God, welcomes us home. I used to think that way as we traveled out West. . . . From how many dangers He saved us, and guided us to the right way."[23]

"The Bull is Very Troublesome"

Upon their October 1 arrival, Archbishop Peter Kenrick personally escorted the travelers to their first convent home: Kenrick's summer house at Old Orchard Farm.[24] This house was the former Colonel Henry Clay Mansion, located on the current grounds of the continually expanding Calvary Cemetery. Kenrick's administration had purchased its original 323 acres to address the shortage of graves produced by the 1849 cholera epidemic.[25]

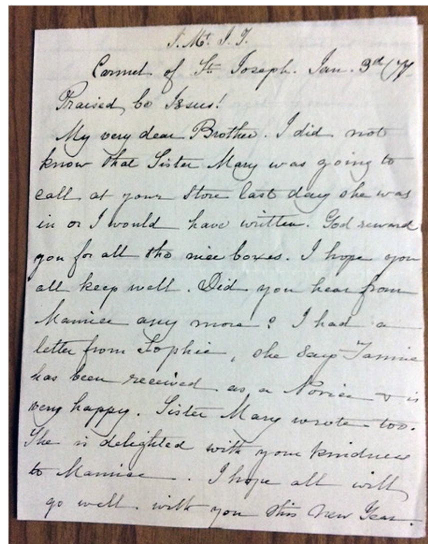
The sisters got down to business right away. On the morning of October 2, Archbishop Kenrick celebrated mass in the convent. On October 5, the sisters held elections. Everyone got a job: Mother Gabriel was elected prioress, and other Carmelites were elected clavaries.[26] But these glowing reports of the convent's first week were soon replaced with reports of hardship.

No letters or diaries from the Carmel of St. Joseph in St. Louis are extant before 1874. According to Baltimore archivist Sr. Constance Fitzgerald, "Lack of letters and annals is typical for first years of a foundation, persisting up to ten years. Early on, there is no plan for creating an archive."[27] Fortunately, church historians William Currier (1890) and John Rothensteiner (1928) gathered Archdiocesan and personal records to paint a picture of life in the new monastery at St. Louis.

The sisters endured, in Currier's words, many "privations and sufferings." Winter 1863–1864 was bitterly cold in St. Louis; nuns from temperate Baltimore were not prepared for this, and one had a "frozen nose" (probably, frostbite). They "succeeded badly" in their efforts at self-support, which included agriculture, sewing, and making artificial flowers. A poem written by one of the sisters—who is not identified in the record—invokes God to heal her heart's losses: "Here bereft of all it cherished/ Thou its every wound wilt cure." The best that could be said was that none of the sisters died in these early years.[28]

Isolation vexed the convent.

"very few persons seemed to care to make the acquaintance of the poor praying women who lived out beyond Calvary Cemetery."



J. M. J. T.

Carmel of St Joseph. Jan. 3rd /77

Praised be Jesus!

My very dear Brother. I did not know that Sister Mary was going to call at your Store last day she was in or I would have written. God reward you for all the nice boxes. I hope you all keep well. Did you hear from Mamie any more? I had a letter from Sophie, she says Fannie has been received as a Novice & is very happy. Sister Mary wrote too. She is delighted with your kindness to Mamie. I hope all will go well with you this New Year.

Letter from Mother Mary Gabriel Boland to her brother, John, January 3, 1877, including thanks, some family news, and a mention of a visit to John's store by Sr. Mary (most likely non-Carmelite out-sister Mary Catherine, who could leave the cloister to do errands). *(Image: Archives of the Carmel of St. Joseph, St. Louis, Missouri)*

Isolation vexed the convent. People living in the vicinity of the Clay Mansion could attend mass relatively nearby, at the residence of the convent's chaplain. But the area was sparsely populated, and "very few persons seemed to care to make the acquaintance of the poor praying women who lived out beyond Calvary Cemetery." Some may have questioned the utility of an order devoted to prayer.[29]

It might seem counterintuitive that isolation would trouble a convent cloistered from the outside world, but today's prioress at Ladue, Mother Mary Joseph, insists that isolation is detrimental to any monastery. "The isolation of the Carmel for its first fifteen years," she notes, "had to be difficult. Too much isolation from the larger community isn't ideal for a cloistered order. Monastery and community—it works both ways. We need to know who we pray for, and when people in the community see our monastery or hear our bell, they are lifted to God. There is a practical aspect, too. When a monastery is part of the community, people help us with donations."[30]

Much of the material in Currier and Rothensteiner is anecdotal, relying on a body of lore about the St. Louis Carmel handed down through the years.[31] That is why the preserved letters of Mother Gabriel, written mainly to her Missouri-dwelling brother, John Boland, from 1874 until her death in 1893, are such an important historical trove. These letters document two persistent problems at the Carmel in its founding years: self-support, by work or by charity, and the threat of disease. But the letters also show Mother Gabriel's commitment to persevere despite worldly problems, illuminating her faith and character.

Mother Gabriel wrote of struggles with agriculture at Old Orchard Farm. She made no specific mention of help. Since Archbishop Kenrick owned slaves, as did other organs of the Roman Catholic Church in St. Louis, it is possible, but unverified, that slaves assisted on the property prior to Missouri emancipation in 1865; Mother Gabriel did say in 1875 that she must supply "meat for the men," who may have been workers. Still, after eleven-plus years in St. Louis, the Carmel was still trying to get the hang of farming. There were problems with the timing for buying ducks (1877) and questions about how to preserve tomatoes and purchase a wagon (1874).[32] While asking around about animal husbandry, Mother Gabriel was referred by a "Mrs. Hudson" to her own brother, John, to whom she sent queries on October 10, 1874:

> I have taken the management of the farm myself lately. The Sister in charge wished me to do so. . . . I thought it would be better to kill pigs enough to last all year. Is it better to buy the pigs now & fatten them or to buy them already killed? The bull we have is very troublesome. He kills or cripples every horse he can get at. He is apt to break through in the fields of our neighbors, etc. Don't you think we had better sell him & buy a gentle one in the spring? We are offered only thirty dollars, and he is a young bull. Do you think it enough.[33]

From 1874 to 1877, Mother Gabriel corresponded frequently to her brother about a second income stream—sales of sewing and craft projects that included dresses, pillowcases, "drawers," and shirts. Often, these letters suggest that John Boland was an engine of aid to the convent, whether helping to sell craft work or sending gifts outright. John Boland had a store, and so he was

Angel from the Soulard convent, where the sisters moved in 1878. *(Image: Dana Delibovi)*

Cloister at 18th Street in Soulard, completed in 1878, where the sisters made their first true convent home. It is now an apartment building called "The Cloisters." *(Image: Jim Hess)*

in a good position to trade and procure goods for the Carmel. Mother Gabriel also asked and negotiated for money. The words of a brief letter from 1876 are typical: "Some one [g]ave me this box of fancy paper, will you please buy it from me (it is too nice for Carmelites) and I am in need of a little money. Only give your usual price. Love to all."[34]

Mother Gabriel would not have been surprised about the need to provide so much self-support. Since the St. Louis Archdiocese had faced financial troubles through at least 1869, its ability to supplement the convent was limited. In 1876, Mother Gabriel enjoined her brother "not even to speak to the Archbishop," on what seems to the provision of better circumstances for the monastery. To do so, she told John, "would only bring you into trouble." She added this clear-eyed observation, which was also the first of several indications in her letters that the Carmel had a stake (with tax liability) in the property at Old Orchard Farm: "The foundation is a bad job from the first. I doubt if it will ever sell to much advantage." Mother Gabriel was equally sanguine about infectious disease in St. Louis. Starting in the 1880s, she wrote of her malarial and tubercular symptoms and worried about contracting cholera from food. She chronicled her travails with the "blue mass"—the mercury-laden drug calomel, which "Dr. Papin" prescribed for her ills. She also remarked about her brother's chills in a letter of September 25, 1876, which will depart with the "first hard frost"—evidence of her attribution of infectious cause.[35]

Mother Gabriel's letters express two of life's most pressing problems: poverty and illness. Yet, the tone of the letters is hopeful overall, and they are full of concern for family members. There is no complaint about having to juggle agriculture and crafts with the daily schedule of mass, verbal prayer, mental prayer, and reading that is the primary job of Carmelite nuns. From the earliest, the letters include reminders to rise above worldly troubles, to guard against "weak faith" that is "easily overcome by the fear of the world's frown, or the desire of its smile," as she told John in 1876. But transcending worldly things did not mean ignorance of worldly things. Mother Gabriel knew about infection risks and about the "temptation of drink" to which two people she knew ("M.C. & L.") had succumbed. She also knew about politics. On October 31, 1876—a week before one of the most contentious elections in U.S. history—she told her brother, "Go to confession before election day. You might get killed. Go home *early* that day."[36]

Despite hardships, the Carmel gradually became established. By 1877, the convent had increased in size, allowing four sisters to leave for New Orleans and begin a new Carmelite Foundation. Private donations eventually eased the burdens of self-support and isolation. Construction began on the order's first, true cloistered monastery—an apartment building today. It was built on land given by a "Mrs. Patterson" at the corner of Victor and Eighteenth Streets in Soulard, supported by financial donors that included some familiar names: Dr. S. L. Papin, Mrs. E. Hudson, and, of course, Mr. John Boland. The Carmel of St. Joseph moved into their new Soulard monastery in summer, 1878.[37]

Only one letter from Mother Gabriel to her generous brother survives from that busy year, penned December 22, 1878. "You

have furnished our Christmas table nicely," she wrote, and "all the Nuns thank you and wish you a happy Christmas."[38] The founding years were over; "unexpected means" had finally delivered a real convent to the Carmel of St. Joseph.

"Why?—We Just Do What We Do"

Exactly why the Carmelite sisters made their Foundation in 1863—at the height of war, instability, and disease—remains opaque. Archivists Mary Ann Aubin and Sr. Constance Fitzgerald call it a "historical mystery."[39] Although Archbishop Kenrick wanted the Carmel very much, he was warned off the Foundation by his own brother, Archbishop Francis Kenrick. Was it only Peter Kenrick's firm will, plus the persistence of Mother Gabriel, that drove him to go against his brother's recommendation in 1863? Was the interpersonal conflict among sisters at the Carmel in Baltimore really so much worse than any risk of travel and resettlement during the Civil War? What additional factors may have motivated both archbishop and prioress?

Reflecting on the mystery leads to insight on three aspects of social and intellectual history that may have helped to spur the Carmel's founding in an inauspicious time: the role of religious women in the nineteenth-century Archdiocese of St. Louis; the experience of life in the borderlands of the Civil War; and the relationship between the intellectual tradition of the Carmelites, embodied by St. Teresa of Ávila, and the life ways of Carmelite sisters.

The historical record shows clearly that Peter Kenrick welcomed religious women to St. Louis; Kenrick introduced eleven orders under his tenure as Archbishop.[40] Kenrick's motivation for bringing religious women to St. Louis was decidedly unsentimental. He wanted women to work and to manage the work of others. Of the St. Louis founding of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, an order that housed and rehabilitated "strayed" women, Kenrick wrote: "The inmates of the establishment will, under the direction of the religious ladies already mentioned, occupy themselves with every species of work suitable to their sex and situation; and thus will be enabled to contribute to the support of a house to which they will owe so much." The Sisters of Mercy came to care for the sick and to educate poor girls and women; the Ursulines and the School-Sisters de Notre Dame came to teach German, Irish, and other immigrant children.[41]

The requirement of self-support multiplied the nuns' work. Archbishop Kenrick, from need and from temperament, kept a tight rein on the purse strings of the Archdiocese, and he expected orders to solicit donations and take in paid work. He gave the Sisters of Mercy the "moderate support" of $800 a year, arguing that "small as is this sum, the Sisters will have no reason to complain of insufficient support" because the Catholic Community of St. Louis would be "disposed to assist them." The Sisters of Mercy were forced to take in sewing and laundry in addition to their nursing and educational duties, prompting the Mother Superior from their home convent in New York to suggest returning if life in St. Louis was too strenuous.[42]

This pattern of primary work plus the work of supporting the convent played out in the first fifteen years of the Carmel of St. Joseph, where the sisters had to perform their main work—a rigorous schedule of morning-to-night prayer—while farming, selling crafts, and finding benefactors. The Carmelites, like other religious women in St. Louis, were working women with heavy responsibilities. Mother Gabriel made this role plain in her letters. From the cloister, she quizzed her brother on farming, committed to craft projects ("We will attend to her work as directed"), bargained on payments ("just let me know how much over $5 it will be"), and even asked her brother to mail a missive she had written to address sales and taxation of a lot. These letters carried no hint of resentment at having to work hard, but they were stalwart and grateful: "[W]e might have had great trouble & even lost the property from its [the tax bill's] not being paid in due time. So we must thank our Lord."[43]

Mother Gabriel was willing to work, but, as her early drive toward mission attests, she was not willing to be subordinate. The fact that a twenty-nine-year-old prioress felt quite entitled to contact the Archbishop of St. Louis to ask for a Foundation subverts any notion that religious women were wholly disempowered in the nineteenth century. Equally important, Archbishop Kenrick's direct assent to her request shows, much to his credit, that he was not put off by an assertive woman. Kenrick embraced the role of religious women as workers, and Mother Gabriel embraced the role of a working, managerial woman. These attitudes may have counterbalanced concerns about making a Foundation during the Civil War. There was work to be done, and religious women had to do it.

Trunk brought from Baltimore to St. Louis on the Carmelite sisters' journey in 1863. *(Image: Archives of the Carmel of St. Joseph, St. Louis, Missouri)*

Carmelite doll wearing a habit sewn by Mother Gabriel. Craft-making, including the sewing of clothes and linens, was a self-support activity of the Carmel of St. Joseph from 1863 to 1878. The grille at the right is a small open door from behind which cloistered Carmelites received visitors. *(Image: Archives of the Carmel of St. Joseph, St. Louis, Missouri)*

Moreover, in wartime Missouri and Maryland, getting to work may have been an aspect of coping with war by sustaining neutrality. This is a highly speculative claim, but the attitudes of Peter Kenrick, viewed in historical context, support the notion that fulfilling daily responsibilities may have helped to further his public stance of neutrality—a stance adopted by many in the Civil War border states. Starting a Carmelite Foundation in 1863 was one more way to do just that.

Historians William E. Gienapp and Christopher Phillips have emphasized the range of nuanced opinions peculiar to the Civil War borderlands—Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, where slavery and Unionism coexisted. Phillips has argued that people and organizations in these states were often driven to make compromises and to adopt a carefully curated persona or "posture" of neutrality, frequently masking actual opinions. In some cases, the persona may have involved a focus on conducting business as usual whenever possible to sustain evolving borderlands "trade patterns" that embraced both North and South.[44]

A prime example was John W. Garrett, owner of the B & O railroad, who concentrated on his business as a source of "common prosperity" and ran "a Southern-leaning railroad headquartered in a slave-holding border state that for half a century had developed profitable trade with the North and West." Baltimore's Archbishop Francis Kenrick also typified this attitude: doing the job of ministry was part and parcel of staying neutral. "[O]wing to his own position as head of a border-state diocese," Francis Kenrick tried to give "no offense to either side: he simply acted as the minister of religion . . . whose sole object should be to hasten the work of peace by every means that seemed available to that end."[45] Another example: Archbishop Peter Kenrick.

Archbishop Kenrick's position on the Civil War has been called "obscure." He diligently remained agnostic on the matter, even avoiding news reports to help him steer clear of opinion. Given that Kenrick owned slaves, he may have been inclined toward the Southern cause, although he never stated this publicly. Throughout the war years he remained neutral, stubbornly keeping his attention on the work of ministry. He wished, as he wrote to his brother in 1862, "to get involved as little as possible in these turmoils," and to "be of service to the end." According to Philadelphia Archbishop Patrick John Ryan, "During our Civil War, he [Peter Kenrick] kept aloof from politics . . . because he believed that, in the peculiar circumstances of Missouri as a border state, the interests of religion would be best forwarded by a prudent silence."[46] Archdiocesan business-as-usual went hand in hand with public neutrality.

Kenrick often exhibited his resolve to remain neutral and attend to work. During the war, he concerned himself with one of his pet projects (and peeves), the "prompt dispatch of business" from Vatican leadership (which, to his frequent annoyance, still held sway over administrative decisions in the United States). He also dealt with illness, injury, and damage to churches wrought by fighting in Missouri. In 1865, he refused Union orders to fly the flag from church steeples. He also forbid priests from taking the Union loyalty oath required by the Missouri Constitution that went into effect on July 1, 1865. Kenrick ultimately won both battles, informally and in court.[47]

In this context, Kenrick's 1863 go-ahead for the Carmel seems like one more way he focused on "the interests of religion" as an aspect of neutrality during the war. "Keep neutral and carry on" is the roughest of conjectures to help explain why, at the height of the Civil War, it made sense to those involved to

Sr. Stella Maris Freund, currently of the Carmel of St. Joseph in Ladue

"It doesn't matter which Carmelite community you are in. It can be St. Louis or anywhere—our life is God alone."

start a new Carmel. It is a piece of the psychosocial history of the border states, illuminated by the Carmel's founding, that warrants further investigation.

Mother Gabriel preserved no letters that speak of war or neutrality, but her surviving letters are imbued with Carmelite spirituality. This tradition was endowed to the order by St. Teresa of Ávila. Two core Teresian principles—detachment from the world and spiritual determination—shine through Mother Gabriel's letters. This intellectual legacy informed the decision to found and persevere with the Carmel of St. Joseph.

The founding of the St. Louis Carmel follows the injunctions and example of St. Teresa to her sisters. In her book of counsel to her nuns, *The Way of Perfection,* Teresa advised sisters to "begin with great determination" on the path of prayer so that "[t]hey know that come what may they will not turn back." For Teresa, the path of prayer included mission work. Her reform of the Carmelite order included the founding of convents in her native Spain, requiring her to combine her life of intensive prayer and meditation with travel, finance, law, writing, and negotiation. She has been called "an extremely businesslike mystic"—a description reminiscent of Mother Gabriel. Teresa offers the metaphor of a determined spiritual journey, which speaks directly to sisters who traveled to St. Louis. Carmelite nuns must have "a very determined determination to persevere… whatever work is involved, whatever criticism arises, whether they arrive or die on the road."[48]

Determination comports with another virtue, detachment from the world, which is made possible for Carmelite sisters by the full reliance upon God. A nun finds the determination to follow the path of prayer and mission because she practices detachment "from all created things"—money, food, bodily health, physical safety, and the like. "It doesn't matter which Carmelite community you are in," says Sr. Stella Maris Freund, currently of the Carmel of St. Joseph in Ladue. "It can be St. Louis or anywhere—our life is God alone." Current prioress Mother Mary Joseph traced this "back to the original formal founding. We are outside of the world—outside of our location. It doesn't matter where you are—we come to pray."[49]

Mother Gabriel, like all Carmelite sisters, was intimately familiar with St. Teresa's writings. She mentioned the words of the saint multiple times in her letters and promised to lend out a copy of Teresa's autobiography. She made many comments about the need for determination, in one letter proclaiming, "Let us have patience and look to the *end* when things look dark to us." Here, "end" was emphasized because it means eternal life in God, against which all worldly things—and worldly worries—prove inconsequential, meriting only detachment. "[T]he evil one so loves to worry us with thoughts of what will never come to pass. Saint Teresa calls the Imagination the 'fool' of the home (of our being). [S]he says if we want to be in peace and happy we must pay no regard to the fool who roves the world over."[50]

In the final analysis, the Carmelite sisters came to St. Louis during the tumult of the Civil War because they were heirs to the Teresian tradition. This tradition stressed determination to press on with spiritual aims, detached from worldly concerns. For nuns with such an intellectual history, war was a worldly "created thing," so it need not affect the spiritual mission to found a monastery. "You ask why they started this Carmel during the Civil War," declared Sr. Stella Maris. "Well, it's because we just do what we do, and pray."[51]

The Carmel of St. Joseph in St. Louis today, the home of the Carmelite sisters since 1928. *(Images: Dana Delibovi)*

ENDNOTES

Acknowledgment: **Thanks to Mother Mary Joseph Freund, Sr. Stella Maris Freund, Mary Ann Aubin, Sr. Constance Fitzgerald, and Dan Zink for their help with this article.**

[1] Charles Warren Currier, *Carmel in America* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1890), 265–66. Note on terminology: Carmelites use the terms *convent* and *monastery* to describe their cloistered dwellings; this article will use that terminology interchangeably.

