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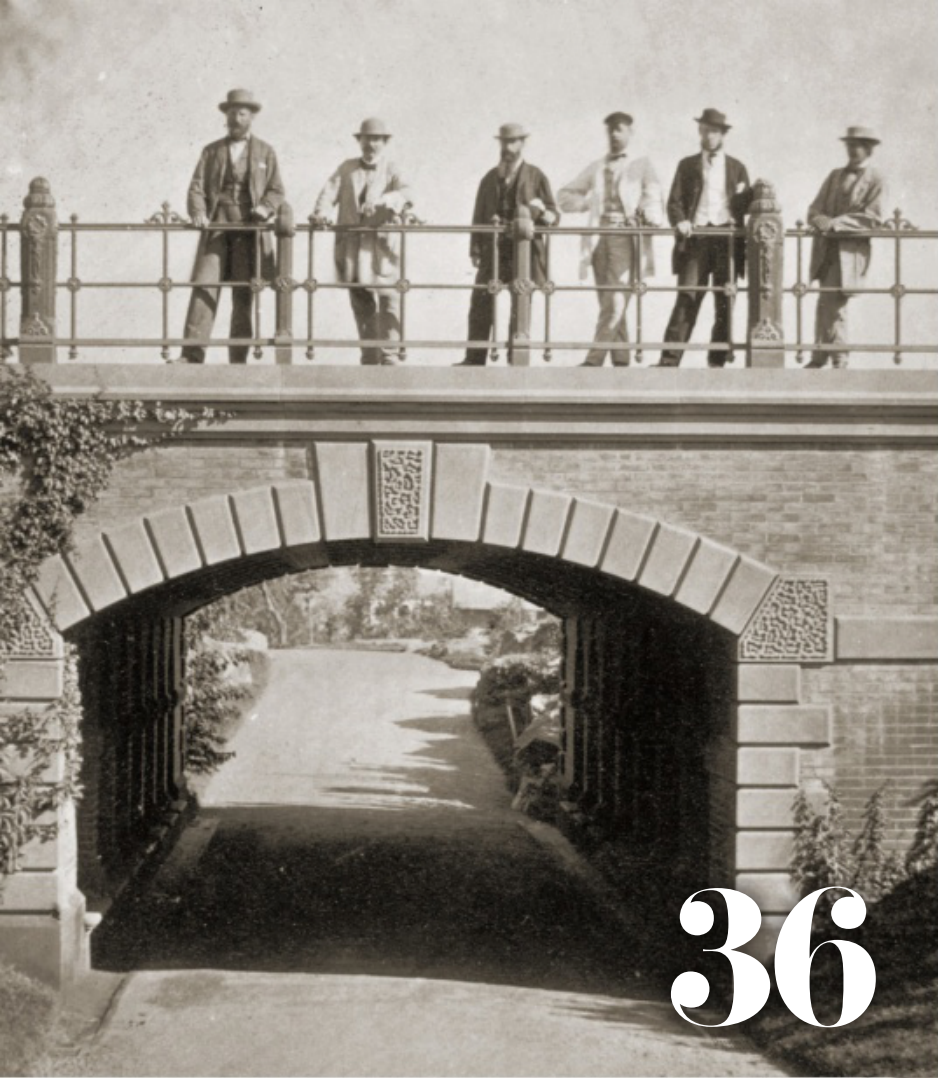
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American History

DECEMBER 2019

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ON THE COVER: At Lexington Green in 1775, Americans began their revolution in mortal earnest.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FROM "JIM MARSHALL: SHOW ME THE PICTURE" BY AMELIA DAVIS, PUBLISHED BY CHRONICLE BOOKS 2019; PHOTO BY VICTOR PREVOST/GEORGE EASTMAN MUSEUM/GETTY IMAGES; TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF THE ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART; "MIDNIGHT RIDE OF PAUL REVERE" BY GRANT WOOD, FRANCIS G. MAYER/GETTY IMAGES; COVER: "STAND YOUR GROUND - BATTLE OF LEXINGTON COMMON", 1984 (OIL ON CANVAS) BY DON TROIANI (B.1949); PRIVATE COLLECTION/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES.



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American History

DECEMBER 2019 VOL. 54, NO. 5

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American History (ISSN 1076-8866) is published bimonthly by HistoryNet, LLC
1919 Gallows Road, Suite 400, Vienna, VA, 22182-4038, 703-771-9400
Periodical postage paid at Vienna, VA and additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER, send address changes to American History,
P.O. Box 422224, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2224
List Rental Inquiries: Belkys Reyes, Lake Group Media, Inc.
914-925-2406; belkys.reyes@lakegroupmedia.com
Canada Publications Mail Agreement No. 41342519,
Canadian GST No. 821371408RT0001

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TO HAVE HAD A TOMAHAWK TATTOOED
ON HIS THIGH, WHILE JAMES POLK
REPORTEDLY HAD A TATTOO OF THE
CHINESE CHARACTER MEANING "EAGER."



New Statue of Liberty Museum

A \$100 million museum opened May 16, 2019, at the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. Logging some 4.5 million visits yearly, Liberty Island can hold 25,000 people at a time, but only 5,000 a day can enter the pedestal and the stairway to the statue's crown accommodates only 500 daily. The new facility offers those in line an array of exhibits about the statue's construction and history. France conceived, created, and donated the statue as a tribute to the abolition of slavery; at Liberty's feet sprawls a broken chain. Creative fundraising abetted the gift's installation and illumination. To build a needed pedestal, newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer engaged in proto-crowdfunding, offering to publish donors' names

and giving away miniature replicas of the statue. In six months, Pulitzer raised \$200,000—today, \$2 million-plus—coincidentally boosting his *New York World's* circulation by 50,000. Next problem: how to get the statue's torch to glow? New York City wasn't paying. Hungarian immigrant and vaudevillian M.B. Curtis funded a few weeks' worth of electricity. The resulting publicity raised his profile and nudged Gotham into covering the bill. Curtis is profiled in a recent book by Richard Schwartz, *The Man Who Lit Lady Liberty: The Extraordinary Rise and Fall of Actor M.B. Curtis* (bit.ly/LightingLadyLiberty).

Pressure Relief Valve

The new facility aims to redistribute crowds drawn to the mid-harbor tourist magnet.



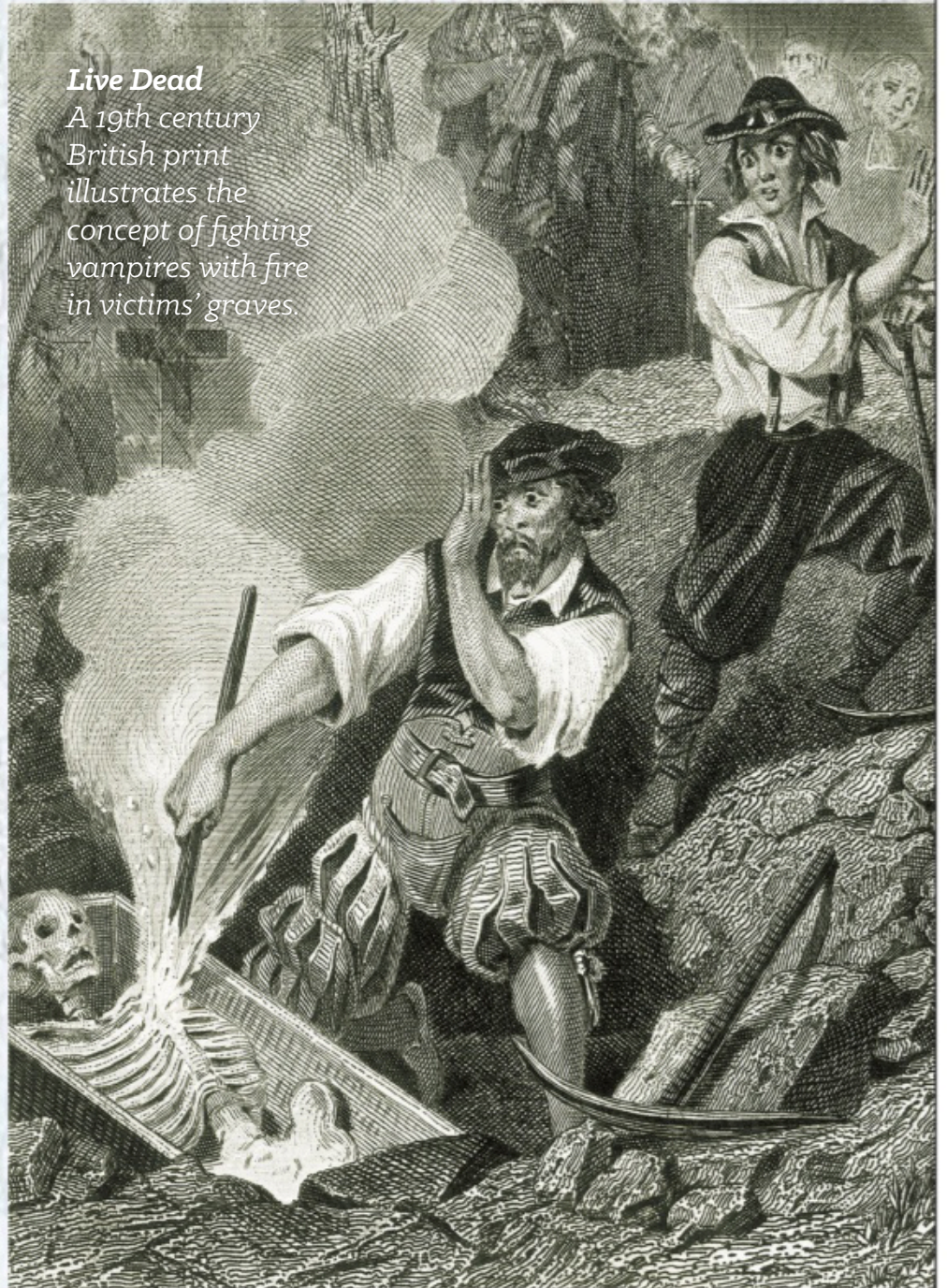
Fear of vampires likely moved 19th century Americans to disturb human remains that turned up in a Griswold, Connecticut, quarry in 1990, according to the *Washington Post*. Described in a recent presentation at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Silver Spring, Maryland, the skeleton bore signs of tuberculosis, a disease so poorly understood 200 years ago that common TB symptoms—emaciation, flushing, fever, and weight loss—were sometimes viewed as marks of vampirism. Around 1800 some in New England, believing vampires nested in victims once interred, sought to keep the undead from stalking others by removing such corpses' hearts, sometimes eating them. Researchers posit that the skeleton in question was unearthed intentionally about five years after burial, perhaps when tuberculosis was afoot. Whoever disturbed the grave arrayed the femurs and cranium to form a skull-and-crossbones image.

Tuberculosis caused about 25 percent of deaths in 19th century America. Some 80 episodes of vampirism-related grave disturbance in New England have been documented, according to folklorist and vampire scholar Michael Bell, author of the 2001 book *Food for the Dead*. According to Bell in a paper published in 2006 in the journal *Anthropology and Humanism*, these cases occurred in areas of New England outside Puritan strongholds Massachusetts and Connecticut. In such outlying regions, 85 to 90 percent of white residents were “unchurched,” practicing varied hybrid religions and perhaps more open to traditional remedies and supernatural beliefs brought from Europe.

When Americans Saw Vampires

Live Dead

A 19th century British print illustrates the concept of fighting vampires with fire in victims' graves.



Till Memorial Up-Armored



Events impelled the Emmett Till Commission, which maintains a memorial to the black youth slain at 14 in Mississippi, to take down a much-vandalized plaque honoring him until it can be replaced with a steel memorial. Emmett Till's 1955 murder ignited a nationwide civil rights movement. The original sign, installed in 2007 at Glendora, Mississippi, was replaced after being abused; a second, pocked by bullets, has come down as well. In July, interest ballooned in a photo circulated online of three white men posing with rifles at the site. The three were identified as members of the Kappa Alpha Order. That fraternity, which has historic links to leaders of the Confederacy, has a chapter at the University of

Mother and Child

Emmett Till, shown with his mother, Mamie Bradley, around 1950, five years before his murder.

Mississippi in Oxford, 90 minutes by car southwest of Glendora. Kappa Alpha suspended the trio pictured. For information about the Till Commission, visit emmett-till.org.



Go to the Source

This 1909 illustration is an early example of “oops” being associated with something unusual.

Epizootics, Oopsy-Daisy, and Oops!

Studying 19th-century animal epidemics prompted Ray Malewitz, a writing professor at Oregon State University in Corvallis, to suggest a fresh etymology for the exclamation “oops,” often characterized as a shortening of the phrase “oops-a-daisy.” Malewitz knew “epizootic,” meaning an epidemic among animals, had gained currency in an 1872 equine epidemic in the United States (bit.ly/HorsePlague). “Ooperzootic,” emerging around the same time, referred to odd human behavior. Malewitz wondered if those words had ties to “oops.” Databases showed “ooperzootic” appear-

ing in racing periodicals and by 1921 shortening to oops. In a 1909 cartoon a horse exclaims “Whee-Oops!” after eating locoweed, a plant with hallucinogenic properties. Malewitz published his findings in the journal *Critical Inquiry* and hopes to convince the Oxford English Dictionary to add his explanation to the history of “oops.” Whatever that word’s origin, the term epizootic lodged in the vernacular as a label for someone with a vague illness, such as a 24-hour bug. A variant entered popular culture in the comic 1896 song “I’ve Got the Ooperzootic.”



On June 19, 2019, Cleveland, Ohio, added the names of 107 USCT soldiers from Cuyahoga County to that city’s magnificent Soldiers and Sailors Monument. The effort to add overlooked soldiers who served in the Civil War

U.S. Colored Troops Honored

stemmed from a 2002 project in which high school history teacher Paul LaRue and his students at Washington High School in Washington Court House, Ohio, researched the lives of seven USCT veterans buried in a local cemetery. The monument commission built upon those results to create its list.

Designed by Union Army captain and Ohioan Levi Scofield and dedicated on July 4, 1894, the Cleveland Soldiers and Sailors Monument rises 125 feet on Public Square near the waterfront. In feting its fallen, Cleveland, once the country’s richest city, went all out. At the monument’s corners elaborate bronzes by Scofield represent Ohioans’ service in the infantry, Navy, Army, and cavalry. Carved stone Army corps badges ornament the exterior. In a chamber within the memorial base, 30 marble tablets naming some 9,000 soldiers from Cuyahoga County decorate the walls. Bas reliefs depict martial scenes. Lit from within at night, thematic stained-glass windows glow like jewels.



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UNESCO Honors Wright

Lauded for innovative designs incorporating natural forms and aspects of vernacular American architecture, architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) has been honored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO has added Wright's buildings to its World Heritage List. The Wright works are among 10 U.S. cultural achievements recognized by UNESCO, including Monticello, the Statue of Liberty, and Cahokia Mounds. The honor applies to eight properties, from the grand and organic cement form of New York City's Guggenheim Museum, above, to Wright's Prairie-style residences and modest "Usonian" houses.



TOP BID

\$30 Million

The four-million-image archive of Johnson Publishing Company, the firm behind *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, was purchased by a consortium of foundations during a bankruptcy proceeding. The archive spans 50-plus years and includes epochal images of Emmett Till's open-casket funeral (see p. 7), and the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., above. The collection will be divided among the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Getty Research Institute, and other participating entities. John H. Johnson debuted *Negro Digest* in 1942, *Ebony* in 1945, and *Jet* in 1951. In 2016, he sold the magazines to private equity firm Clear View Group but kept the photo archives.



Known as a revolutionary, Paul Revere was a silversmith and engraver, the family trades. Revere's father, Apollo Rivoire, a French Huguenot, came to Boston in 1723 as an apprentice silversmith. Curators at the New-York Historical Society have assembled 140 objects associated with Revere, from his

Paul Revere: Artisan on View

depiction of the Boston Massacre to tea services, thimbles, and a bronze courthouse bell.

Revere was not part of the elite, but he rubbed shoulders with prominent men, in 1760 joining the Masonic Lodge of St. Andrew and in 1765 the Sons of

Liberty. In 1765, to protest imposition by the crown of Stamp Act taxation without colonial legislative approval, Revere, 30, reworked an English cartoon to show colonists trying to grab the Magna Carta—and associated rights—from a dragon representing England. In 1773, Revere participated in the Tea Party in Boston Harbor and in 1775 rode from Boston to Lexington, Massachusetts, to alert residents to the approach of British soldiers (see "First Blood," p. 26). A transcription of a deposition by Revere about his ride is at bit.ly/RevereAccount. The New York exhibition is on view until January 12, 2020.



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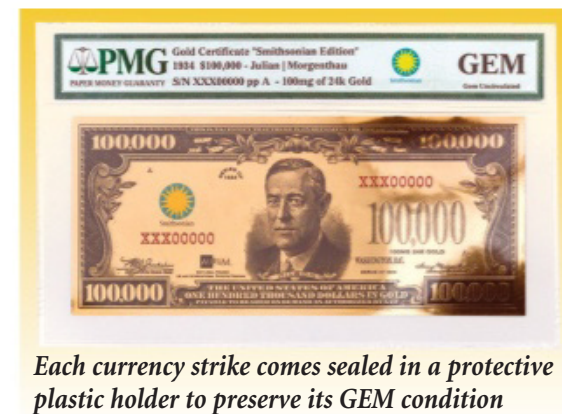
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Rick Atkinson (“First Blood,” p. 26) is the bestselling author of the Liberation Trilogy—*An Army at Dawn*, *The Day of Battle*, and *The Guns at Last Light*—as well as *The Long Gray Line* and other books. His many awards include Pulitzer Prizes for history and journalism. A former staff writer and senior editor at *The Washington Post*, he lives in Washington, DC.

Liesl Bradner (“Women With Wings,” p. 44) is the author of *Snapdragon: The World War II Exploits of Darby’s Ranger and Combat Photographer Phil Stern*. She has profiled photographer and writer Lee Miller (“Restless Eye,” December 2018), and globetrotting muckraker Nellie Bly (“Troublemaker,” February 2018). She tweets as @lieslbradner.

Richard Jensen (“Watery Waymaking,” p. 52) is a writer and historic preservation specialist in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He most recently contributed “Highway to the Future” (February 2019).

Alice Watts loves medieval English and antebellum American history and B movies set in the Wild West. She is the author of *Loren Janes: A Stuntman’s Stuntman and Cultivating America’s Gardens*. She lives in Lewinsville, a suburb of Dallas, Texas, with her toy poodle Maggie. “Pattern Recognition” (p. 36) is her first article for *American History*.

Letters

Steaming Ahead

George Washington’s distillery (“Booze Backstory,” August 2019) was the work of Oliver Evans of New Port, Delaware. His design incorporated leather drive belts, labor-saving devices, and many other prescient features. A prolific inventor and pioneer in the use of high-pressure steam, Evans designed an early steamboat and, in 1805, the first steam-driven wagon, the Oruktor Amphibolos, meant to function as an amphibious dredge. He also designed automated mills and other advanced industrial systems.

Clifford B. Hearn Jr.
Middletown, Delaware

Not Nasty at All

Thank you for your coverage of birthright citizenship (“Born in the USA,” June 2019), which resonates with me because my mom, who was born three years after her folks got off the boat from Ireland, looked down on Italian Americans, and my Vietnamese in-laws resent Mexicans and other Latinos. However,

you owe cartoonist Thomas Nast an apology. Far from condemning immigrants, in the image on p. 37 he was commenting with his usual acerbity on hypocrisy. The banner’s fine print reads, “Know Nothings 1870,” and looking down from atop the wall at stereotypically Chinese figures are stereotypically Irish figures clearly embracing the xenophobia until lately directed at them. You should print the banner large enough to be legible to readers without making them play Sherlock Holmes.

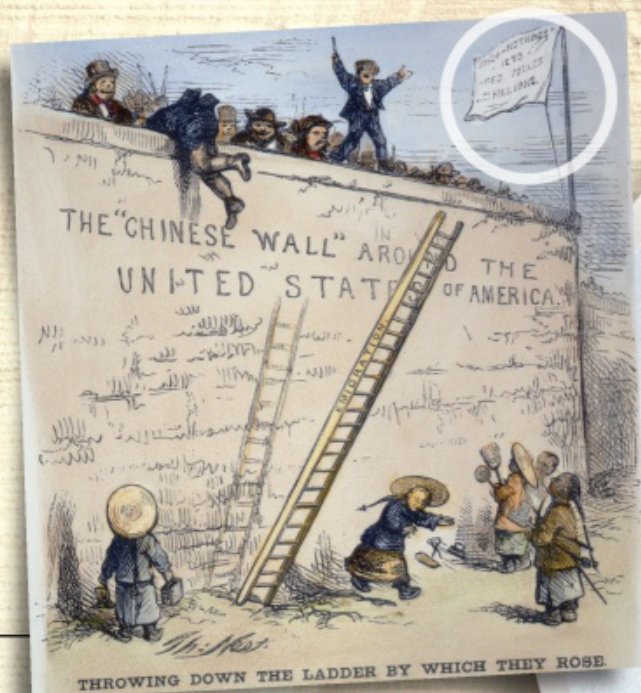
Arthur Wallis Shantz Jr.
Westerville, Ohio

The editor regrets his mistake.

Fatherly Fortitude?

I found “Passing Fancy” (June 2019) very interesting. The accomplished and prominent Richard Greener, frustrated at not being able to earn a living, took a position in Russia in 1898, a year after leaving his family. Soon after he left, Genevieve and their kids began to pass as white. Perhaps Richard left to improve the family’s circumstances. That the couple never divorced and that Richard and daughter Belle met in 1914 seem to support this theory. If he did, that’s quite a sacrifice for a dad to make.

Mike Champness
McLean, Virginia



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A NUANCED AND COMPLEX WAR

BY RICHARD ERNSBERGER JR.



Speaking Truth

Christy Coleman is chief executive of Richmond, Virginia's American Civil War Museum, which in May opened a redesigned home at the Tredegar Iron Works.

Christy Coleman is chief executive of the American Civil War Museum in Richmond, Virginia. That facility resulted in 2013 from the merger of the Museum of the Confederacy and the American Civil War Center at the Historic Tredegar Iron Works, also in that city. Coleman, who had headed the latter since 2008, earlier held senior positions with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and was president and CEO of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, Michigan.

How did the public react to the museums' merger? Some in Richmond worried that the story of the Confederacy would be lost, but most people have lauded the merger, which simply places Confederate history in the larger narrative of an American crisis. Richmond is a diverse city continuing to reconcile and embrace its rich past. It no longer chooses to be solely defined by four years.

You've said that you want to present the war from multiple points of view and burst

"comfortable myths." We look at this conflict through the lenses of the people who lived through it, and their voices were diverse: Indigenous people, enslaved and free African Americans, immigrants, and whites with a variety of views. We deliberately present political, social, and military histories and display how people lived. There are many myths about the Civil War—some benign, some pernicious. We've learned that the war was nuanced and complex. Documents, artifacts and records speak their own truths, if we let them.

What are some pernicious myths? One is that African Americans were mere beneficiaries of the war rather than active participants—whether by advocating for the war to abolish slavery or running away and disrupting the Southern economy. Another myth is that women were not involved, when some worked at the front, including Mary Edwards Walker, a surgeon and the only woman ever to win the Medal of Honor.

Has the wartime experience of enslaved African Americans gotten too little attention? For well over a century, there were deliberate efforts to remove the centrality of the African-American experience to the Civil War, resulting in a false dichotomy: either the Confederacy wasn't fighting to defend slavery or the United States went to war to end slavery. Neither statement is accurate. These common misconceptions strip the black people who lived through that conflict, free or enslaved, of agency.

You want to test the premise that historical presentations can “promote and disturb in a constructive way.” We've been looking closely at Reconstruction, which is often depicted as a failure but wasn't—it was abandoned. And we've examined the extension of civil rights not just for African Americans but for other ethnic Americans who were finally given equal protection under the law and citizenship rights through ratification of the 14th and 15th amendments. Our primary exhibit looks and feels different from most Civil War exhibitions. It's vibrant and people-centric without losing sight of the fact that this was a devastating war. The public trusts our work because it's supported by objects, letters, and artifacts. Visitors can see it all with their own eyes. If new research reveals new truths, we have a responsibility to bring that information to the fore—no matter how uncomfortable. I think every program and exhibit mounted at ACWM since 2014 has reflected this idea.

An image of President Abraham Lincoln amid the ruins of Richmond just after Robert E Lee's surrender disturbed some visitors. You're referring to a painting that belongs to the Chicago History Center, which had loaned it to the Civil War Center. A few self-described Confederate Heritage proponents

Clear View onto History

A new glass entry hall houses the permanent exhibition “A People's Contest,” including displays of soldiers' homely tools and possessions.

took issue with its hanging in our core gallery. The majority of guests were thrilled to have the iconic image on display.

At Colonial Williamsburg, you proposed and participated in a simulated slave auction. That was in October 1994, and it was among the most profoundly important things I've ever done in my career. It was an emotionally wrenching performance—and had to be, because that's what it was like for millions of enslaved people who were stripped from their homes and families to help build this nation. It was stressful because I became the face of a prominent institution, and the press and public scrutiny was unlike anything I'd ever experienced.

