

# LEGACY

A Journal of Student Scholarship

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Volume 6

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A Publication of the Sigma Kappa Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta  
& the Southern Illinois University Carbondale History Department

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## Sarah B. Hanson

### Advice Books and Love Letters: Courtship in the Late Colonial Period

The Late Colonial Period (1750-1800) was witness to more autonomous courting behaviors than Americans had experienced in previous centuries. For one, parental control over the selection of a mate was dwindling, while the idea of romantic love was an increasingly prevalent factor in the choosing of a life-long partner. In the Late Colonial Period, correspondence between courting couples evolved from brief exchanges into flowing love letters. In addition, the idea of romantic love was gradually more stressed in advice literature, poetry, and fiction. It is clear that, between 1741 and 1794, the concept of romantic love was progressively more widespread, especially among members of the middle and upper classes.<sup>1</sup> Contradictory to the concept of romantic love, it is apparent from advice literature that property and social status were still factors in the determining of a partner. For instance, *The Lover's Instructor* told men, "Let not your principal concern be your lady's portion, but her family and alliances."<sup>2</sup> However, there were indications that young couples went against what advice books wrote and chose their mates on compatibility, rather than on social status or parental influence. For example, in 1782, Mary Pearson, whose father was a preceptor at Charleston Academy, began secretly courting Ephraim Abbot, a charity student at Harvard who held no property and had little money.<sup>3</sup> When looking at the balance of power, parental influence, as well as romantic love, and comparing advice literature and love letters, there were evident disparities between what people were told to do, and what actions they ultimately chose for themselves.

In the period of this study, the Revolutionary War signaled the split of the colonies from England and the founding of a new nation. With this came more liberal ideas that can be seen in our Constitution, for instance, freedom of speech and freedom of press. It can be assumed that this split further increased freedom of thought. Thus, courting behaviors of the Late Colonial Period were directly changed by who chose the courtier. It was young people themselves, not their parents, who decided their mates. However,

parents ultimately retained what the historian Ellen K. Rothman called, "the right to be consulted."<sup>4</sup> Various historians have theorized that women had less choice of a mate than their male counterparts, but retained the right to refuse courtiers.<sup>5</sup> Henceforth, circumstances surrounding accepted courting behaviors of the Late Colonial Period included that the pair usually become acquainted through family or social functions, such as balls and church. When a young man was interested in a woman, he would inform her parents of his intentions. If the young lady accepted the gentleman's advances, the couple would begin courting through (usually) supervised interviews and calls in the parlor, and through correspondence.<sup>6</sup> This correspondence constitutes the love letters referred to in this analysis.

Also in the Late Colonial Period, there was a plethora of advice books directing young couples on how to court. These advice manuals consisted of almanacs, sample letters, and personal accounts in order to instruct on the etiquette and moral virtues of courting. Importantly, these advice books are often historically referred to as "courtesy books." Courtesy books focused on both sociability and morality, and could be applied to all classes.<sup>7</sup> In lieu of courtesy books, nineteenth-century America and England witnessed the rise of etiquette manuals that were modeled after the aristocracy.<sup>8</sup> These Victorian Era etiquette books complacently ignored moral virtue and, instead, sought after a rigorous, unattainable etiquette for a growing working class. Still, advice books read during the Late Colonial Period were classified as courtesy books, rather than etiquette manuals.

With advice books, readership defined who may have used the guides. In Michael Curtin's article, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," he noted that courtesy books were written for the middle and upper classes, and mainly for urban life. Thus, advice books were written for literate persons. In an age with no permanent educational system, it can be supposed that people who could afford education, and had the social wherewithal to use them, did so. For instance, a poor farmer who could not read or write, would not write a love letter or read an advice book, whereas a son of a politician probably would. *The Lover's Instructor* spoke of marrying women of good status in the hope of inheriting money.<sup>9</sup> In the middle and upper classes, family alliance was essential to status. Therefore, it can be argued that the literate middle and upper classes read advice literature. Furthermore, author Michael Curtin argued that mostly males read

courtesy books. After all, middle to upper class men were educated in all subjects, while women remained confined to learning sewing, cooking, and being a good wife.