[2] Kathleen Waters Sander, *John W. Garrett and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 157; Walter J. Daly, "The Black Cholera Comes to the Central Valley of America in the 19th Century—1832, 1849, and Later," *Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association* 119 (2008), 144. The first prioress of the Carmel of St. Joseph in St. Louis, Mother Mary Gabriel, wrote in letters of cholera contraction and mortality risk during the 1880s and 1890s; see *Correspondence from Mother Gabriel Boland to Her Brother John: 1874–1893,* Archives of the Carmel of St. Joseph, St. Louis, MO, 82, 125, 183, 248; Samuel J. Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick, Bishop and Archbishop of St. Louis, 1806–1896," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 84, no. 1 (March, June, September 1973), 60; Historic American Buildings Survey, District of Missouri, "Colonel Henry Clay Mansion," Project no. Mo-18, 1937, U.S. National Parks Service, Washington, D.C.; Mary Ann Aubin, *The Past is Prologue: 150 Years of Carmel in St. Louis* (St. Louis: Carmel of St. Joseph, 2013), 7, 8.

[3] Sr. Constance Fitzgerald (Archivist of the Carmelite Monastery of Baltimore), phone interview by Dana Delibovi, Baltimore, September 19, 2019.

[4] Christopher Phillips, *The Civil War in the Border South* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2013), 17.

[5] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 4.

[6] Katharine T. Corbett, *In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999), 68, 72.

[7] John E. Rothensteiner, *History of the Archdiocese of St. Louis: in Its Various Stages of Development from A.D. 1673 to A.D. 1928* (St. Louis: Blackwell Wicklandy Co., 1928), 331.

[8] Sarah Hinds, "In Defense of the Faith: The Catholic Response to Anti-Catholicism in Early Nineteenth-Century St. Louis," *The Confluence* (Fall/Winter 2015), 15. Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick," 60.

[9] Paul W. Brewer, "Voluntarism on Trial: St. Louis' Response to the Cholera Epidemic of 1849," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 49, no.1 (Spring 1975), 102; G. J. Garraghan, "Some Early Chapters in the History of St. Louis University," *St. Louis Catholic Historical Review* 5, nos. 2–3 (April–July 1923), 114; G. F. Pyle, "The Diffusion of Cholera in the United States in the Nineteenth Century," *Geographical Analysis* 1, no. 1 (January 1969), 65–74; Archdiocese of St. Louis, "1843–1903: The Immigrant Church," accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.archstl.org/history/immigrant-church; Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick," 27–28, 56–59.

[10] Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick," 26, 63–65. See also corroborating evidence: *Carte Ecclésiastique des Etats-Unis d'Amerique* (Paris: Les Missions Catholiques, 1877), archived June 11, 2017, https://imgur.com/WbbTmnr; John Joseph O'Shea, *The Two Kenricks* (Philadelphia: John J. McVey, 1904), 200.

[11] *The Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence* (Philadelphia: Cathedral Archives of Philadelphia, 1920), 465. Dates of Peter Kenrick's overture to Francis Kenrick are estimated based on a response by Francis in the fall of 1861.

[12] Transcription of the *Book of the Dead, Foundation of St. Louis, and Necrology,* aggregated 2019, Archives of the Carmel of St. Joseph, St. Louis, MO, 4, 8. See also: Inno McGill, "Our Lady of Mount Carmel," *The Indian Sentinel* 2, no. 1 (January 1920), 119; Currier, *Carmel in America,* 261; Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 105, 175, 229, 248; Mother Mary Joseph Freund (Prioress of the Carmel of St. Joseph), Sr. Stella Maris Freund (Sister in the Carmel of St. Joseph), and Mary Ann Aubin (Archivist of the Carmel of St. Joseph), interview by Dana Delibovi, St. Louis, August 24, 2019, October 28, 2019.

[13] Fitzgerald interview.

[14] Ibid.

[15] The Carmelite Nuns of Baltimore, "History of Our Community," accessed October 26, 2019, https://www.baltimorecarmel.org/history-of-our-community/.

[16] Descriptive notes, September 29, 1863, Archives of the Carmelite Monastery of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD, Record Group IV, Series 1, Folder 1, Box 2.

[17] *Kenrick-Frenaye,* 465.

[18] Currier, *Carmel in America,* 265–66.

[19] Book of the Dead, Foundation, Necrology, 1–6, 8; Currier, *Carmel in America,* 266, 284, 288.

[20] Freund-Aubin Interview; B & O Railroad Museum, "Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1860," accessed October 28, 2019, http://www.eduborail.org/NPS-4/Map-1-NPS-4.aspx. See also: William G. Thomas, *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), overleaf. Route validated by Dan Zink (Archivist at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum), personal communication to Dana Delibovi, Baltimore, November 4, 2019.

[21] Sander, *Garrett,* 115, 117; Thomas, *Iron Way,* 111; Edward Hungerford, *The Story of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad: 1827–1927* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1928), 2:5–19, 32–34.

[22] *Report of Brig. Gen. Benjamin S. Roberts, U.S. Army, of Operations April 24–May 5* (Charlestown: West Virginia Archives and History, May 21, 1863), accessed October 28, 2019, http://www.wvculture.org/history/sesquicentennial/1863jonesimboden.html; Thomas, *Iron Way,* 112–13; Woods' Baltimore City Directory, *Advertisements: Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Re-Opened* (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1864), 52, accessed October 28, 2019, https://archive.org/details/woodsbaltimoreci1864balt; Freund-Aubin interview.

[23] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 85.

[24] Currier, *Carmel in America,* 266–67.

[25] Archdiocese of St. Louis, "Calvary Cemetery," accessed October 29, 2019, https://cemeteries.archstl.org/locations/calvary#485743-historical.

[26] Currier, *Carmel in America,* 267. "Clavary," literally, one with a key, is a Carmelite sister with administrative responsibilities. Elections were held, by rule, every three years, and it appears that positions cycled among the sisters; for example, Sister (then Mother) Alberta was prioress of the St. Louis Carmel three times before her death in 1879, and Mother Gabriel is documented to have been prioress (after her initial stint in 1863) in 1876 and 1890. See: Book of the Dead, Foundation, Necrology, 2; Gabriel-Boland, Correspondence, 12, 160.

[27] Fitzgerald interview.

[28] Currier, *Carmel in America,* 267–69.

[29] Ibid., 267–68; Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 114. Community-attended mass at the residence of the first chaplain, Father Edmund Saulnier, is chronicled; however, Father Saulnier died in May of 1864, and public masses with other chaplains are not reported.

[30] Freund-Aubin interview.

[31] Currier, *Carmel in America,* 266–69; Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 331–33.

[32] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 1, 2, 15.

[33] Ibid., 1–2.

[34] Ibid., 2, 3, 5–7, 13, 15, 6.

[35] Ibid., 3–5, 13, 15, 44, 45, 52, 54, 56, 61, 68–72, 75, 77, 81–83, 85, 86, 90, 93, 95–96, 99, 122, 133, 141–42, 155, 158, 171, 175, 195–96, 221, 229, 233, 252, 261, 267.

[36] Ibid., 7, 9, 11. The disputed presidential election of 1876 pitted Hayes (Republican) against Tilden (Democrat); see William H. Rehnquist, *Centennial Crisis: The Disputed Election of 1876* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2007), 99.

[37] Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 332. Currier, *Carmel in America,* 317.

[38] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 19.

[39] Freund-Aubin interview; Fitzgerald interview.

[40] Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 27, 31, 33, 329. The orders were: Ursulines (1848), Sisters of the Good Shepherd (1849), Sisters of Mercy (1856), the School Sisters de Notre Dame (1858), the Carmelites (1863), the Little Sisters of the Poor (1869), the Sisters of St. Mary (1872), the Sisters of St. Francis (1872), the Oblate Sisters of Provence (1880), and the Sisters of the Precious Blood (1882).

[41] Peter Richard Kenrick, Lenten Regulations; Seminary Needs; Arrival of Sisters of Good Shepherd in St. Louis, February 2, 1849, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, Record Group RG 01 C, Series 03. See also: Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 28; Rothensteiner, Archdiocese, 31; Corbett, In Her Place, 67–68.

[42] Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 32, 33.

[43] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 1–18.

[44] William E. Gienapp, "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (1992), 13, 18; Phillips, *Civil War in the Border South,* 9, 17, 18; Phillips, *Civil War in the Border South,* 15, 17, 18, 23; Gienapp, "Lincoln and the Border States," 13.

[45] Sander, *Garrett,* 116, 119; O'Shea, *Two Kenricks,* 200. Care must be taken when considering Francis Kenrick's mindset, since he did, as noted, withhold recommendation of the Carmel in St. Louis in 1861; in that particular at least, he did not evince as strong an attitude of pressing on with that work than did his brother, Peter.

[46] Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick," 64–70; See also Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 210–19; Patrick J. Ryan, "Most Reverend Peter Richard Kenrick, D.D," *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 21 (January to October, 1896), 426.

[47] Miller, "Peter Richard Kenrick," 66–70; See also Rothensteiner, *Archdiocese,* 211–13, 215–19. Peter Kenrick's legal battles against provisions of the 1865 "Drake Constitution" (nicknamed for firebrand St. Louis Unionist Charles Drake) is a valuable subject of study, well chronicled by both Miller and Rothensteiner. Argument and decision of the United States Supreme Court on *Cumming v. State of Missouri* (1866)—which overturned Missouri's conviction of a Catholic priest for refusal to take the loyalty oath required by the 1865 Missouri Constitution—is available at https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/71/277.html. Archbishop Kenrick paid legal expenses for this case in excess of $10,000 (Miller, 70.).

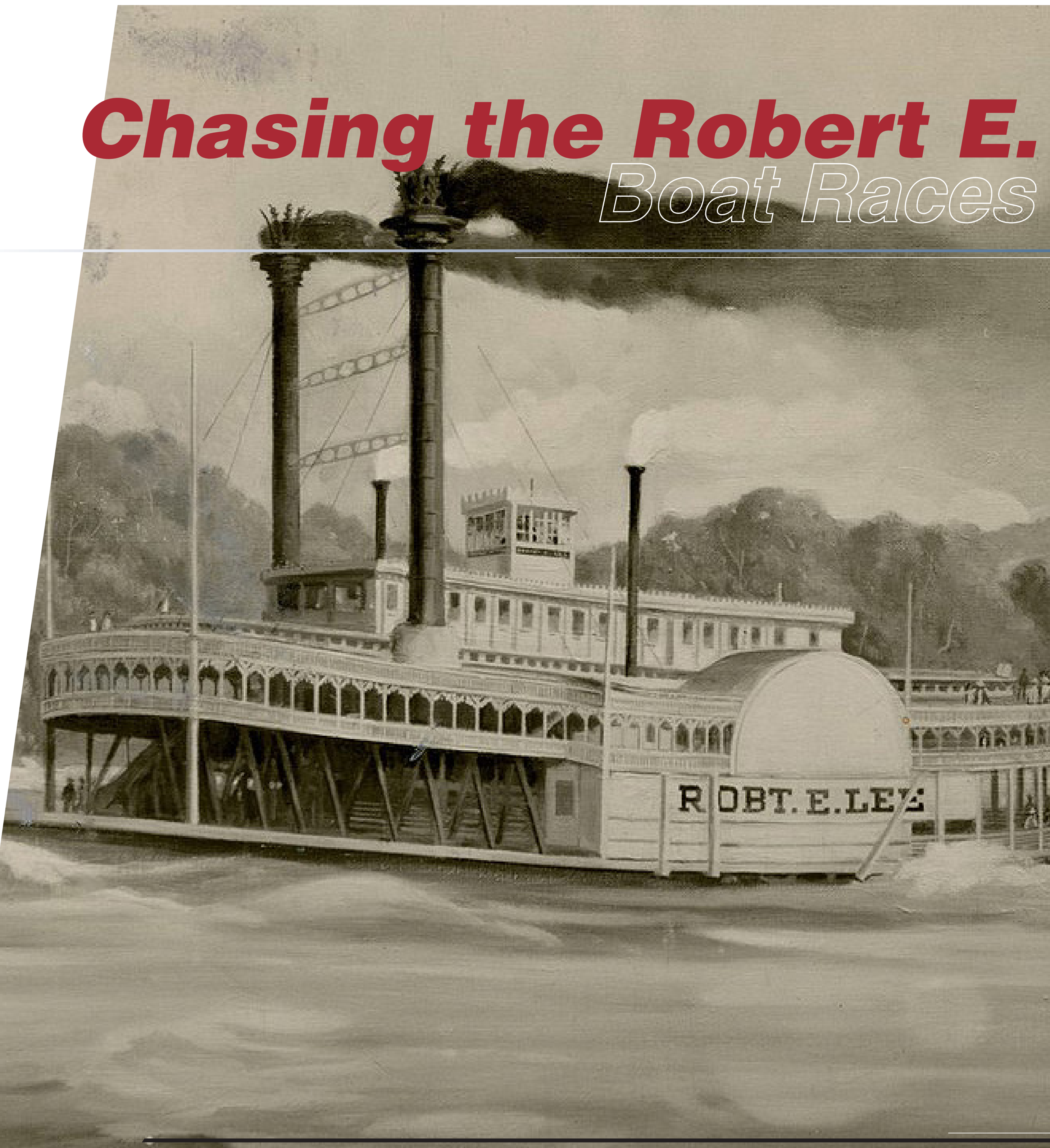
[48] St. Teresa of Ávila, *The Way of Perfection,* ed. Kieran Kavanaugh (Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 2000), 251, 253; Cathleen Medwick, *Teresa of Ávila: The Progress of a Soul* (New York: Image Books, 1999), x; St. Teresa, *Way of Perfection,* 229.

[49] St. Teresa, *Way of Perfection,* 107–9. Freund-Aubin interview.

[50] Gabriel Boland, Correspondence, 35, 36, 50, 51, 72, 102, 131, 133, 144, 162, 163.

[51] Freund-Aubin Interview.

Chasing the Robert E.
Boat Races



The steamboat ***Robert E. Lee***, built in 1866, outpaced the ***Natchez*** in a famous and fabled race from New Orleans to St. Louis in 1870. It was named for Confederate general Robert E. Lee the year after the Confederate defeat in the Civil War and could carry more than 5,000 bales of cotton. *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

Lee: on the Mississippi River

by DEAN KLINKENBERG

In 1870, the Robert E. Lee *beat the* Natchez *in a race on the* Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis, the most famous contest of the steamboat era. *The race captured the imaginations of millions of people around the world at a time when steamboats and the Mississippi River were losing economic relevance in the United States. While the race didn't reverse the economic fortunes of the river economy, it set a standard for speed and tenacity that proved to be a remarkably enduring inspiration for boat enthusiasts of subsequent eras.*

Speed records set during the steamboat era had economic consequences; faster boats got more business.

Speed records set during the steamboat era had economic consequences; faster boats got more business. The races also celebrated technological progress and the wit and creativity of steamboat captains and crews. Formal and informal records were kept of the fastest times to common destinations.

For the 300 mile run from New Orleans to Natchez, for example, the *Comet* completed the trip in five days and ten hours in 1814. By 1828, the *Tecumseh* had made the run in three days and an hour, but just six years later the *Tuscarora* trimmed it down to one day and twenty-one hours. In twenty years, the travel time had been reduced by eighty percent. When the *Robert E. Lee* cut the time down even more in 1870—to sixteen hours and change—contemporary steamboats were traveling the route nearly five days faster than the *Comet* had.

In the twentieth century, more powerful engines pushed sleeker boats faster and faster, delighting technology enthusiasts and the general public. Still, the challenges of covering a thousand miles on the Mississippi River as quickly as possible hadn't changed too dramatically since the *Lee* beat the *Natchez*. Since 1870, hundreds of attempts were made to best the *Lee's* record, but most failed to reach the finish line.

The dramatic story of more than a century's worth of races on the Mighty Mississippi offers insight into changing ideas about the river's role and technology's limits when put to the test against Mother Nature.

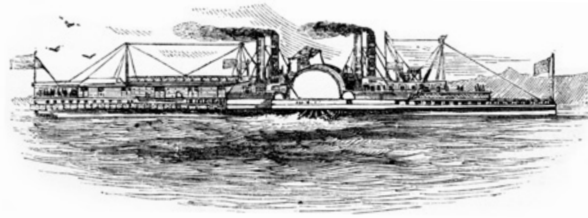
A Race for the Ages

No steamboat race is more celebrated than the 1870 match between John Cannon's *Robert E. Lee* and Thomas Leathers' *Natchez*. Both boats were well-known at the time, as were their captains. The *Lee*, built in 1866 by Cannon, was the king of the inland waters, fast and luxurious, the most impressive steamboat in the country. Leathers built the *Natchez* (his sixth boat with that name) specifically to knock the Lee off its river pedestal.

The captains weren't exactly the best of friends. They had opposing sympathies during the Civil War, in spite of their common Kentucky roots. While much of the animosity between them played out between their associates, Cannon and Leathers once got into a fist fight in a New Orleans bar.

From the moment the *Natchez* hit the water, newspapers, passengers, and the general public wanted to see the two boats race. Leathers encouraged the talk, but Cannon refused the bait, at least for a while. Proponents of river transportation hoped that a high-profile contest between two grand steamboats would help stem the loss of business to the railroads. (It didn't.) The race did, however, draw millions of dollars in wagers.