You served on the Richmond city commission that studied the future of the Confederate statues that line Monument Avenue. What did you learn from that experience? The most important lesson was about active listening and servant-leadership. Both were required to produce recommendations reflecting the views of thousands of residents and other concerned people. We consulted with leading historians and used the best scholarship available. The result was a considered and important first step that must move through local and state government before implementation.

The Civil War was a polarizing struggle, and the country is polarized today. Does the war offer lessons on which everyone can agree? Come visit the museum and determine that for yourself. ★



‘THE PUBLIC TRUSTS OUR WORK BECAUSE IT’S SUPPORTED BY OBJECTS, LETTERS, AND ARTIFACTS. VISITORS CAN SEE IT ALL WITH THEIR OWN EYES.’



Home of Bean, Scrod, and Scandal

Boston goggled at the Morton affair and its tangle of a young woman, a powerful man, and his aggrieved wife, also her sister.

CARNAL CRIMES

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

In August financier **Jeffrey Epstein** committed suicide in the jail cell in which he was awaiting trial on federal charges of sex trafficking and conspiracy to traffic minors for sex. FBI agents who raided Epstein's Gotham mansion had found thousands of lewd images of young women and underage girls; the court of public opinion viewed his end as no loss.

But even this self-enforced verdict had been a long time coming. In 2008, after a lengthy investigation occasioned by allegations from 36 girls that Epstein had molested them at his Palm Beach mansion, he and federal prosecutors for the Southern District of Florida agreed to a deal whereby Epstein pleaded guilty to a state charge of soliciting prostitution from a minor and had to register as a sex offender. The court sentenced Epstein to 18 months in jail. He was released after 13.

Perhaps the most telling comment is Christ's: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones... it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea"—an adjuration

Epstein seems to have taken to heart. But his case raises questions about the law itself. The *Miami Herald*, which has tracked the Epstein case like a bloodhound, called his 2008 plea bargain "the deal of a lifetime." Was that arrangement made because of Epstein's many connections with the rich and powerful? Those connections comprise a long bipartisan list. Former president Bill Clinton told *New York* magazine in 2002 that Epstein was "a committed philanthropist" whose "insights and generosity" Clinton "especially appreciated." (After Epstein's recent arrest, Clinton denied through a spokesman knowing anything about the financier's "terrible crimes.")

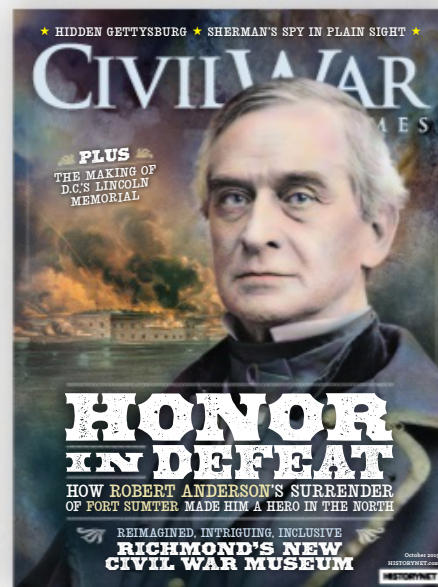
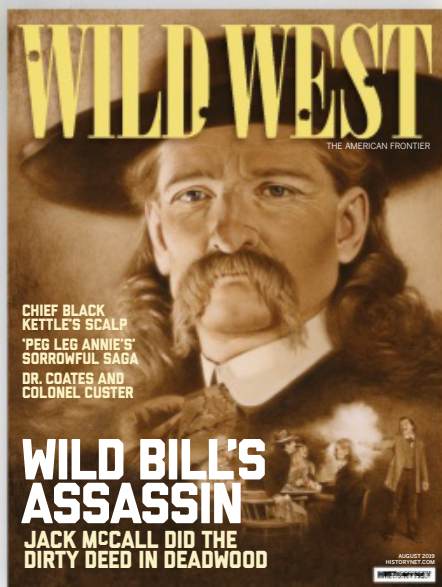
In the same *New York* article, Donald Trump called Epstein a "terrific guy" and "a lot of fun to be with." Trump added, "It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side." (President Trump told reporters in July "I had a falling out with him...I was not a fan of his, that I can tell you.") The federal prosecutor who struck the 2008 deal, Alexander Acosta, became Trump's labor secretary in 2017. After news of the new case broke, Acosta defended the deal he had made, claiming that state prosecutors in Palm Beach had planned to go even easier on Epstein, bringing a charge of soliciting that would have required only that he pay a fine. Acosta resigned his cabinet post July 12.

Investigators and attorneys, journalists and partisans, have wrestled with this matter for months—as they should. For centuries, America's wealthy and powerful have gotten away with grotesque sex crimes.

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Perez Morton was born in 1751, son of a Boston tavern-keeper. Educated at Boston Latin School and Harvard, he climbed into the local elite, in the early 1770s becoming a lawyer, a Mason, and a revolutionary. His friends included future Massachusetts governor Thomas Bowdoin and future American president John Adams. A year after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Morton was chosen to speak at the re-burial of the remains of that fight's most famous casualty, Dr. Joseph Warren. Morton's oration, a specimen of the high style of the day, dwelt on the decedent's virtues. The greatness of Warren's soul, said Morton, "shone even in the moment of death, for... in his last agonies he met the insults of his barbarous foe with his wonted magnanimity." This was not Morton's most famous literary contribution: earlier he had supplied the lyrics for William Billings's four-part round, "When Jesus Wept," still sung today.

*When Jesus wept, the falling tear
In mercy flowed beyond all bound;
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear
Seized all the guilty world around.*

In 1781 Morton took another step up in the world, marrying Sarah Wentworth Apthorp, handsome daughter of a wealthy merchant and slave trader. Gilbert Stuart would paint Sarah's portrait three times, as if never tiring of her. The Mortons moved into the Apthorp family mansion on State Street, a premier Boston address, and had five children.

Sarah's younger sister Frances, or Fanny, came to live with the couple in the mid-1780s. Dates involving Fanny are hazy. She and brother-in-law Perez had an affair, and she became pregnant, a less hazy circumstance.

Betsy Cranch, a niece of Abigail Adams who lived nearby, wrote in her diary that Fanny was "very unwell" (period code for with child). Fanny bore a daughter in 1787 or 1788.

Fanny Apthorp was not underage, by our standards or by those of her time, but she was young: 20 or 21 when she conceived. The father was 15 years older and socially prominent. The power differential was stark.

So was the disparity in the principals' fates.

Sarah Apthorp, the aggrieved wife, could have filed for divorce, available in Massachusetts since colonial times, even for women. Instead Sarah remained with Perez—he died in 1837, she in 1841—albeit on apparently cooler terms; they produced no more children.

Sarah, a poet all her life, began publishing; one of her

most famous works, "The African Chief," a lament for a slave, contains the lines

*The hard race of pallid hue
Unpractic'd in the power to feel*

that could also apply to Perez. Sarah got a measure of revenge in an affair of her own, with founding rake Gouverneur Morris. She, her lover, and her husband even dined together once in summer 1803. "Monsieur was cordial, all things considered," noted Morris in his diary.

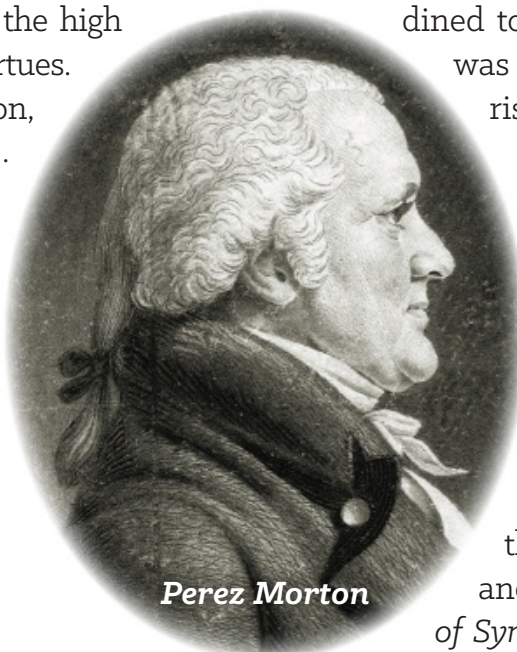
Perez Morton could afford to be cordial. His familial adultery left him virtually unscathed. Charles Apthorp, Sarah's and Fanny's brother, defended the family honor by challenging Perez to a duel, but the shoot-out seems to have been scheduled for form's sake; the sheriff was present at the chosen spot when the would-be duelists arrived, in order to thwart the face-off. An Apthorp neighbor anonymously published a novel, *The Power of Sympathy*, that draped the scandal with the lightest of disguises: the fictional seducer's surname is "Martin." Perez bought up most of the press run; a dozen copies were found decades later in a trunk. His long political career, extending into the 19th century, included service as speaker of the Massachusetts House and state attorney general—chief upholder of the laws.

Fanny Apthorp was long gone, dead from a self-administered laudanum overdose in 1788; at most, her daughter would have been 20 months old. In a note she addressed to Perez in which she wrote of her "guilty innocence." Of the child, nothing is known.

The well-connected man flourished; women suffered, in silence or in suicide.

Perez Morton was not alone. Gouverneur Morris's affairs mainly involved unhappily married women, but while living abroad he carried on with a landlady's two daughters, one evidently young—she "begins to feel the gentle hint from nature's tongue," he wrote creepily in his diary. Thomas Jefferson is now generally known to have fathered children by his slave Sally Hemings; historian Annette Gordon-Reed depicts the relationship as long and intimate. But there cannot be real consent between owned and owner.

When morality sleeps, age will prey on youth, power on impotence, wealth on the dispossessed. What may have changed, for the better, is the legal and journalistic means, and occasionally the will, to bring the guilty to justice, however delayed. ★



Perez Morton



Sarah Morton



It's Here!

In the latest issue of *Civil War Times*, 20 historians weigh in on the popularity of the Civil War in a changing America, discord among Union generals before Antietam, photo sleuthing an image of General Burnside, and lots more!

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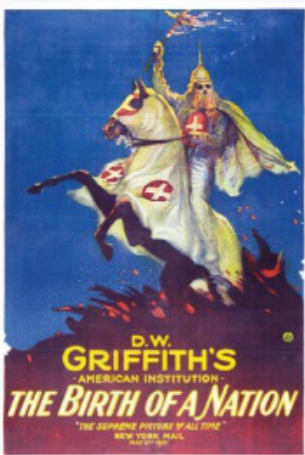
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KU KLUX CON JOB

BY PETER CARLSON



Riding a Wave
Simmons, top, used the D.W. Griffith film's Atlanta premiere as a springboard to promote the Klan.

"I am a sick man," the Imperial Wizard told congressmen investigating the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1921. "I have suffered an attack of tonsillitis combined with laryngitis, which developed into bronchitis, which threatened pneumonia... At any time, under the strain of talking, I am liable to have a coughing spell that may result in a vomiting spell."

Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons wasn't trying to weasel out of appearing before the House committee that October day. The Klan poohbah was so eager to talk he'd sent the panel telegrams *demanding* to testify. Despite his threat to blow lunch, the hammy Simmons gabbed for hours with nary a cough or retch. The next day he blabbed some more. On his third day as a witness, he swaddled his throat in a thick purple scarf and kept on talking.

Simmons painted the Klan as a peaceful,

Christian group, its robes "as innocent as the breath of an angel." He claimed to be a lifelong "friend of the Negro." Sure, he'd written the "Ku Klux Creed," a vow to "forever maintain white supremacy," but that was just "race pride." And he denounced *New York World* stories on Klan violence as "unfounded rumors" published in a paper "owned or controlled by a Jew."

In closing, Simmons stood to paraphrase Jesus Christ: "I cannot better express myself than by saying to you who are persecutors of the Klan, 'Father, forgive you for you know not what you do.'" Then he fainted, possibly on purpose, into his chair. His theatrics played well in rural America. Within months, several hundred thousand Americans had joined the Klan. "Best advertising we ever got," Simmons crowed. "Congress *made* us."

The Wizard was a big man, 6'2", with bright

red hair and a line of mesmerizing palaver. Born on an Alabama farm in 1880, he served in the Spanish-American War, then became a Methodist preacher, proselytizing around rural Alabama until 1912, when the church fired him for incompetence. He sold garter belts and though he'd never married, lectured on "Women, Weddings and Wives."

He carried cards from a dozen fraternal outfits—Masons, International Order of Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Knights Templar—whose badges festooned his vest. He loved his lodges' goofy rituals and mystical mumbo-jumbo. The Woodmen of the World hired him as a publicist. He did so well they made him "Colonel" William Simmons.

A colonelcy was nice, but Simmons longed for his own show. In 1915, he decided to resurrect the Ku Klux Klan, the Reconstruction-era terrorist group. Federal prosecutors had stamped out the Klan decades earlier, but Simmons thought he could revive it. He scripted quasi-religious initiation rituals, confecting alliterative titles—Kladd, Klaliff, Klexter, Klokard—and crafting a constitution: "The Tribunal of Justice shall consist of a Grand Council of Yahoos, and a Grand Council of Centaurs..." Naturally, he gave himself the top job—Imperial Wizard.

In October 1915, Simmons applied to charter his Klan in Georgia. Thanksgiving night, he led 15 men up Stone Mountain, outside Atlanta, to perform an ancient ritual Simmons had adopted and which would become infamous: They erected a wooden cross and set it ablaze.

The movie *The Birth of a Nation*—a Lost Cause fever dream portraying Klansmen as saviors of white women under siege by lust-crazed black men—was about to open in Atlanta. In local papers Simmons placed ads alongside those for *Birth* blaring, "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the World's Greatest Secret, Social, Paternal Beneficiary Order." The night the movie opened, Simmons led a mounted squad of armed Klansmen in white sheets, galloping past the theater and firing their rifles into the sky.

Simmons's stunts attracted several thousand members. In 1920, he hired public relations geniuses Edward Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, and within a year, Klan ranks swelled to nearly 100,000. Simmons touted the Klan as a "high class" organization, ballyhooing the many ministers, Masons and businessmen in its ranks. But when Klansmen beat, whipped, castrated, or killed people they despised—blacks, Jews, Catholics, immigrants, and union organizers—Simmons denied that their actions had any connection to his "patriotic, benevolent association."

Simmons and his cronies at the Atlanta office knew that many members at least condoned violence by secret cadres within the Klan who concealed their crimes lest word reach the cops.

However, Klan leaders cared far less about whipping blacks, Catholics, and Jews than they did about amassing money and political power. Driven by greed, David Stephenson, charismatic Grand Dragon of the Indiana chapter—the nation's biggest—even toyed with recruiting Catholics, until he realized anti-Catholicism was a big draw in fundamentalist churches where the Klan recruited.

Simmons loved being Imperial Wizard, particularly now that revenue from initiation fees, dues, and sales of Klan robes was pouring into his "Imperial Palace" in Atlanta. The Klan bought him a house and paid him \$1,000 a month—today, \$172,000 a year—plus a \$25,000 bonus. The Klan endorsed Prohibition, but Simmons frequently celebrated his good fortune with dollops of bourbon.

In September 1921, the *World* exposed Klan crimes. Publicity from the ensuing congressional hearings boosted membership to nearly a million. Rising revenues attracted men, chief among them Hiram Wesley Evans, eager to depose the frequently soused Simmons. A Dallas dentist, Evans became national secretary, or "Imperial Kligrapp."

At the 1922 "Klonvocation," Evans convinced delegates to elect him Imperial Wizard and shunt Simmons to the role of Emperor. Simmons went along until it dawned on him that the Emperor was a figurehead and Evans had the reins—and the key to the strongbox.

Irate, Simmons denounced his successor at Klan gatherings. He sued Evans, who countersued, alleging libel. After a Klan employee killed Simmons's lawyer, William Coburn, in 1923, the Emperor surrendered. He settled for a \$145,000 payout in return for severing ties to the "invisible empire" he'd created. "Murder was too much for me," he explained. "I didn't want to fight men who could kill that way."

Without Simmons, Klan membership briefly exceeded 3,000,000. In 1925, Indiana authorities convicted Stephenson, chief of that state's 350,000 Klansmen, of kidnapping, raping, and murdering a young woman. His lurid trial laid

Racist Requiem
Ex-Kleagle William Coburn was shot dead by fellow Klansman Philip Fox in 1923.



bare the extent of Klan bribery of politicians in Indiana and elsewhere. Millions of members quit. By 1930, the Klan was down to 50,000 diehards.

Simmons took his severance to Florida, where he founded The Knights of the Flaming Sword, appointing himself Supreme Monarch. The scheme flopped and Simmons drifted back to Alabama where, historian Wyn Craig Wade wrote, "the forgotten and frequently tipsy Wizard haunted the lobbies of second-rate hotels until his death in 1945." ★



THE POWER TO DIG

BY DANIEL B. MOSKOWITZ

MCGRAIN V. DAUGHERTY
273 U.S. 135
(1927)
CONGRESSIONAL POWER TO INVESTIGATE



Fall Guy
Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall, left, was the first Cabinet member to do time for crimes committed in office.

Scandals have dotted American politics from the start. In 1798, Representative Matthew Lyon (Democrat-Republican-Vermont) was censured for spitting on a colleague, convicted of violating the Alien & Sedition Act, and reelected—from prison. But save for Watergate, font of America's sole presidential resignation, no scandal outranks the Teapot Dome Affair, an outrage that effloresced under President Warren G. Harding. Teapot Dome also stands alone in its impact on government operations, since it established the constitutional basis for Congress to investigate how Cabinet members and subordinates implement executive branch functions assigned the President—a precedent with current-day implications.

Corruption riddled Harding's presidency, but other misdeeds paled beside the fate of two federal oil holdings reserved for Navy use. Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall got Harding to transfer the reserves—Teapot Dome in Wyoming and Elk Hills in California—to his department. In crooked private deals Fall leased the reserves to companies that lubricated the process with \$400,000 (today, \$5.6 million) in bribes. Officials involved did not pretend to be serving the public. "People in the government were selling the administration to the highest bidder," historian Robert Dallek wrote. "They

weren't interested in the national interest; they were interested in their self-interest." Royalties paid the public coffers were paltry. Fall's style of living suddenly grew opulent.

An oilman irked that the leases had not been put up for bid griped, triggering a 1922 Senate Public Lands Committee inquiry that exposed Fall's bribes. After Harding died, the committee told successor Calvin Coolidge to name a special counsel to turn the congressional findings into legal action. Courts canceled the oil leases. In 1929 Fall became the first Cabinet member to do time for misconduct in office.

Congress wondered how Fall had avoided alarming the Justice Department. Despite blatantly violative behavior and Fall's wallow in filched lucre, Justice had snoozed. The Senate named a five-man panel to examine why. Curiosity fell on U.S. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty, who as a small-town Ohio attorney had conceived the gambit that finagled Harding the 1920 Republican nomination when the front-runners deadlocked. A grateful Harding made Daugherty the nation's top prosecutor.

By this time congressional probes of executive branch actions had become embedded. The first came during the second Congress, in 1792, when the House of Representatives set up a special committee to discover why, the

Pouring It On
Members of the U.S. Senate Public Lands Committee dug into the tangled Teapot Dome affair.

year before, American troops commanded by General Arthur St. Clair had lost so badly to 1,000 Indians in the Battle of the Wabash River 100 miles north of Cincinnati, Ohio. Investigations became so standard that, though the Constitution gives lawmakers no specific investigative authority, their power to do so seldom was challenged. Investigating seemed to be inherent to legislating. After all, five House members in 1792 had been among those drafting the Constitution, and all five voted for the St. Clair inquiry. The outcomes of the few cases touching on the issue and reaching the Supreme Court suggested congressional investigations were allowed but did not address the question directly. The main such ruling, 1881's *Kilbourn v. Thompson*, invalidated a congressional inquiry into how assets of a bankrupt real estate scheme had been distributed among creditors, including the United States. The justices noted that Congress had given no valid legislative aim for its scrutiny. *Kilbourn* established a test for investigative legitimacy: an inquiry must not only deal with "subjects on which Congress could validly legislate" but the resolution authorizing that inquiry must specify the lawmakers' interest in considering such legislation.

Fast forward to Teapot Dome. Congress in its resolution setting up the investigation into the Justice Department gave no legislative purpose. That offered a reluctant witness an opening to challenge a subpoena to appear at the hearings and to impugn the whole process as unconstitutional. The case also gave the Supreme Court a shot at a definitive ruling on the legitimacy of congressional inquiries.

Reluctant witness Mally S. Daugherty, president of Midland National Bank in the attorney general's home town, was the AG's older brother. The Senate ordered Daugherty the banker to appear in person bearing records on safety deposit vault rentals and customer accounts showing large cumulative withdrawals. Daugherty refused. The Senate authorized his arrest and forced appearance.

Deputy Senate Sergeant at Arms John J. McGrain arrested Mal Daugherty. The banker immediately went to the nearest federal court, claiming the inquiry was unconstitutional and demanding his release. The court agreed, finding that the investigation lacked a stated legislative goal and that the Senate was in essence trying the attorney general—a judicial function, not a legislative function.

By the time the Supreme Court ruled in January 1927, much had changed. Coolidge had succeeded Harding. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover had persuaded the new president to force Harry Daugherty out. Columbia University Law School dean Harlan Fiske Stone briefly headed Justice before being named to the Supreme Court. Stone recused himself from Mal Daugherty's case, but his eight colleagues had no trouble finding the lower court wrong and awarding Congress broad discretion to begin an inquiry, to decide what to investigate, and to compel witnesses to testify and produce subpoenaed documents. The core issue in *McGrain v. Daugherty* was how the Department of Justice was run. "Plainly the

subject was one on which legislation could be had and would be materially aided by the information which the investigation was calculated to elicit," Justice Willis Van Devanter wrote in the unanimous decision.

Van Devanter then went beyond the immediate issue of whether Harry Daugherty had been derelict as U.S. attorney general, decreeing that lawmakers have extensive investigatory power. Van Devanter supported that conclusion by pointing to the long history of congressional investigations and to similar state legislature probes upheld by courts in Massachusetts, New York, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Missouri.

In a decision *The New York Times* called "one of the most sweeping ever handed down," Van Devanter wrote, "A legislative body cannot legislate wisely or effectively in the absence of information respecting the conditions which the legislation is intended to affect....We are of the opinion that the power of inquiry—with process to enforce it—is an essential and appropriate auxiliary to the legislative function." Harry Daugherty eventually was cleared by the Senate committee, which decided it had not found evidence that Daugherty knew of the oil lease scheme.

Congressional inquiries had been common, but *McGrain* removed any legal threat to them. The day after the decision was handed down, the Senate began action to force a reluctant witness, utilities magnate Samuel Insull, to testify in an inquiry into nearly \$1 million in suspicious donations to senatorial candidates in Illinois. That impact has persisted.

"*McGrain's* rationale and theory has been picked up and cited extensively," says lawyer Todd Tatelman, the Congressional Research Service expert on the issue.

For instance, the justices cited *McGrain* in upholding congressional demands for testimony in probes of domestic Communist Party activities and of anti-Vietnam War activities.

Perhaps because *McGrain* validated existing practices rather than changing practice, it appears on no list of the Court's most significant decisions, and for most of its existence has been known primarily to lawyers specializing in issues involving separation of powers. That obscurity is gone. All year the case has been invoked repeatedly as politicians and journalists have commented on House and Senate probes of the Trump administration. ★

THE MCGRAIN CASE GAVE THE SUPREME COURT A SHOT AT RULING DEFINITELY ON THE LEGITIMACY OF CAPITOL HILL HEARINGS.



NATURAL MAN

BY SARAH RICHARDSON

“... the song of liberty is so sweet. Now in these last days the sun shines brighter, the birds sing more gaily and everything seems more laughing, now that my prison walls are crumbling away under the steady hammer strokes of father time,” Frank Meyer wrote shortly before leaving a job at a nursery in Washington, DC, to scout plants in the wild, a task the young man loved even more than tending specimens in a greenhouse. Born Frans Nicholas Meijer in Holland in 1875, Meyer spent more than a decade roaming China and Central Asia on behalf of David Fairchild, himself a legendary plant explorer risen to chief of the U.S. Agriculture Department. From the field Meyer sent to USDA tons of plant material for study and experimentation. Many Meyer specimens led to valuable crops, including a soybean now among the varieties most planted in the country. Meyer achieved immortality for discovering in China a dwarf citrus tree with unusually sweet fruit that he introduced to America, where it is known as the Meyer lemon. Smaller, rounder, and thinner-skinned than standard lemons, the Meyer descends from the interbreeding of the citron, the pomelo, and the mandarin orange.

A son of a modest family, Meyer managed to apprentice himself at 14 to the great Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries, who besides training his worker taught him French and English. Within eight years Meyer was head experimental gardener at Amsterdam’s botanical garden, the Hortus Botanicus. In 1901, he sailed to America, worked a year in

greenhouses in DC, then for four years traveled in the United States, Cuba, and Mexico.

The assignment Fairchild proffered was not for the fainthearted; the holder would be traveling alone, with only enough money to hire a translator and buy basic supplies. Meyer eagerly signed on. As a precaution, he cultivated a rough air, letting his hair grow and wearing a sheepskin coat and heavy boots. As part of a wave of plant-collecting adventurers dispatched to gather novel and economically useful specimens, he endured the occasional wilderness mugging.

In three expeditions that collectively consumed 13 years, Meyer meandered nation to nation, trudging the wilds to find and collect seeds, fruits, and cuttings that he carefully packed for shipment to the States. In China, he located the source of a fungal blight destroying American chestnut trees.

Witnessing myriad uses of the soybean, Meyer recognized that legume’s commercial

High Time

In Turkestan, Meyer photographed his party at 9,000 feet. From left: guard, interpreter, teamster, handyman.

potential. North Americans had been growing soybeans since colonial days, but Meyer collected 42 more varieties, including the first found to be a source of oil. In 2018 soybean acreage surpassed corn as top crop in the United States. He collected countless novel varieties, including types of bamboo, pear, persimmon, and plum. In Afghanistan, he spied a tiny wild fruit that proved to be the progenitor of the domesticated peach.

Meyer kept Fairchild abreast of his doings with lively updates by mail. "I am sitting now in a Chinese house, for the inn I lived in at first was too noisy and dark and there was no room to dry seeds or specimens," he wrote while holed up as warlords battled in 1917. "Some mice are running about, mosquitoes buzz, a cricket sings in an old wall and the policeman, who I stationed to spy upon me, snores on a bench, for it is well into the night. Tomorrow we may go to see a lot of wild pear trees, 15 miles away from here..."

Reproved for departing a locale before its vegetation leafed out, Meyer wrote that he was not able to remain still for long, "unless I was of a barnacle nature, which God help me, I never hope to become." He and an assistant once hiked 40 miles in 15 hours to catch a train. Some of Meyer's lodgings were so cold the ink in his pen froze.

By 1917, Meyer wanted to return to the United States. He confessed to his patron that he worried about how he could make a living. "I might easily advise you to come back to this country and take up the breeding of plants, but I do not feel sure that a man of your restless disposition will be contented with the necessarily quiet life of a plant breeder," Fairchild replied.

Meyer admitted to his boss in a letter from Hupeh, in central China, that fieldwork was wearing. "Of course, this exploration work with its continuous absence from people who can inspire one, gets pretty hard on one's nerves," he wrote. "One must be some sort of a reservoir that carries along all kinds of stores. Soldiers in the field have more dangers to face, but they get at least companionship

and often recreation supplied to them. For about one month now I haven't seen a white person, for all of the missionaries are at the mountain and seaside-resorts and travelers one rarely meets here..."

On June 1, 1918, Meyer's reservoir ran dry. At 11:30 p.m. fellow passengers on a Yangtze riverboat bound for Shanghai reported him missing from his cabin. Days later his badly decomposed body, bearing no trace of violence, surfaced 30 miles downriver.

His servant recalled that Meyer had described a dream in which his father and old friends came to see him, a vision Meyer considered a bad omen. The American consul reported on June 14, 1918, "It appears that Mr. Meyer while traveling down the Yangtze from Hankow to Shanghai on the S.S. 'Feng Yang Maru' of the Nisshin Kisen Kaisha, was drowned near Wuhu. Whether he fell off the ship accidentally or committed suicide in a fit of depression will probably never be known."

Meyer specified in his will that \$1,000 be distributed among colleagues or spent on an outing or entertainment. In 1920 Fairchild established the USDA Frank N. Meyer Award honoring distinctive service to the National Germplasm Program in the memory of an intrepid scientist who braved remote regions and survived cold, civil war, and illness only to encounter his most dangerous foe within.

"The remarkable new field that he has opened up, the vast quantities of material that he has introduced, will always remain as a great epoch in American agriculture and horticulture," a friend wrote. "I know that few people ever realized the tremendous battle that was raging within his soul..." ★

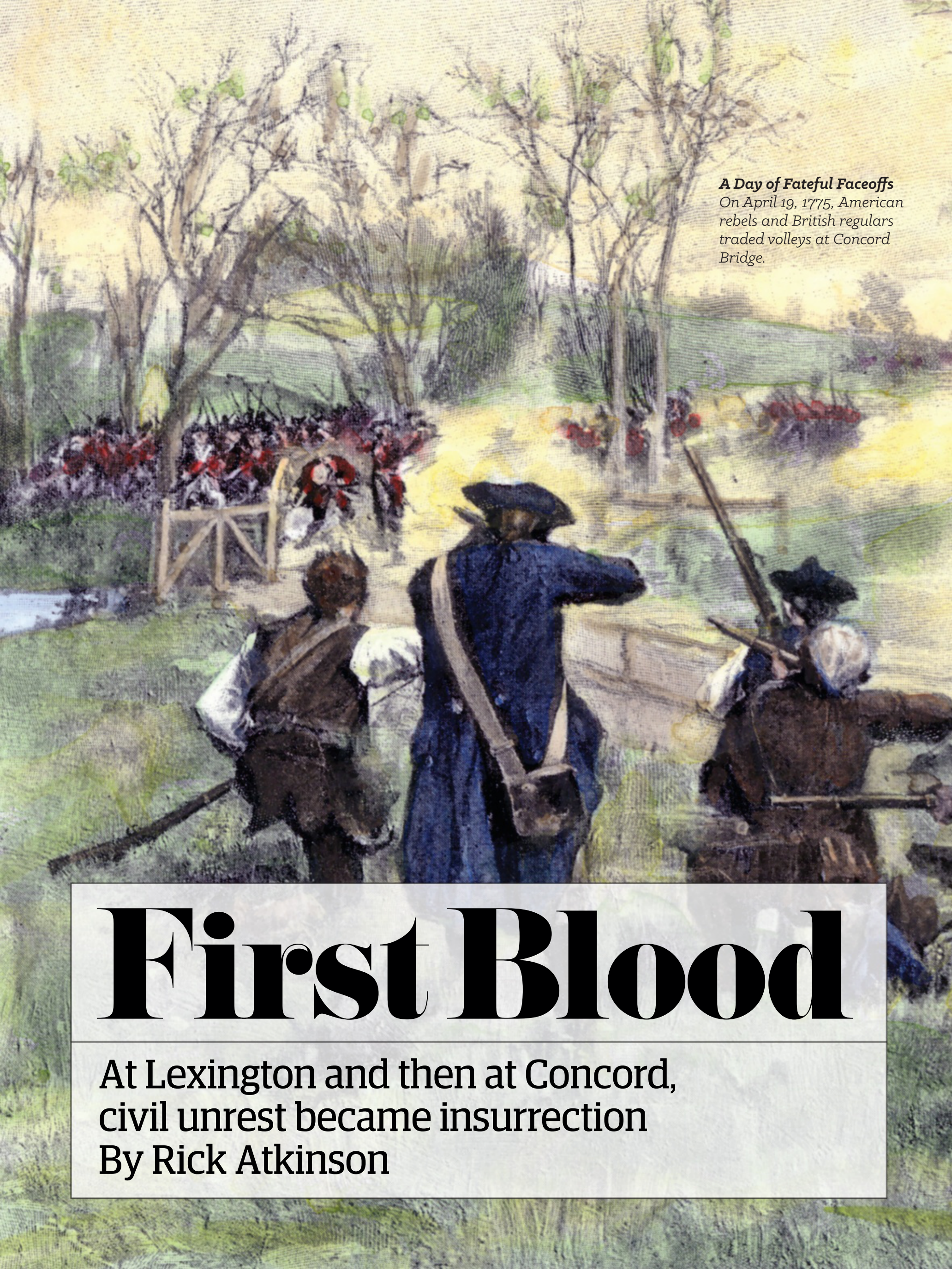


**'THIS ...
WORK
WITH ITS ...
ABSENCE
FROM
PEOPLE
WHO CAN
INSPIRE
ONE, GETS
PRETTY
HARD ON
ONE'S
NERVES.'**



Rambling Man

Meyer, above in customary field garb, loved the hard life he lived. Left, Meyer near Sat tun ying, Chili Province, China, beside a large Chinese chestnut tree that has had its trunk and lower limbs scraped clean of bark.



A Day of Fateful Faceoffs
On April 19, 1775, American rebels and British regulars traded volleys at Concord Bridge.

First Blood

At Lexington and then at Concord,
civil unrest became insurrection
By Rick Atkinson



Shadows scuttled beneath the elm and linden trees along Boston Common. Hoarse whispers carried on the night air, along with the creak of leather and the clatter of a stone kicked down a lane. It would later be reported that a barking dog was bayoneted to enforce the silence. Not until the moon rose at ten p.m. on Tuesday, April 18, 1775, three nights past full but still radiant, did shape and color emerge from the hurrying gray figures to reveal hundreds of men in blood-red coats congregating on the beach near the town magazine. Moonglow glinted off metal buttons and silvered grenadiers' tall bearskin caps. The soldiers reeked of damp wool and sweat, mingled with the tang of the brick dust and pipe clay used to scour brass and leather. Their hair had been greased, powdered, and clubbed into queues held with leather straps. The moon also gave tint to the facings on their uniform coats—purple or green, buff or royal blue, depending on the regiment from which each man had been plucked for the march to Concord.

The navy had collected only 20 longboats and would need two lifts to shuttle all 800 men to marshy Lechmere Point, a mile across Back Bay. Sailors bent to their ash oars against the tide, and with every stroke the standing soldiers swayed. Each man's kit included the 11-lb. Brown Bess musket, three dozen rounds of ammunition in a cartridge box, and a haversack to carry bread and salt pork. Beneath heavy coats and crossbelts the men wore wool waistcoats, white linen shirts, breeches buckled at the knee, and canvas or linen gaiters to keep pebbles from their low-topped brogans. Most wore black leather caps or felt hats with the brim stitched up to give a forepeak and two comers. By neck cords at officers' throats hung gorgets—small silver or gilt crescents worn as an emblem of rank, a last remnant of medieval armor. Loading was haphazard, and as the soldiers clambered from the boats to wade through the reeds on the far shore, sergeants hissed and clucked to reassemble the ten discomposed companies of light infantry and 11 of grenadiers. "We were wet up to the knees," a Lieutenant Barker later reported. Midnight had passed by the time the second lift arrived, and further delays followed as navy provisions in the boats were handed out—supplies that, Barker added, "most of the men threw away." Forging a shallow inlet on the edge of Cambridge further wetted each shivering man to his waistcoat, but at last the troops reached the wide road leading west, unpaved except for napped stones and gravel shoveled into mud holes.

Few knew their destination. Two a.m. had come and gone as they put on speed. With their wet shoes squelching at more than 100 steps per minute, their pace approached four miles an hour. Past apple and plum orchards they tramped, past smokehouses and cider mills and oblique driftways that led into cow pastures. The heavy footfall rattled pewter dishes on dressers and in cupboards, and an eight-year-old boy later recalled a wondrous sight on the road outside his window: a long bobbing column of red, "like a flowing river," sweeping northwest beneath the gibbous moon.

A brigade of armed men tiptoeing through Boston in the middle of the night had not gone unnoticed. "The town," a British fusilier acknowledged, "was a good deal agitated." Joseph Warren may have watched the mustering troops; he lived in a rented house on Hanover Street, barely a mile from the foot of the Common, and several companies had made for the boats from his North End neighborhood. Regardless, Warren was soon well informed. Two



Hastening from Harm's Way

Women and children hurry bullocks and belonging to safety as the tension mounts.

surtout, then picked his way through twisting North End alleys to the waterfront. Two confederates waited with a dinghy. Softly they rowed from the wharf, against the young flood and under that old moon, with a temperate breeze stirring out of the southwest. Ahead loomed HMS *Somerset*, a 70-gun ship of the line anchored as a sentinel in the ferryway between Boston and Charlestown in water so shallow the vessel could barely swing at anchor. Some *Somerset* crewmen were manning the longboats at Lechmere Point or working her pumps; an inspection this week had showed the man-of-war to be in desperately poor repair—seams rotten, butt ends open, long overdue for caulking and sheathing in Halifax. Whether distracted or sightless, the watch failed to spot the small boat that scooted past the big craft's stem and on to the Charlestown shore.

In 1775, America had more than 3,000 churches, representing 18 denominations, but none was more important on this April night than Christ Church on Boston's Salem Street. Known as Old North, the church featured eight great bells cast in England, a magnificent quartet of hand-carved wooden angels perched above the nave, and a towering steeple, long a landmark for navigators entering the harbor and featured in a Boston panorama engraved by Revere the previous year. As carefully planned earlier in the week, another confederate—Revere identified him only as “a friend”—climbed

Informal Armory

To arm the uprising, colonial gunsmiths built firearms one weapon at a time, by hand.



weeks earlier, the provincial congress had agreed that an enemy force exceeding 500 men leaving town with baggage and artillery ought to be considered a threat to the province and met by an assembled “army of observation...to act solely on the defensive so long as it can be justified.” This British force, even without heavy guns, was threatening enough for Dr. Warren. Before the first boats pulled off the Boston beach, he had summoned two couriers to carry the alarm to Samuel Adams and John Hancock, holed up in a Lexington parsonage, and to alert the wider countryside.

The first herald was a beefy, slab-jawed tanner in a slouched hat. William Dawes Jr., barely 30, still lived in Ann Street, where he had been raised by Puritan stock so strict that children were forbidden to look out a window on Sundays and the instructive *School of Good Manners* advised, “Let thy recreations be lawful, brief, and seldom.” Dawes had overcome such constrictions to become an adept smuggler, a patriot messenger, a militia adjutant, and an intelligence agent; while surveilling British officers, he supposedly sometimes posed as a vegetable peddler, sometimes as a miller, sometimes as a drunk. At Warren's instruction, Dawes would ride through the Boston Neck gate on a “slow-jogging horse,” then loop northwest through Cambridge, rousing households on the way to Lexington.

The second herald had already proved his value as a trusted courier in nearly a dozen rides to New York, Philadelphia, New Hampshire, and, twice this month, Lexington and Concord. Various newspapers had often mentioned Paul Revere over the past year because of dispatches he carried hither and yon from Boston; he had, as the historian David Hackett Fischer would write, “a genius for being at the center of great events.” Now 40, with the brown eyes of his French Huguenot forebears, a broad, ruddy face, and the sinewy arms of a metalworker, Revere had run his own business as a silver- and goldsmith for more than 20 years—making teapots, mending spoons, inventing alloys, and setting false teeth, including two for Dr. Warren. He had become a skilled copperplate engraver, a concocter of allegory and caricature, who also made plates for playing cards, broadside illustrations, and paper money. For all Revere's legendary bravura, his life was stained with tragedy: he would father 16 children, his “little lambs,” and most would die before their time.

This was his time. After a brief consultation with Warren, he hurried to his nearby house in Clark's Square, snatched his riding boots and a long

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154 stairs and a rickety ladder to a window in the steeple's north face, lugging two lanterns of tinned steel with glass panels, pewter finials, and metal rings for hanging or carrying. For plainspun Boston, the lanterns—at least the one that has survived—were fancy artifacts: 14 inches high, six inches wide and deep, with 200 perforations in the top, arranged to throw exquisite shadows shaped as circles, diamonds, and Maltese crosses. Flint and steel soon lighted the candles, and twin gleams could be seen across the harbor. As Revere intended, rebel leaders beyond the Charles now knew that British troops were on the move via Back Bay—two if by sea—rather than taking the more circuitous, one-if-by-land route through Roxbury.

Dramatic as the signal was, and as enduring in American iconography, it proved superfluous, since both Dawes and Revere eluded British patrols to spread the word themselves. Handed the reins to a big brown New England mare, Revere swung into the saddle and took off at a canter across Charlestown Neck, rider and steed, hooves striking sparks, merging into a single elegant creature, bound for glory.

Two hours later, Revere trotted into Lexington, his mount lathered after outgalloping a pair

of British commander General Thomas Gage's equestrian sentinels near Charlestown. Veering north toward the Mystic River to avoid further trouble, Revere had alerted almost every farmstead and minute captain within shouting distance. Popular lore later credited him with a stirring battle cry—"The British are coming!"—but a witness quoted him as warning, more prosaically, "The regulars are coming out." Now he carried the alarm to the Reverend Jonas Clarke's parsonage, just up the road from Lexington Common.

**REVERE
TOOK OFF AT
A CANTER
ACROSS
CHARLESTOWN
NECK, RIDER
AND STEED
MERGING
INTO A SINGLE
ELEGANT
CREATURE.**

Here Clarke had written 3,000 sermons in 20 years; here he called up the stairs each morning to rouse his ten children—"Polly, Betsey, Lucy, Liddy, Patty, Sally, Thomas, Jonas, William, Peter, get up!" And here Clarke had given sanctuary, in a bedroom to the left of the front door, to the renegades Hancock and Samuel Adams.

A squad of militiamen stood guard at the house as Revere dismounted, spurs clanking. Two warnings had already come from the east: as many as nine mounted British officers had been seen patrolling Middlesex roads, perhaps "upon some evil design." At the door, a suspicious orderly sergeant challenged Revere, and Clarke blocked his path until Hancock reportedly called out, "Come in, Revere, we're not

afraid of you." The herald delivered his message: British regulars by the hundreds were coming out, first by boat, then on foot. There was not a moment to lose.

Wondering About Will
British General Thomas Gage didn't know if colonials would fight at Lexington and Concord.





Surreal Sally

More than a century later, American artist Grant Wood portrayed Revere's ride as ghostly.

Thirty minutes later, Dawes arrived with the same warning, and the two riders soon swung toward Concord. As Adams packed to move deeper into the countryside, Hancock lumbered about the parsonage with his sword and pistol, prattling on about making a desperate stand until he, too, was persuaded to bolt for safety in his fine carriage.

The Lexington bell began to clang in the wooden tower hard by the meetinghouse. More gallopers rode off to rouse half a hundred villages. Warning gunshots echoed from farm to farm. Bonfires flared. Drums beat. Across the colony, in an image that would endure for centuries, solemn men grabbed their firelocks and stalked off in search of danger, leaving the plow in the furrow, the hoe in the garden, the hammer on the anvil, the bucket at the well sweep. This day would be famous before it dawned.

Lexington spread across 10,000 acres occupied by 750 people and 400 cows. Hardwood copses separated fields and pastures, and many small creeks snaked toward the distant Charles and Mystic rivers. Two cleared acres had been given over to the town Common, where the 11-mile road from Charlestown approached straight and level for the final 500 yards, then forked at the three-story meetinghouse, big and homely as a barn, before continuing the six miles to Concord. On these two acres some 130 militiamen, summoned by that insistent peeling, milled, stamping their feet against the nighttime chill. They awaited orders from their captain, John Parker, described as “a great tall man . . . with a high, wide brow.” A farmer, father of seven, and sometime town assessor, Parker, 45, had fought as a sergeant in the French and Indian War at Louisbourg and Quebec. Shadows falling across the Common deepened the dark sockets around Parker's eyes, symptomatic of the pulmonary tuberculosis that would kill him that September.

Massachusetts Bay had been the first colony to form its militia into regiments, one per county in 1636, in an effort to fashion a military organization suitable for more than haphazard local defense. Each generation since

**RATHER THAN
KEEP MEN
OUT IN THE
COLD TO NO
PURPOSE,
PARKER
DISMISSED
THE COMPANY
WITH ORDERS
TO MUSTER
AT THE SOUND
OF A DRUM.**

had gone to war at least once; an estimated one able-bodied Massachusetts man in four had served in the last French war. Some militia units were little more than armed rabble, saluting unsuspecting officers by firing blank charges at their feet or sneaking up on young women before shooting into the air in a weird courtship ritual. Lexington's troops, ranging in age from 16 to 66, were more disciplined; under militia rules, any man interrupting the clerk while he called the roll was fined two shillings. The town had no minute company but had voted money for drums, a carriage to bury the dead, and gunpowder, now stored in the meetinghouse.

A scout dispatched in search of redcoats returned around 3 a.m. to advise Parker that none could be found. Perhaps this was another false alarm, or a British feint. Rather than keep his men out in the cold to no purpose, the captain dismissed the company with orders to reassemble at the sound of a drum. Some men ambled home. Most headed to the red-doored Buckman Tavern, an ancient “public house of entertainment” with a double hip roof on the edge of the Common. Here they could find a crackling fire and a mug of warm flip, heated at the hearth with a hot iron.

Parker's scout had not ventured far enough east. The British were coming on hard, spurred by the distant pop of warning shots and the gleam of alarm fires flaring on the horizon. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith, the expedition commander, had heeded Gage's order to lunge for the Concord River bridges with a “party of the best marchers”; six light infantry companies now hurried ahead of the main column. Assured by a passing teamster that a thousand rebels were in arms, Smith also sent a courier to Boston to plead for reinforcements, a wise impulse.

The vanguard making for Concord was led by John Pitcairn. Not only was Major Pitcairn, a marine, on horseback and far from the sea to which he was accustomed—he was commanding more than 200 men from a half dozen army regiments to whom he was a stranger. The Scottish son of a Fifeshire minister, in his 50s portly and affable with heavy brows and full lips, Pitcairn could usually be found in Old North Church on Sundays, although his weekday profanity was described as “a Boston legend.” He did not extend his geniality to rebels, who deserved only “severe chastisement.” “If I draw my sword



Last Full Measure

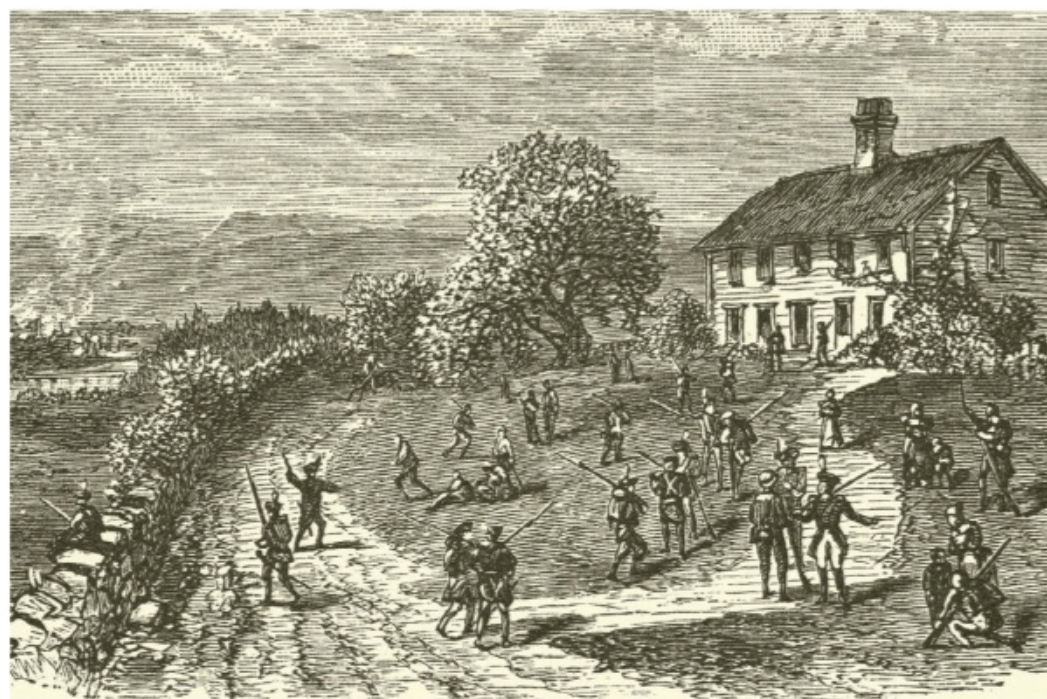
An enemy round claims minuteman Isaac Davis at the north Concord bridge.

but half out of my scabbard,” he had asserted, “the whole banditti of Massachusetts will run away.” The major, an American clergyman later suggested, was “a good man in a bad cause.”

As an apricot glow began to brighten the eastern sky soon after 4 a.m., the sounds of a country folk alert and alarmed intensified—bells, shots, distant hoofbeats. Pitcairn ordered his troops to halt and load their weapons, a portentous command. With practiced motions, each soldier plucked a paper cartridge from his waist pouch, bit open an end, dribbled some powder grains into the musket flash pan, then poured the rest—close to half an ounce—down the muzzle, followed by the bullet and the cartridge wadding, which he tamped home with a steel ramrod. There was nothing precise about the Brown Bess—that “outspoken, flinty-lipped, brazen-faced jade,” in Rudyard Kipling’s description. Imperfect barrels, imperfect balls, a lack of sights, variable powder, and windage between ball and barrel meant the musket was marginally

accurate at 50 yards, hopeless beyond 100. But that hardly mattered when bullets were fired in swarms at close range. The enormous lead slug, nearly three-quarters of an inch in diameter and an ounce in heft, could stop a charging bull.

At Pitcairn’s command, the men seated their ramrods and surged forward, breathing hard, pulses pounding. The 14-inch bayonets on their muskets protruded above their heads like a picket fence. Scraps of cartridge paper, spat out, littered the road behind them.



Readiness Was All

At Concord, militiamen assembled, not certain of how the events of the day would play out.