The captains prepared mostly by taking care of logistics, like stashing fuel at pre-arranged locations along the river. As the *Lee's* normal end port was Louisville, Cannon arranged to transfer passengers to another boat at Cairo, Illinois, so the *Lee* could continue to St. Louis. Stories of elaborate pre-race preparations are largely false. Noted steamboat historian Frederick Way related the account of Johnny Farrell, the *Natchez's* second engineer, who visited the *Lee* a few hours before the boats left New Orleans: "This old idea about the two boats preparing for days for the race, tearing down bulkheads, putting up wind sheaves, and a lot of other stuff, is not true. When I went aboard the *Lee*, all they had done was to move the coal bunkers a little forward. . . . On our boat there was absolutely no preparation whatever. There was no such thing as colors flying, bands playing, and the decks of both boats crowded with ladies and gentlemen."[1]



At 5 p.m. on June 30, the boats left New Orleans in front of ten thousand spectators crammed onto the levee. The *Lee* jumped out to a four-minute head-start that it gradually built into a comfortable lead. Telegraph operators transmitted the progress of the boats to people around the world. Cannon carried only seventy-five passengers (among them the governor of Louisiana) and no freight, but Leathers took on a regular load of cargo and a full complement of passengers. As they raced, the *Lee* slowed down just enough to refuel, while the *Natchez* stopped at its regular ports to unload passengers and refuel.

Both boats experienced setbacks. The *Lee*'s engineering crew had to improvise a fix to a leaky boiler. At Vicksburg, the *Natchez* had to pull over for thirty-four minutes to fix a valve on the pump that sucked river water into the boiler. Around Island 93, the *Natchez* ran into a sandbar but managed to shake itself free.

The race's biggest controversy took place around Greenville. In the middle of the night, the *Lee* pulled aside the *Frank Pargoud* and the two boats lashed together while a hundred cords of pine knots were transferred to the *Lee*. Cannon's move, while planned well in advance, incensed many fans (and bettors) who felt the *Lee* had benefited unfairly from the combined power of the two steamboats. While it's not clear that the *Lee* actually gained any time from tethering to the *Frank Pargoud*, it certainly benefited from having the added fuel.

The *Lee* pulled into Memphis at 11:04 p.m., greeted by huge crowds, fireworks, and music. It barely slowed down, tying up to coal barges again and getting back on its way six minutes later. The *Natchez* arrived over an hour later to pick up and discharge passengers, which cost it another seventeen minutes, then it got stuck on a shoal around Island 41 and lost more time.

When the *Lee* reached Cairo, Illinois—in record time—the boats were still just an hour and ten minutes apart. The *Lee* slowed to get alongside the steamer *Idlewild* and transferred its passengers bound for Louisville. The *Lee* also took on two new passengers, Enoch King and Jesse Jameson, pilots who knew the Mississippi well from Cairo to St. Louis. Cannon wanted the extra help to guide them through the difficult Thebes Gap and other tricky sections.

Leathers had trouble navigating the river north of Cairo, in spite of his experience. After hitting bottom a few times, he was forced to slow down. As the two boats neared Cape Girardeau, fog thickened in the river valley. Leathers pulled over at Devil's Island around midnight, then learned that the *Lee* had passed by just 25 minutes earlier. The *Natchez* had closed the gap by more than half.

The *Lee*, meanwhile, slowed down when it ran into the fog but didn't stop. Cannon executed an elaborate system for plodding ahead. He sent a few men ahead of the boat in a yawl to measure the river's depth; they relayed the information to the *Lee's* regular pilots, who were positioned at the bow of the texas deck. Through it all, Cannon stood on the hurricane deck to monitor the operation and quickly relay instructions to the pilothouse. Even with all these measures in place, Cannon nearly pulled ashore to wait out the fog. But he didn't, and the *Lee* crept slowly forward. By 2 a.m., the fog had thinned out and the *Lee* had a wide open river for the homestretch.

The *Natchez*, in contrast, waited for five-and-a-half hours until the fog cleared. When they reached Grand Tower, the crew learned that the *Lee* had passed by the town six hours earlier. Leathers almost certainly knew at that moment that he had been beaten.

At 11:33 a.m. on July 4, the *Lee* steamed into St. Louis in a record time of 90 hours and 13 minutes, more than six hours ahead of the *Natchez*, and three hours faster than the record that the *Natchez* had set just a month before. The record set by the *J.M. White* in 1844 had stood for over twenty-five years, but in 1870, two boats beat it within a month of each other.

St. Louis turned out two hundred thousand spectators for the finish. Excursion boats and a train blew their whistles in celebration, and the *Lee* answered back. Among those who welcomed the *Lee* at the St. Louis levee were Mary Lee, Robert E. Lee's daughter, and James B. Eads, whose revolutionary bridge was under construction just upriver from the landing where the race ended.

Koenig took the competition seriously—he personally paid for the silver trophy—and defined a set of rules for the competition.

The Koenig Cup

In the wake of the *Lee*'s record, St. Louisan Edwin Koenig became passionate about shattering it and set the stage for races to come. Koenig was enthusiastic about the Mississippi and boating from a young age, perhaps because the family home at 3836 Kosciusko Street in South St. Louis overlooked the Mississippi River, or maybe because his father was an avid river man himself. Koenig joined the St. Louis Yacht Club when he was just fifteen years old and would later serve as its leader—or "commodore"—for forty years.

One way Koenig indulged his interests was by sponsoring an event that became known as the Koenig Cup, a competition to recognize the first boat to break the *Lee*'s record and subsequent record breakers. Koenig took the competition seriously—he personally paid for the silver trophy—and defined a set of rules for the competition:

RULES FOR COMPETITION

- **Competitors had to start in New Orleans and finish in St. Louis** and give advance notice of their intent to challenge the record.
- **The clock started when racers left New Orleans and didn't stop until they reached St. Louis;** the Coast Guard in each city had to record starting and ending times.
- **Racers had to run continuously;** the only permissible stops were for fuel or repairs.
- **Boats could carry spare parts** but not spare engines.
- **Engines and boats could be repaired** but not replaced.
- **Crew members could leave the boat but couldn't be replaced.**[2]

It didn't take long to certify the first winner. In July 1929, a three-man crew of Memphians led by Dr. Louis Leroy piloted a twenty-six-foot runabout called the *Bogie* in a race against a fifty-five-foot yacht, the *Martha Jane*, captained by George M. Cox. It was Dr. Leroy's fourth attempt to beat the *Lee's* time. A previous attempt had been lauded for offering "an opportunity for accomplishment and observation in marine engineering."[3]

The boats left from Canal Street in New Orleans on July 21, but engine trouble forced Cox to put the *Martha Jane* aport at Natchez—and therefore forfeit the nickel wager to enter. Leroy and crew (Harvey Brown and Bob Hunter) forged ahead, forgoing sleep for four days while subsisting on a diet of buttermilk and orange juice.

En route, the *Bogie*'s crew changed propellers three times and had to stop for twelve hours at Greenville, Mississippi, to replace the propeller shaft. After a frantic push in the last 50 miles, the crew completed the run in 87 hours and 31 minutes, nearly three hours faster than the *Robert E. Lee*. Even though their 150-horsepower Scripps motor was capable of pushing the boat along at 30 miles an hour, they averaged just 12 miles an hour for the entire trip.

After pulling into St. Louis early in the morning on July 25, the three men—"lean-faced and sunburned"—went straight to a hotel to clean up and sleep.[4] The *Bogie*'s team finished at St. Louis at an exciting time. A new toll bridge had just opened over the Mississippi River above the Chain of Rocks, and pilots Dale Jackson and Forest O'Brine were in the middle of setting a record for endurance flying (420 hours) with the *St. Louis Robin*. Commodore Koenig took Dr. Leroy and his wife to Lambert-St. Louis Flying Field, where they boarded a plane to get a close look at the *Robin*.

The *Bogie*'s record didn't have the staying power of the *Lee*'s. The following summer, five boats left New Orleans on August 8 in a race to St. Louis, but only Claude Mickler made it to St. Louis. He beat Dr. Leroy's time by nearly nine hours, racing solo in a boat he called *And How III*, a twelve-foot vessel that one paper wrote "might have been the captain's dinghy," running with just one instrument, a tachometer, which he kept sandwiched between his legs.[5] He used it to make sure his motor was running between 3,500 and 3,800 revolutions per minute.

Mickler ran during the heat of the summer but found a creative way to find relief. "Sunday, when the sun was hottest, I was passing a Government boat of some kind and saw a fellow inside taking a shower. I pulled alongside, jumped aboard and told him to hurry up. I needed that one, too. That refreshed me a lot."[6]

Mickler, though, was not awarded the Koenig Cup, because his motor had been replaced at Memphis, which violated the rules. While Mickler denied the motor change, he didn't seem too disappointed. "The trip was more to show an outboard boat could make the grade than to win a trophy," he said.[7]

New Orleans-to-St. Louis Boat Race Set for Aug. 27

Koenig Trophy, Symbolizing Speed Supremacy, to Be Goal of Drivers from Throughout Valley.

JUL 12 1931

By LEIGHTON RUTLEDGE.

Motor-boat enthusiasts of the Mississippi Valley will gather at New Orleans August 27 for the start of a race to St. Louis against time, the goal of which is the Koenig Trophy, emblematic of speed supremacy over a tricky and treacherous 1154-mile river route. This was made known yesterday when Commodore Ed C. Koenig of the St. Louis Yacht Club, donor of the prize now held by Dr. Louis Leroy of Memphis, announced plans forwarded to him by the New Orleans Yacht Club.

Probably a dozen boats will start the long grind, including outboard speedsters and elaborately rigged inboard cruising semispeed types. Already six or eight entries are assured, and more are likely to be forthcoming under the blanket challenge issued by the organization in the Crescent City. A provision of the award of the Koenig Cup is that notice be given the holder of the cup at least ninety days before the contemplated attempt is made. This proviso has been observed by the drivers, who originally contemplated individual assaults during the summer on Dr. Leroy's record of 87 hours and 31 minutes, but who have been rounded up to start in a competitive effort through the efforts of Dr. Leroy, the New Orleans Yacht Club and Commodore Koenig.

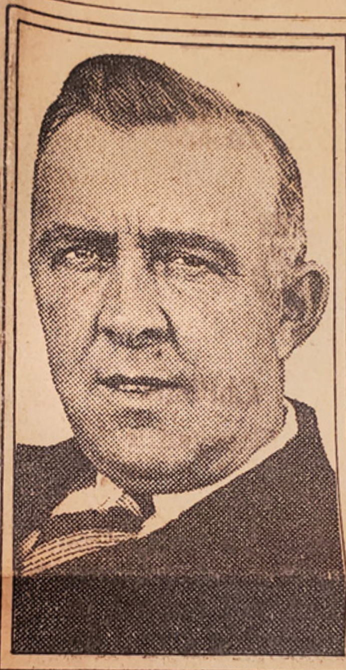
St. Louis Competitor.

St. Louis has at least one entrant. He is Charles F. Schokmiller, 8329 Hall's Ferry road. On three previous occasions he has attempted to better the time for the distance, but each time was forced to give up the try by motor difficulties or adversities presented by the Father of Waters.

It is understood Dr. Leroy, who is a prominent Memphis surgeon, is rebuilding his inboard-motored craft, the Bogie, with a view to defending the trophy. Mayor F. Schelben of Greenville, Miss., also is a prospective entrant. L. O. Heard of the Police Department of Baton Rouge, La., is to be another competitor.

Women speedboat drivers, who have lately gained considerable prominence, notably through the sterling performances of Miss Loretta Turnbull of California, will have their representative in Miss Irene Freutel of Memphis, whose boat is a 24-footer.

Donor of Trophy for River Classic



E. C. KOENIG

Annual Race Foreseen.

It is the hope of New Orleans sportsmen, headed by the Yacht Club's commodore, P. B. Lusk, as well as the present holder of the trophy and its donor, to make a race such as this an annual affair. It would rival the Albany-New York City outboard jaunt in nation-wide interest, and would go a long way toward establishing national supremacy among speedboat pilots. The tortuous river course makes severe demands on men, boats and motors as to stamina and navigating skill.

The best time ever made from New Orleans to St. Louis by water is 74 hours 2 minutes. Frederick Smith, bus line official at Memphis, arrived at the foot of Olive street in his sedan-runabout at the end of that time on May 10. He did not, however, earn the Koenig trophy because of failure to file his challenge with Dr. Leroy ninety days previously.

Dr. Leroy's elapsed time was the first improvement upon the record of 90 hours and 14 minutes set up by the steamboat Robert E. Lee in her historic race with the Natchez in 1870.

In 1931, St. Louisans C.F. Schokmiller and George Blaich, Jr. piloted a boat from New Orleans to St. Louis in 78 hours, 46 minutes, breaking the old record by almost nine hours. Along the way, their carburetor broke twice, the second time just an hour from the finish line. Two other boats started at New Orleans on the same day, but neither finished. Schokmiller and Blaich were the second team to win the Koenig Cup. *(Image:* St. Louis Globe-Democrat *Collection, St. Louis Mercantile Library Association)*

Edwin Koenig (center) congratulates Frank G. Burkarth (right) onboard the *Cifisco III*, a 37-foot cabin cruiser, after Burkarth won the Koenig Cup in October 1953. Burkarth, John Ritchie, and Herman Blattel completed the run in 61 hours, 22 minutes, 18 hours faster than the record set by Roy Smith and James Mawhee just three months earlier. *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

In 1931, St. Louisans G.F. Schokmiller and George Blaich, Jr., won the Koenig Cup when they crossed the finish line in the *Miss Evinrude II* eight hours faster than the *Bogie* had; they were the only boat of three that finished a race from New Orleans to St. Louis. It was the fifth try for Schokmiller, but he still didn't have an easy time of it. Somewhere around Natchez, Mississippi, they ran over a six-foot-long alligator gar. "When we hit him we thought it was all finished," Schokmiller told a reporter. "It spun us around and almost sent us over. And it didn't do him any real good either. He came to the top and floated belly up. Our propeller broke his back."[8]

Their carburetor broke twice, the second time just an hour from the finish line, and they nearly ran out of gas as they approached St. Louis, but Blaich "sat up on one side and tipped her [the boat] over a little bit and she started again and the last few drops of gas brought us in." By the time they finished, Blaich said their gas tank was "as dry right now as a Kansas Congressman's vote."[9]

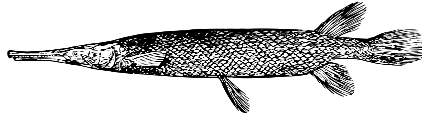
The Great Depression and World War II limited the number of serious challenges until the early 1950s, so their record stood for twenty-two years. In 1952, Lee Sawyer, after two years of planning, tried to break the record with a solo run, but he had about as much bad luck as one person could. At New Orleans, he had trouble finding a place to put his boat in the water. Officials wouldn't let him use the Canal Street ramp, because they were apparently unnerved by the amount of gasoline he was carrying. Just three hours into his attempt, he ran onto a sandbar. For the next four days, he fought recurring motor troubles, fatigue, and a mild case of food poisoning. He lost the main channel a few times and missed a refueling stop before throwing in the towel after four days with little sleep and food. He beached his boat on a sandbar and collapsed, just thirty miles from St. Louis.

The following year, Roy F. Smith and his navigator, James E. Mawhee, set a new standard, finishing thirty-four minutes faster than Schokmiller and Blaich in a fourteen-foot boat called the *Mark Twain*. They had only slightly better luck than *Sawyer*. One of their motors broke down north of Memphis, so they sent it by truck to Cairo, Illinois, for repair. They lost eleven hours at New Madrid, Missouri, to another engine repair and limped into St. Louis with just one working motor.

Smith and Mawhee kept possession of the Cup for only three months. Frank G. Burkarth, John Ritchie, and Herman Blattel blew away the old record by nearly eighteen hours, pulling the *Cifisco III* into St. Louis on October 8; 150 boaters at the St. Louis Yacht Club cheered them on, as boats followed them to the finish line around Cliff Cave County Park: "Seen from midstream, the convoy was a glowing circle of bobbing boats, laden with boat lovers bearing red flares. The *Cifisco* bore down through their midst, and the welcoming din began."[10]

The persistent Lee Sawyer came back with another solo run in 1954; he not only reached the finish line ("Sunburned, exhausted and happy") but also set a new record with his boat, the *Huckleberry Finn*, that shaved another four and a half hours off the record.[11] Still, his run didn't exactly go smoothly. Below Vicksburg, he ran into a logjam and found himself quickly surrounded by trees, twigs, and grapevines. When his engines died, he jumped into the river and used pliers to cut away a vine that had wound itself around his propellers. He was also slowed—twice—when he got entangled in commercial fishing lines.

Creativity was a hallmark of many of the record setters. In 1955, brothers Raymond and Charles Loetscher and navigator Max Zeiner completed a record-setting run in a homemade 26-foot boat called *Loetschers' Little Rock*. It was powered by three V-8 car engines that the river men configured to run together. They also built a guard around the propellers to protect them from debris.



They lost a few minutes at Arkansas City when the harbor police pulled them over for exceeding the twenty-miles-per-hour limit, but they convinced the officer that they were supposed to be going that fast because they were racing. Their effort almost failed near Sainte Genevieve when they hit a sandbar, but four hours of furious digging set them free. When a reporter asked Zeiner—who had never been on the Mississippi prior to that trip—where they were when they hit the sandbar, he replied, "we were right where we were supposed to be. It was the sand bar that was lost. Somebody must have put it there to sabotage our efforts."[12] In spite of the delays, they broke the old record by nearly four hours.

The pace of change picked up in the mid-1950s. Three records were set in 1956 alone, then broken again in 1957 and 1958, the last one cutting the record time from fifty-three hours to twenty-nine-and-a-half hours, nearly a full day quicker. Racers approached the challenge with different strategies (and budgets). In 1956, for example, the Loetscher brothers were back for another attempt, competing against the *William Tedford*. The Loetschers ran in a 26-foot long steel boat powered by three Cadillac engines. Tedford, his 17-year-old son, Bill, Jr., and Nick Cioll raced in a 15-foot-long plywood boat powered by 33-horsepower engines. "Tedford said his boat weighed less than one of the Loetscher's engines," according to the *Post-Dispatch*.[13] The Tedfords crafted the three-engine configuration not for speed—it only increased their top speed by two miles per hour—but to create a backup engine for their catamaran, because "the boat could plane with two engines but not with one."[14] Tedford won and set a new record in the process, although it only held up for one month.

By the 1950s, racers chasing the Koenig Cup were getting better at managing river hazards, although they still occasionally ran into driftwood and sandbars. Roy Cullum and Richard Arant "struck so many logs in the last few miles that they thought they would sink before the finish."[15] William Tedford's successful run in July 1956 included ninety minutes lost when they ran over an obstruction and damaged all three propellers. Dangers were especially acute after dark, which is why many racers chose to run when the moon was full.

Fatigue was always problematic for racers, however. "We went through something of an endurance test ourselves," Dr. Louis Leroy had said after finishing his run in 1929. When his crew arrived, "Their eyes were red slits, their cheeks sunken, their clothing greasy and wrinkled. They estimated they had lost from 15 to 20 pounds each. Dr. Leroy's Van Dyke beard was ragged and all were unshaven. Their skin was a deep brown from the beating of the sun."[16]

Most racers slept little or not at all. Sawyer, in his first solo run, woke up in the water at one point; he had fallen asleep at the wheel and run onto a sandbar. He also lost the main channel a couple of times when fatigue-induced confusion contributed to navigation errors. Roy Cullum reported that he "started to see boats and buildings and men walking on the river" near the end of his run.[17]

It didn't help that most racers weren't able to eat much while the boat was running. "Eating makes you sleepy and we couldn't afford to sleep," Dr. Leroy said.[18] Apart from the need to pay attention when flying over water at high speeds, many of the boats vibrated too violently to make eating practical. Dr. Leroy's team had gotten by on buttermilk and orange juice. The Tedfords sometimes got a burger from their ground crew at a refueling stop but otherwise relied on beverages from their cooler. Roy Cullum and Richard Arant just drank a lot of water and milk.