The British were less than two miles from Lexington when another scout brought word to Parker of their approach. A drum beat to arms, and that infernal bell tolled again. Men in Buckman Tavern set their tankards next to the guttering candles and scrambled to the Common. Other men, filling their powder horns in an upper gallery of the meetinghouse that served as the village armory, clattered down the stairs and out the door. But only half the company answered this second call, fewer than 80 men in two ranks, anxiously peering east for redcoats. “Don’t molest them,” Parker said, “without they being first.” Precisely why he chose to confront a superior force from the exposed expanse of the village lawn rather than from a nearby thicket or stone wall would never be clear. Perhaps, dying himself, Parker had lost all impulse to seek shelter. Certainly he seemed fixed on something larger than this life. When an anxious militiaman said, “There are so few of us. It is folly to stand here,” the captain replied, “The first man who offers to run shall be shot down.”

Full dawn brought the loamy smell of plowed fields and another mild, pleasant morning. The British vanguard swung into view. The tramp of heavy brogans broke the quiet as three companies veered to the right of the meetinghouse at double-quick time. Pitcairn, on his horse, led the rest of the column to the left, following the curve of the Concord road before cantering onto the Common. A guttural roar began to build in the ranks, more growl than cheer. “Soldiers, don’t fire,” Pitcairn yelled, according to a British lieutenant. “Keep your ranks. Form and surround them.” Spectators gawking from the road heard other officers yell, “Throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels!” and “Disperse, you rebels, immediately!” When regulars closed to within 50 yards, Parker apparently took the command to heart. As he swore in a deposition a week later, “Upon their sudden approach, I immediately ordered our militia to disperse and not to fire.”

A single gunshot sounded above the clamor, possibly a warning shot or a sniper at Buckman Tavern. Whoever fired first on the Common would remain forever uncertain, but muskets quickly barked along the British line, promiscuous shooting from agitated soldiers in a makeshift command, led by a stranger. “Without any order or regularity,” as Pitcairn later acknowledged, “the light infantry began a scattered fire...contrary to the repeated orders both of me and the officers that were present.” With each trigger pulled, flint in the falling hammer struck a glancing blow against the steel frizzen, sprinkling sparks to ignite powder in the pan, which, in turn, set off

Mixed Company

Major John Pitcairn, a British marine, was leading more than 200 men from six regiments.

the main charge through a touchhole in the side of the breech. Brilliant yellow flame erupted from each muzzle, along with a flat boom, a belch of smoke, and that heavy lead slug moving at 1,000 feet per second. Those who outlived the day would remember the acrid smell of burning powder, the rattle of ramrods shoving home another volley, the whiz of balls that missed and the terrible thud of balls hitting home, the shouts, the screams, the puffs of dust from bullets smacking a wall, as if the stone were breathing. Billowing smoke grew so dense that soon only the upper torsos of officers on horseback could be seen clearly. One lieutenant from the 38th Foot lost control of his spooked mount, which bolted 600 yards through the village until the rider finally reined in.

Few of Parker’s men managed to fire more than once, if that. Nothing was right, except the courage. Militiaman John Munroe, grazed across the cheek and with a scorch mark on his jacket where another bullet had passed between his arm and his waist, fired, retreated a short distance, then loaded his musket with a double charge, which blew off a foot of the barrel. Jonas Parker, a cousin of the captain’s, neatly placed his bullets and spare flints in a hat at his feet. A British ball knocked him to his knees, and as he fumbled to reload, British bayonets tore him dead. Pitcairn slashed at the air with his sword in a futile signal to cease fire. “Our men without any orders rushed in upon them,” Lieutenant Barker of the King’s Own told his diary. “The men were so wild they could hear no orders.”

Only when Colonel Smith cantered into the village with his grenadier companies and ordered a drummer to beat to arms did the carnage end. “I was desirous,” Smith later wrote, “of putting a stop to all further slaughter of those deluded people.” After a final sputter of gunfire, gray smoke drifted off, revealing dying lumps on the greening grass, blood and so much more leaking away.

Lexington had been not a battle, or even a skirmish, but an execution. The only British casualties were two privates, lightly wounded by gunshots, and Pitcairn’s horse, nicked twice in the flank.

The American tally was far worse. Eight rebels were dead, nine wounded. Of those slain, only two bodies lay on the original American line.

Several had taken bullets in the back while dispersing, including one man captured earlier in the morning and killed while ostensibly trying to escape a hundred yards to the east. Jonathan Harrington was shot close to his house on the western lip of the Common and reportedly died on his doorstep, within view of his wife and son.

Samuel Adams, upon hearing of the gunplay, exclaimed, “Oh, what a glorious morning is this!” But Adams had not been there to see the divine clay smeared on Lexington’s green, along with the litter of hundreds of tom paper cartridges. Reverend Clarke was there, watching from several hundred yards’ distance as Smith, who had prevented his men from pillaging the nearby houses, agreed to allow them a celebratory salute. The redcoats “drew up and formed in a body on the Common,” Clarke reported, “fired a volley and gave three huzzahs by way of triumph.” Then, forming again by companies, they turned and marched west, toward Concord.

Concord was ready for them. A British mounted patrol had captured Paul Revere at a bend in the road near Folly Pond, but William Dawes managed to escape at a gallop. Continuing his charmed morning, Revere—saucy and unrepentant, even with a pistol clapped to his head—was soon released, though without his brown mare, to make his way on foot back to the Clarke parsonage. But others had carried warnings into Concord, where a sentinel at the courthouse fired his musket and heaved on the bell rope. The clanging, said to have “the earnestness of speech” and pitched to wake the dead, soon drove all fifteen hundred living souls from their beds.

Reports of shooting in Lexington “spread like electric fire,” by one account, though some insisted that the British would load only powder charges without bullets. Many families fled west or north, or into a secluded copse called Oaky Bottom, clutching family Bibles and a few place settings of silver while peering back to see if their houses were burning. Others buried their treasures in garden plots or lowered them down wells. Boys herded oxen and milk cows into the swamps, flicking at haunches with switches.

Militiamen, alone or in clusters or in entire companies with fife and drum, rambled toward Concord, carrying pine torches and bullet pouches, their pockets stuffed with rye bread and cheese. They toted muskets, of course—

some dating to the French war, or earlier—but also ancient fowling pieces, dirks, rapiers, sabers hammered from farm tools, and powder in cow horns delicately carved with designs or calligraphic inscriptions, an art form that had begun in Concord decades earlier and spread through the colonies. Some wore “long stockings with cowhide shoes,” a witness wrote. “The coats and waistcoats were loose and of huge dimensions, with colors as various as the barks of oak, sumac, and other trees of our hills and swamps could make them.” In Acton, six miles to the northwest, nearly 40 minutemen gathered at Captain Isaac Davis’s house, polishing bayonets, replacing gunlock flints, and powdering their hair with flour. Davis, a 30-year-old gunsmith with a beautiful musket, bade goodbye to his wife and four youngsters with a simple “Hannah, take good care of the children.”

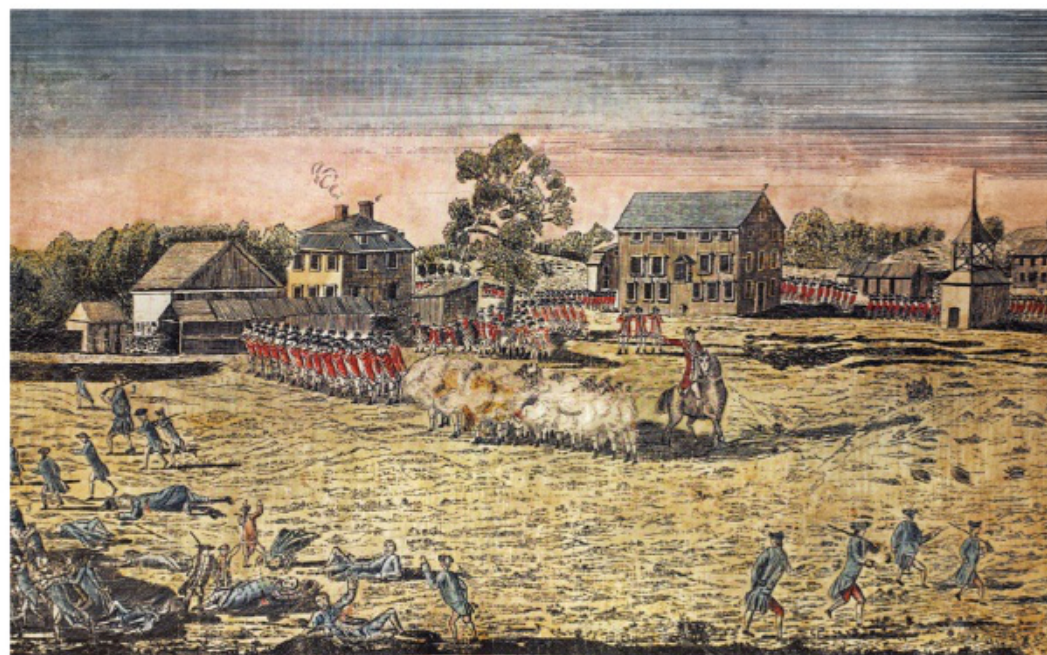
A HOST OF FACTORS WAS MAKING THE COLONIAL AMERICANS ANXIOUS FOR THE FUTURE, NOSTALGIC FOR THE PAST, AND, IN THE MOMENT, ANGRY.

“It seemed as if men came down from the clouds,” another witness recalled. Some took posts on the two bridges spanning the Concord River, which looped west and north of town. Most made for the village green or Wright Tavern, swapping rumors and awaiting orders from Colonel James Barrett, the militia commander, a 64-year-old miller and veteran of the French war who lived west of town. Dressed in an old coat and a leather apron, Barrett carried a naval cutlass with a plain grip and a straight, heavy blade forged a generation earlier in Birmingham.

Barrett’s men were tailors, shoemakers, smiths, farmers, and keepers from Concord’s nine inns. But the appearance of tidy prosperity was deceiving: Concord was suffering a

protracted decline from spent land, declining property values, and an exodus of young people, who had scattered to the frontier in Maine or New Hampshire rather than endure lower living standards than their elders had enjoyed. This economic decay, compounded by the Coercive Acts and British political repression, made these colonial Americans anxious for the future, nostalgic for the past, and, in the moment, angry.

Sometime before eight a.m., perhaps 200 impatient militiamen headed for Lexington to the rap of drums and the trill of fifes. Twenty minutes later and barely a quarter mile away, 800 British soldiers hove into view



The Decisive Moment

The fusillades at Lexington rang in years of rebellion, hardship, and internecine warfare.



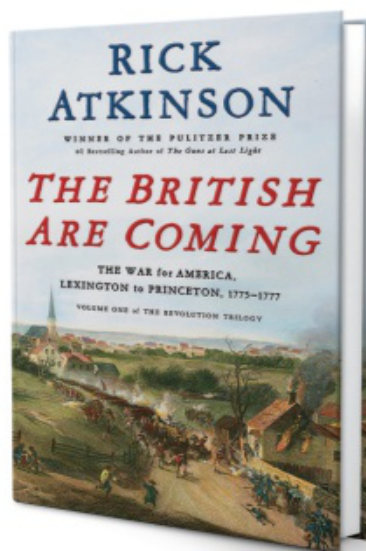
like a scarlet dragon on the road near the junction known as Meriam's Corner. "The sun shined on their arms & they made a noble appearance in their red coats," Thaddeus Blood, a 19-year-old minuteman, later testified. "We retreated."

The British brigade wound past Abner Wheeler's farm, and the farms of the widow Keturah Durant and the spinster seamstress Mary Burbeen and then the widow Olive Stow, who had sold much of her land, along with a horse, cows, swine, and salt pork, to pay her husband's debts when he'd died three years earlier. They strode past the farms of Olive's brother, Farwell Jones, and the widow Rebecca Fletcher, whose husband also had died three years before, and the widower George Minot, a teacher with three motherless daughters, who was not presently at home because he was the captain of a Concord minute company. Into largely deserted Concord the regulars marched, in search of feed for the officers' horses and water for the parched men. From Burial Ground Hill, Smith and Pitcairn studied their hand-drawn map and scanned the terrain with a spyglass.

Gage's late intelligence was accurate: in recent weeks, most military stores in Concord had been dispersed to nine other villages or into burrows of mud and manure. Regulars seized 60 barrels of flour found in a gristmill and a malt house, smashing open the casks and powdering the streets. They tossed 500 lbs. of musket balls into a millpond, knocked the trunnions from several iron cannons found in the jail yard, chopped down the liberty pole, and eventually made a bonfire of gun carriages, spare wheels, tent pegs, and a cache of wooden spoons. The blaze briefly spread to the town hall, until a bucket brigade of regulars and villagers extinguished the flames.

With the pickings slim in Concord, Colonel Smith ordered more than 200 men under Captain Lawrence Parsons to march west toward Colonel Barrett's farm, two miles across the river. Perhaps they would have better hunting there.

Since 1654, a bridge had spanned the Concord River just north of the village. The



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Worlds in Collision

At Lexington British soldiers, thinking to defeat a rebel rabble, fired and moved on.

current structure, 16 feet wide and 100 feet long, had been built for less than £65 in 1760 by 26 freemen and two slaves, using blasting powder and five teams of oxen. The timber frame featured eight bents to support the gracefully arcing deck, each with three stout piles wedged into the river bottom. Damage from seasonal floods required frequent repairs, and prudent wagon drivers carefully inspected the planks before crossing. A cobbled causeway traversed the marshy ground west of the river.

Seven British companies crossed the bridge around nine that Wednesday morning, stumping past stands of black ash, beech, and blossoming cherry. Dandelions brightened the roadside, and the soldiers' faces glistened with sweat. Three companies remained to guard the span, while the other four continued with Captain Parsons to the Barrett farm, where they would again be disappointed: "We did not find so much as we expected," an ensign acknowledged. A few old gun carriages were dragged from the barn, but searchers failed to spot stores hidden under pine boughs in Spruce Gutter or in garden furrows near the farm's sawmill.

The five Concord militia companies had taken post on Punkatasset Hill, a gentle but insistent slope half a mile north of the bridge. Two Lincoln companies and two more from Bedford joined them, along with Captain Davis's minute company from Acton, bringing their numbers to perhaps 450, a preponderance evident to the 100 or so redcoats peering up from the causeway; one uneasy British officer estimated the rebel force at 1,500. On order, the Americans loaded their muskets and rambled downhill to within 300 yards of the enemy. A militia captain admitted feeling "as solemn as if I was going to church."

Solemnity turned to fury at the sight of black smoke spiraling above the village: the small pyre of confiscated military supplies was mistaken for British arson. Lieutenant Joseph Hosmer, a hog reeve and furniture maker, was described as "the most dangerous man in Concord" because young men would follow wherever he led. Now Hosmer was ready to lead them back across the bridge. "Will you let them burn the town down?" he cried.

Colonel Barrett agreed. They had waited long enough. Captain Davis was ordered to move his Acton minutemen to the head of the column—"I haven't a man who's afraid to go," Davis

replied—followed by the two Concord minute companies; their bayonets would help repel any British counterattack. The column surged forward in two files. Some later claimed that fifers tootled “The White Cockade,” a Scottish dance air celebrating the 1745 Jacobite uprising. Others recalled only silence but for footfall and Barrett’s command “not to fire first.” The militia, a British soldier reported, advanced “with the greatest regularity.”

Captain Walter Laurie, commanding the three light infantry companies, ordered his men to scramble back to the east side of the bridge and into “street-firing” positions, a complex formation designed for a constricted field of fire. Confusion followed, as a stranger again commanded strangers. Some redcoats braced themselves near abutments. Others spilled into an adjacent field or tried to pull up planks from the bridge deck.

Without orders, a British soldier fired into the river. The white splash rose as if from a thrown stone. More shots followed, a spatter of musketry that built into a ragged volley. Much of the British fire flew high—common among nervous or ill-trained troops—but not all. Captain Davis of Acton pitched over dead, blood from a gaping chest wound spattering the men next to him. Private Abner Hosmer also fell dead, killed by a ball that hit below his left eye and blew through the back of his neck. Three others were wounded, including a young fifer and Private Joshua Brooks of Lincoln, grazed in the forehead so cleanly that another private concluded that the British, improbably, were “firing jackknives.” Others knew better. Captain David Brown, who lived with his wife, Abigail, and ten children 200 yards uphill from the bridge, shouted, “God damn them, they are firing balls! Fire, men, fire!” The cry became an echo, sweeping the ranks: “Fire! For God’s sake, fire!” The crash of muskets rose to a roar.

“A general popping from them ensued,” Captain Laurie later told General Gage. One of Laurie’s lieutenants had reloaded when a bullet slammed into his chest, spinning him around. Three other lieutenants were wounded in quick succession, making casualties of half the British officers at the bridge and ending Laurie’s fragile control over his detachment. Redcoats began leaking to the rear, and soon all three companies broke toward Concord, abandoning some of their

wounded. “We was obliged to give way,” an ensign acknowledged, “then run with the greatest precipitance.” Amos Barrett reported that the British were “running and hobbling about, looking back to see if we was after them.”

Battle smoke draped the river. Three minutes of gunplay had cost five American casualties, including two dead. Of the British, eight were wounded and two killed, but another badly hurt soldier, trying to regain his feet, was mortally insulted by minuteman Ammi White, who crushed his skull with a hatchet.

“GOD DAMN THEM, THEY ARE FIRING BALLS!” SHOUTED CAPTAIN DAVID BROWN, WHO LIVED 200 YARDS FROM THE BRIDGE. “FIRE, MEN, FIRE!”

A peculiar quiet descended over what the poet James Russell Lowell would call “that era-parting bridge,” across which the old world passed into the new. Some militiamen began to pursue the fleeing British into Concord, but then veered from the road to shelter behind a stone wall. Most wandered back toward Punkasset Hill, bearing the corpses of Davis and Abner Hosmer. “After the fire,” a private recalled, “everyone appeared to be his own commander.”

Colonel Smith had started toward the river with grenadier reinforcements, then thought better of it and trooped back into Concord. The four companies previously sent with Captain Parsons to Barrett’s farm now trotted unhindered across the bridge, only to find their dying comrade mutilated by White’s ax, his brains uncapped. The atrocity grew in the retelling: soon enraged British soldiers claimed that he and others had been scalped, their noses and ears sliced off, their eyes gouged out.

As Noah Parkhurst from Lincoln observed moments after the shooting stopped, “Now the war has begun and no one knows when it will end.” ★

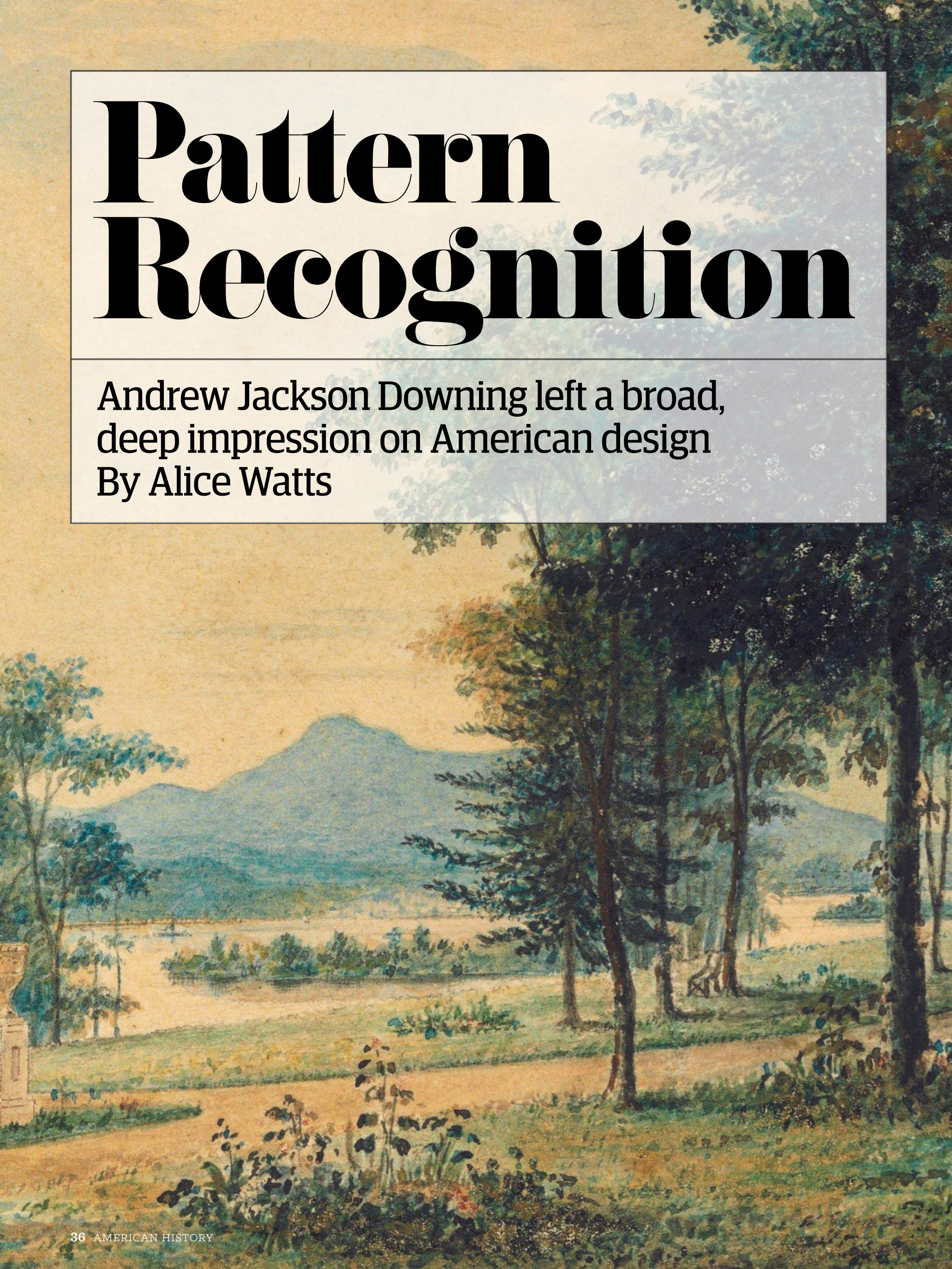


Shapes of Things to Come

Retreating from Concord, imperial forces came under fire from colonials poised to ambush.

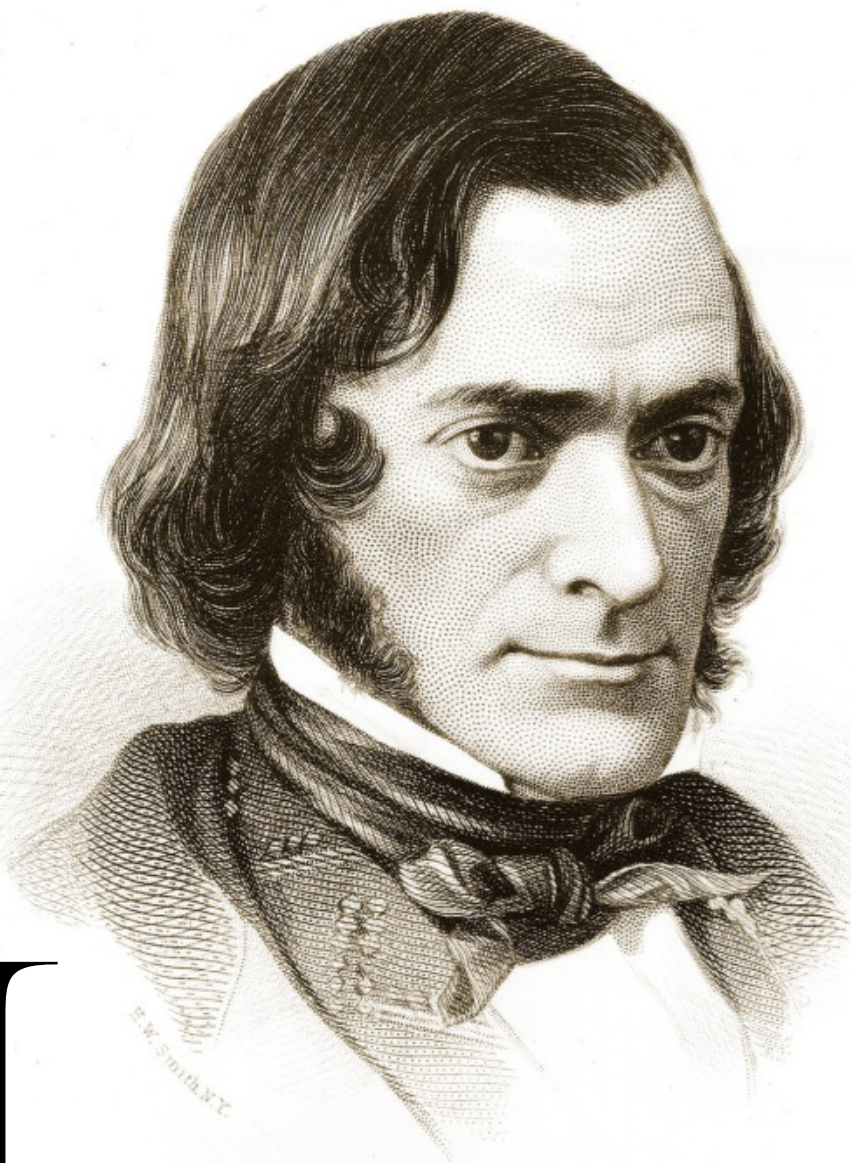
Pattern Recognition

Andrew Jackson Downing left a broad, deep impression on American design
By Alice Watts





Picture Perfect
Downing's renderings
conveyed an expansive
vision of the settled
American landscape.



Idealist and Realist

Downing, left, almost singlehandedly reframed American landscape design.

Downing and companions and others boarded, crewmen cast off, and the *Clay* resumed speed, its huge pistons pumping hard. At 2:45 p.m. the *Clay* was passing Yonkers, New York, when fire broke out in the engine room. The pilot turned the *Clay* east, toward the New York shore, grounding the bow and allowing those forward to escape but putting the ship's blazing midsection between passengers and crewmen at the stern and safety. The ship had two lifeboats; there was no time to launch them. Those who could, swam—or drowned, pulled under by those who could not. Those who stayed aboard burned to death.

Of the *Clay*'s 500-some complement, 70 died, including many with names known nationwide. Andrew Jackson Downing was one, along with his mother-in-law, Caroline DeWint. Downing's and DeWint's deaths devastated their families—but also left *The Horticulturist* without an editor and deposited in the hands of Downing's business partner Calvert Vaux and his friend Frederick Law Olmsted plans Downing had roughed out for a monumental park in upper Manhattan.

Although his career lasted barely 16 years, Andrew Jackson Downing almost single-handedly reoriented landscape design in the United States away from Europe's geometry and classicism and toward a less formal style better bespeaking the national character. He helped America find its face in its gardens and its rural architecture. Downing's writings "cut across all



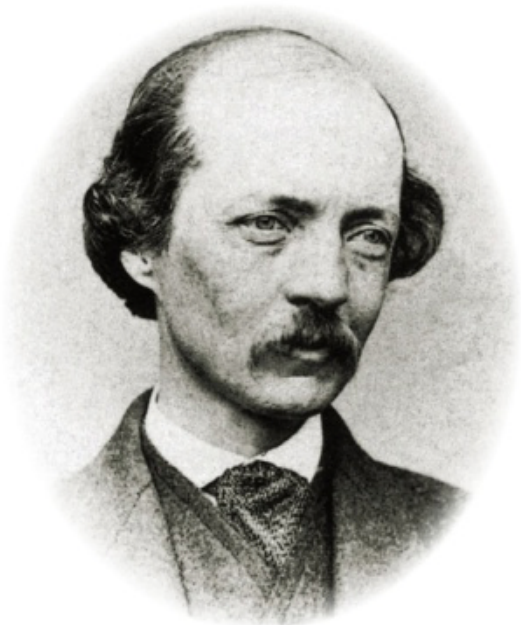
Partner in Commerce and Creativity

Calvert Vaux was Downing's business partner as well as a landscape designer in his own right.

In mid-19th-century America, riverboats ranked high among modes of transport. Building and maintaining heads of steam by burning wood or coal, these vessels worked any river of any significant size. Hudson River steamboats burned anthracite coal. Stokers also kept handy "fat pine" logs that burned hot enough to push a paddle-wheeler to 22 mph, even carrying passengers and freight. A reputation for speed meant more business, although engine explosions and fires, as well as accidents, were as common as the practice of captains racing, usually surreptitiously, along their assigned routes, as was so on Wednesday, July 28, 1852, when the steamer *Henry Clay*, out of Albany, New York, docked 90 miles down the Hudson River at Newburgh to board passengers.

The *Clay*, a fixture on the Albany/New York City circuit, was a typical double-paddle wheeler, 198 feet long and powered by a walking beam engine, so called from the rhythmic motion of the pistons driving the paddles. The engine room was amidship. Captain Thomas Collyer had built the *Clay* and a similar vessel, the *Armenia*, the year before. This day he was commanding the *Clay*. The *Armenia* was also on the river, commanded by Captain Isaac Smith.

Among those waiting at Newburgh when the *Clay* tied up early that afternoon was Andrew Jackson Downing. Accompanied by family and friends, Downing, 36, was bound for New York City, then Newport, Rhode Island, on business—specifically, a conference on designing the grounds of the Smithsonian Institution and the Mall in Washington, DC. Besides his work as a pioneering planner of demesnes for American institutions and America's wealthiest residents and editor of the popular magazine, *The Horticulturist*, Downing was a best-selling author. His architectural pattern books were popular resources from which the wealthy and folks further down the economic ladder took the designs for their residences. Unknown to Downing and fellow passengers, that day Captain Collyer was racing Captain Smith to Manhattan.



Another Inheritor

Frederick Law Olmsted was prime among those carrying forward the Downing aesthetic.

segments of society, which is why he had such an impact nationally,” says Kelly Crawford, museum specialist at Smithsonian Gardens.

Born on Halloween 1815 in Newburgh to nurseryman Samuel Downing and wife Eunice Bridge, Downing was the youngest of five children. The Hudson Valley of his boyhood was a fascinating place, with a wide variety of plant life, topography, and splendid architecture in the form of rich residents’ mansions.

Young Downing’s winning personality, combined with an interest in houses and gardens rooted in the family business, Botanic Gardens and Nurseries, brought him into those mansions, onto their grounds, and into their owners’ company, where he flourished.

At 16, Downing left school to help older brother Charles run Botanic Gardens and Nurseries. Work steeped him in the practical details and aesthetics of landscape gardening and triggered an interest in architecture.

At 19, Andrew was publishing essays on these topics in the *Magazine of Horticulture* and other major publications emphasizing the need to view house and garden in tandem and to suit residences to their surroundings.

For a dwelling’s shape, layout, and detail, many homeowners and builders relied on books—essentially, catalogs reproducing drawings of architectural and artistic designs and individual elements. This tradition dated to Roman times, when in his *Ten Books on Architecture* the military engineer Vitruvius prescribed how a residence or institutional building should look and function. The Vitruvian bywords were “firmness” (solidity), “commodity” (utility), and “delight” (beauty). This ethos carried through the Middle Ages into the Renaissance,

when innovators like Italian architect Andrea Palladio emulated Vitruvius by publishing books from which Palladio’s and other designers’ clients could select the bits and pieces that would give their houses the desired look and feel. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, architectural guides by such authorities as Minard Lefevre and Asher Benjamin, often adapting Roman and Greek styles through a British lens, instructed carpenters and craftsmen and offered technical drawings on which to base houses. However, the drawing often was only a floor plan, with no notes on its exterior.

A younger school of pattern book authors in Britain was compiling images of less classically inflected design. *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, by John Claudius Loudon, published in 1832, and 1835’s *Rural Architecture*, by Francis Goodwin, emphasized a less formal approach.

Downing’s study of these volumes strongly influenced his ideas of how houses should look and feel. Upon marrying Caroline DeWint in 1838, he set about building a residence for them in Newburgh. Classical was the regnant style but, working from Loudon and Goodwin and their precepts, Downing went Gothic, with pointed roofs, twin towers flanking an entranceway, and clustered chimneys.

All the while Downing was thinking about landscape design. In 1841, he published *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted for North America; with a view to the improvement of country residences*. His focus was gardening and landscaping, but *Treatise* also fea-

**DOWNING
WROTE WITH
AN EYE TO
WHAT WOULD
SELL AS WELL
AS TO WHAT
WOULD PLEASE
CLIENTS AND
HELP THEM
COMMUNICATE
WITH
CONTRACTORS.**

tured a dozen drawings of houses, including the Downing residence. The book, heavily indebted to Loudon and another English writer, Humphrey Repton, sold through three editions and made Downing a celebrity.

His adaptation of design to the North American setting appealed to the market. Downing introduced readers to the architectural trends known as the Beautiful and the Picturesque. These movements refracted the romantic aesthetic of the day in literature and art. “*Treatise*, followed by his second book *Cottage Residences*, were the pivotal points in Downing’s career,” Crawford says. “While *Treatise* was geared to wealthier Americans, *Cottage Residences* provided a kind of pattern book for more people of more modest means.” Although not a pattern book, *Treatise* foreshadowed

things to come, and also overshadowed a pattern book partially published in 1838 by Downing’s friend, the architect Alexander Jackson Davis, who drew the dwellings in Downing’s *Treatise* but never completed his own pattern book project.

Downing was 27 when he published *Cottage Residences* in 1842. His manifesto departed from the schools of Lefevre, Benjamin, and their ilk. Downing was writing for the public, organizing information so consumers could understand and use it. A Downing pattern book—and soon, competitors by other authors—coached would-be homeowners on how to show an architect or contractor what to build. *Cottage Residences*, the first American house pattern book to benefit from advances in printing technology and distribution method, remained in print the rest of the century.



Connecticut Crispness

Cottages in Woodstock, Connecticut, exemplify Downing's theory of fitting dwelling to purpose.

Downing began *Cottage Residences* with "Architectural Suggestions," his take on the Vitruvian triad. Instead of "firmness, commodity and delight," Downing advocated fitness—for the owner's style of life and the building site; purpose—working farmhouse, cottage, or villa, telegraphed by chimney type and the leisurely presence of a veranda; and architectural style. British forms, bowing to British weather, avoided roofed exterior spaces. Downing fitted his model houses with expansive porches. Each chapter discussed a particular style of home, including exteriors and interiors, offering both a floor plan and a design for garden and grounds—a unified residence combining beauty and function. Downing himself designed and sketched eight of the 10 houses, including Design II, "A Cottage in the English or Rural Gothic Style." That drawing was rendered in final form by Davis, who contributed one of the other two houses; the last was by John Notman. Aiming to appeal to rural residents and city dwellers able to afford a country house, Downing wrote conversationally. However, he was off the mark. Houses in *Cottage Residences*, even "cottages," were far beyond the means of most.

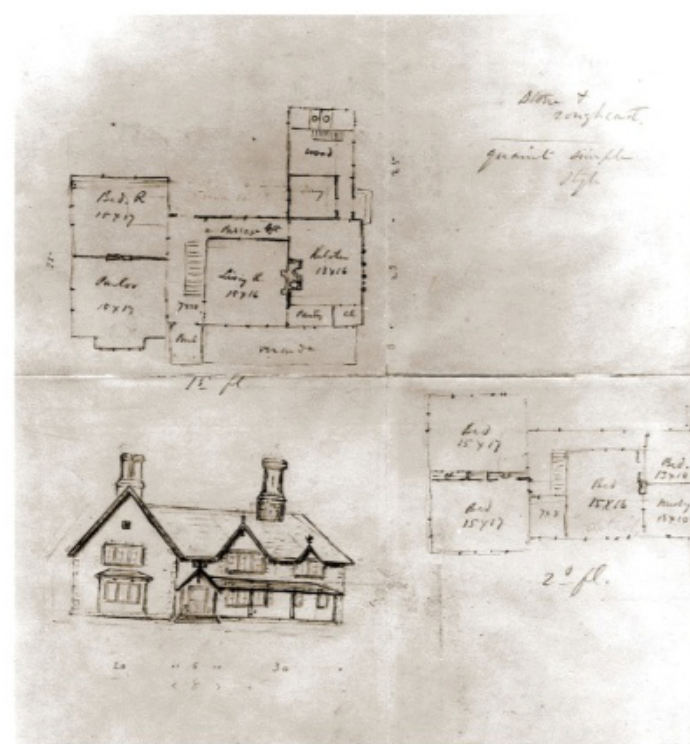
Between the 1842 appearance of *Cottage Residences* and Downing's second pattern book, *The Architecture of Country Homes*, in 1850, he was busy writing, completing commissions, and undertaking civic projects. With brother Charles he wrote a book on pomology—the study of fruit—meanwhile updating *Treatise* and *Cottage Residences*. In 1846, he accepted the editorship of *The Horticulturist* and *Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste*, probably the first American periodical whose every edition featured an architectural or landscape design—in this instance, many by Downing.

Country Homes also reflected Downing's evolution in his approach to design as well as indirectly responding to complaints about the cost of trying to build from *Cottage Residences*. *Country Homes* presented designs ranging from simple, truly inexpensive farmhouses and cottages to expansive villas. Downing kept his conversational style, arguing amiably on behalf of good taste even on a shoestring. The best-selling book spoke to a growing middle class, which embraced Downing as a practical

theorist and made his ideas a go-to destination for planning a residence.

Country Homes opened with "The Real Meaning of Architecture," an exegesis on Downing's vision, followed by designs for 13 cottages, nine original; four had run in *The Horticulturist*. This first section also covered six farmhouses. Part II presented 14 villas, seven of which were Davis renditions based on Downing designs, with contributions by Davis, Richard Upjohn, Russell West, and Gervase Wheeler.

Previously, American dwellings generally had a center hall flanked by rooms. Downing



Good Old Country Comforts

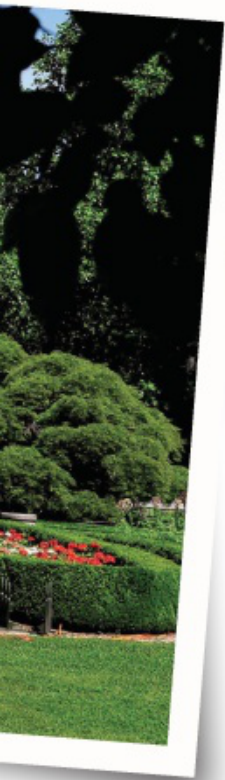
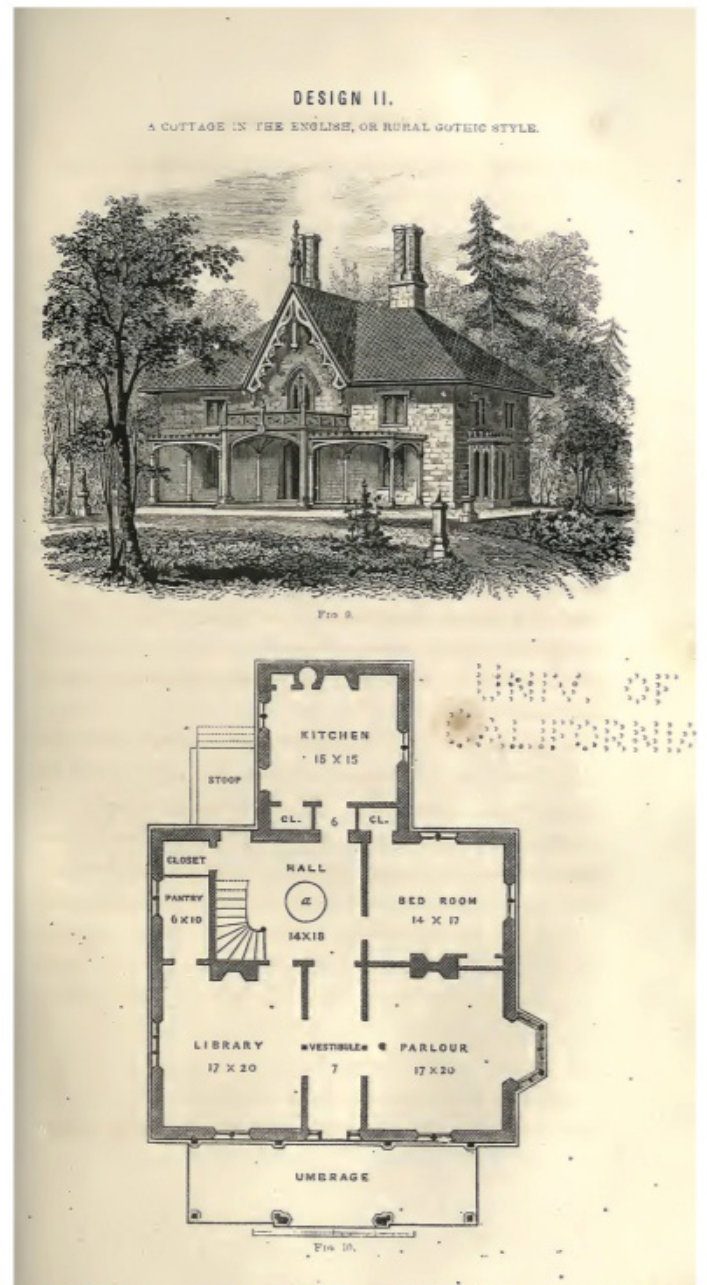
Drawing from Downing's landmark 1850 work *The Architecture of Country Houses*.

Curb Appeal Before There Were Curbs
Downing's designs emphasized forms and details that drew in the onlooker's eye.

introduced an irregular, organic layout. Doing penance for his pricey faux pas in *Cottage Residences*, he recommended economical ways to meld materials and design, as in using wood for board-and-batten exteriors and combining stone and stucco on cottages. He gave big play to brackets—cornice scrolls—and rural Gothic styles without neglecting the Italian villa and other themes.

Country Homes included exterior ornamentation, interiors, and furniture, not addressed in *Cottage Residences*. Few photographs exist of 1850-era residential interiors; filling that gap, *Country Homes* offers glimpses of antebellum middle- and upper-class life in rural America. Downing also discussed the practical matters of heating and ventilation as essential to comfort. *Country Homes* stressed suitability: a cottage should look like a cottage; a farmhouse, like a farmhouse. Neither adjuration precluded beauty; rather, according to Downing, a residence should reflect its purpose and its family's lifestyle.

Downing's influence extended to public spaces. He had long advocated lawns and gardens as settings for residences. On an 1850 trip to Europe he experienced public gardens and parks such as those in London's West End and Munich's *Englischer Garten*. The following summer, noting America's lack of public parks, he wrote to New York City Mayor Ambrose Kingsland to urge that the city dedicate at least 500 acres in upper Manhattan for a



After Downing
Landscape design at Georgia's Barnsley Resort invokes aspects of Downing's viewpoint.



Downing's Vision Vindicated

From left, Central Park's creators—treasurer Andrew Green, drainage engineer George Waring, landscape architect Calvert Vaux, gardener Ignaz Pilat, associate landscape architect Jacob Mould, and park superintendent Frederick Law Olmsted—atop Willowdell Arch on September 23, 1862.



That Tragic Day

Downing died trying to aid fellow passengers aboard a blazing Hudson River steamship.

“New-York Park.” Downing plumped for such a project in the August 1851 *Horticulturist*, arguing that metropolitan residents deserved a landscape in which all could experience the outdoors. Kingsland went for the notion, setting in motion legislation that would set aside acreage and establishing a commission to oversee creation of a “central park.”

Upon Downing’s death, Vaux and Olmsted ran with his idea, first persuading the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park to hold a competition to pick an architect to design the park. The two fleshed out Downing’s preliminary drawings. Their “Greensward” plan won the competition, and in 1858 construction began of what became the emerald gem at Manhattan’s heart. That project’s success and other achievements, such as Prospect Park in Brooklyn, immortalized Olmsted, a prominence that eclipsed Downing’s.

The *Henry Clay* disaster, the Hudson’s worst ever, stampeded Congress into passing the Steamboat Act of 1852. Steamer captains now had to be licensed; vessels had to undergo safety inspections. Racing was banned, a proscription sometimes honored in the breach but definitely curbed. Steamboat deaths declined from more than 1,000 in 1851 to 45 in 1853.

Downing barely established an oeuvre of landscape and architectural projects. Houses built to his vision underwent renovation. Fashions changed. His honeymoon home was demolished

in 1922. However, Downing’s legacy endures, articulating as it does a sensibility transmitted by Downingesque elements in countless houses: central gables, scrolled ornamental brackets, clustered chimneys, and, above all, porches. Downing’s default design was the single-family residence surrounded by lawns, gardens and trees, a combination that describes millions of American residences.

Former partner Calvert Vaux and his associate, Frederick Withers, enjoyed success for years treading where Downing might have. Many

TODAY’S VOGUE FOR HOME RENOVATION HAS ROOTS IN PATTERN BOOK CULTURE AND ITS INTEREST IN EVEN THE SMALLEST DETAILS OF DESIGN.

houses Vaux and Withers built departed from Downing’s pattern book designs and those he put forth in *The Horticulturist* but nonetheless hewed to his dictum of unity between house and setting. Consider artist Frederick Church’s Hudson Valley home, Olana, designed by Vaux with much input from Church and built 1870-72 (“Saving Olana,” August 2018). An eclectic blend of Victorian and Middle Eastern elements, the house and grounds harmonize beautifully.

Succeeded by Vaux’s 1857 *Villas and Cottages*, Downing pattern books sold well into the early 20th century, presaging a 21st century revival that is seeing builders, often renovating residences in decades-old suburban developments, look to the past for touches

that set a dwelling apart from its mass-market context. Planners use pattern books to help homeowners select historically correct designs. Downing’s overall approach never became dated. Enthusiasm for renovation and rehabilitation has spawned stacks of magazines and hour upon hour of cable television devoted to shelter—a vast and mutating multimedia pattern book advocating, as Andrew Jackson Downing did, on behalf of good taste and harmony interweaving dwelling, furnishings, and landscape. ★

Flying Fashionistas
Entrants in the 1929
All Women's Air Derby,
posing at the event's
starting point in Santa
Monica, California,
sport flapper-style
cloches and mannish
jodhpurs and neckties.





Women With Wings

The 1929 Powder Puff Derby showed
women could hold their own in the air
By Liesl Bradner



Style and Substance

Clockwise from top left: Air mail pilot Blanche Noyes cranks her plane's engine; Amelia Earhart in the cockpit of her red Lockheed Vega; crowds eyeball planes at the Clover Field starting line; Bobbi Trout, who looked "like a boy" but flew "like a man."



In the 1920s, when civilian aviation was organizing itself and aviators were setting benchmark upon benchmark, air races were a popular spectator sport. The All Women's Air Derby, as it was known officially, drew crowds to see and meet record setters, nonconformists, and all bands between. At the extremes flew unassuming Amelia Earhart, a demure daredevil from Atchison, Kansas, and bohemian Florence "Pancho" Barnes, a Union Army balloonist's granddaughter who declared, "Flying makes me feel like a sex maniac in a whorehouse with a stack of \$20 bills." Endurance flier Evelyn "Bobbi" Trout was known for flying by night—and living to tell the tale. Ruth Elder financed flying lessons with her beauty contest winnings. Feminist Opal Kunz's husband, George, was chief mineralogist at Tiffany's and well able to keep her in planes. Blanche Noyes flew for the air mail service. Stylish Alabamian Ruth Elder had failed in 1927 to become the first woman to fly from Long Island to Paris, France (she was forced to ditch in the Atlantic) but the attempt had earned her

dinner at the White House and a Manhattan ticker tape parade. These and fellow competitors—pint-size Vera Dawn Walker, banker's daughter Neva Paris, test pilot's wife Claire Mae Fahy, and more—took off from Clover Field—now Santa Monica, California, Municipal Airport—on August 19, 1929, aiming to log the fewest air hours reaching Cleveland, Ohio. That nine-day journey killed one racer, made the survivors famous, and signaled American women's full-fledged entry into aviation.

Between its early 1900s inception and the decade following the Great War, aviation evolved dramatically. Aircraft went from dual-winged contraptions of wood, fabric, and wire puddle-jumping along at 80 mph and landing in whichever farm field presented itself to sleek metal monoplanes able to exceed 200 mph and travel great distances. The airborne future looked limitless. To seduce passengers away from railroads, airlines needed larger, faster, and safer aircraft but also terminals at which to take on and disperse travelers and their luggage. Dearborn, Michigan's Ford Airport was the first such facility to offer comfortable waiting and boarding areas, though it was not unusual for passengers to get a face full of propwashed grit. Grass airfields hung on into the 1930s.

The airplane industry echoed the automobile's introduction, with scores of manufacturers opening, closing, merging, and acquiring one another. Unlike car makers with their assembly lines, the aircraft industry emphasized craftsmanship, often hand-building planes one by one from the wheels up. Also unlike the auto industry, which was concentrated around Detroit, Michigan, the aircraft industry had no geographic hub. Headquarters and factories dotted the map: Bell and Curtiss Wright in Buffalo, New York; Republic and Grumman on Long Island; Boeing in the Northwest and later Wichita, Kansas. Los Angeles, California, was home to Douglas, Lockheed, Northrop, North America and Vultee.

Charles Lindbergh's heroic 1927 trans-Atlantic solo flight legitimized flying as a skill, a source of celebrity, and a business proposition, attracting millions in investment and stoking public interest in flying as a means of travel and in fliers as a new category of star.

In 1929, 9,098 men held flying licenses in the United States. So did 117 women. Those among the latter trying to make a living at flying had few permanent career options. Many had to resort to air circuses—traveling carnival-style troupes of aviators setting up for business for a few days in the hinterland to entertain crowds with wing-walking and trick flying, as aviatrix Phoebe Omlie and husband Vernon did for a living—and barnstorming in the air from town to town, sometimes solo, to spin up deals to get paid for aerial stunts. The film industry offered opportunities as a stunt woman or stand-in. Wealthy women took up flying for the challenge and the notoriety. On June 24, 1929, Opal Kunz made Page 1 of *The New York Times* for crashing her newly purchased cream and gold Travel Air C-9827 biplane at Morris Plains, New Jersey, with an ex-sailor aboard. Kunz promptly bought another Travel Air, which she had christened "Betsy Ross" by Mrs. Thomas Edison at Newark Metropolitan Airport. Wellesley-educated stockbroker's daughter Ruth Nicols took flying lessons on the sly. Evelyn Trout began flying at 17 with money earned at the family filling station in Southern California. Emulating star dancer Irene Castle, Trout cropped and pomaded her black hair, dressed mannishly and went by



Channel Crosser

Harriet Quimby had pushed the edges of the envelope, flying the English Channel in 1912, three years after the first man to do so.