Many racing teams included a navigator in the crew, often an experienced Mississippi River pilot, to keep the boat in deep water. "We'd never have made it without his [Nick Cioll's] ability to smell out the sandbars and all that floating real estate that keeps you from sleeping as it comes at you at 40 miles an hour," William Tedford, Sr., said.[19]

Even with the help of the navigator, though, flying up a big river at high speeds was difficult work. "It's not any fun," Bill Tedford, Jr., recalled. Commercial barge traffic stirred up large wakes, or what Tedford called swells, "and those swells roll down the river for at least a mile below the boat, if he's going upstream and you're going upstream, the river gets rougher and rougher and rougher and it goes from shore to shore. You can't get around it without jumping over these waves. . . . You're leaping over these waves, which is why we liked to have the catamaran. . . . It kinda cushioned the impact when you came down the other side of the waves."[20]

Besides the bumps and hazards of barge wakes, the crew was busy the whole time the boat was moving. Navigators kept track of

Interest in racing on the Mississippi River rekindled in the 1980s, thanks to flashy new speedboats and celebrity competitors

deep water. Drivers couldn't take their eyes off the river. If there were other crew members, they were either watching for debris in the river or busy with other tasks. Bill Tedford, Jr., said whoever wasn't driving "had to constantly change these fuel tanks, because you run out of fuel about every 45 minutes."[21]

The technology continued to improve over time. Fiberglass hulls came into use and engines grew more and more powerful. In 1929, Dr. Leroy broke the *Lee*'s record with a boat that could top out around 30 miles per hour. In their July 1956 run, Tedford's team sometimes ran at 40 miles per hour at night. In 1968, Lou Cooley's boat could hit a top speed of 140 miles per hour.

After the flurry of activity in the 1950s, the records proved harder to beat. Bill Tedford took the Koenig Cup back in 1964. In 1968, the husband and wife duo of Lou and Dorothy Cooley topped Tedford's time by 17 minutes, thanks in part to a support team of a dozen members spread out among an accompanying airplane and refueling teams on land.

The last Koenig Cup was awarded in 1972 to Bill Tedford again, who ran with his usual team (son Bill, Jr., and Nick Cioll) in a boat they called the *Robert E Lee VI*. Their record time of 26 hours and 50 minutes bettered the Cooley's time by two hours.

It was Tedford's third win, and the rules for the competition stipulated that as soon as there was a three-time winner, the trophy would be retired. Interest in the races was waning by then, as well. In 1929, the *Post-Dispatch* provided daily updates on the progress of the *Bogie*. Most of the successful runs after that received press coverage both before and after the race. By 1972, however, Tedford's new record merited barely a paragraph in a round-up column in the sports section.[22]

The Mississippi Marathon

The Koenig Cup wasn't the only speed race on the Mississippi inspired by the *Lee* and *Natchez*. In 1956, the Mississippi River Marathon Racing Association sponsored its first annual New Orleans to St. Louis race. Six boats started at New Orleans, but only the boat piloted by Byron Pool and Lonnie Kirkpatrick finished. They completed the run on August 6, finishing about five hours slower than the record at the time.

The race was moved to Labor Day weekend in 1957 and 1958, and Pool and Kirkpatrick won both times, beating fifteen boats in 1957 and twenty-eight boats in 1958. Their third win brought a quick end to the competition, but their 1958 finish established a new record of 29 hours and 29 minutes.[23]

The marathon returned in 1959 with a new sponsor, the Mid-America Racing Association, and with two significant changes: the race ran downstream from St. Louis to New Orleans and boats only ran during daylight hours. They ran the competition in 1959 and 1960, then in 1961 shortened the course to end at Greenville, Mississippi, instead of New Orleans.

The Mississippi River Marathon Racing Association returned in 1970 to sponsor an event commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the race between the *Lee* and *Natchez*. The marathon started at New Orleans again and ran upriver to St. Louis, where boats finished on July 4 in front of big crowds celebrating Independence Day. Only stock boats with outboard motors were allowed to compete, and the race ran only during daylight hours; boats made a mandatory overnight stop at Greenville, Mississippi. While the pre-race publicity suggested that the organizers had high hopes to attract competitors, only three boats ultimately entered. Bill Petty and John Pierce finished first.

The Grace Cup

Interest in racing on the Mississippi River rekindled in the 1980s, thanks to flashy new speedboats and celebrity competitors, culminating in a record that may never be beaten.

In 1982, Larry Smith, founder of Team Scarab racing boats, asked Michael Reagan, son of President Ronald Reagan, to pilot a boat to challenge Bill Tedford's 1972 record. Reagan, whose racing credentials included a win at the 1967 Outboard World Championships at Lake Havasu, Arizona, needed some convincing,

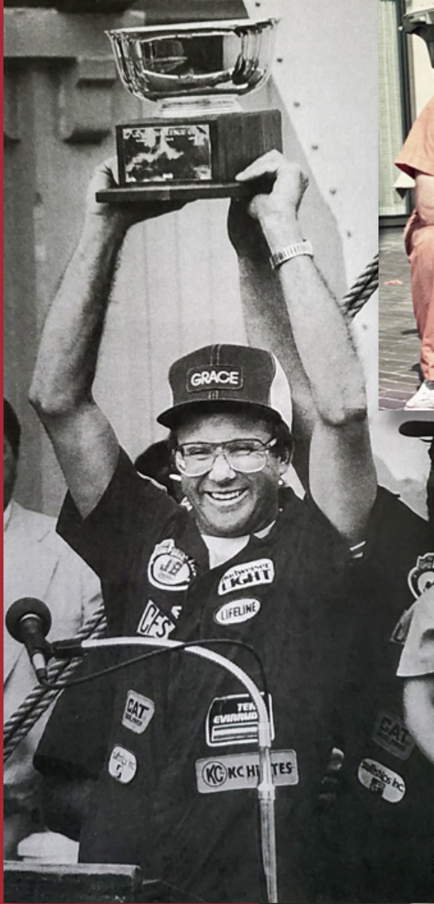
Robert Cox holding the Grace Cup trophy in January 2020. Cox won the trophy in October 1983 when he completed the race from New Orleans to St. Louis in 23 hours, nine minutes, beating Michael Reagan's record from the previous year by two hours. The Grace Cup was retired in 1986 with Cox as the last champion. *(Image: Robert Cox)*

also became a fundraiser for the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Reagan leveraged his name recognition and connections to convince the W.R. Grace Company, owners of the *Robert E. Lee* riverboat restaurant at St. Louis, to sponsor the event. They donated $102,700 ($100 per mile) to the U. S. Olympic Committee and established the Grace Cup Challenge as the successor to the Koenig Cup. Robert Coquillette, executive vice president of the Grace Company, proclaimed that the challenge "will stand as a permanent symbol of the incredible athletic and technical achievement represented by the New Orleans to St. Louis speed run. It is one of the most grueling endurance tests in America."[24] Like the Koenig Cup, the trophy would be awarded to any boat that established a new record time for a continuous run from New Orleans to St. Louis.

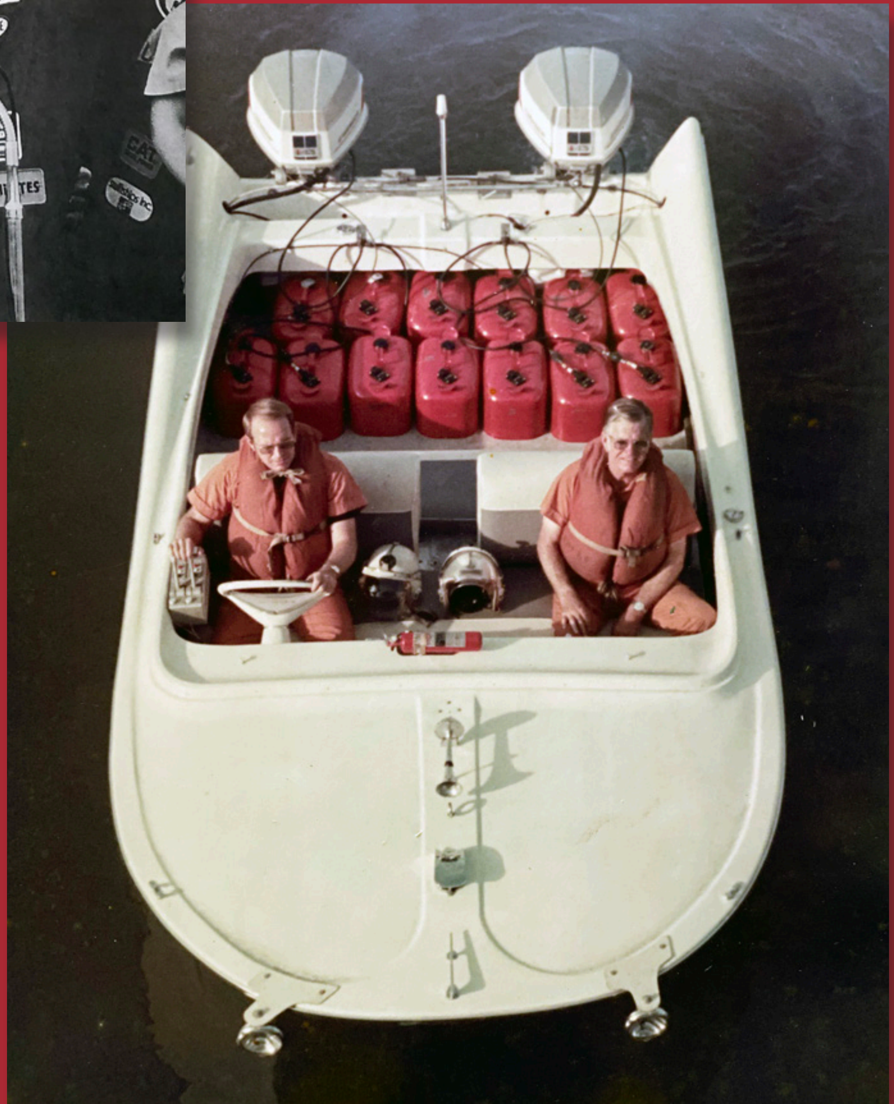
Smith and Reagan signed up additional major sponsors for the event they called Assault on the Mississippi, including Anheuser-Busch, which sponsored their three boats—*Bud Light I, II,* and *III*. Reagan started the race from New Orleans in *Bud Light I* along with crewmates Johnny Mann on the throttles and Mike Low as navigator. Reagan, though, would pilot whichever boat was in the lead for the final leg into St. Louis. That turned out to be an easy decision, as *Bud Light I* was the only boat in position to challenge the record.

Even with the big budget, fancy boats, and extensive advance team, Reagan's boat had a rough time. Below Vicksburg, *Bud Light I* hit a log in the river and lost an engine, and the crew had to change the lower units on their engines three times during the race. At Memphis, an error by their ground crew left them



Michael Reagan, son of then President Ronald Reagan, holding the Grace Cup on July 22, 1982, after setting a new record of 25 hours, 11 minutes for the run from New Orleans to St. Louis. Reagan's team spent more than $500,000 on the attempt and raised another $500,000 for the U.S. Olympic Committee. *(St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, Globe-Democrat Collection)*

William Tedford Sr. and Jr., holding the Koenig Cup in 1972. The Cup was first awarded to Dr. Louis Leroy in 1929, the first person to beat the *Robert E. Lee's* record time from New Orleans to St. Louis. In 43 years, the Cup changed hands 13 times. In 1972, William Tedford, Sr., won the Cup for the third time, which, under the rules of the race, gave him permanent possession of the silver trophy. *(Image: William Tedford, Jr.)*



William Tedford Sr., and Jr., in their boat, *Robert E. Lee VI*. In 1972, the father and son teamed with navigator Nick Cioll to set a new standard for the run from New Orleans to St. Louis, finishing in 26 hours, 50 minutes. To minimize refueling stops, they equipped the boat with multiple gas tanks, each one providing enough fuel for about 45 minutes. *(Image: William Tedford, Jr.)*

"Maybe it's easier to put these programs together because of who I am, but, remember: The Mississippi River didn't give a damn who was driving." –Michael Reagan

short on fuel, so they had to make an unplanned stop at New Madrid, Missouri, that cost them ninety minutes. The stop also prompted the helicopter that had been shadowing them (and carrying corporate sponsors August Busch, Bernie Little, and Bill Marriott) to land and find out what had gone wrong.

Down the stretch another engine failed, but *Bud Light I* ultimately succeeded, breaking Tedford's record by 99 minutes. They circled in front of the *Robert E. Lee* a few times, waving to a small crowd on the floating restaurant as a band played "Meet Me in St. Louie, Louie."

After the race was over, Reagan was asked how much his famous name helped him set the record; he observed, "Maybe it's easier to put these programs together because of who I am, but, remember: The Mississippi River didn't give a damn who was driving."[25]

The Assault on the Mississippi crew spent at least $500,000 on the race, while raising another $500,000 for the U.S. Olympic Committee. President Reagan spoke at a celebratory banquet in St. Louis, where Bill Tedford, Sr. and Jr., were present; Michael Reagan had invited them as special guests. Tedford, by the way, spent about $2,000 for his slightly less fast time; his support crew consisted of four buddies who bought gas in advance (with cash).

Team Reagan's hold on the record didn't last long. The next year, Bob Cox and Dean Pink left New Orleans at 12:31 a.m. in a standard nineteen-foot Charger bass boat. As they sped upriver, a few tow captains pointed their spotlights on the river to help them navigate through the darkness. Like Tedford, Cox had a small support crew, just a couple of friends who helped with refueling by trucking cans of gasoline from stop to stop; he still managed to beat Reagan's time by two hours. Cox guessed he spent about $7,500 for his race.

Cox hadn't been aware of the Grace Challenge Cup when he began the run, although he knew about Michael Reagan's record run the previous year. His primary reason for racing had been to prove the endurance and capabilities of the bass boats he sold from his mid-Missouri dealership. He contacted officials about halfway to St. Louis, who later confirmed that he qualified for the record. Reagan called to congratulate him, and the two later met in Oregon when Cox was officially awarded the trophy.

Oil tycoon Patrick F. Taylor was the only significant challenger to Cox's hold on the Grace Cup. In September 1983, he prepared a $250,000, 38-foot Bertram offshore racer he called *Tygertayl* to break Cox's record. Taylor had never raced a boat before, but he heard about Reagan's attempt and figured he could do better.[26] He equipped his boat with radar and shortwave radio to avoid hazards in the river. "Hitting (a sandbar) is a real no-no," he said before the attempt began.[27] He ran with a full moon and with the advantage of a falling river and big support team that included a helicopter. Like Reagan, he used the attempt to raise money for the U.S. Olympic Committee. In spite of all the preparations, Taylor's September 1988 attempt failed. It ended, in fact, when he ran the boat onto a sandbar. He ultimately made five attempts to break the record, all of which were unsuccessful.[28]

Cox, too, made a few more unsuccessful attempts to break his own record, including one in 1985 in which he ran onto a sandbar near Natchez. The impact broke his neck. A towboat pulled the boat free, after which he managed to pilot the boat for another two hundred miles until the engine quit. "My right arm from the middle of my right finger in the middle was numb from all the way there to my shoulder to my neck," Cox said.[29] A week after the accident, he underwent surgery to remove two discs from his neck.

The Grace Company retired the Cup Challenge in 1986, but Cox came back with Jim Highfill in 1987 and beat his 1984 record by nearly three hours. In all his attempts, Cox never brought along a navigator or relied on maps. "We just run by the seat of our britches," he said.[30]

The Budweiser Challenge Cup/ Mississippi River Race

In 1987 eleven teams lined up for a new take on the New Orleans to St. Louis run: the Budweiser Challenge Cup-Mississippi River Race. Unlike other races, boats competed head-to-head and only ran during daylight hours, eliminating the dangers of

Arneson entered a thirty-two-foot Skater catamaran powered by a 1,325-horsepower G.E. T 58 turbine engine.

speeding along the Mississippi at high speeds in the dark. Teams raced 641 miles to Memphis, where they spent the night, then ran the remaining four hundred miles to the Arch the next day.

The first team out of the gate on September 5 was also the first team out of the race. Just sixty miles after the start, Larry Robbins hit a barge wake at 65 miles per hour and went airborne. When the boat crashed back down, the impact broke his arm. Just five teams finished the first day's run. As they raced into St. Louis the next day, a crowd of some 25,000 lined the riverfront to cheer the winners. Most were probably there to catch a glimpse of the novice pilot of the 43-foot Wellcraft Scarab, a man named Don Johnson, who was better known for starring in the television show *Miami Vice*. "It's treacherous," he said. "In a minute's notice you can be upside-down or sideways or snagged in a tree. It's a grueling run." [31]

Johnson's team won the race (they were the only team to complete both legs) with a time under 20 hours, but since they only ran during daylight hours, they would not have qualified for the Koenig Cup or the Grace Challenge Cup.

Budweiser didn't return as the sponsor in 1988, but the event still attracted 21 teams, including Mike Mitchell of Fayetteville, Tenn., who wanted to race "for the challenge of beating the Mississippi." [32] Mitchell didn't get the chance, though; he found a leak in the gas tank and had to withdraw.

Of the seventeen boats that began the race at New Orleans, just eight finished. Seven of those eight boats beat Don Johnson's time from the year before. Childhood friends Roy Fulton, Jr., and Jimmy Jackson won the 1988 race, finishing in just under fifteen hours for the two-day, daytime-only run. River racing was a Fulton family tradition. Fulton's father, Roy Fulton, Sr., won the Mississippi River Marathon three times (1959–1961). Fulton, Sr., also served on Fulton, Jr.'s, support team in 1988. The faster times proved problematic for race planners. The top four boats finished four hours earlier than expected, so no crowds on the riverfront cheered them on.

Organizers had high hopes for the Mississippi River Race. Cities along the Mississippi wanted it to be a centerpiece of Labor Day riverfront festivals, like Greenville, Mississippi's Delta Days. Organizer Elizabeth Gentry Sayad "hoped the race would develop into 'the Indianapolis 500 of motorboat racing.'" [33] Kenneth Bitting, Jr., the race's co-organizer, wrote: "We are structuring it to become the America's Cup of Power Boat Racing – the Mississippi 1039!" [34] In spite of their optimism, they failed to raise enough money to run the event in 1989 and had to cancel.

The Mississippi River Cup Challenge

In 1990, Ted McIntyre founded the Gulf Coast Power Boat Association to revive the continuous run format. His company, Marine Turbine Technologies, spent $75,000 to get the race going. It started and ended at the same points as the Koenig Cup, but unlike the older competition, boats were allowed to replace engines and to carry extra engines on board.

One of the four teams that signed up was headed by 69-year-old Howard Arneson, an inventor whose innovations included an automatic vacuuming system for swimming pools and a surface drive that significantly improved the speed and efficiency of motorboat engines. Arneson entered a 32-foot Skater catamaran powered by a 1,325-horsepower G.E. T 58 turbine engine. Two electric bass motors boosted its maneuverability. The boat was modified to carry 300 gallons of Jet A fuel, enough to ensure that it would only have to stop to refuel four times.

The race began around 7 a.m. on September 22 when Arneson ignited his turbine's afterburner, sending a plume of fire shooting straight up into the air. Arneson and team, sporting orange helmets fitted with face shields and orange life preservers, shot out from the New Orleans harbor and into a lead that they never surrendered. "I made up my mind to hammer it right from

SAYAD & ASSOCIATES
presents

THE SECOND ANNUAL
MISSISSIPPI RIVER RACE

September 3 and 4, 1988 LABOR DAY WEEKEND
(DAYLIGHT HOURS ONLY)

a 1,039 mile run from New Orleans to Memphis to Saint Louis

1987
WORLD RECORD
Don Johnson
TV's "Miami Vice"
19:51:09

A TWO DAY RACE
First Day:
New Orleans to Memphis . . 641 Miles
Second Day:
Memphis to St. Louis . . 398 miles

ST. LOUIS
STE. GENEVIEVE
CAPE GIRARDEAU
CAIRO
WICKLIFFE
NEW MADRID
MEMPHIS
GREENVILLE
VICKSBURG
NATCHEZ
BATON ROUGE
NEW ORLEANS

N
E W
S

SCARAB
mercruiser
43
C8
GENTRY
99
eagle

Sponsors & Racers may contact Producers:

ELIZABETH GENTRY SAYAD & ASSOCIATES
41 Westmoreland Place St. Louis, Missouri 63108, U.S.A.
(314) 367-3062 FAX 314 241 0943

NOTICE:
Race Rules and Regulations on reverse side.

Publicity flyer for the 1988 Mississippi River Race. The race succeeded the Grace Cup Challenge, although the format was changed to a two-day, daylight only run. Actor Don Johnson won the inaugural Mississippi River Race in 1987.
(Image: Missouri State Historical Society, Elizabeth Gentry Sayad Collection)

In the end, Arneson shattered Cox's 1987 record by nearly eight hours, finishing the entire run in just 12 hours and 40 minutes.

the beginning," Arneson said after the race.[35]

For 1,039 miles, Arneson stuck to the main channel of the Mississippi, resisting the temptation to follow chutes that might save a few miles. As they roared up the river at speeds up to 110 miles an hour, tow boat crews waved and yelled their support.

Traveling at high speed on the river was jarring. "Your eyeballs jiggle around in your head, and the wind buffeting—imagine trying to stand up in a 100-mph gale for 12 hours," Arneson said. "I was black and blue for a month." As Arneson roared into St. Louis, he "had a hard time seeing, my eyes were watering from big tears. You get rummy, emotional, so I had to think of other things." Navigator Tom George added: "It was a dream come true. A pure delight! That boat ran as planned and history was made!"[36]

In the end, Arneson shattered Cox's 1987 record by nearly eight hours, finishing the entire run in just 12 hours and forty minutes. He ran so fast that he beat his ground support team into St. Louis by two hours, even though he had traveled nearly 400 miles further than them. His time was a full three days faster than the *Robert E. Lee's*.

Ted McIntyre, the race organizer and one of the other competitors, observed, "What he did to that record is going to change the whole complexion of the event. It's a daytime race now. He devastated the record, made a mockery of it. I'm half his age, and I was a whipped puppy."[37] McIntyre was forced to end his own attempt at New Madrid, Missouri.

Harry Truman vs. Robert E. Lee

Virtually all of the boats competing for the fastest time from New Orleans to St. Louis were small motorboats. In 1949, a commercial boat took a shot at breaking the *Lee's* record. The *Harry Truman*, built for the Federal Barge Lines in 1948, was among the most powerful tows of its time. Powered by twin 1,600-horse-power diesel engines that turned two propellers, the tow was capable of a top speed of 18 knots (20.7 miles per hour). Captain Willis "Cannonball" Smith guided the boat from New Orleans on March 9, 1949, with the intent of breaking the *Lee*'s record.

Outfitted with the best and most modern equipment, the *Harry Truman* still wasn't immune to the difficulties experienced by the power boaters. An electrical problem slowed them down near Profit's Island (about 150 miles upriver of New Orleans), and mechanical troubles near Cairo, Illinois, caused a delay of nearly three hours. The *Harry Truman* ultimately fell one hour and twenty-one minutes short of the *Lee*'s record. Captain Smith was in good spirits in spite of falling short: "Smith, who derives his nickname from his complexion and the fact he 'cannonballs' through fog when other skippers tie up for safety, was in no mood of depression, despite two nights without sleep."[38]

By the time twentieth-century boaters took on the *Robert E. Lee*'s record, the Mississippi River had been significantly altered. The river had been shortened and mapped and buoys placed to mark the main channel. While that reduced some of the difficulties that the *Lee* and *Natchez* had faced, debris in the river was still problematic. In addition, the wakes kicked up by commercial barges created hazardous conditions for twentieth-century-boats racing at high speeds.

Whether it was coal-fired steamboats pumping muddy water through their boilers or catamarans powered by jet fuel, the races continued to showcase advances in boat technology. But while the differences in technology from the *Robert E. Lee* to the *Bogie* to Arneson's Skater catamaran are stark, technology alone wasn't enough to set a new speed record. Some records were set by racers using standard boating equipment of the era, while many of the most advanced boats were derailed by mechanical or human failures.

For Tom George, who served as navigator for high-profile racers including Arneson and Don Johnson, Arneson's record had brought the competition back to its roots: "In the beginning it [the race from New Orleans to St. Louis] was a test for boats and the riverboat pilot's knowledge of the river. Then the race became more of a test for the boats. Now with the record at 12 hrs. 40 min. 51

Edwin Koenig (right) with his father, Henry, on the front porch of their home at 3836 Kosciusko Street in 1943. Edwin Koenig, long-time commodore of the St. Louis Yacht Club, founded a competition for speed boats that was inspired by the famous Lee vs. Natchez steamboat race of 1870. Edwin shared a love for the Mississippi with his father, who had once been a prominent member of the Western Rowing Club.
(St. Louis Mercantile Library Association, Globe-Democrat *Collection)*

sec it will be a test for equipment as well the navigator's and pilot's knowledge of the river."[39]

The competition, though, also tested the personal perseverance of competitors and their ability to adapt to difficult conditions. While all the races featured an often unstated drama pitting human technology against nature that fueled some of the public interest, ultimately, the most successful racers were the ones who adapted to the river's world rather than trying to conquer it. And it's not likely that these races would have had the cultural staying power if they had been held anywhere other than the Mississippi River. As George summed up: "The race has always be[en] a great test of man and equipment on one of the greatest rivers in our world and always will be!"[40]

Edwin Koenig

Edwin C. Koenig, the son of Henry C. and Lizzette (Bruesselbach) Koenig, was a longtime Mississippi River enthusiast, promoter of motor boating, and avid racer. "It has always been my ambition to own the fastest power boat in the world," he told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1927.[41] He set a few speed records with sailboats as a young man, and in 1904 he built his first racing boat, a steam-powered craft he called *Idlewild*. He also built a series of speed boats he called *Independence* and regularly challenged others to race him. On October 18, 1908, while attempting to set a speed record with the *Independence I* on the Mississippi at St. Louis, a rudder broke, and Koenig narrowly avoided crashing into one of the piers of the Eads Bridge.

In his role as commodore of the St. Louis Yacht Club (Ted Drewes was also a member), he organized motor boating events—regattas—on the Mississippi River, including one that attracted a reported 150,000 spectators. In 1926, he challenged Major William B. Robertson, a pioneer in aviation, to race a power boat on the Mississippi River as part of the second annual motorboat regatta. Twenty-five thousand spectators on the riverfront watched a full day of motorboat races. At the end, the cruiser *Miss St. Louis*, the fastest boat of the day, took to the river. As it passed the starting line, "An airplane piloted by Charles E. Lindbergh, chief mail pilot of the Robertson Aircraft Organization . . . swooped down to an even start."[42] Lindbergh's plane, "a rickety old model," easily beat *Miss St. Louis* to the finish line.[43] Lindbergh then turned the plane around and finished with a flourish by flying under the Eads Bridge.

Koenig owned three excursion boats that operated on the Mississippi at St. Louis, beginning with the *Kabekona*—"a fabulously appointed excursion boat"—that he owned with Andrew D. Franz; they ran exclusive cruises on the Mississippi River for the city's well-to-do from 1915 to 1917.[44]

Koenig also operated the *Belle of the Bends* for three years after World War I, and in the 1930s he bought the *Erastus Wells*, renaming it the *City of St. Louis*. He spent over $25,000 of his own money to convert the boat into the headquarters of the St. Louis Yacht Club. In 1938, he challenged the owners of the *Delta Queen* steamboat to race the *City of St. Louis* from New Orleans to St. Louis, even offering a wager of $25,000; they declined.

Koenig died in 1960—he was 83 years old—and left most of his money to Washington University, Saint Louis University (SLU), Shriners Hospital, and Cardinal Glennon Hospital, which is why you will find a residence hall at Washington University and a plaza at SLU named after him.

Speed Records ***from New Orleans to St. Louis***

Date	Time	Captain/Crew	Boat	Engines	Event
1844, May 8	95:09	**Captain J.M. Convers**	***JM White:*** steamboat		Steamboat era
1870, June 22	94:45	**Captain Thomas Paul Leathers**	***Natchez:*** steamboat		Steamboat era
1870, July 4	90:14	**Captain John W. Cannon**	***Robert E. Lee:*** steamboat		Steamboat era
1929, July 25	87:31	**Dr. Louis Leroy, Harvey Brown, Bob Hunter**	***Bogie:*** 26-foot mahogany Chris Craft motorboat	One 150-horsepower Scripps motor	Koenig Cup
1930, Aug 11	78:40*	**Claude M. Mickler**	***And How III:*** 12-foot outboard motorboat	Outboard motor	Did not qualify for Koenig Cup: changed motors en route
1931, May 10	74:02*	**Frederick Smith, Harvey Brown, E. Grady Lyle, Edmund Higgins**	***Greyhound:*** 23-foot long runabout	One 130-hp motor	Did not qualify for Koenig Cup: did not provide advance notice of attempt
1931, Sept. 28	79:46	**Charles F. Schokmiller, George Blaich, Jr.**	***Miss Evinrude II:*** mahogany outboard motorboat	Four cylinder motor	Koenig Cup
1953, July 5	79:12	**Roy F. Smith, James E. Mawhee**	***Mark Twain:*** 14-foot motorboat	Outboard motors	Koenig Cup
1953, Oct. 8	61:22	**Frank G. Burkarth, John Ritchie, Herman Blattel**	***Cifisco III:*** 37-foot cabin cruiser	Twin 145-hp engines	Koenig Cup
1954, Aug. 15	56:56	**Lee Sawyer**	***Huckleberry Finn:*** 15-foot motorboat	Twin Mark 40 Mercury 25-hp motors	Koenig Cup
1955, Aug. 5	52:53	**Raymond Loetscher, Charles Loetscher, Max Zeiner**	***Loetscher's Little Rock:*** Homemade 26-foot steel motorboat	Three V-8 car engines configured to run together	Koenig Cup
1956, June 24	47:20	**Roy Cullum, Dick Arant**	***The Rambler:*** 15-foot aluminum motorboat	Two 40-hp outboard motors	Koenig Cup
1956, July 22	41:57	**Bill Tedford, Sr., Bill Tedford, Jr., Nick Cioll**	***Robert E. Lee III:*** 15-foot marine plywood motorboat	Three 30-hp engines	Koenig Cup
1956, Aug. 25	39:41	**Lee Sawyer, John Springmeyer**	***Huckleberry Finn:*** 15-foot plywood boat	Two 40-hp outboard motors	Koenig Cup
1957, July 12	31:11	**Roy Cullum, Lynn Graham**	***Rambler II:*** 16-foot Crosby fiberglass boat	Two Mercury 60-hp motors	Koenig Cup
1958, Aug. 31	29:29*	**Byron Pool, Lonnie Kirkpatrick**	***Bing Ding III:*** 17-foot Crosby fiberglass motorboat	Twin 70-hp, Mark 78 Mercury outboards	Mississippi River Marathon Race; did not qualify for Koenig Cup
1964, July 23	29:22	**Bill Tedford, Nick Cioll**	***Robert E. Lee V:*** catamaran	Twin 90-hp motors	Koenig Cup
1968, July 7	29:05	**Lou Cooley, Dorothy Cooley, Larry Rentz**	22-foot catamaran	Four 105-hp Chrysler outboard motors	Koenig Cup
1972, July 23	26:50	**Bill Tedford, Sr., Bill Tedford, Jr., Nick Cioll**	***Robert E. Lee VI:*** 17-foot fiberglass catamaran	Twin 120-hp Evinrudes	Koenig Cup
1982, July 22	25:11	**Michael Reagan, Mike Low, Johnny Mann**	***Bud Light I:*** 38-foot Wellcraft Scarab	Three 425-hp V8 Evinrude motors	Grace Cup Challenge
1983, Oct. 5	23:09	**Bob Cox, Dean Pink**	19-foot Charger bass boat	One 235-HP Johnson outboard motor	Grace Cup Challenge
1984, Aug. 11	21:04	**Les Westmoreland, Jerry Jackson, Bruce Ellingson**	18-foot Baja sportster	One 200-hp Mercury motor	Not sanctioned
1985, Aug. 30	18:43	**Bruce Ellingson, Jerry Jackson**	***Miss Oklahoma:*** 20-foot Concord ski boat	Johnson 3.6 GT V-8 motor	Not sanctioned
1987, Aug. 7	20:15	**Bob Cox, Jim Highfill**	20-foot Charger bass boat	300-hp Johnson V-8 outboard motor	APBA sanctioned
1987, Aug. 8	18:39*	**Sam Beelman, Tom Seals**			Not sanctioned by APBA
1990, Sept. 22	12:40	**Howard Arneson, Thomas George, Jay Niccum**	32-foot Skater catamaran	One 1,325-horsepower GE T 58 turbine engine	Mississippi River Challenge Cup

*Unofficial times

ENDNOTES

[1] Frederick Way, Jr., *She Takes the Horns: Steamboat Racing on the Western Waters* (Cincinnati, 1953), 74.

[2] According to the Koenig Cup rules published in 1982, the official starting point of the race was the Coast Guard fireboat at the end of Esplanade Street; the finish line in St. Louis was the Coast Guard base at Iron Street. Departure and finishing times had to be recorded in the official log of each Coast Guard facility and approved by the Duty Officer. See Mark Spencer, "Assault on the Mississippi," *Powerboat* (September 1982), 19.

[3] "Speed boat in race against time from New Orleans to here," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 31, 1928.

[4] "Motorboat beats Robert E. Lee's time to St. Louis," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 25, 1929, 32.

[5] "Outboard motorboat beats record from New Orleans," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 12, 1930, 3A.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Another boat also beat the Bogie's record but was not awarded the Koenig Cup. In May 1931, four Memphians—Frederick Smith, Harvey Brown, E. Grady Lyle, and Edmund Higgins—finished in seventy-four hours, two minutes. Their effort was disqualified from the Koenig Cup because they failed to notify the committee ninety days in advance of their effort. Edwin Koenig nonetheless met the crew at the finish line and had a cup made for them to commemorate their achievement. Leighton Rutledge, "New Orleans to St. Louis river speed mark broken," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 11, 1931.

[8] "New Orleans-St. Louis motorboat racers win trophy and $400," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 29, 1931, 10A.

[9] Ibid.

[10] "Up-river speedboat record beaten by 17 hours, 50 minutes," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 9, 1953, 4C.

[11] "Sawyer sets speedboat record from New Orleans to St. Louis," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 16, 1954, 3A.

[12] "Record-breaking boat men tell of difficulties during river race," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 6, 1955, 3A.

[13] "Two attempts planned on river speed record," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 20, 1956, 4A.

[14] William Tedford, Jr., interview with the author, November 25, 2019.

[15] "New river record set for run from New Orleans," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1956, 3A.

[16] "Motorboat beats Robert E. Lee's time to St. Louis," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 25, 1929, 32.

[17] "2-man boat sets record, New Orleans to St. Louis," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 25, 1956.

[18] "Motorboat beats Robert E. Lee's time to St. Louis," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 25, 1929, 32.

[19] "Speedboaters set new record for New Orleans-St. Louis run," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 23, 1956, 7C.

[20] William Tedford, Jr., interview with the author, November 25, 2019.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Sport Shorts: Miscellaneous," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 24, 1972, 3C.

[23] Pool and Kirkpatrick's run, however, did not meet the criteria to qualify for the Koenig Cup. William Tedford, Jr., interview with the author, November 25, 2019.

[24] Spencer, "Assault on the Mississippi," 16.

[25] Ibid, 21.

[26] Peter Hernon, "A Taylor-made race for a very rich daredevil," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 20, 1983, 11A.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Three teams beat Cox's 1983 record, but none was sanctioned by the American Power Boat Association (APBA), which had become the de facto authority ensuring consistency between racing attempts. In August 1984, Les Westmoreland, Jerry Jackson, and Bruce Ellingson reached St. Louis in twenty-one hours, four minutes. The next year, Jackson and Ellingson finished the run in eighteen hours, forty-three minutes. In August 1987, Sam Beelman and Tom Seals beat Jackson and Ellingson's time by four minutes.

[29] Robert A. Cox, interview with the author, December 26, 2019.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Polly Whittell, "Don Johnson Tames the Mississippi," *Motor Boating & Sailing* (November 1987), 36.

[32] "Race kicked off Saturday," *Vicksburg Sunday Post*, September 4, 1988.

[33] "New sponsor, races on Mississippi," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 21, 1987, 4A.

[34] Kenneth H. Bitting, Jr., letter to Mr. Ben Langley, January 30, 1989, Missouri State Historical Society, Elizabeth Gentry Sayad Collection, folder 731 f.121.

[35] Steve Temple, "Fire on the Mississippi," *Powerboat Magazine* (November/December 1990).

[36] Ibid. Jim Wood, "Howard Arneson: Marin's Master of Motion," *Marin Magazine* (April 2008); Temple, "Fire on the Mississippi"; Thomas George fax to Elizabeth Sayad, Sept 26, 1990, Missouri State Historical Society, Elizabeth Gentry Sayad Collection, folder 731 f.110.

[37] Temple, "Fire on the Mississippi."

[38] "Towboat Harry Truman has the spirit but loses to ghost of the Robert E. Lee," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 13, 1949, 10A.

[39] Thomas George fax to Elizabeth Sayad.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Tim Renken, "River run is a tough one," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 23, 1965, 6B.

[42] "Plenty of thrills for 25,000 viewing motorboat races," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 19, 1926, 3.

[43] "Boating enthusiast Edwin C. Koenig dies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 5, 1960, 3C.

[44] "Edwin C. Koenig," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, XVII, October 1960, 107-8.