Celebrity Contestant

Ruth Elder had to ditch in the Atlantic during her 1927 Long Island-to-Paris flight but survived to be feted with a parade.



“Bobbi”—“She looks like a boy but flies like a man,” a reporter wrote. Inspired by Lindbergh, Ruth Elder, 23, learned to fly. Hollywood picked her for lead roles in the 1928 Paramount vehicle *Moran of the Marines* (Paramount 1928) and Universal’s 1929 *The Winged Horseman*.

Women had long been making news in the air, pushing back against a patriarchal aviation culture. Harriet Quimby flew the English Channel in 1912, three years after Louis Blériot was the first man to achieve the feat. In 1921, former wing-walker Phoebe Omlie broke the world parachute jump record. In 1921, Louise Thaden flew to 20,260 feet, a record for a female aviator. On June 18, 1928, Amelia Earhart, accompanying two male pilots, flew the Atlantic in a Fokker trimotor, just a year after Charles Lindbergh’s famous New York-Paris solo flight. Global certifying body FAI—the France-based Fédération Aéronautique Internationale—derisively classified these achievements as “miscellaneous air performance.” In the same vein, air race organizers, all male, refused to let women compete. That barrier stood until 1929, when in collaboration with promoter Cliff Henderson, who during World War I had flown with the 101st Aero Squadron, the National Exchange Club, a businessmen’s group, announced the All Women’s Air Derby. Adhering to the mainstream model, the 2,700-mile route between Santa Monica, California, and Cleveland, Ohio, involved multiple days, many stops, and much ballyhoo (see map, p. 49). To have a shot at the \$25,000 first prize, a prospect needed FAI and National Aeronautics Association pilot’s licenses and 100 hours of solo flight, including 25 hours of soloing cross-country. She also had to be a certified airplane mechanic. The race drew 70 applicants; of 40 qualifiers, 20 entered, including German aerobat Thea Rasche, “The Flying Fraulein,” and petite Australian Jessie Maude “Chubbie” Miller, first woman to pilot a plane from England to Australia.

Racers’ rides varied widely in engine displacement, prompting the sponsor to divide the field: fliers whose aircrafts’ engines displaced 510 cubic inches or less were lightweights, anything with a bigger bore was a heavyweight. The dominant model was an open-cockpit biplane, with a 510- or 800-cubic-inch engine, built by Travel Air since 1925 in Wichita, Kansas, which billed itself as the Air Capital of the World. Travel Air executive Walter Beech, who thought having female aviators race would sell airplanes, had helped bring about the event.

At noon on August 18, 1929, Santa Monica’s seaside morning fog was burning off and Clover Field was buzzing. Humorist and aviation enthusiast Will Rogers, with flier and sidekick Wiley Post, was there to cover the race for his Gulf Oil radio show. Seeing the competitors primping for the press, Rogers, coining a catchphrase, cracked, “Looks like a powder puff derby to me.” Earhart, who had flown into Santa Monica in her shiny red heavyweight five-passenger Lockheed Vega, was favored to win. Officials decided the 300-hp Travel Air Opal Kunz had just bought was too much aircraft for a woman; she rented a 200-hp Travel Air. Edith Folz fired up the Kinner 5 engine in her Alexander Eaglerock Bullet, a stylistic standout with its retractable gear, underslung wing, and enclosed cabin; Folz, a clotheshorse, had a custom lavender flying suit she called a “Folzup,” tailored for flying and ground-bound casual wear.

Earhart, Thaden, and Marvel Crosson were worried that Mary Haizlip, 19, who had learned to fly from her World War I aviator husband Jimmy, was missing. Word came that a plane had gone down in a nearby field—the women recognized it as stunt pilot Phoebe Omlie’s Monocoupe. Omlie, who had lost her way in the fog, was about to be jailed for smuggling dope when Earhart intervened; the sheriff’s deputy let the other woman off. Pancho Barnes arrived in jodhpurs and beret, smoking her usual cigar.

Hopscotch in the Sky



The 1929 Powder Puff Derby embodied the possibilities and limitations of aeronautical technology, as well as organizers' promotional emphasis. The opening leg was Santa Monica to San Bernardino, California. Day 2 hopscotched through Calexico, California, and on to Yuma and Phoenix, Arizona. Day 3 took 208 miles to Douglas, Arizona. Day 4 was to El Paso, Texas, via Columbus, New Mexico. On Day 5, the fliers crossed Texas via Pecos, Midland, Abilene, and Fort Worth. On Day 6, pilots flew to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Wichita, Kansas. Day 7 took them east to Kansas City, Missouri, and East St. Louis, Illinois. Day 8 took them to Terre Haute, Indiana, and on to Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio. They finished on Day 9 at Cleveland, an airplane manufacturing mecca.

Among the 3,000 spectators was Edgar Rice Burroughs, author of the Tarzan series. Another celebrity, tool fortune heir Howard Hughes, shyly wished Crosson good luck; himself an aviator, Hughes was sponsoring 4'11" Vera Dawn Walker in a Curtiss Robin. To reach the rudder pedals, Walker had to prop herself forward with pillows. Until Hughes intervened, she had been stuck for a sponsor.

The San Bernardino leg took the aviators 68 miles east—once they were able to get going. Mishaps abounded. Earhart had to turn back to unstick her aircraft's jammed starter. Mechanical trouble delayed Haizlip by a day; she arrived aboard a replacement craft. Besides staying aloft, the challenge was keeping on course without radios, using questionable charts to reach ill-marked landing fields. Savvy fliers like Barnes kept an eye peeled for railroad tracks, a reliable guide. Barnes was first to San Bernardino, where 4,000 spectators crowded the airport.

The second day's leg was 348 miles to Calexico, California, and Yuma and Phoenix, Arizona. Earhart's propeller broke; a spare had to be flown in from Los Angeles. Trout's 100-hp Golden Eagle Chief cartwheeled across a field, requiring days of repair work. Airport mechanics accidentally contaminated the fuel tank of Elder's Swallow biplane with five gallons of oil. Landing hard amid dust clouds, Kunz damaged her Travel Air's landing gear. When Fahy, who had been having trouble maintaining control, set her Travel Air down at Calexico, she found snapped aileron wires that appeared to have been sabotaged with acid.

The flyers next headed to Phoenix, Arizona, 150 miles northeast of San Bernardino.

Barnes, following the wrong rails, veered far off course, landing in a farmer's field in Mexico. "I wheeled around, goosed the throttle, and got outta there," she recalled.

Desert temperatures and a stifling cabin made Elder woozy. Losing her map to the slipstream, she landed her red Swallow NC8730 in a field of grazing bulls. A rancher's wife appeared, shouting that she was scaring the herd. Elder about-faced and took off.

**THE RACE
DREW 70
APPLICANTS;
OF 40
QUALIFIERS,
20 ENTERED.
EACH HAD TO
BE A CERTIFIED
MECHANIC.**

At dusk that day in Phoenix all pilots were accounted for except Warsaw, Indiana-born Marvel Crosson, 29, who with younger brother Joe was a bush pilot in Alaska. A month before, Crosson had gained fame reaching 23,996 feet in a Travel Air Jet J-5. Searchers found her corpse in the Gila River Valley, her parachute unopened, several hundred feet from the wrecked Chaparral. Decades later the son of the Travel Air factory investigator who worked the case said his late father had suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in Crosson's death, which dominated the next morning's front pages. Exhaust also had sickened other competitors. Race officials suggested canceling. Survivors said they would push on to honor their fallen sister.

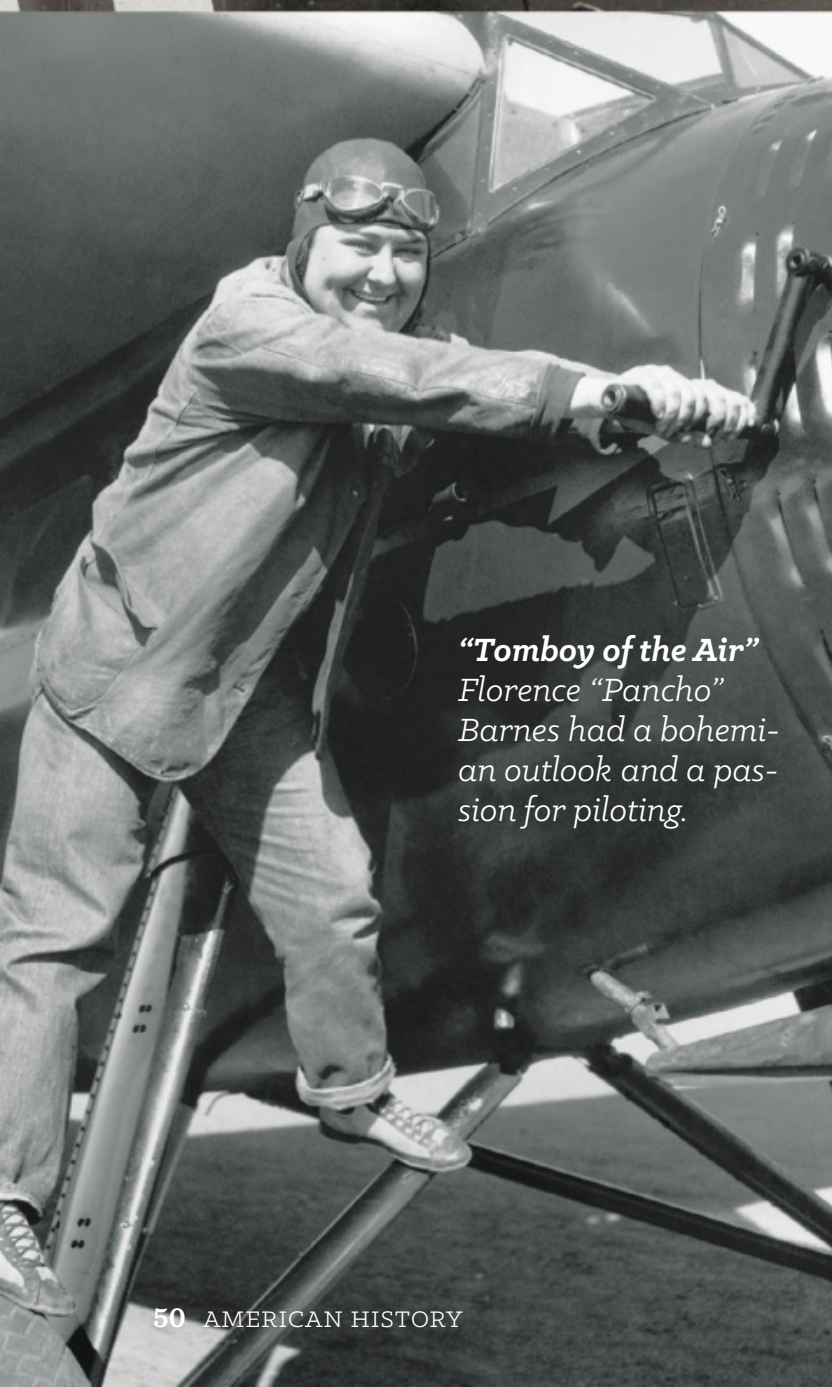
The stops were as much work as the flying, if not more. Each destination tried to set a record for hospitality. Mayors and city councils overscheduled the aviators with charity appearances, photo sessions, and soirees. Even the most media-savvy among the competitors had not reckoned with the kind of notoriety that would draw 10,000 spectators, many of them rabid autograph hounds, to an airfield outside Wichita, Kansas.

Required to keep a gallon of water and three days' worth of rations aboard, the fliers had little stowage, and at events often appeared clad in wrinkled frocks and sporting windburned cheeks, V-shaped tans, and goggle-induced owl eyes. Some wore plus-fours under their skirts to keep from flashing too much thigh negotiating cockpits. By Day 4, racers were recovering from Marvel Crosson's death. In honor of her



The Flying Freulein

In 1927, Thea Rasche tried to fly under a Hudson River bridge at Albany, New York. Engine failure forced her to ditch.



"Tomboy of the Air"
Florence "Pancho" Barnes had a bohemian outlook and a passion for piloting.

wrong-way turn, Barnes painted "Mexico or Bust!" in white on her Travel Air's fuselage.

At Pecos, Texas, gawking drivers pulled onto the airstrip as competitors were landing. Colliding with a car, Barnes totaled her plane, knocking her out of the race. Accidents and illnesses continued. Margaret Perry, diagnosed with typhoid fever, had to enter the hospital in Abilene, Texas. Fouled oil lines grounded Haizlip. On high, Noyes noticed her luggage smoldering. She set down in the desert and pulled up her plane's wooden flooring to extinguish the flames with sand.

On August 26, 1929, 15 of the original 20 landed at Cleveland, Ohio, Municipal Airport. Thaden came in first in the heavy class, with O'Donnell second and Earhart third. Omlie, Folz, and Keith-Miller led the light brigade. "To us, the successful completion of the Derby was of more importance than life or death," said Thaden. "The public was skeptical of airplanes and air travel. We women of the Derby were out to prove that flying was safe; to sell aviation to the layman."

After a round of congratulatory effusions that included autographing one another's cloth flying helmets, the racers gathered beneath a Cleveland airport grandstand to talk business, specifically, about forming an organization; in time they and other women fliers, a total of 99 founding members, signed up. That November, 26 women fliers met at Curtiss Airport on Long Island. Mechanics were revving a Challenger's engine; as they sipped tea served from a toolbox on wheels, the women had to raise their voices, nearly shouting as they discussed jobs, locating an office for their group, and assembling files on female fliers. Membership would be open to any woman with a pilot's license. The topic of a name came up. The Climbing Vines, Petticoat Pilots, Homing Pigeons, and Gadflies were among the suggestions. "The Ninety-Nines," said Earhart, referring to the charter members. The phrase stuck; the group elected Earhart president and Thaden treasurer and vice-president.

The Derby reprised in 1930 but soon the male-dominated air establishment was reverting to form. Florence Klingensmith's death at the 1933 Frank Phillips Trophy Races in Chicago—metal stress felled her overpowered Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster—led organizers to bar women from the 1934 finals. In 1935 pressure from female fliers got that ban lifted. Thaden and copilot Noyes took first place in the prestigious 1936 Bendix Race in a Beechcraft C-17R. The irrepressible Barnes did stunt flying on Howard Hughes's 1930 film *Hell's Angels* and founded the first stunt pilots union. In the 1930 Powder Puff Derby, she broke Earhart's record for speed by a woman flier, reaching 196.19 mph in a Travel Air Type R Mystery Ship. Earhart, who in 1931 married publisher George P. Putnam, flew relentlessly, soloing across the Atlantic in 1932. On a 1937 attempt to circumnavigate the globe with navigator Fred Noonan, Earhart vanished, a mystery beloved of curiosity seekers and conspiracy theorists.

Pioneering Ninety-Nines members strongly influenced American aviation through World War II. One was Jacqueline "Jackie" Cochran, an orphan from Muscogee, Florida, who grew up picking cotton, made a fortune in cosmetics, and earned a pilot's license in three weeks. By 1938 Cochran was considered the best female pilot in the United States. On June 18, 1941, she shuttled a Hudson V bomber across the Atlantic. "Flying Grandmother" Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter became the first director of the Women Marine Corps. Civilian members served as flight instructors, air traffic controllers, and commercial airline pilots. Many Ninety-Nines enlisted as Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) and in the Women's

Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), which Cochran headed. Initially assigned to test-fly repaired planes, the women saw their duties expand to include tracking and searchlight missions, glider towing, flying radio-controlled target planes, and delivering weapons, cargo, and personnel. More experienced members flew for Grumman, testing naval aircraft. Louise Thaden became director of the Women's Division of the Penn School of Aeronautics. As a flight instructor, Kunz trained several hundred U.S. Navy fliers at Rhode Island State Airport. Edith Folz Stearns served in the Air Transport Auxiliary, shuttling military aircraft from factories to bases and maintenance depots. Omlie established 66 flight schools in 46 states, including the facility in Tuskegee, Alabama, at which African-American airmen trained. Mary Von March conducted final inspections of Pratt-Whitney engines powering B-24 Liberator heavy bombers. Barnes headed the Women's Air Reserve.

For secret postwar aviation projects, the U.S. Defense Department took over an airport that Barnes owned near Muroc Air Force Base—now Edwards Air Force Base—in Southern California's Mojave Desert.

Nearby, Barnes opened Rancho Oro Verde Fly-Inn Dude Ranch, whose rustic bar became a test-pilot hangout made notorious as the Happy Bottom Riding Club by Tom Wolfe in his 1979 book *The Right Stuff*, a best-selling paean to the test-pilot culture from which the American space program emerged in the 1950s (see sidebar below).

Trained by U.S. Air Force aviator Chuck Yeager, Cochran in 1952 became the first woman to break the sound barrier. At the controls of a Canadian-built F-86 Sabrejet she set a world record of 652 miles per hour over Edwards Air Force Base. From 1949 through 1977, Cochran ran the annual All Woman Transcontinental Air Race. She died in 1980. The Powder Puff Derby lives on as the annual women-only Air Race Classic, a 2,400-mile, four-day event staged around North America. The next race—June 23-26, 2020; airraceclassic.org—starts in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and ends in Terre Haute, Indiana. Any woman with a pilot's license can still join the Ninety-Nines, which has 155 chapters worldwide. ★



Last Photo

Marvel Crosson crashed in the desert. An investigator suspected carbon monoxide.



Dames in Space

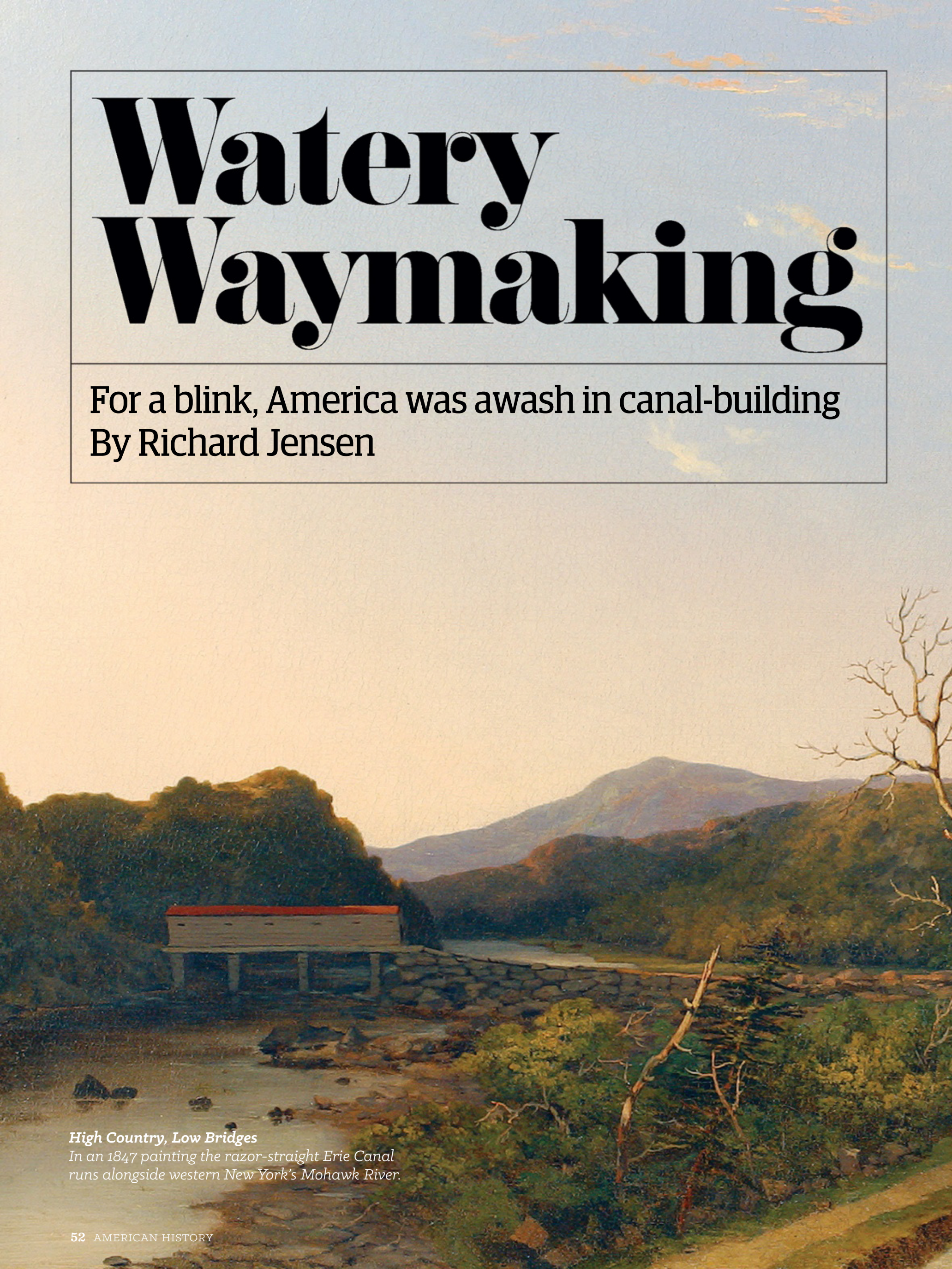
The Mercury 13 was a short-lived secret attempt to put female pilots into space. Dr. William Randolph “Randy” Lovelace II, head of a NASA special committee on bioastronautics, who tested the Mercury 7 male astronauts, thought women's smaller frames and lower oxygen needs would make them great astronauts. Oklahoma-born Ninety-Niner Geraldyn “Jerrie” Cobb was the ideal candidate. First to qualify for Mercury 13 in 1961, Cobb, 29, passed the same physical and psychological testing as male candidates. In a sensory deprivation test, floating in darkness for 9 hours and 40 minutes, Cobb's results outdid those of the Mercury 7 astronauts. Lovelace recruited 19 more female candidates; 13 passed the same tests as the men. Mercury 13 ran aground when astronaut John Glenn spoke at a congressional hearing. “Men go off and fight the wars and fly the airplanes,” Glenn said. “The fact women are not in this field is a fact of our social order.” The program was canceled. “I think some of them really thought they were going

to be astronauts,” said Gene Nora Jessen, Mercury 13 participant and author of *Sky Girls*. She would go on to fly for Beechcraft. Cobb, 87, spent 30 years as a missionary flying supplies in to remote corners of South America. December 14-23, 1986, 34-year-old Ninety-Niner Jeana Yeager (no relation to Chuck Yeager), copiloted with Dick Rutan the first nonstop, non-refueled world circumnavigation aboard the Rutan Voyager aircraft. In July 1991, astronaut Eileen Collins traveled in space carrying one of Louise Thaden's flying helmets signed by the 1929 Powder Puff Derby racers. On July 23, 1999, as the first woman to command a space shuttle, Collins brought Amelia Earhart's scarf and a pilot license signed by Orville Wright in 1924 for Bobbi Trout, the last living Powder Puff racer, aboard Russian Space Station Mir. —Liesl Bradner

The Right Stuff: Aviation legend Chuck Yeager trained Jackie Cochran for her record F-86 flight.