When Mount Auburn Cemetery opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1831, it introduced the "rural cemetery movement" that included a new way of thinking about not only cemeteries but the ways people used them. Two decades later, Bellefontaine Cemetery opened in St. Louis, inspired by the same model and dedicated in May 1850. *(Image: Shutterstock)*

Death, Civic Pride, and Collective Memory:

The Dedication of Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis

by JEFFREY SMITH

When the Rev. Truman Marcellus Post delivered his sermon at the dedication of Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, he assured the crowd that they embarked on "no ordinary errand. No civic festivity, or literary reunion, no achievement of Commerce, or joy of Victory." Post's sermon was part of the festivities on May 15, 1850, to dedicate a new burial ground that would be different than any St. Louis had seen. This was the first and best example of the "rural cemetery movement" in the region, capitalizing on new thinking of cemeteries as community assets that people used as parks.

James Yeatman (1818-1901) was among the original board members of Bellefontaine Cemetery in 1849, and the one the board sent to the east coast to hire a superintendent. In August, he managed to lure Almerin Hotchkiss away from the prestigious Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Hotchkiss brought his design and organizational ideas with him.
(Image: Missouri Historical Society)

Many major cities had rural cemeteries by the time Bellefontaine was dedicated in May 1850, as this map suggests. These were, not coincidentally, also some of the fastest-growing cities in the United States. *(Map: Michael Thede)*

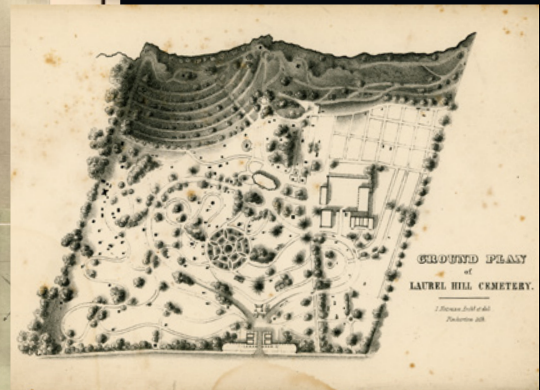
Part of the original 138 acres Bellefontaine acquired from Luther Kennett included the Hempstead family graveyard; Kennett had agreed to allow the Hempstead family access to the burial ground and a turnaround when he purchased it in 1831, and Bellefontaine created a family lot consisting of the former graveyard. It includes graves from as early as the 1810s, including that of fur trader Manuel Lisa. *(Images: Jeffrey Smith)*

Bellefontaine was part of something of a revolution in cemeteries that started when Mount Auburn Cemetery opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in September 1831.[1] Their founders and community leaders saw them as a city amenity not unlike parks, libraries, opera houses, athenaeums, or museums. Others followed in other cities, responding to many of the same needs and cultural priorities. Paradoxically, these "rural" cemeteries were anything but rural in our context; they were almost exclusively an urban phenomenon, albeit located outside cities in the adjacent countryside. Within a decade or so, the remaining ten largest cities in the United States (and a number of the smaller ones as well) had similar burial sites—Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, Green-Wood in Brooklyn, Green Mount in Baltimore, and Mount Hope in Rochester opened such cemeteries by decade's end. When St. Louisans received a charter from the State of Missouri for a Rural Cemetery Association in early 1841, they were at the forefront of thinking about these burial sites.

Population pressures were part of the story. Rapid growth in American cities in the decades after the War of 1812 (New York became the first city with more than 100,000 souls in 1820, and grew by five-fold over the next three decades) created new needs for graveyards—all those people die, after all, and unlike population as we usually tabulate it, cemetery population accumulates. Not only were graveyards filling up, but cities like St. Louis were growing geographically as well, engulfing them and thus monetizing that land with more profitable uses than burying the dead. Cities needed burial grounds farther outside the city to accommodate both the growing need for burial sites and to inter the remains of those being exhumed from those older graveyards now swallowed up by the city. They were generally located between one and five miles outside the city, well out of the way of development. In fact, a number of them intentionally used land that had little other commercial use. For example, Mount Auburn took over a wooded area of glens and deep ravines called "Sweet Auburn"; the land Simon Perkins sold the proprietors of the Akron (Ohio) Rural Cemetery (renamed Glendale) in 1839 was scenic with its deep glens but commercially almost worthless, and the board at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond even included the land's economic inadequacy when making its case for a state charter in 1847, noting that the land was "wholly unsuited to the general improvement of the city." Being used as a permanent burial site would not only not inhibit the city's growth, as some were claiming, but would generate revenue and encourage growth in surrounding areas, thus transforming a geographic lemon into civic lemonade.[2]

More importantly for our purposes here, these cemeteries were also a central piece of preserving and articulating a community's collective or cultural memory. Unlike their precursors, the new type of burial ground introduced by Mount Auburn in 1831 targeted more than the bereaved burying loved ones; rather, their founders designed both the landscape and the functions for the living to visit. They were not "pleasure grounds" as such, but they were places where people could escape urban crowding and pollution and be part of a more natural setting (albeit a highly mediated and designed nature).

These cemeteries retained their sacred function of burial and consecration, but they also served the more secular function for visitors. Since the new cemeteries encouraged (and even relied upon) visitors who may or may not have had any relation to the cemetery or those buried there, the monumentation took on a

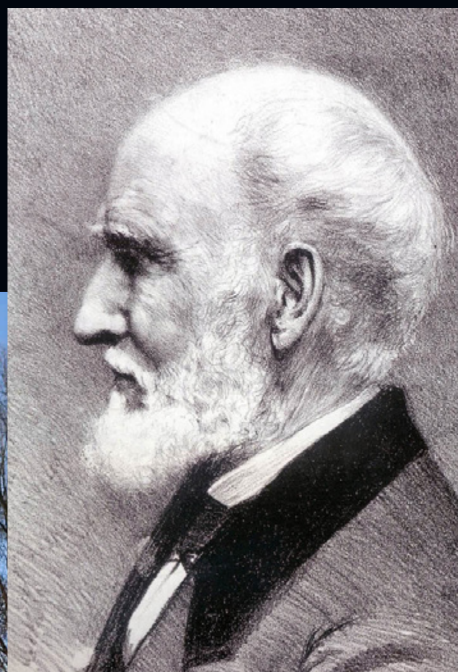


Curvilinear roads that meshed with the terrain, handsome vistas, and planned landscaping were all parts of the rural cemetery movement, as is evident from these early maps of Mount Auburn in Cambridge and Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, both of which informed Hotchkiss' design of Bellefontaine. *(Images: Library of Congress)*

At the dedication ceremony, Bellefontaine distributed copies of this map, drawn by noted St. Louis cartographer Julius Hutawa from the design by Superintendent Almerin Hotchkiss. Like a number of other cemeteries, Bellefontaine held an auction that afternoon in which people paid an extra premium to be the first to select the locations of their family lots. Among the road names was "The Tour," so purchasers could be confident their family lots were in view of the main route visitors would take—and it worked; every person who bought a lot that day is either on or within view of The Tour. Hotchkiss knew the value of such a tour route from his experience at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

They were not "pleasure grounds" as such, but they were places where people could escape urban crowding and pollution and be part of a more natural setting (albeit a highly mediated and designed nature).

When former Senator Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858) died, his grave was marked with an obelisk seen here in the distance on the right on a family lot he shared with Henry Brandt. As the Louisiana Purchase Exposition approached, the State of Missouri established a Benton Monument Commission in 1902 to create and fund a more lavish granite marker for Missouri's first senator, seen in here in the foreground. *(Image: Jeffrey Smith)*



Wayman Crow (1803-1885) was among the founding members of the board of Bellefontaine. While attorney James MacPherson agreed to host the first meeting of the organizers in March 1849, Crow—a prominent Whig politician and dry goods merchant—was one of the two who signed the invitation along with iron manufacturer James Harrison. Crow purchased a lot at the dedication, but a quarter-century later acquired a new one and vacated the old one for this site overlooking the Mississippi River. *(Images: Missouri Historical Society, Jeffrey Smith)*

"We know, that man is the creature of associations and excitements. . . . Who, that has stood by the tomb of Washington on the quiet Potomac, has not felt his heart more pure, his wishes more aspiring, his gratitude more warm, and his love of country touched by a holier flame?"

Joseph Story, Dedication of Mount Auburn Cemetery, 1831

new kind and level of importance. Before, in burying grounds operated by churches or towns or even families, the markers provided a way to mark a grave and suggest familial relations and ideas about salvation. After all, the people walking through those graveyards were, by and large, mourners at burials or descendants of those interred. The demographics of visitors altered the thinking about monuments, gravestones, and even the spatial arrangements of burials. Those markers evolved into ways to communicate ideas about more earthly concerns such as social position, economic status, and real or perceived importance. Grave markers and family monuments became larger and more highly decorated, offering more information about the deceased, and located in places that suggested status and convenience to be viewed. Despite a rhetoric of these monuments' role of preserving history (and to an extent they do preserve a version of history) it is a highly mediated history that reflects a kind of invention.[3] That is to say, collective memory and history are not necessarily two sides of the same coin, despite the fact that the makers of them believe "that they embody *history*, defined as objective reality, not an interpretation of a memory."[4] Once we see them as a product of a creative process rather than recording information or contributing to the mourning process alone, cemeteries and their markers, monuments, mausoleums, and structures take on new importance as a prism through which we can understand the values and attitudes of the people and communities that erected, visited, and supported them. Collective memory and monuments reflect the values of both the creators of the monuments and those who interact with them, both at the time of creation and at every subsequent moment. Their responses may not be the same, but they are based on their own values and pasts.

People consciously understood this role cemeteries played in reflecting cultural ideas and values from their beginning. Speaking at the dedication of Mount Auburn in September of 1831, Associate Justice Joseph Story noted the role of cemeteries in the entertainment and edification of all who wander their paths. "It should not be for the poor purpose of gratifying our vanity or pride, that we should erect columns, and obelisks, and monuments to the dead," Story noted, "but that we may read thereon much of our own destiny and duty. We know that man is the creature of associations and excitements."[5] Others followed suit with similar sentiments almost immediately. Just four years later, Samuel Walker sought a place to collect the stone commemorations of notable figures in his booklet calling for a rural cemetery that became Green Mount in Baltimore, thundering that "Maryland has not been without her great men, names that would have adorned a Roman age, in her proudest era; but under our present system, where are they? Who can point to the narrow houses, where rest their lowly heads? They are scattered to the four winds of heaven, resting here and there in obscure isolated tombs, undistinguished and almost forgotten?"[6] William Wyatt echoed Walker's view in his speech at the dedication of Green Mount in July 1839 with his hopes that "here may be recorded the public gratitude to a public benefactor, and in some conspicuous division of these grounds, the stranger may read the history of the statesman, the divine, the philanthropist, the soldier or the scholar whose deeds have improved or whose fame adorned the city."[7] That same year, Laurel Hill Cemetery founder John Jay Smith sent an article to the daily newspapers in Philadelphia about his having recently received the new visitor's guide to Mount Auburn—some 250 pages long with sixty engravings—observing that "thus does a rural cemetery insure a double chance for good or great names being remembered first on a stone tablet, and next on the ever more enduring page."[8]

That was the backdrop for the oration of the Rev. Truman Marcellus Post. The following is an excerpted version of Post's speech, published by both Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis newspapers, and even the later biography of Post. This was not particularly unusual; cemeteries commonly published the dedication speeches in early versions of their published rules and regulations or as marketing documents; Mount Auburn published the proceedings of its dedication, complete with the dedication speech of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Joseph Story.

Connecticut-born Truman Marcellus Post (1810-1886) was trained in both the law and theology, and became more strident in his antislavery views after the murder of Elijah Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois, in late 1837. He became pastor of Third Presbyterian Church in St. Louis in 1847, the post he held when he delivered this oration. *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

"Address of Professor Post"[9]

Fellow Citizens:

We are come hither to-day on no ordinary errand. No civic festivity, or literary reunion, no achievement of Commerce, or joy of Victory, gathers us this day amid these scenes of nature, this green and wooded seclusion.

We are come, 'tis true, to found a City—of your own emporium the shadow, the counterpart, the home; to grow with its growth, and become populous with its people—yet a city for no living men, a City of the Dead, we found this day.[10]

Not in pride come we. In no vain ambition to wrestle with our mortal state, or rescue these bodies from corruption, or our names from oblivion. Too well, alas! we know,

"Nor storied urn,
nor animated bust,

Back to its mansion
calls the fleeting breath;

Nor Honor's voice
provokes the silent dust,

Nor Flattery soothes
the dull cold ear of death."

In no such dream of the children of pride, but as under a common doom, we come on an errand of love and sorrow. We come to consecrate a place to the sad proprieties of grief, and the last offices of earthly affection, the holy memories of the dead, and the repose of the grave—to hallow a sanctuary for remembrance and love and tears—to thoughts that walk again life's pilgrimage with the departed, or see the faces faded and lost from earth, brightening in the smile of God. We come to select the last home for families, and friends, and forms we love most dearly. Yea, to choose the place of our own final rest, where memory, perchance, may drop over our dust the "tribute of a tear."

In doing this, and in exhibiting a care for the seemly bestowment of our dead, we obey a universal feeling of humanity — a feeling that regards the very form, consecrated by the residence of the soul and the memories of love, as more than common earth. We ask no more leave of Philosophy for this sentiment than we do for our tears over the dead — content to follow the irrepressible impulse of nature, an instinct of immortality clinging around our very clay. But we do know it is the highest philosophy to follow the universal and immortal voice of Nature. Her indications, truer than all logic, always point to beneficent, though it may be hidden uses.

Moreover, observation teaches us, here, as everywhere, that violated Nature vindicates herself — a natural retribution attends on our treatment of the dead. A neglect of the decencies and pious proprieties of sepulture ever reacts disastrously on the manners and tastes, sentiments and morality, and, finally, on the entire genius of civilization.

But, apart from all philosophy, we love to linger around the place of our dead, where we looked on the forms we loved for the last time. Thither fondly we oft return, and sorrow soothes itself with its offering of tears, over their lone and lowly rest. We love to beautify their last repose, as though the departed spirit were more quickly conscious and cognizant around the spot where the companion of its mortal pilgrimage awaits the resurrection, as though there it were still sensible to the soothing charm of natural beauty, or the gentle offices of memory and love. True, we cannot wake their sleep; they answer us never with voice or sigh; still we delight to make their rest beautiful — beautiful with all that nature, and all that art can give; we would strew it with flowers, to be tended with gentle fingers, and bedewed ever with fresh tears; we would that affection and honor should speak of them in commemorative marble, and nature around should wear her benignest and loveliest aspect.

In spite of philosophy, Nature still exclaims: "Ah! Who to dumb forgetfulness a prey, This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned, Left the war precincts of the cheerful day, Nor left one longing, lingering look behind? On some fond breast the parting soul relies, Some pious drops the closing eye requires, Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries, Even in our ashes live their wonted fires."[11]

Posts and steps like these in Bellefontaine were intentionally designed to mirror the entrances to homes. They appear to not be present in other major urban cemeteries, suggesting that they were a product offered and created by a local stone works. *(Image: Jeffrey Smith)*

Natural taste and sensibility again, plead for the rural cemetery. A seemly and beautiful sepulture amid the jostle, and din, and offenses of sight and sound, in the tumult of the city! It is impossible! In the city churchyard, on the borders of our crowded and reeking thoroughfares, 'mid the clang, and clamor, and dust, and the tramping of feet, and the rattling of wheels, it seems as if the buried could not rest.[12] We can hardly disabuse the mind of the painful illusion, that the turmoil of mortal life may still perturb even the sleepers of the grave. The sensibilities of the mourner are shocked by the mingling of the vulgar and profane life with the awe and silence of the house of death. Meditation flees such scenes — the sanctity of private grief is outraged.[13] The faces of the departed will not come to greet you, and the sensitive spirit hastes to hide its wound away from the stare and curiosity of the passing crowd. No, not there — but in seclusion, silence and solitude, grief loves to seek the face of the dead, and commune with its memories and hopes: where earth, with its stilly life, where green in its time, and Spring comes forth with its flowers beautiful and voiceless; and Summer passes into a solemn Sabbath glory; and pensive Autumn throws its seemly shroud of fading loveliness over the dying year; and the desolate Winter keeps religiously at least the fitting loneliness and stillness of the tomb.

Grief for the dead, also asks seclusion and isolation. It shuns the public walk. The stare of the curious crowd oppresses, profanes, tortures it. It treads its path of sorrow with no idle gazer. It asks to love and weep alone. It asks a burial place where the landscape, with its natural variety of surface, and the screen of hill, and dale, and copse, and thicket, may furnish separate sanctuaries for sorrow. Our nature, too, asks a place of final rest beside the forms loved in life. . . . These sentiments have, in every age, established burial places amid the high and tranquil and beautiful places of nature.

Health unquestionably requires the rural cemetery.

Health unquestionably requires the rural cemetery. The burial place in the midst of the city soon becomes a nuisance, exaling [*sic*] from its crowded graves the pestilence. From this consideration, as well as that of taste, either by custom or express legislation, burials in the city were universally prohibited by the States of antiquity . . . . Maladies the most dreadful to which man is liable have come forth from the shallow and crowded graves to avenge the unseemly bestowment of the dead.[14]

. . . But, far beyond the hygienic or aesthetic, the moral uses of the rural cemetery claim our regard.

To make the place of the dead beautiful and attractive, is wise for man. The amenity that lures life often with the shadow of the tomb, purifies, ennobles, and hallows it. The tomb, the great refiner and chastener of life, as a beneficent remembrancer and educator—the perpetuator of the discipline of sorrow, without its pang—the admonisher of the true and enduring in our being—it is well to give it permanent voice, often to invoke its influence to sober life's passion and hope, and to impart true wisdom to its reason and aim.

Place, then, and preserve the city of Death beside that of Life, as its sorrowful but blessed remembrancer. Let Life look oft on the features of its pale brother. Make that face not foul and revolting, but charming with the spell of beauty and of holy repose; that the loving may often come to gaze thereon, and may turn away with chastened hopes and passions, and quicken end sympathies, and higher and holier thoughts.

Again, the rural cemetery, as a permanent conservatory of memories of the past, and the attractor of the living within the sphere of their influence, is a great interest of civilization; a perpetuator of social life and order.[15] It binds the present to the past by the ties of reverent love and sorrow. It gives the virtue and reason of the departed perpetual utterance on the ear of life. A cemetery is a great picture gallery of the loved and honored dead. You walk in it as in a Pantheon of historic virtues and fames. The wise, the gifted, the eloquent, the good, the heroic, and the loved, look forth upon you from their rest, and the power of their thought is upon your soul. That thought, in such scenes, preserves, not chains and enslaves order.

The rural cemetery, then, demanded by natural taste and for its moral uses, we may regard as almost a necessity of civilization; and we feel it worthy of ourselves and our city to provide such a place for the burial of our dead, and to consecrate it for all coming time as a sanctuary for grief, and memory, and funeral silence and repose.

We count it a matter of gratulation that the work has been entered on in such a spirit and with such beginnings. The enterprise was long contemplated, and at length entered upon as almost a necessity of seemly and permanent sepulture.

"Soon the mourner shall follow the mourned, till we, and all hearts that beat for us beneath these heavens, shall at last keep the long and silent rendezvous of the grave. Yea, I see the endless succession of the future hastening on, as the many waters of yonder mighty river, till the seasons weary in their round, and the sun grows weary in the sky, and time itself is sere and deathlike old. I see the world of Life itself passing, and Death's shadow falls over all. But Death himself shall perish in that hour. The great Victor of Death shall summon the pale prisoners of the grave, and they shall come forth; and then, though voice of earth's memory may have perished for ages, though the rock-hewn monument may have crumbled long cycles ago, still a record, written on no earthly marble, waits us in the great doom, and our mortal works follow us there."—

Epitaph, Truman Marcellus Post's gravestone, Bellefontaine Cemetery[16]

ENDNOTES

[1] Recent scholarship has built on Blanche Linden-Ward's seminal history of Mount Auburn Cemetery by expanding the interpretive perspective beyond her focus on Mount Auburn in terms of landscape history; see Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1989). Recent works have focused on these cemeteries as cultural phenomena as well. For examples, see Joy Marie Giguere, *Characteristically American: Memorial Architecture, National Identity, and the Egyptian Revival* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014; James R. Cothran and Erica Danylchak, *Grave Landscapes: The Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemetery Movement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018); Jeffrey Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* (Latham: Lexington Books, 2017). There are a number of histories of individual rural cemeteries as well; see, for example, Jeffrey Richman, *Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery: New York's Buried Treasure* (Brooklyn: Green-Wood Cemetery, 1988); and Christopher Vernon, *Graceland Cemetery: A Design History* (Amherst, Massachusetts: Library of American Landscape History, 2011).

[2] "Statement to the General Assembly of Virginia," January 10, 1850, Hollywood Cemetery Minutes, Hollywood Cemetery Collection, Virginia Historical Society.

[3] Elizabethada Wright. "Reading the Cemetery, 'Lieu de Memoire par Excellence," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 33:2 (Spring, 2003), 28.

[4] Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 21.

[5] Joseph Story, *An Address Delivered on the Dedication of the Cemetery at Mount Auburn, September 24, 1831, To Which is Added an Appendix, Containing a Historical Notice and Description of the Place, with a List of the Present Subscribers* (Boston: Joseph T. and Edwin Buckingham, 1831), 14.

[6] Samuel D. Walker, *Rural Cemetery and Public Walk* (Baltimore: Sands and Nelson, 1835), 19.

[7] William E. Wyatt, *Services at the Dedication of Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier, Vt., Sept. 15, 1855, with the Rules and Regulations* (Montpelier: E. P. Walton, Jr., Printer, 1855), 32.

[8] John Jay Smith, Jr., "Memoranda Respecting the Foundation of Laurel Hill Cemetery," Laurel Hill Cemetery Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the undated article he sent to dailies in Philadelphia, pasted into this document, "Rural Cemeteries—Mount Auburn."

[9] The following offers excerpts from Post's address, which was reprinted by both Bellefontaine Cemetery and in local newspapers.

[10] This idea of cemetery as home emerged as part of the rural cemetery movement. Family lots contributed to this, with their arrangement and design reflective of Victorian houses—steps in front and entry into public spaces with "private" spaces (that is, individual gravestones) smaller. Unusual to Bellefontaine (and perhaps unique) is the number of newel posts entering family lots with the terms "Our Home" on them.

[11] From Thomas Gray (1718-1773), "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," first published in 1751.

[12] Post's reference to the rural cemetery as an escape from urban life was not unusual in dedication speeches. It also speaks to the changed attitude about cemeteries as places for the living to visit and commune with nature rather than merely a site to warehouse the dead.

[13] Here, Post is referring to a common problem in cities like St. Louis. As cities grew in population, they also grew geographically so that land on the outskirts of town used for burials became surrounded by the city itself, making that land too valuable to be used as a graveyard. As cities grew, therefore, some of those graveyards remained, others were moved. The idea of a bustling city immediately adjacent to the burial ground was a common one, though, and seen as problematic.

[14] Issues of health were commonly cited as reasons to establish cemeteries, and Post was building on a long history of placing burial sites outside town. He makes references to gravesites of the ancient world, but he surely knew of more recent thoughts on the subject. In 1838, Laurel Hill Cemetery founder John Jay Smith (writing under the pen name "Atticus") noted that rural cemeteries were essential to keep miasmas and such away from the population. See Atticus [John Jay Smith], *Hints on the Subject of Interments*, Smith "Memoranda Respecting the Foundation of Laurel Hill Cemetery," 11. In 1839, the founders of Glendale Cemetery in Akron, Ohio, used Smith's exact words—right down to the italics—in its petition to the state legislature requesting a charter for the Akron Rural Cemetery, arguing that: "It is at this day well known, and has been satisfactorily demonstrated, *that burials in cities greatly endanger the public health*; that the miasmata disengaged from burying places, may, and often have, caused frightful catastrophes, and that they not only give more virulence to prevailing maladies, but also originate contagious diseases, whose ravages have been terrible." See Petition to Ohio Legislature, January 10, 1839, Glendale Cemetery Minutes. The charter passed in March 1839. Glendale Cemetery Minutes, Petition to Ohio Legislature, January 10, 1839.

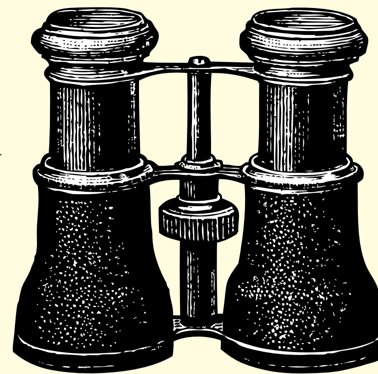
[15] Again, Post's comments are consistent with other writers and speakers at the time, seeing the cemetery as a place to preserve and articulate the community's collective memory. At the dedication of Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831, Associate Justice Joseph Story noted its power in his dedication. Others followed suit with similar sentiments almost immediately, quickly normalizing the idea that proximity to the great was uplifting and edifying. See Joseph Story, *An Address Delivered on the Dedication of the Cemetery at Mount Auburn, September 24, 1831, To Which is Added an Appendix, Containing a Historical Notice and Description of the Place, with a List of the Present Subscribers* (Boston: Joseph T. and Edwin Buckingham, 1831), 14; Samuel D. Walker, *Rural Cemetery and Public Walk* (Baltimore: Sands and Nelson, 1835), 19.

[16] Gravestone, Truman Marcellus Post, Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri.

Otto Widmann and the Birds of Missouri

by BONNIE STEPENOFF

By 1907, a studious German immigrant named Otto Widmann had spent four decades traveling through Missouri recording the movements of more than three hundred species and sub-species of birds.



In that year, he published his *Preliminary Catalog of the Birds of Missouri*, the only comprehensive book on the state's birds before 1992. Widmann, who was born in 1841, did his work in the post-Civil War period of industrialization, urbanization, railroad-building, and rapid deforestation. As time went on, he became painfully aware that some of the wildlife he encountered would soon disappear from the state. In essays and speeches throughout his long life, he implored Missourians to protect the birds and preserve the woodlands and marshes that gave them a home.[1]

By 1880, Widmann had become a respected ornithologist, contributing articles to prominent scientific journals.

When Widmann arrived in 1867, St. Louis had a vibrant group of scientists studying various aspects of natural history. Prominent among them was another German immigrant, George Engelmann, a practicing physician and a distinguished amateur botanist. Engelmann traveled widely in the Mississippi River Valley, Arkansas, and the western territories of the United States, publishing studies of cacti, oaks, conifers, mistletoe, and grapes. He advised and encouraged Henry Shaw to establish the Missouri Botanical Garden. In 1856, he was a founding member of the Academy of Science of St. Louis, the organization that, half a century later, would publish Widmann's *Catalog*.[2]

In 1867, St. Louis was a bustling commercial center that still contained pockets of untamed land, even within the city limits. On the riverboat journey on the Mississippi River from New Orleans in the spring of that year, Widmann wondered at "ducks by thousands, geese, hawks, plovers, gulls, grebes, crows, and vultures." For the first ten years of life in the city, he concentrated on his pharmacy business, but he managed to find time for long hikes to wooded places, where bird-life abounded. On the banks of the River des Peres, a tributary of the Mississippi River, in the southern reaches of the city, he found a "giant wood," where he rarely met another human being, but encountered many species of birds, including owls, hawks, and the graceful, high-flying Mississippi Kite.[3]

Widmann began his field studies with only a campstool, binoculars, and a great deal of patience. However, he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to identify some birds on sight. He had to obtain specimens in order to measure them and study their characteristics. He explained this to his wife, Augusta, whom he married in 1872. Having purchased books for him, she also gave him, as a Christmas present, a cane-gun for shooting small birds. Over the years he obtained and used other firearms.[4]

In his defense, it should be said that the great John James Audubon was a hunter-naturalist who found it necessary to kill and procure specimens for study. Widmann did not kill for sport, only for what he perceived as the advancement of science. Many years later, his grandson Homer Widmann remembered:

> I recall being astonished, as a small boy, at the amazing visual acuity of my grandfather and at his extraordinary accuracy with small bore firearms. My elder brother and I often accompanied him on field trips, where, observing an uncommon specimen he would shoot it, remarking "Quick, boys. Get it," and then put it in his pocket.

After taking such an action, his grandson explained, "He would always admonish us never to kill wantonly, that only in the interest of science was the killing of any bird justified."[5]

By 1880, Widmann had become a respected ornithologist, contributing articles to prominent scientific journals. One of his early publications in the *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* drew attention to an "immense gathering of crows on Arsenal Island," an accretion of sand in the Mississippi River in the vicinity of St. Louis. Located near the St. Louis Arsenal, the island was also known as Smallpox Island because the city's smallpox hospital was situated there. During the Civil War, the island served as both a city and a military cemetery. After the war, floods washed away many of the grave markers, and many graves were moved to the military cemetery at Jefferson Barracks. When Widmann observed the island in the summer of 1879, thousands of crows spent nights there, after feeding all day in the fields and gardens on both sides of the river. According to Widmann, the din of their cawing voices could be heard from miles away.[6]

He continued to observe bird-life along the Mississippi River. In the early 1880s, he participated in a cooperative study under the supervision of Wells Woodbridge Cooke (1858-1916), a young man who would become an eminent authority on bird migration. Widmann collected data in St. Louis, while Cooke made observations in Jefferson, Wisconsin, and they presented their findings in a joint report on the movements of various species along the river. Widmann made his notes, for the most part, in the woods along the River des Peres near the point

Eurasian Tree and House Sparrows, color illustration by Otto Widmann, appears as the frontispiece to Widmann's *Summer Birds of Shaw's Garden* (1909), his most popular and well-known work.
(Image: St. Louis Mercantile Library Associaton)

Otto Widmann (1841-1933) was among the first to study and document the birds in Missouri, reflecting his interest in bird migration patterns. A local drugstore owner, Widmann's interest in ornithology was rekindled when he saw a Baltimore oriole in his yard in 1873. He became one of the region's leading ornithologists.
(Image: Bird Lore: An Illustrated Bi-Monthly Magazine Devoted to The Study and Protection of Birds, *1902)*

"…Cooke and Widmann identified more than 130 species of birds at observation points along the river in Missouri and Wisconsin."

where it flowed into the Mississippi. Nearly every day for several months in winter and spring, he made the long walk to his observation point at 4:30 in the morning and did not return until the afternoon. In addition, he made numerous evening excursions to points overlooking the great flyway.[7]

Through their cooperative efforts, Cooke and Widmann identified more than 130 species of birds at observation points along the river in Missouri and Wisconsin. Some appeared in large numbers. On March 4, 1882, for instance, Widmann reported that bluebirds "were seen and heard everywhere; the males doing most of the warbling; the females most of the fighting. I caught two females in my hands, which had come down to the ground in combat." Other species were scarce. Widmann saw only one Pileated Woodpecker in St. Louis; Cooke saw none. Widmann recognized one Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Cooke saw two, but at too great a distance for clear identification.[8]

The movements of crows roosting in and near St. Louis continued to fascinate Widmann. In 1888, he reported that thousands of crows still came to roost on fall and winter evenings on desolate Arsenal Island. The raucous scavengers found a plentiful supply of grain and carrion in a large city surrounded by farms, dairies, and pastures. At that time the city also contributed to the crows' omnivorous diet by depositing its garbage in the river. After sunset in autumn, he wrote, the trees on the island were black with these birds. On the coldest nights, they stayed down on the ground, huddling together on the sand.[9]

Within a few years, Arsenal Island had moved down the river, eventually disappearing underwater, and the crows found two new places for their nightly roosts. One of these gatherings was on Gabbaret Island in the Mississippi River opposite the northern reaches of St. Louis, but a much larger one was on the Illinois side of the river opposite Jefferson Barracks. During the day, the birds spread over a wide area, up to twenty or thirty miles from the roost, on both sides of the river, searching for food and causing animosity among farmers. Studies by Widmann and others revealed, however, that the birds did less harm than good, because they reduced the numbers of insects, mice, and other harmful pests.[10]

At the age of 48 in 1889, Widmann retired from the pharmacy business and devoted his time to ornithology. With Augusta and their growing family, he moved from the city to a wooded four-acre property in the outlying community of Old Orchard (which later became part of Webster Groves). Scattered among the trees on his land were dozens of white birdhouses that sheltered wrens, martins, bluebirds, and sparrows. As the years went by, Augusta took increasing interest in her husband's studies, often accompanying him on field trips. During this time he participated in several organizations, including the St. Louis Bird Club, the Audubon Society, and the American Ornithologists Union.[11]

While living in the suburbs, he continued to enjoy the company of science-minded men in the city. Beginning in 1898, he met on a monthly basis with a group of colleagues in the Naturalists' Club. The group had no officers, no by-laws, no dues, and limited itself to twelve members, who had achieved prominence in zoology, anthropology, anatomy, or some related field of research. Members had to receive an invitation and be approved unanimously. Typically, they met on a Saturday evening in one member's home. One of them read a paper on a scientific topic, followed by general discussion and refreshments. The men smoked pipes and cigars and socialized far into the night.[12]

At the same time, beginning in the 1890s, he ventured far from St. Louis, exploring various regions in the state. He was particularly fascinated by the Bootheel of southeastern Missouri, a wide, flat, swampy stretch of woodlands bordering the Mississippi River. When he first visited the area, near the Arkansas state line, he marveled that, with the exception of a few ridges, "the whole territory is still covered with the original forest." Here he observed vast numbers of birds, including uncommon varieties like the Pileated Woodpecker and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.[13]

There in the Bootheel, Widmann discovered the first nest and eggs of the Bachman's Warbler that had ever been

Otto Widmann (far left) was among the founding members of the St. Louis Zoological Society, seen here with other zoo founders around 1920. *(Image: Missouri Historical Society)*

identified in Missouri. On May 8, 1897, he heard males of the species singing in a swampy area of Dunklin County. For the next several days, he followed the warblers through woods, brambles, and pools of water, until he finally found a female building a nest. For three subsequent days, he watched as the bird produced three eggs in the shelter of dense woods that protected her brood from roving hogs, cattle, and humans.[14]

Even in these forested wetlands, Widmann perceived threats to wildlife. For example, in the late 1880s, fashionable ladies rushed to purchase clothing adored with egret feathers. Egrets, also known as White Cranes, roosted in the Little River and St. Francis River basins of the Bootheel. On one of his visits to the lowlands, Widmann met a crane hunter who boasted that he made a profit of $800 from the sale of crane feathers. There were many others like him who drastically reduced the number of Egrets. Fortunately, the fashion craze faded, and at least some of these graceful white birds survived the hunters' onslaught.[15]

Based on his observations at the turn of the century, Widmann called urgently for the protection of Missouri's birds. He spoke not only to his scientific colleagues, but also to the general public. In an article published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1901, he stated that "The protection of birds has become imperative." Recalling an incident in which he scolded a group of boys for wantonly "killing every bird their guns could reach," he pleaded with parents, teachers, and pastors to instruct young people "in the science of bird life, their species and the purposes of their creation." His zeal on the subject was clearly religious. Game laws, and their enforcement, would not suffice. "The only salvation," he wrote, "is changing public sentiment," and this must begin with the children.[16]

In 1902, he suffered a dramatic setback. While he was away on a trip to Germany, his home in Old Orchard burned down. Lost in the blaze were books, notes, a series of diaries covering twenty-five years of research, and the unfinished manuscript of his planned catalog of the birds of Missouri. This discouraging blow prompted a return to the city, where he and his family resettled in a two-story brick house at 5105 Enright

European Tree Sparrow.

Geog. Dist. –
Europe and Asia to
China and Japan.

"In America only in the neighborhood of St. Louis where it was introduced in 1870.
It has left the thickly settled parts [of] St. Louis but is found scatteringly throughout the outskirts and suburbs, spreading to neighboring cities, Alton, Grafton, and Belleville, Ill., to Creve Coeur Lake, St. Charles, and westward as far as Washington, 54 miles from St. Louis."

Excerpt from *A Preliminary Catalog of the Birds of Missouri,* Otto Widmann, 1907

The Cardinal, by way of contrast, was a bird that thrived in the state.