Watery Waymaking

For a blink, America was awash in canal-building
By Richard Jensen



High Country, Low Bridges

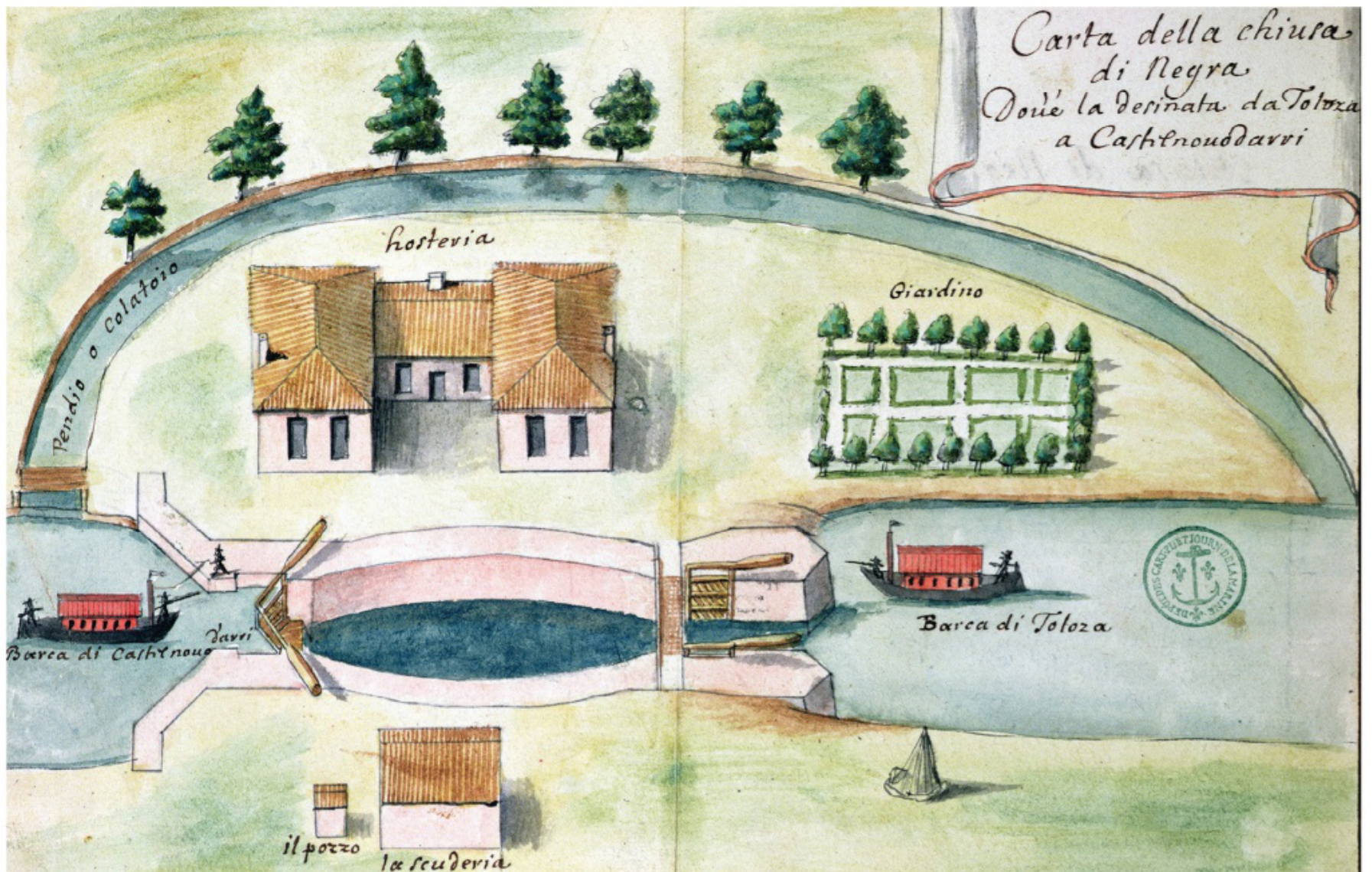
In an 1847 painting the razor-straight Erie Canal runs alongside western New York's Mohawk River.



U

nder the 1783 Treaty of Paris, Britain relinquished to the United States of America claim to all land in North America east of the Mississippi River and roughly south of the 49th parallel. That cession made the upstart country one of the world's largest. For Britain, America had embodied such seemingly endless opportunity that in colonial charters English monarchs granted recipients parcels extending "from sea to sea." This appetite for land colored the former colonials' outlook just as, during two-plus centuries of European rule, they had absorbed and modified so many continental institutions and customs to fit their expansive setting.

Consider transportation. In England, conveyance of goods and passengers was often a money-making proposition. Creating roads on so small an island, long inhabited and densely populated, required getting easements and rights of way from property owners, as well as permission from Parliament. Road builders made money charging tolls, a model adapted to waterways in the 1700s, when investors moved from building roads to building canals. Thanks to nascent industrialization, canals, previously unprofitable risks, almost overnight became practical necessities. These conduits—relatively short, narrow, shallow, and plied by capacious boats built for shallow-draft commerce—evolved into a network linking industrial centers in the Midlands to mining districts in the southwest. To tow canal boats, crews worked teams of animals trudging paths alongside waterways. Aqueducts carried canals over rivers and sometimes entire valleys, but British canal builders faced few natural obstacles. A scant change in elevation



made it relatively easy to connect the Midlands to the southwest and London. Vertiginous Wales and Scotland got fewer canals.

Britons' proprietary approach to canal building underwent an early trial in the New World, where roads were so bad that to get from the Northeast to the Southeast merchandise and passengers went by sea. Rivers navigable at their mouths soon became impassable upstream through a quirk of geology. Hardly a river flowing into the Atlantic did not collide with the fall line, the transition, marked by waterfalls, between the ancient hard rock of the Appalachian Mountains and the young sediment of the coastal plain. At those white-water zones, goods came off the boats to travel by wagon and even teams of porters who rolled, trudged, and eventually climbed over peaks higher than any in Britain using horses, donkeys, and shoe leather.

The alternative to portage, ambitious but expensive, was the canal. Mimicking the British model, investors including George Washington bankrolled the Dismal Swamp Canal. Built in the

1790s and early 1800s, this project connected the Chesapeake Bay via Julian Creek, near Hampton Roads, Virginia, to the Pasquotank River in North Carolina north of Elizabeth City on Albemarle Sound. Completed in 1805, the 22-mile canal, described as “a ditch filled with muddy water,” was making money by 1810.

Adjoining the canal and straddling the North Carolina/Virginia border stood the Lake Drummond Hotel, run by the canal company. The state line bisected the hotel's interior; should a Virginia marshal arrive to bust a game of chance, players scuttled to the North Carolina side and kept dealing, and vice versa.

Over the next 15 years, profits from the canal and the hotel funded expansion of the ditch into a 40-foot channel eight feet deep, with five locks. Locks, or pound locks, enable lock keepers to float canal boats up or

French Forerunner
Locks on the Canal du Midi in Southern France conformed to the classic model.

Pirate-Free Transportation
France's pioneering Canal du Midi used locks to connect the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.



down a steep passage. The Chinese built the first pound locks in 984, but in the West these mechanisms were unknown until 1396, when Belgian engineers independently invented them. The technique involves controlling the water flow in and out of a series of canal compartments. A pound lock has watertight gates, one upstream, the other down, enclosing enough canal to float a boat or more. Each gate has sluices to let water in or out. At least one gate is always closed. Upon admitting a boat, the other gate closes, impounding water. If the boat needs to ascend, the sluice allows water into the compartment to raise the vessel. If the boat needs to descend, the sluice is opened to drain water, lowering the craft.

Other canal projects sought to open the American interior, but private money generally evaded such undertakings. The British model, which worked so well on that small, densely populated island, was a non-starter in vast, unsettled North America. Investors had to absorb years of construction expenses before seeing a return, and profitability was chancy. Boosters dreamed of canal-connected cities thriving along the Ohio River and the Great Lakes, but reality was deflating. When Ohio joined the Union in 1803, Cincinnati counted about 2,500 residents; the hamlet that became Cleveland had 10.

The French had pioneered a solution that would work in America. The Garonne River starts near the Mediterranean, north of the Pyrenees, and flows northwest to the Atlantic at Bordeaux. The dream of connecting the Garonne at Toulouse via a 150-mile canal with a Mediterranean lagoon called the *Etang de thau*, avoiding an 1,800-mile-plus sail around the Iberian Peninsula, was not new in 1661, the year King Louis XIV authorized such a project. Augustus Caesar, Nero, and Charlemagne all had envisioned a canal between the Garonne and the Mediterranean, but none figured out how to get boats over a summit between them. The lock's arrival made that



Topside Travel
Barge on the Barton Aqueduct over the River Irwell in Manchester, England.

possible—at a cost so high only a government could fully fund it. To build the *Canal du Midi*, its wealthy designer, engineer Pierre-Paul Riquet, personally advanced 20 percent of the expense.

The French crown and the regional government of southern France covered the other 80 percent. The 14-year project, completed in 1682 at a cost of about 17.5 million livres, or around £1.3 million, sped goods between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic on a route safe from pirates and less vulnerable to bad weather. The *Canal du Midi*, with its 63 locks, was the Western world's longest artificial waterway—until 1825, when the Erie Canal, emulating the French model of private/public financing, came along.

As early as 1724, boosters in what is now upstate New York were floating the idea of a canal linking Lake Erie to the Atlantic using the only eastern river that could allow ocean-going vessels past the fall line. Between Peekskill and Cornwall-on-Hudson, where the Appalachian Mountains descend to their lowest, the Hudson River zigs and zags through the fall line—a narrow and tricky route, but not impassable. However, the geology of New York's western tier did pose daunting barriers. To carry shipborne commerce between Lake Erie and the Hudson required a 360-mile canal linking Buffalo and Albany. The river town stood nearly 600 feet lower than the lake port—a forbidding elevation change demanding 50-plus locks and more labor than seemed feasible.

The first concrete endeavor to open a water route across upstate New York came in 1792, when Gouverneur Morris, Philip Schuyler, and Elkanah Watson chartered the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company. Their modest goal was to make the Mohawk River, a Hudson tributary that rises tantalizingly close to Lake Ontario, entirely navigable. Using private capital, they proposed to build lengths of canal bypassing rapids and other obstacles on the Mohawk using locks.

Founding Engineer
George Washington, a Dismal Swamp Company investor, visited in the 1760s.

When construction began, upstate flour merchant Jesse Hawley saw an opportunity to profit. Hawley prepared to ship flour milled near Seneca Falls, on the Mohawk, for sale in New York City, 270 miles south, and other coastal locations. The Morris plan did not pan out—the canalized Mohawk never reached Seneca Falls—and Hawley lost his shirt. He spent nearly two years in debtor's prison. In stir, under the pseudonym "Hercules," Hawley wrote editorials calling for a canal connecting Lake Erie and the Hudson. His essays are remarkable in their detail and their predictions. A canal linking Lake Erie to the Hudson would be such a boon to the city of New York, he wrote, that "in a century its island would be covered with the buildings and population of its city."





As Hawley was proselytizing, the federal government was amassing budget surpluses that President Thomas Jefferson said should go for infrastructure. Backers thought the Erie Canal embodied Jefferson's notion. However, in 1809, as a lame duck after James Madison's election, Jefferson tarred the canal as "nothing short of madness." If a canal was to be built to Lake Erie, it would have to be built with private funds, or by the state of New York.

In 1810, Thomas Eddy and Jonas Platt took up the cause. Eddy was a director of the Morris/Schuyler outfit trying to canalize the Mohawk. Platt was a state senator who saw that the canal would have to be a state project and that success lay in shooting for the moon—half-measures like the Mohawk River would not open the door for trade with the west. Together the partners pitched a largely artificial waterway from Buffalo to Albany and sold DeWitt Clinton on it. Clinton, nephew of nine-time New York governor George Clinton, was a seasoned politician—variously mayor of New York City, New York's governor and lieutenant governor, and U.S. senator representing the Empire State. The canny Clinton, convinced a canal was feasible, went all in behind the notion.

In the boom years uncorked by the conclusion of the War of 1812, even hardened skeptics like Martin Van Buren, a longtime adversary of DeWitt Clinton, had to admit that an Erie Canal was achievable. After much legislative wrangling, including another failed attempt to get Washington to back the project, by 1817 all was set to go.

Walls of Water

The Erie Canal's most extreme cut, a seven-mile section at Lockport, lifted boats 70 feet over the Niagara Escarpment.

**SUCCESS LAY
IN SHOOTING
FOR THE
MOON—HALF-
MEASURES
LIKE THE
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TRADE WITH
THE WEST.**

Now the obstacles became geographical. From Albany to Schenectady the proposed canal ran parallel to the Mohawk River until it reached a narrow gorge, where a pair of aqueducts had to be built to get the canal through. The waterway would follow the Mohawk to Rome and cut across to Oneida Lake. To depart the lake the route would

take the Seneca River for a brief stretch before traversing western New York's wilderness. Local crews did much of the digging, which first required clearing a swath 60 feet wide through forests thick with deadfall and understory. Improvised devices helped fell trunks and pull stumps. Men drove horse teams pulling oversize plows to cut overland portions of the canal bed. Discovery of raw materials for cement near Syracuse sped the task. Approaching Rochester, the route crossed a mile-wide valley. Cut by Irondequoit Creek, which in this vicinity was more of a river, the valley was 70 feet deep, its sides too steep for locks and the valley floor too unstable—in spots there was quicksand—to support an aqueduct.

The solution triggered the first great Irish influx to America. The Irondequoit Valley project's complexity and scale demanded imported expertise and labor. The canal commission awarded the bid to J.J. McShane, a canal builder from Tipperary, Ireland. McShane brought over some 3,000 Irish laborers and set them to building a stone culvert 100' long, 25' high, and 30' wide. The channel, above the Irondequoit Creek, would be the canal's path, with the valley filled in to support it. To stabilize the result, crews had to sink nearly 1,000 pilings and cover them with timber before they could empty the first load of fill. Despite these challenges, the Irondequoit stretch was

Picks and Shovels

Immigrant Irish "navvies" (as in navigator) excavated the Erie Canal by hand.





American Superhighway #1
A 19th century map shows the Erie Canal from the Hudson River along the Mohawk River and on to Buffalo and Lake Erie

completed in a summer. By fall 1822, the Erie Canal was crossing the valley on an embankment 50 to 60 feet above the Irondequoit.

The final obstacle was the Niagara Escarpment, a thick layer of prehistoric seabed forming a line of limestone cliffs across all of western New York, and parts of Ontario and Pennsylvania. At the most favorable location for the canal to vault the cliffs, the escarpment still stood 70 feet above adjacent terrain. Self-taught engineer Nathan Roberts designed two sets of five locks each that would ascend 60 feet of escarpment in 12-foot lifts cut into the limestone. To surmount the remaining ten feet of escarpment Irishmen cut a seven-mile channel by hand. The town that grew and spread alongside the worksite came to be called Lockport.

Good management, labor-saving inventions, luck, and Irish greenhorns ready to sweat got the Erie Canal done on time and about as close to on-budget as possible. The canal, 360 miles long, four feet deep, 40 feet across, and punctuated by 83 locks, opened in 1825, eight years after construction commenced. The enterprise ran up a total cost of about \$7.1 million—only about 5 percent over initial estimates.

The impact on trade was immediate and significant. The cost of shipping goods from the interior to the coast fell 90 percent, and in the first full year of operation toll revenues exceeded the construction cost. Passenger travel vastly exceeded expectations—more than 40,000 paying customers in 1825 alone. The canal became a leg on the Underground Railroad. Runaway slaves stowed away on canal boats bound for Buffalo, a short jaunt to Canada and freedom.

A culture and a way of life sprang up around the canal, especially among the loose-knit fraternity responsible for moving freight from the inland sea at Buffalo to Albany and back again.

Canallers—‘canawlers’ as they said—developed their own argot, pecking order, and legends. It

was easy to find a job on the canal. Entry-level positions were everywhere. A youngster taken on as a “hoggee” would be thrown untrained into a shift of controlling the mule team. Because mules worked an assigned portion of the towpath, a hoggee didn’t walk the full length of the canal but stuck with his team, trudging the same 15 miles day after day. Most young men who tried being hoggees soon tired of watching the back end of the same mules along the same 15 miles of canal that their teams trod day in and day out. The main idea was to avoid falling in. Working on canals between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, young Ohioan James Garfield dunked himself 16 times in six weeks, sickening him and sending him home. Garfield’s towpath stint propelled him through school and into the law, service in Congress and the Civil War, and Congress again before winning the White House in 1880.

Hoggees who toughed it out stood to move up to boatman, traveling the length of the canal, and at voyage’s end, when they were paid, cutting loose in whatever town they landed in—the rollicking song “Buffalo Gals” suggests the delights available at the canal’s western terminus.

Life on the canal was soon romanticized—and exaggerated. One legend, that of the Empeyville Frog, brought notoriety to a crossroads about 12 miles north of the Erie Canal. Supposedly a giant frog named Joshua, weighing a ton, specialized in straightening roads. The story went that

Team Spirit
Engraving shows a “hoggee” and a horse team. Mules were used more commonly.

locals chained the oversize croaker to meandering thoroughfares and goaded Joshua into jumping, which pulled out the kinks. Canal lore held that, like Joshua, everything was bigger in the big ditches, including fish, a claim illustrated by the



Taming the River

1852 view of the Erie Canal at Little Falls, 57 miles west of Schenectady. An early canal was dug at the Mohawk River rapids here in 1793-94.



story of a blacksmith who made a crowbar into a hook, tied the result to a towrope, hung a piglet as bait, and cast off from a canal boat loaded with barley. A humongous Lake Erie sturgeon bit, hauling the boat and its mule team backwards for miles until the fisherman looped the towrope around an abutment, with the hoggee barely keeping his animals out of the drink. “For weeks after that,” a canaller swore, “we had to harness those mules with their heads facing the boat, they were so used to going backwards.”

Canal legends came closest to reality in characterizing fights among the fellows who manned the boats and tromped the paths. Along routes beyond the reach of anything resembling law enforcement, it made business sense to salt a crew with skilled fighters, because when two boats arrived simultaneously at a lock, the accepted process for deciding which went in first seems to have been a fight between each side’s champion, loosely refereed by the lockkeeper.

Lockkeepers had small residences at locks and were expected to work around the clock. To augment their monthly salaries some locksmen

operated general stores—perhaps the first 24-hour convenience marts—and saloons, always sure of a steady stream of customers. The keeper had a temporary captive market for his wares and refreshments while the water level was raised or lowered in the lock.

The Erie Canal had a four-mile-an-hour speed limit, but horse and mule teams on the towpath could do little more than five mph. Passengers could travel from Albany to Buffalo in five days; most freight shipments took six. Passengers ordering meals en route paid about four and a half cents a mile; skinflints could save a penny a mile bringing their own grub. The 152-mile trip from Utica to Rochester cost \$6.25, roughly a week’s pay for a clerk.

The Erie Canal’s success spurred an outbreak of canal fever. Pennsylvania, with its far more challenging terrain, embarked in 1824 on a series of projects that included canals and a railroad between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. By 1840, Pennsylvania had more than 1,200 miles of canals, the longest—the Main Line—ran 391 miles between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and at the east end incorporated 82 miles of rails. The Keystone State’s canal network mainly improved intrastate transport. Although offering connections to the busy Ohio River, the Pennsylvania canal system was no match for the Erie Canal as a conduit for westbound goods and travelers.

Between 1827 and 1832 Ohio legislators funded and built slightly more than 300 miles of canals connecting the Great Lakes to the Ohio River. Promoters in Maryland pitched a privately funded canal linking the Potomac River at Washington, DC, to Pittsburgh on the Ohio River. The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal eventually required significant funding from the state of Maryland and the federal government, and never crossed the Appalachians, as originally intended. Though significantly shorter than the Pennsylvania, Erie, and Ohio canal systems, the C&O transited far more difficult terrain. The Erie Canal had cost \$7.1 million; to build the C&O from Washington to Pittsburgh, a run of 341 miles, was estimated at \$22 million.

Trade Terminus

Canals spurred New York City’s economy, as attested to by the Hudson wharves.

The 185 miles that were completed between Washington and Cumberland, Maryland, cost \$11 million—per mile the most expensive major canal project 1800-50, and the only one that fell short of its intended goal.

Besides major canal projects, a host of



Towpath Tune

Ask an American to sing a song about a canal and chances are good the response will start with “Low bridge, everybody down!”—the open to the refrain of “Erie Canal,” a campfire anthem that conjures images of barge crews and mule teams. Bruce Springsteen’s embrace of the tune has rekindled debate as to whether “Erie Canal” is folk music or a folksy commercial song.

Liner notes to Springsteen’s 2006 LP *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions*, describe “Erie Canal” as “written in 1905 by Thomas S. Allen as ‘Low Bridge, Everybody Down,’ but now it’s as much a folk song as if it had been written eighty years earlier in the canal’s heyday.” The fact that Allen, a Natick, Massachusetts, vaudevillian, published “Erie Canal” in 1913 is central to the argument that the song came from Tin Pan Alley, not canallers working the big ditch—except that in 1930 a court decided the tune predated Allen’s copyright.

As the LP subtitle indicates, the Boss borrowed his version from folk singer Pete Seeger. A fixture in progressive political entertainment since the 1940s, Seeger presented his 1961 take as the traditional number mid-century revivalists believed “Erie Canal” to be. From Bill Bonyun’s 1950 Smithsonian Folkways LP *Who Built America* to a 1963 arrangement by the Kingston Trio on the album *#16*, folk revival recordings ignored Allen not out of malign intent but because these musicians were working from songbooks, many of which failed to list Allen, who died in 1919, as the song’s ostensible composer. “It was not uncommon for the person who first transcribed a song to claim authorship,” writes folklorist Stephanie Hall. “Folk songs and minstrel show songs were often in oral circulation long before they appeared in published form.”

The ’50s folk revival owed much to efforts in the early 20th century to preserve and circulate genuine American folk songs. John Lomax collected an invaluable hoard of songs from across the country; he and later his son Alan produced multiple volumes that codified and popularized American folk music. From his childhood in the 1890s, Louisville, Kentucky-born John Jacob Niles studied the folk songs of the Appalachian Mountains. Philadelphia musicologist Sigmund Spaeth was well known for tracing popular songs’ folkloric roots.

In *Read ‘Em and Weep*, his 1925 book of “songs you forgot to remember,” Spaeth wrote of “Erie Canal,” “This seems to be a real folk song.” Spaeth had acquired the song from George S. Chappell, a Connecticut architect and raconteur who also was Carl Sandburg’s informant for a version Sandburg published in his 1927 book *American Songbag*, which ranked the tune among those of “vulgar birth.”

Berkeley, California, folklorist R.W. Gordon had doubts about Spaeth’s and Sandburg’s claims for “Erie Canal.” Receiving the “Erie Canal” lyric by letter in the mid-’20s, Gordon wrote privately that “certain things about it make me fairly certain that it originated on the vaudeville stage rather than on the canal, and that it is not very old.”

Gordon was not alone. In 1928, Allen’s publisher, F.B. Haviland, sued Doubleday, Page, & Co., publisher of Spaeth’s book, alleging copyright infringement and seeking \$25,000 in damages. At trial in 1930 in New York City, Doubleday’s lawyers had two expert witnesses sing the song for the jury and discuss their experiences with it. Erie County, New York, State Surrogate Judge Louis B. Hart, a prolific song collector, said he had learned

Monsters of Folk

Pete Seeger and Bruce Springsteen perform in DC for Barack Obama’s 2009 inauguration.



“Erie Canal” in 1906. John Jacob Niles, by now regarded as “Dean of American Balladeers,” said he had learned the song in 1900. The trial also pointed out a discrepancy between the plaintiff’s version and that published by the defendants.

Thomas Allen’s lyric reads “Fifteen years on the Erie Canal;” Spaeth’s, “fifteen miles.” The variation sets apart versions that claim Allen as a source versus the alleged traditional versions. Jurors rejected Haviland’s infringement claim. “I believe that the song was a

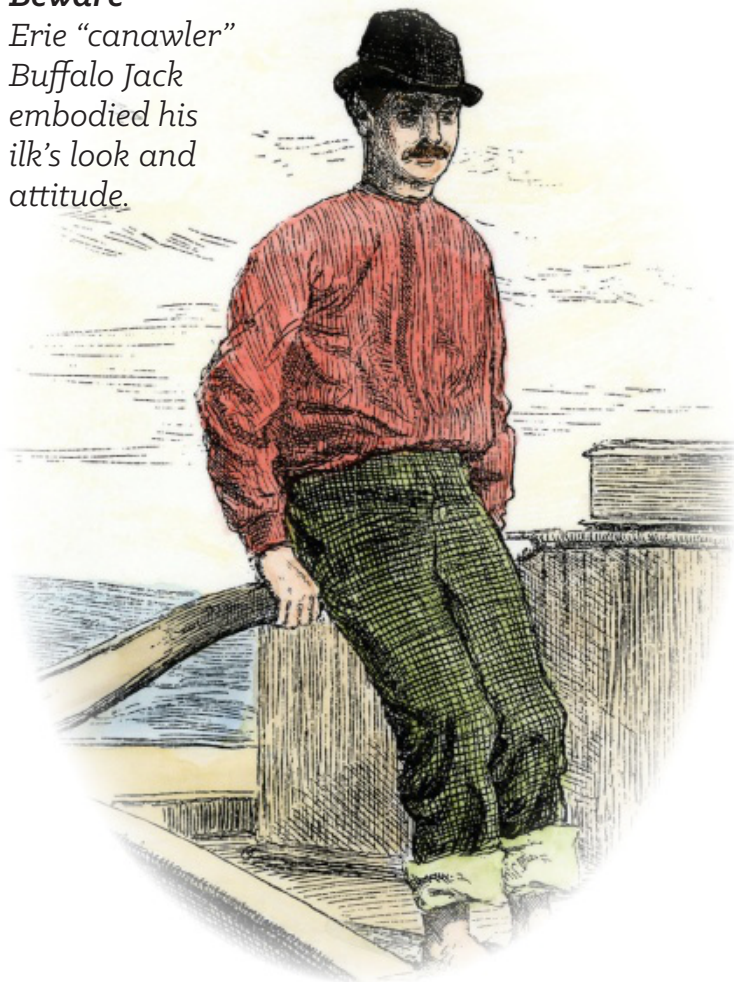
folk song in the public domain before plaintiff’s copyright,” Judge F.J. Coleman wrote in his summation. “Allen, who sold it to the plaintiff, is dead and we have no evidence of his authorship...Two witnesses testified to having heard the song many years prior to the date of the copyright and it is impossible to doubt their sincerity.”