Avenue in a neighborhood of elite families on the city's west side. In these new quarters, with the help of his wife, he recovered from his dejection, slowly reassembled his materials, and resumed his life's work.[17]

In May of 1906, Otto and Augusta traveled on the new branch of the Iron Mountain Railroad to Branson in southwestern Missouri. He had already visited the Ozarks and had spoken eloquently to the Naturalists' Club of the abundant wildlife in the "rows upon rows of long-stretched hills, so characteristic of the region." Branson impressed him as a lively and prosperous town that "was all new and everything built on a large scale, the hotels, drug stores, general and furniture stores, livery, barns, post office building and a bright new bank." He predicted that the town would grow and prosper, but as a nature lover he placed a higher value on the nearby White River and its steep bluffs. During their four-day visit to the area, the Widmanns observed eighty-four different kinds of birds, including numerous hummingbirds, hovering around "many a wildflower seldom or never seen in other localities."[18]

Widmann relied on numerous friends and colleagues in St. Louis and other areas of the state to collect data for his *Catalog*. For example, James Newton Baskett of Mexico (Audrain County) in north central Missouri was an avid bird-watcher and the author of several children's books, including *The Story of the Birds,* first published in 1897. Widmann's long-time friend John Kastendeick of Billings (Christian County) in southwestern Missouri amassed a large collection of mounted birds of the Ozarks. Philo W. Smith of St. Louis collected birds' eggs from all around the state. Another local associate, Frank Schwarz, was a taxidermist and also a member of the Naturalists' Club. Schwarz's son Max remembered that Widmann, "a very amiable and quiet person," was "always ready to go out in the field with you."[19]

His constant field work reflected a sense of urgency, expressed in his *Catalog* as a stern warning about the decrease in the number of birds, its causes and its consequences. "When we consider how much one organism is dependent on others," he wrote, "we do not wonder that an annihilation of many forms of animal life, high and low, is inseparably bound up with such a change as deforestation and subsequent cultivation." In the early twentieth century, Missouri had already lost a large percentage of its original woodlands, and massive drainage projects were quickly transforming the forested wetland of the southeastern Bootheel into endless flat fields of corn and cotton. Many woodland birds had already vanished. Where, he wondered, would the marsh birds go?[20]

Protection of these birds required more than restrictions on hunting. The game and fish protection law of 1905, Widmann said, was a good start, but its effectiveness remained to be seen. Not only hunters, but also farmers, landowners, and corporations, would have to change their behavior. People should band together to create bird sanctuaries in places where forests still existed. Farmers should pause before removing trees, stumps, vines, thickets, and shrubs, which provide shelter for birds. Home owners and community leaders should set up bird nesting boxes in gardens and parks. Most urgently, bird lovers, and there were many of them, should speak up and inspire appreciation of "the wonderful works of creation, and certainly not the least among them is the bird!"[21]

His *Catalog* included a lengthy entry on the Carolina Parakeet, which had already vanished from Missouri. Early nineteenth-century explorers had seen many of them in the Missouri River Valley. In the 1840s, Audubon encountered numerous parakeets in northwestern Missouri. These flashy birds with green, yellow, and red feathers and strident voices appeared frequently in wooded river bottoms until the late 1850s, when the sight of them became rare. In counties along the Missouri River, bird-watchers saw the last of them in the 1860s. Widmann had second-hand reports of a few sightings in the Ozarks after 1890. The bird's disappearance remains a mystery, but by the mid-twentieth-century the species was extinct.[22]

The Cardinal, by way of contrast, was a hardy bird that thrived in

The final number was three thousand birds, sliding down into a brick chimney that was sixty feet high and tapered from six feet square at the bottom to five feet square at the top.

the state. According to the *Catalog*, the brilliantly colored Redbird was "A common resident in all parts of Missouri, very common in most of southern Missouri, the Ozark region as well as the prairie and swamp lands." Cardinals did not just pass through the state on their way north or south, but remained through all the seasons. In winter, some of them stayed in their summer homes, but many of them retreated to "sheltered woods in the bottomland, or to nooks and corners on warm hillsides" near cornfields. Their high-pitched calls pierced the air for most of the year, especially from February through the end of summer.[23]

After his *Catalog* appeared in print, winning praise as a well-crafted and much-needed summary of bird life in the state, Widmann continued his field work and writing. In the summer of 1908, he made twenty visits to the Missouri Botanical Garden (Shaw's Garden), observing and recording the birds that made appearances there. Forty species had nests in the Garden; another six species visited regularly, and twenty species were transients. Residents included quail, doves, cuckoos, woodpeckers, blue jays, crows, meadowlarks, and sparrows.[24]

At the age of seventy-nine, Widmann wrote a charming essay on the Chimney Swift, presenting it to the St. Louis Naturalists' Club on February 26, 1921. Small, lithe, high-flying Chimney Swifts spent summers in the United States and Canada and adapted to the growth of towns and cities by nesting in chimneys rather than hollow trees. For many years, beginning in the 1880s, Widmann and his family had observed their nesting patterns in various spots around St. Louis, finally discovering "the roost which in size and accessibility and ease of observation surpasses all others, the chimney of the greenhouse in Tower Grove Park." There, on a September evening, he noticed an immense number of the birds flying near the park. He and his companions followed them and watched excitedly as the "enormous mass of highly excited, twittering birds" descended into the chimney.[25]

The stream of birds kept pouring into the opening for another ten minutes. According to accepted practice, he estimated the number of birds by counting how many entered the chimney in one second and multiplying that by the number of seconds that elapsed. The final number was three thousand birds, sliding down into a brick chimney that was sixty feet high and tapered from six feet square at the bottom to five feet square at the top. Park personnel recalled that the birds had been using the chimney for twenty years. In addition, they filled up another chimney on a street outside the park.[26]

Through all his years of studying Missouri's birds, Widmann relied on the supportive presence of Augusta. As they grew older, he wrote in his brief "Autobiography," they lost their ability to walk for long distances on rough terrain. Trains and automobiles allowed them to continue their travels, but they "had to confine their visits to places easily reached and having good walks and benches when tired." On May 18, 1921, a few months after he gave his talk on Chimney Swifts to the Naturalists' Club, his wife passed away, leaving her husband "dependent for companionship on my children and grandchildren."[27]

On his ninetieth birthday in 1931, Widmann received an honorary life membership in the St. Louis Bird Club, which he had helped to organize. Ornithologists from many parts of the world sent congratulatory telegrams. He also received a letter from President Herbert Hoover. An article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted that his publications on Missouri birds were widely known and that his essay on "The Birds of Shaw's Garden" was studied in the public schools. The *Post-Dispatch* article also praised the late Augusta Widmann for unswervingly supporting her husband's work and launching his career by presenting him with a subscription to Theodore Jasper's illustrated *Birds of North America.*[28]

Widmann died in his home on Enright Avenue on November 26, 1933, with family members in attendance. In spite of his advanced age, he remained active until a few weeks before his death, participating in field trips with the St. Louis Bird Club. When friends approached him with the idea of forming a new organization to be called the Widmann Bird Club,

he protested, saying there was no need for more clubs, just more members. By all accounts, he was a modest and retiring man, who deflected overblown praise and described himself as "just a bird lover."[29]

At the time of his death, Bachman's Warbler still existed in the state, but within twenty years it was gone. Widmann had first discovered the eggs of this bird in the spring of 1897. In the early twentieth century, other ornithologists recorded sightings, not only in the Bootheel, but also in the Ozarks. According to Mark Robbins' *Birds of Missouri* (1992), the last observation of the species occurred in 1948. "Searches during the late 1950s at the former breeding sites were unsuccessful," Robbins wrote. The bird had been extirpated from Missouri and was possibly extinct.[30]

Fortunately, according to Robbins, most of the species Widmann had observed remained in the state, which retained a relatively large population of birds. In his 1992 book, Robbins positively identified 385 species in Missouri, and he also praised Widmann for his pioneering work. "Certainly the most fortuitous event to shape Missouri ornithology," said Robbins, "was the arrival of Otto Widmann to St. Louis in 1867." Widmann's *Catalog* provided the only thorough summary of Missouri's bird population around 1900, and, according to Robbins, much of the information remained applicable in the 1990s.[31]

...the St. Louis Post-Dispatch *noted that his publications on Missouri birds were widely known and that his essay on "The Birds of Shaw's Garden" was studied in the public schools.*

Widmann's careful observations and clearly-written descriptions of bird life not only contributed to the scientific record but also expressed a deep sense of wonder. His own grandson, Homer Widmann, may have given the best summation of Widmann's legacy when he wrote, "He loved birds. Their manifestation of true freedom and the joy of their natural beauty was impressed upon us as was the love of nature and an interest in all phases of natural history."[32]

According to Peterson's ***Field Guide to the Birds***, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, native to Europe and Asia, was brought to St. Louis around 1870. They seem to be peculiar to this area, not at all common in any other parts of the United States. *(Image: Bonnie Stepenoff)*

The Eurasian Tree Sparrow

German immigrants who missed the songbirds of their homeland brought the Eurasian Tree Sparrow (ETS) to St. Louis. Journalist Carl Daenzer, founder of the *Westliche Post* and editor of the *Anzeiger des Westens,* financed the importation of the bird, known then as the European or German Sparrow, to the city. On April 25, 1870, Daenzer brought a box of twenty or thirty of the birds to Lafayette Park and set them free. These small birds, with their characteristic white cheeks, black ear-spots, and white collar at the nape of the neck, flew away almost immediately and seemed to disappear.[33]

Nearly forty years later, Otto Widmann told the story of the birds' spread in the St. Louis area. Soon after leaving Lafayette Park, some of them found nesting sites in the southern part of the city near the breweries. As time went on, however, the larger and more aggressive English House Sparrow competed with the Tree Sparrows and pushed many of them outside the city limits. The House Sparrow thrived in rural and urban areas throughout the United States. For the most part, the ETS, with its gentler disposition and higher-pitched voice, remained in or near the city of St. Louis, mostly in suburban and nearby rural areas, with some of them finding shelter in Shaw's Garden.[34]

Prized as a St. Louis bird, the ETS slowly extended its range through parts of eastern Missouri and western Illinois. In the 1920s, their thatchy nests began to appear in the Illinois towns of Alton (Madison County), Grafton (Calhoun County), and Belleville (St. Clair County). By the 1930s, the birds were sighted in small colonies along the Missouri River as far west as Washington (Franklin County), Missouri. In the 1940s, they became a common sight through much of St. Louis County and neighboring St. Charles County. By the 1970s, some of them had moved south to Farmington (St. Francois County), Missouri, and by the 1990s, they had been spotted as far north as Burlington, Iowa, and Pierce County, Wisconsin.[35]

Avid bird-watchers often travel to St. Louis to catch a glimpse of the ETS and add it to their life lists. The birds are fairly common in the St. Louis area all year 'round, often visiting backyard feeders or flocking together in winter near bodies of water or in hedgerows. For many years before his death in 2012, G. Michael (Mike) Flieg, a prominent local ornithologist, hosted birders visiting the area. In the yard at his home near the St. Louis Airport, he kept as many as ten birdhouses occupied by the ETS. Birders may also find the birds in public areas, such as Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge, just north of Annada (Pike County), Missouri.[36]

ENDNOTES

[1] Otto Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog of the Birds of Missouri* (St. Louis, Missouri: Academy of Science, 1907, available through the Leopold Classic Library), 16-20; "Review: Widmann's 'Birds of Missouri,'" *The Auk: A Quarterly Journal of Ornithology* 25, no. 1 (January-March 1908): 89-90; Mark B. Robbins, David A. Easterla, and David Plank, *Birds of Missouri: Their Distribution and Abundance* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 2.

[2] Michael Long, "George Engelmann and the Lure of Frontier Science," *Missouri Historical Review* 89, no.3 (April 1995): 251-68.

[3] Otto Widmann, "Autobiography of Otto Widmann," *Wilson Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (July-September, 1927): 149, 151.

[4] Widmann, "Autobiography," 151.

[5] Homer Widmann, letter to James F. Comfort, Director, Audubon Society of Missouri, 5 June 1961, in the Widmann, Otto (1841-1933) Collection, 1898-1965, Folder 3, State Historical Society of Missouri. For discussions of the issue, regarding Audubon, see Christoph Irmscher, "Violence and Artistic Representation in John James Audubon," *Raritan* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 1-34, and Thomas L. Altherr, "The American Hunter-Naturalist and the Development of the Code of Sportsmanship," *Journal of Sport History* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 7-22.

[6] Otto Widmann, "Notes on Birds of St. Louis, Mo.," *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* 5, no. 3 (July 1880): 191; Frederick A. Hodes, *Divided City: A History of St. Louis, 1851 to 1876* (St. Louis: self-published, 2015), 556-57; William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis* Volume I (New York: Southern History Company, 1899), 42-43.

[7] T. S. Palmer, "In Memoriam: Wells Woodbridge Cooke, Born January 25, 1858 – Died March 30, 1916," *Auk* 34, no. 2 (April, 1917): 119-32; W. W. Cooke and Otto Widmann, "Bird Migration in the Mississippi Valley," published in *American Field* 20, no. 22 to 21, no. 3, reprinted by Leopold Classic Library, 3-4.

[8] Cooke and Widmann, "Bird Migration," 20, 37.

[9] Otto Widmann, "The Crows' Winter Roost at St. Louis," *Ornithologist and Oologist* 13, no. 2 (February 1888): 17-19.

[10] Otto Widmann, "Great Roosts on Gabbaret Island, Opposite North St. Louis, Mo.," *Auk* 15, no. 1 (January-March 1898): 27; Otto Widmann, "St. Louis Ornithologist Scientifically Considers Great Crows' Nest in Illinois," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Sunday Magazine,* February 17, 1901, 10.

[11] Widmann, "Autobiography," 151; "Ornithologist Widmann Wants a Bird Day Established," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* December 1, 1901, 16; Otto Widmann handwritten timeline, Widmann Collection, Folder 3. The United States Federal Census for 1900 for Webster Groves, St. Louis County, Missouri, lists Otto Widmann living in a household with his wife, Augusta, and seven children, ranging in age from ten to twenty-six.

[12] "Unique Club of St. Louisans with Scientific Hobbies," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat Sunday Magazine,* October 15, 1905, 3; "The St. Louis Naturalists' Club is Unique in Organization is Ultra-Exclusive," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat Sunday Magazine,* March 25, 1928, 5.

[13] Otto Widmann, "Swainson's Warbler an Inhabitant of the Swampy Woodlands of Southeastern Missouri," *Auk* 12, no. 2 (April-June 1895): 113-14.

[14] Otto Widmann, "Summer Home of Bachman's Warbler No Longer Unknown," *Auk* 14, no. 3 (July-September 1897): 305-8; Robbins, Birds of Missouri, 199.

[15] Otto Widmann, "The Brown Creeper Nesting in the Cypress Swamp of Southeastern Missouri," *Auk* 12, no.4 (October-December 1895): 350-55.

[16] Otto Widmann, "Ornithologist Widmann Wants a Bird Day Established," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* December 1, 1901, 16.

[17] Widmann, "Autobiography," 155; T. S. Palmer, "In Memoriam: Otto Widmann," *Auk* 71, no. 4 (October-December 1954): 457; "Mount Cabanne/Raymond Place Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, prepared by Lynn Josse, listed on the Register in July 2002, Section Seven, page 72, and Section Eight, page 197.

[18] Otto Widmann, "Birds of the Ozarks," a paper presented to the St. Louis Naturalists' Club, February 1906, in *Extracts from the Diary of Otto Widmann, Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis* 24, no. 8 (December 1922), 69; Otto Widmann, "Reminiscences of a Visit to Branson and White River in Taney County, Mo., in the Spring of 1906," in *Extracts from the Diary of Otto Widmann,* 70-71.

[19] "Review: Widmann's 'Birds of Missouri'," *Auk* 25, no. 1 (January 1908): 89-90; Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog,* 1-2; "Unique Club of St. Louisans," 3; Max Schwarz, letter to Prof. Daniel McKinley, March 6, 1962; Widmann Collection, Folder 1.

[20] Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog,* 16-17. See Bonnie Stepenoff, "'The Last Tree Cut Down': The End of the Bootheel Frontier, 1880-1930," *Missouri Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (October 1995): 61-78.

[21] Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog,* 18-20.

[22] Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog,* 113-16. For a very detailed treatment of this topic, see Daniel McKinley, "The Carolina Parakeet in Pioneer Missouri," *Wilson Bulletin* 72, no. 3 (September 1960): 274-87. McKinley cites Widmann and praises his work. In preparation for a biography of Widmann, which was never completed, McKinley gathered the materials that are included in the Widmann Collection, previously cited.

[23] Widmann, *Preliminary Catalog,* 194-95.

[24] Otto Widmann, "Summer Birds of Shaw's Garden," *Missouri Botanical Garden 20th Annual Report* (St. Louis, 1909), 59-62.

[25] Otto Widmann, "Chimney Swift," presented to the St. Louis Naturalists' Club, February 26, 1921, *Extracts from the Diary of Otto Widmann,* 49-62.

[26] Widmann, "Chimney Swift," 59-60. In 1925 and 1926, Chimney Swifts appeared in very high numbers and remained in St. Louis later in the year than usual. See Otto Widmann, "Chimney Swifts in November, 1925," *Wilson Bulletin* 40, no. 3 (July-September 1928): 151-54.

[27] Widmann, "Autobiography of Otto Widmann," 164.

[28] "Bird Expert to Be Honored on his 90th Birthday," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* June 14, 1931, 10A; "Otto Widmann, Bird Authority, Dies at 92," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* November 27, 1933, 3B. *The Birds of North America; drawn from life and uniformly reduced to one-quarter their natural size by Theodore Jasper* was originally issued in forty parts, 1873-1878, and later appeared as Jacob Studer's *Popular Ornithology,* illustrated by Jasper, in several editions.

[29] "Otto Widmann, Bird Authority, Dies at 92," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 27, 1933, 3B; "Just a Bird Lover," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* November 28, 1933, 16.

[30] Robbins, *Birds of Missouri,* 277-78.

[31] Robbins, *Birds of Missouri,* 2-4.

[32] Homer Widmann, letter to James Comfort, June 5, 1961, previously cited.

[33] Jim Jackson, "Eurasian Tree Sparrow," *Missouri Conservationist Magazine* (May 2003), https//mdc.gov/conmag/2003/05/Eurasian-tree-sparrow; Webster Groves Nature Study Society, *Birds of the St. Louis Area,* Revised Edition, Webster Groves, Missouri, 1998, 5.

[34] Widmann, "Summer Birds of Shaw's Garden," 60–61.

[35] Jackson, "Eurasian Tree Sparrow"; Robbins, *Birds of Missouri,* 374–75; Webster Groves Nature Study Society, *Birds of the St. Louis Area,* 5.

[36] Jackson, "Eurasian Tree Sparrow"; Webster Groves Nature Study Society, *Birds of the St. Louis Area,* 5, 144, 173; Ted Cable, "Exceptional Immigrant," *Bird Watching* (December 22, 2011), http://birdwatchingdaily.com/news/species-profiles; Michael D. Sorkin, "G. Michael Flieg: Longtime zoo curator brought back Antarctica penguins to help set up program here," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* July 15, 2012, A20.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DANA DELIBOVI

Dana Delibovi MA, MS is an adjunct professor of philosophy at Lindenwood University. Her essays and criticism have recently appeared in *Teaching Philosophy, After the Art,* and *The Wall*. Ms. Delibovi's current projects include the intellectual history of Catholic religious women and translations from the Spanish of poetry by two Catholic sisters, Teresa of Ávila and Juana Inés de la Cruz.

DEAN KLINKENBERG

Dean Klinkenberg, the Mississippi Valley Traveler, is a former academic psychologist turned freelance writer with an abiding curiosity in the Mississippi River. His work has appeared in publications such as *The National,* the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* the *Minneapolis Star Tribune,* and GoNomad.com. He has also published six guidebooks for travel along the Mississippi, and two Frank Dodge mysteries set in river towns. When he's not driving, hiking, or paddling along the Mississippi, he works from his home office in St. Louis.

JEFFREY SMITH

Jeffrey Smith is Senior Professor of History at Lindenwood University and editor of *The Confluence.* He has written and lectured extensively on the rural cemetery movement including *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* and "Till Death Keeps Us Apart: Segregated Cemeteries and Social Values in St. Louis, Missouri," in *Till Death Do Us Part: American Ethnic Cemeteries as Borders Uncrossed* (University Press of Mississippi, 2020).

BONNIE STEPENOFF

Bonnie Stepenoff, Professor Emeritus of History at Southeast Missouri State University, is the author of six books, including *The Dead End Kids of St. Louis: Homeless Boys and the People Who Tried to Save Them* (University of Missouri Press, 2010). Her articles have appeared in many anthologies and journals, including *Yonder Mountain: An Ozarks Anthology* (University of Arkansas Press, 2013), *Cultural Landscapes* University of Minnesota Press, 2008), *French Colonial History, Sherlock Holmes Journal, Missouri Historical Review, Gateway, Illinois Geographer,* and *Missouri Conservationist.* She is also a Pushcart-nominated poet, whose work has been selected for publication in the *Red Moon Anthology* (2009, 2016, 2019), *Haiku 21* (2011), *Modern Haiku, Frogpond,* and *The Heron's Nest.*

LINDENWOOD
209 South Kingshighway
Saint Charles, MO 63301-1695
www.lindenwood.edu/confluence

©2020 Lindenwood University   All rights reserved.   Design: Michael Thede Design LLC