Haviland had to pay the defense’s legal fees and the singing witnesses’ travel costs. Alan Lomax’s 1933 *American Ballads and Folk Songs* includes both Allen’s published version and one similar to Chappell’s that Lomax collected from Reverend Charles A. Richmond. The lyrics disagree, parting ways on Allen’s “fifteen miles” and Richmond’s “fifteen years.” Nonetheless, in 1939, New York folklorist Harold Thompson stated in his exhaustive survey of that state’s folklore, *Body, Boots, & Britches*, that he never had heard a canal worker sing “Erie Canal,” instead flatly attributing the song to Thomas Allen. Thompson’s endorsement may reflect the fade from the collective memory of the 1930 court decision rejecting Allen’s claim to authorship, perhaps presaging the acceptance of Allen’s dubious authorship reflected in the Seeger Sessions liner notes and countless other publications. —*Musician and journalist Tyler Bagwell is writing a folk-music history of Buffalo, New York, from which he adapted this article.*

Buffalo Gals

Beware

Erie “canawler”
Buffalo Jack
embodied his
ilk’s look and
attitude.



smaller canals spread from New Hampshire to Georgia. Ill-advised, poorly surveyed, and pitched with unrealistic expectations of cost and future traffic, these undertakings rapidly exhausted their private capital and began tapping state budgets. States sold bonds to fund canals, fueling a bubble that burst in 1837. In the ensuing recession several states defaulted on bonds.

The Panic of '37 did not end the American canal's brief golden age—the steam engine did. Calamity was baked into progress. On July 4, 1828, the C&O Canal staged an official groundbreaking near Georgetown, the Maryland port adjoining the capital and the eastern terminus of the canal. The same day in Baltimore, 40 miles north, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad broke ground. By the mid-1830s, steam-powered locomotives able to operate year-round, in contrast to frozen canals, were pulling trains of freight cars faster and more heavily loaded than canal boats. Canals that did not freeze over competed favorably with trains for a decade before rail rates undercut those for canals. During this interregnum, the canal was king. Towns grew rapidly along the watery thoroughfares and with them a way of life and a pattern of settlement that would repeat on a grand scale when transcontinental railroads arrived in 1869.

An otherwise unpromising settlement on the south shore of New York's Lake Onondaga had gone through seven names by the time the Erie Canal was authorized. The Post Office rejected the eighth, “Corinth,” because New York already had a Corinth. In 1820, about 250 people lived in the no-name town, which owed its existence salt ponds on the far side of the lake from which locals made a living drying and harvesting the flavoring agent.

In 1825, the year the Erie Canal was completed, the village, now home to 600, incorporated as Syracuse, New York, and was nameless no more. In 1828, the Oswego Canal, linking the Erie Canal to Lake Ontario, passed

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Comfort and Speed

Above, an 1847 poster. Right, DeWitt Clinton
pours Lake Erie water into the ocean.



Eras at Odds

In the 1830s, Lockport, left, was a thriving canal town. The railroad's arrival ended that heyday.



Syracuse, and by the 1830 census 11,000 people lived there. A similar narrative unspooled west at Rochester, which also provided a connection between the Erie and Lake Ontario and benefited from the rapids on the Genesee River, whose speed and volume drove multiple mills. The Erie Canal funneled much Midwestern grain to New York—and all along the route, thanks to those rapids, Rochester was best situated to mill that grain. By 1838, the town was known as “Flour City.”

Canals enjoyed a brief American heyday. By 1900 every major canal but the Erie was in disarray. Some waterways were being used for local haulage; others were backfilled and repurposed as railbeds or roadways. Even the

Erie, designed to carry 1.5 million tons of freight yearly, eventually staggered, and largely was replaced in 1918 by the New York State Barge Canal. Where canals do survive, their traffic has been largely reduced to recreation and tourism. Even with a boom in shipments since 2010, the entire New York state canal system—which includes both the Barge Canal and the Erie Canal, as well as numerous feeder lines, saw only about 200,000 tons of freight traffic in 2017. ★

Canal Continuity

From the start, travelers took to America's canals for business and pleasure. By day, passengers could lounge inside a reasonably capacious cabin stocked with seating and reading material or climb topside to enjoy the scenery—always alert to a cry of “Low bridge!” which demanded a quick leap to a lower spot to avoid a collision with a bridge built just high enough to let a canal boat pass.

Travelers did not complain about meals aboard, but they did gripe about the sleeping arrangements. Daytime congeniality evaporated when stewards unfolded Murphy-style bunks from cabin walls, leaving little navigating room. New York City Mayor Philip Hone described fellow passengers “packed on narrow shelves fastened to the sides of the boat like dead pigs in a Cincinnati pork warehouse.” Of a night on a canal boat, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote, “Forgetting that my berth was hardly so wide as a coffin, I turned suddenly over, and fell like an avalanche on the floor, to the disturbance of the whole community of sleepers.”

Railroads and highways made canals impractical but often left their

beauty intact. The longest canals have always had recreational users—initially swells on sight-seeing excursions—but now canal recreational traffic dwarfs commercial traffic. Towpaths are now bicycle and pedestrian trails serving cities that grew along the waterways. Passenger vessels are back, albeit way snazzier than their ancestors. Some luxe canal cruises go 16 days.

A landmark moment in this shift occurred in 1954, when Associate U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a noted outdoorsman and conservation advocate, began to fight a

plan to make the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal into a federal highway. In a letter to *The Washington Post* Douglas challenged the paper's editors to a hike. “Take time off and come with me,” he said. “We would go with packs on our backs and walk the 185 miles to Cumberland.”

The editors accepted. Joined by dozens of other interested individuals, the expedition set out on March 20, 1954, as a party of 58. Only nine hikers—including Douglas—completed the trek, but the publicity torpedoed the highway scheme. Since 1971, the canal has been a national park.

—Richard Jensen

Supreme Effort

Thanks to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, the C&O Canal became a popular national park.



Not Entirely Normal Lens

Photojournalist Jim Marshall
saw things his own way

*Rolling Stone Brian Jones and Jimi Hendrix
at the Monterey Pop Festival, Monterey,
California, 1967*





John Coltrane
outside his house
in Queens, New
York, 1963

**Mrs. Fannie Lee
Chaney** at home in
Meridian, Mississippi,
hearing of the death
of her son James, a
civil rights worker
slain by night riders,
Ramparts, 1964

**Robbie Robertson,
Michael McClure,
Bob Dylan, and
Allen Ginsberg,**
North Beach, San
Francisco, 1965



PHOTOS BY JIM MARSHALL. FROM "JIM MARSHALL: SHOW ME THE PICTURE" BY AMELIA DAVIS. PUBLISHED BY CHRONICLE BOOKS 2019



Joan Baez and The Freedom Singers participating in the trial run for the March on Washington through Newport, Rhode Island, during the Newport Folk Festival, July 1963 (Selection from a proof sheet)



Jim Marshall at Woodstock, Bethel, New York, 1969

O

nce upon a time in America, not everybody had and used a camera. Serious photography was the province of a relative few, and of those few an infinitesimal fraction deserved to be called artists. One of the latter, Jim Marshall (1936-2010), personified that complicated breed. Tetchy, ever on the move, Marshall acquired and honed his skills and sensibility working the streets of San Francisco, where he came of age. Through timing, guile, bravado, and a gift for perceiving and seizing opportunity he vaulted to star status, in the process inserting himself into history. Among other scenes, Marshall covered the nascent 1960s civil rights movement and the musicians of the day, and, whether framing celebrity or anonymity, always obeyed the axiom, "Get closer." *Show Me the Picture*, new from Chronicle Books, combines penetrating essays on Marshall the artist and Marshall the man by a variety of writers to complement a wealth of compelling Marshall images, some familiar from ubiquity, others resoundingly fresh in their power and humanity. — Michael Dolan is editor of American History.



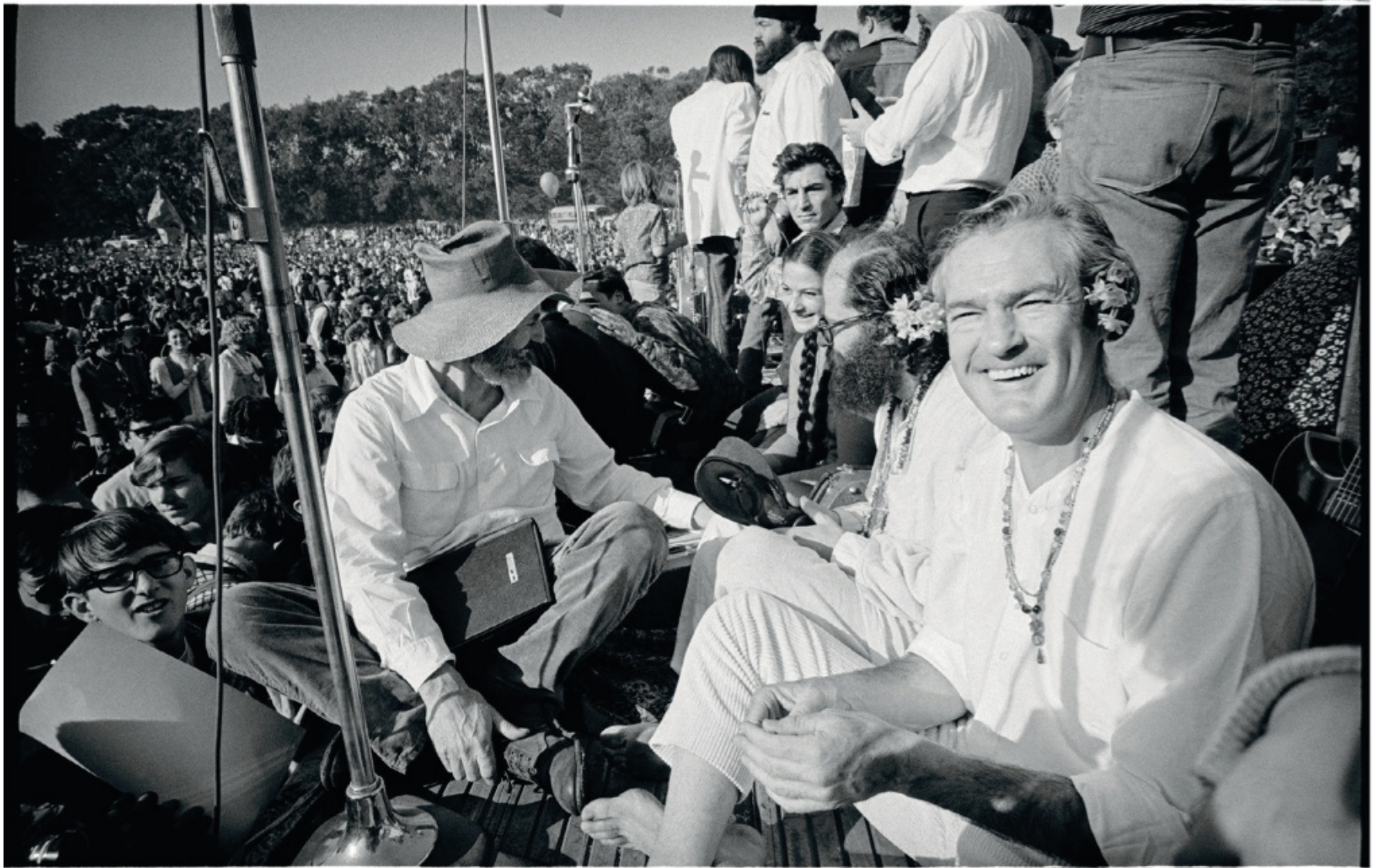
Jim Marshall:
Show Me the Picture
By Amelia Davis,
Chronicle Books, 2019
chroniclebooks.com

The last free concert
on Haight Street in
San Francisco by the
Grateful Dead before
the band moved to
Marin County,
California, 1968

**Gary Snyder,
Allen Ginsberg, and
Timothy Leary** at
the Human Be-In,
Golden Gate Park,
San Francisco, 1967

Thelonious Monk,
left, with daughter
Barbara, wife Nellie,
and son Thelonious Jr.
in their apartment's
kitchen, New York
City, 1963



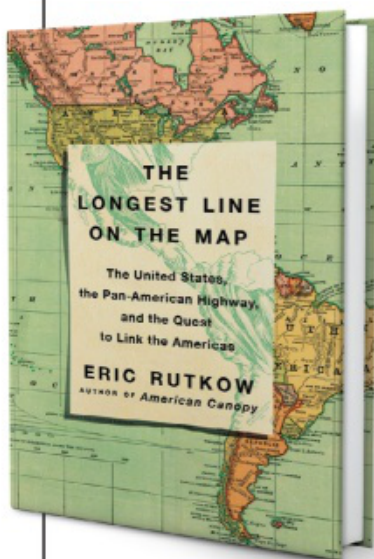


PHOTOS BY JIM MARSHALL. FROM "JIM MARSHALL: SHOW ME THE PICTURE" BY AMELIA DAVIS. PUBLISHED BY CHRONICLE BOOKS 2019



Journey's End
In 1937 engineers from Brazil reached Washington, DC, after a nine-year slog along the proposed Pan-Am Highway route.

PAVED WITH PROMISES



The Longest Line on the Map: The United States, the Pan-American Highway, and the Quest to Link the Americas

By Erik Rutkow
Simon & Schuster,
2019; \$30

Eric Rutkow's *The Longest Line on the Map* purports to concern itself with America's "other great twentieth-century hemispheric infrastructure project," but scarcely delivers on that claim. That the Americas join at the isthmus of Panama is a tectonic accident, which, given the planet's four-billion-year history, happened almost yesterday—about three million years ago, geologists say.

Yet location is what makes real estate valuable, and so that wasp-waisted ribbon of land has figured large in the belief north of the border that the United States necessarily has an interest in the affairs not only of adjoining nations, but all jurisdictions on this unitary New World landmass. As far back as 1823's Monroe Doctrine, American statesmen viewed South and Central America as deserving protection from Europe, and as a market for goods made in the USA. Rutkow touches briefly on that early history before pivoting to Hinton Rowan Helper—a diplomat, huckster,

and unalloyed racist with a vision of connecting the United States and South America by rail.

Helper is only one of many Americans in this tale of greed, slippery salesmanship, politics, and hubris, as investors race to lace Central America with railroads.

That the most successful of these undertakings morphed into the United Fruit Company, hardly an embodiment of Pan-American economic exchange and mutual benefit, says volumes about the motives impelling this first round of road-building. The second round began as a '30s-era public-works highway project infused with urgency during World War II, given the Panama Canal's strategic significance. That urgency persisted and intensified afterwards, with the highway hawked as a bulwark against communism.

Boosters sang of benefits to be had from highway-driven free trade, but the venture sank into the swamps of Darien, in no small

part because the States feared the importation of cattle carrying hoof-and-mouth disease and a flood of cocaine grown and processed in Colombia, just over the Panamanian border.

Line is well-researched and well-written, and Rutkow skillfully knits about a century of history into a cogent narrative. However, the picture that emerges is of a committee trying

to push a rope uphill. Unlike kindred massive projects—the transcontinental railroad, the Panama Canal, the interstate highway system—nobody was hungering for a Pan-American highway. This tale is not of economic inevitability, but of dreamers and their dream-scape. —**Richard Jensen is a freelance writer in Sioux City, South Dakota.**

STATUE STORY

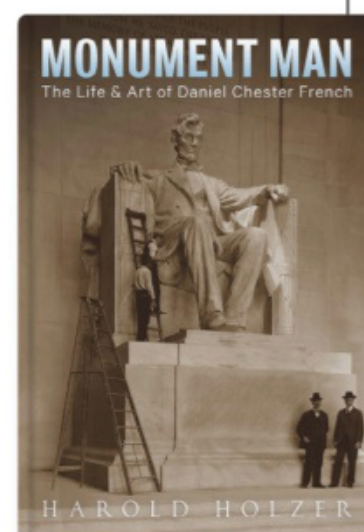
In youth Daniel French, son of a judge and one-time college president, displayed an interest in birds as well as in carving turnips, clay, wood, gypsum, and plaster. Sculpting became his niche. He advanced to sketching images and assigning the chiseling to others, often one or more of the six similarly talented Piccirilli brothers. French was “primarily a modeler, not a carver,” Holzer observes.

French did carve his first big job, in 1873. His adoptive home town, Concord, Massachusetts, commissioned a Minuteman to be cast of bronze from Civil War cannons. To nail his figure’s physiognomy and garments, the 23-year-old college dropout at first worked naked, using himself as a model. The result triggered a stream of work: a bust of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who patiently sat for 20 sessions while French captured the aged essayist’s inner man; a statue of college founder John Harvard, executed despite a lack of physical descriptions; and one of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, namesake of a college for the hearing impaired, with his friend Alice Cogswell, who inspired his interest in improving educational opportunities for the deaf. French studied birds’ wings to accompany the educators’ memorial. Winged figures adorn others among his most admired works, and he maintained a lifelong passion for incorporating into even large creations small but telling details, a characteristic Holzer brings to his accounts of the sculptor’s life and projects.

There followed works on a heroic scale—an equestrian statue of Ulysses S. Grant located at the foot of Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, a mounted George Washington given France in

gratitude for the Statue of Liberty, Abraham Lincoln standing pensively in the Emancipator’s namesake Nebraska capital. In 1911, at the urging of the National Commission on Fine Arts, which French chaired, the Lincoln Memorial Commission recommended that French’s friend and collaborator, Henry Bacon, submit ideas for a structure to house a French work and the largest American statue ever. French’s elegiac Lincoln, dedicated in 1922 with an aged Robert Lincoln at hand, has acquired a secular spirituality as a backdrop for events as similar and dissimilar as Marian Anderson’s 1939 concert, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, protests against war and poverty, and a recent tweet-ready rumpus involving MAGA hats.

The artist, for his last 27 years a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, happily spent those decades filling gaps in that institution’s holdings in American sculptures and antiquities. Holzer thoroughly documents and engagingly tells how French discovered, embraced, and implemented his genius. —**Richard Culyer writes in Hartsville, South Carolina.**



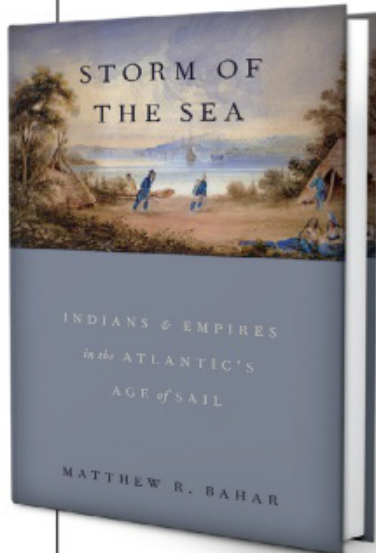
Monument Man: The Life and Art of Daniel Chester French

By Harold Holzer
Princeton Architectural Press, 2019; \$35

Pieces of Abe

In 1920, a stone carver, foreground, and crew assemble the French statue that is the centerpiece of his memorial to President Abraham Lincoln.

MARITIME TIMES



***Storm of the Sea:
Indians & Empires
in the Atlantic's
Age of Sail***

By Matthew R. Bahar
Oxford University Press, 2018; \$35

In the early 1500s, inhabitants of the region along what became the border between Maine and Canada stood on their beaches, watching strange white objects approach by sea. Perplexity turned to astonishment as native peoples tried to wrap their minds and experience around sailing ships. Coming into contact with the nautical newcomers, the natives reacted to their vessels as we *should* expect technological primitives to do—by studying those ships and becoming as proficient in their use as the Europeans introducing them.

In *Storm*, Bahar tells how, along the coast of the North American continent washed by the northwestern Atlantic, tribes ultimately unified as the Wabanaki Confederation persistently and successfully resisted colonial encroachment not by rejecting European ways but by adapting those ways to their own purposes—notably by embracing sailing technology. Already expert as mariners whose survival depended on saltwater fishing, the Wabanaki responded to the white man's arrival not only by becoming highly valued and well-paid navigators on foreign vessels but also by building a European-style fleet. The Wabanaki bought, stole, and occasionally even built the ships with which they were able to establish local naval supremacy.

Through that supremacy and Europeans' reliance on their homeland for trade, the Wabanaki emerged as a regional power politically, economically, and militarily. Their leaders crossed the Atlantic to meet Continental monarchs. Tribesmen avidly followed international relations and internal English politics, capitalizing on British domestic disputes and the Anglo-French rivalry. The Wabanaki became expert at economic diplomacy, enabling them to fight English colonists to a standstill without needing active allies, their status declining only after the French and Indian War ended with them bereft of trading

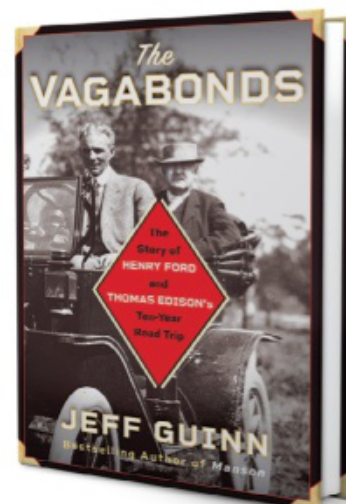
partners from whom they could obtain the supplies necessary to maintain their fight.

Popular portrayals of the American Indian tend to reduce their subject to marauding villains or heroic victims. Less obvious is the patronizing stereotype implicit in both familiar portrayals—that of a people nobly or foolishly fighting inexorable technological and societal advancement. *Storm of the Sea*, depicting as it does Native Americans willing and able to beat Europeans at their own games, demolishes that *reductio ad absurdum*.

—James Baresel is a freelance writer living in Front Royal, Virginia.

ROAD TRIP!

Every year between 1914 and 1924, a pair of notables took auto tours across America. They met presidents, endured mild discomfort in a rural America unprepared to accommodate tourists, and left plenty of stories that fill journalist Guinn's lively 320-page chronicle. By this time Thomas Edison's spectacular days were behind him, but he remained America's iconic inventor. Henry Ford, 16 years younger, once worked at an Edison company, admired the inventor, and, after a 1911 visit to Edison's New Jersey lab, invested in Edison projects, none of which panned out. During a 1914 visit to Edison's Florida home, the men hired guides and drove into the Everglades for a sodden ordeal both enjoyed enough to begin



***The Vagabonds:
The Story of Henry
Ford and Thomas
Edison's Ten-Year
Road Trip***

By Jeff Guinn
Simon & Schuster, 2019; \$28

making yearly auto trips.

Even then, America was awash in cars, but most drivers stayed in town. In the hinterlands, paved roads were rare; road signs hadn't come into fashion. The drive-in filling station had debuted in 1913, but stores still were selling gasoline by the can. The first motel did not appear until 1925. Travelers camped for the night on someone's property. However, Edison and Ford were not inclined to rough it. Edison provided a battery to power lights and, when necessary, a telephone. Ford deployed a caravan hauling tents, stoves, food, camp gear, and spare parts, plus servants—though despite the inevitable breakdowns, no mechanics. Ford could fix anything. The trip also attracted reporters and news-reel camera crews.

Guinn records the occasional hike, tree-felling contest, and nature lesson. The travelers communed in their tents for conversations lost to history. What survives is a celebrity road trip that galvanized backwoods America. The pair often yielded to small-town leaders' pleading for speeches, posing for photos, enduring interviews, and dispensing advice and sometimes largesse. The buzz they generated faded as America entered the 1920s and other distractions emerged. In 1925, Edison, 78, citing his health, begged off. The trips never resumed.

Edison invented nothing of consequence during this period, which saw Ford, a one-trick pony, stick to making Model T's in a market gravitating to higher-tech vehicles. Guinn pays attention to larger issues, but mostly he delivers an entertaining picture of a United States entering the automobile age and makes a good case that these overhyped expeditions made a major contribution.
—Mike Oppenheim writes in Lexington, Kentucky.



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AN AMERICAN PLACE



Roosevelt Island...

...in New York City's East River, has had multiple monikers. The Lenape tribe said "Minnehanonck;" Dutch colonizers, "Varkens Eylandt." Under British rule, a prideful owner dubbed his holding Blackwell's Island. New York City bought the property in 1828 for \$32,000, plus \$20,000 to settle a lawsuit. In 1832 the city began building and running, often badly, a profusion of facilities—hospitals, insane asylums, workhouses, penitentiaries—hence the title of Stacy Horn's new book. In *Damnation Island: Poor, Sick, Mad and Criminal in 19th-Century New York* (Algonquin.com), Horn vividly recounts mucky doings on Blackwell's Island raked into public focus by Nellie Bly, William Rogers, and other crusading newshawks. In 1872, convicts doing time there built a lighthouse at the north tip of what in the 1920s officially became Hospital Island, and which by the 1950s was generally abandoned. In the 1960s the premises underwent redevelopment into mixed-income housing complexes accessible by bridge, subway, and tram. Some 12,000 Manhattanites now live there. The current name, bestowed in 1973, became more pertinent in 2012, when the southernmost four of the island's 147 acres became home to Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, above. —Michael Dolan is editor of American History.



Now a homey locale, Roosevelt Island once was a lazaretto on which the city confined smallpox patients, housed in a Gothic Revival facility, inset, designed by James Renwick Jr.

40
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freedom of worship*



*freedom from want
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