Accordingly, advice literature of the Late Colonial Period made obvious efforts to coerce women to be subservient to their courtiers. Advice about the power balance in courting couples was clear; the female had to be dutiful to her soon-to-be husband because in marriage she bore the brunt of housework and was to be a good wife. In one advice book, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Really nature and the circumstances of human life, seem to design for man that superiority, and to invest him with a directing power in the more difficult and important affairs of life."<sup>10</sup> Obviously, a man's "directing power" was meant for affairs outside of the house because Franklin later commented on the "incumbent" subordination of women to household matters.<sup>11</sup> *The Virginia and North Carolina Almanac* for 1760 reminded bachelors that women were vital to marriage because they loved their husbands, raised the children, and cleaned house.<sup>12</sup> In addition, women remained less educated than men and this was duly analyzed in many manuals. *A Series of Letters on Courtship and Marriage* said, "But gentlemen, I would beg leave to observe that the common education of young ladies is chiefly extended no farther than to superficial and exterior accomplishments."<sup>13</sup> Women's confined roles in society defined their obvious subservience. In addition, a woman's goal in life was to find a good husband. In Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, he reminded future wives that, "the most laudable ambition is to be wife, and the greatest wisdom is to be good."<sup>14</sup> *The Lover's Almanac* suggested that qualities required for men and women in relationships differed. While a man needed property, a woman needed good looks and domesticity.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, *The Lover's Instructor* reminded men to choose women who were religious, domestic, and dependent.<sup>16</sup>

Also evident from advice literature is men held the power to choose women; that is, men courted women, not the other way around. One advice book warned men: "Neither suffer great expectations to betray you into a state of servile independence; you will then become the slave to the humor of a person whose fortune you hope to inherit."<sup>17</sup> This quote and the directions for choosing a wife were written in the actual preface to *The Lover's Instructor*. The fact that these ideas were written in the preface again show that men had to have read this advice literature because a lot of emphasis was put on a man's choice of whom he would court. An analysis of advice magazines from the Late Colonial Period noted

that most discussions occurred where men overtly held the power.<sup>18</sup> Thus, while advice prepared men for choosing a mate, it coached women on how to dress, what to read, and how to act. In *The Lover's Almanac*, the author gave an example of a lady, Delia D---, who had beauty of the body and mind. The almanac spoke of her "soft blue eyes," "silken eyebrows," and "lovely cheeks."<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, *The Virginia and North Carolina Almanac* explained how lovely and amiable women were supposed to sooth hardworking men.<sup>20</sup> The ideal Late Colonial Period woman presented in advice literature was the picture of perfection, but that reality was hard to obtain.

While advice literature conveyed explicit male power, love letters and personal accounts suggest that females may have held their own kind of covert power. Women were the ones who were able (most of the time) to reject or accept courtiers. Actual love letters from the Late Colonial Period communicated that while males openly expressed their love for women, many women conveyed their fears, openly rejected their suitors, or played coquette. In a letter from Benjamin Franklin to Madame Brillon in 1779, he begged for her affection and urged her to stop being "playful" with him.<sup>21</sup> In a letter from a woman named Eliza to Stephron, she candidly said, "And when I am properly convinced that I am the object of your affections, it will be time enough for me to acknowledge it."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in the example of Mary Pearson and Ephraim Abbot, "At times, Mary was both overwhelmed by Ephraim's love and mistrustful of it..."<sup>23</sup> These examples show the upper hand women sometimes held in keeping their suitors at bay while they felt out the relationship and thought about the final implication of the courtship: marriage. For obvious reasons, women were less apt to express their feelings because they had more at risk if marriage was proposed. A poem from 1773 exclaimed, "But she regrets how soon the pleasure ends, laments her absence from her much loved friends."<sup>24</sup> Nicole Eustace, in "The Cornerstone of a Copious Work: Love and Power in Eighteenth Century Courtship" explained that women often remained mum with their feelings since they had more at stake during courtship; because of the real implications that women faced in marriage — loss of family, moving away from home, loss of freedom, and being confined to household work and less play — they would often not speak of their true feelings.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, even various pieces of advice literature pointed out that women sacrificed their families and friends when entering into marriage. *The Virginia and North Carolina Almanac* stated, "For your sake, she has left father and mother and all the dearest connections of life."<sup>26</sup>

These ideas certainly fit with the societal roles surrounding women and marriage in the Colonial Period, and thus remain as possible motivators for why women were less apt to express their emotions. In comparing and contrasting advice literature versus real life, it is certainly notable that advice literature was more apt to convey male power, while in real life, females held more covert power once in the relationship. This covert power can be seen with a woman's choice whether to court or marry a suitor, and to sometimes keep that suitor at bay while deciding her feelings and attitudes towards the relationship.

In addition to the balance of power, parental influence in courtship was also presented differently in advice literature and in actual love letters and accounts. While advice literature told courting couples to include parents and family in their decisions and choices, in real life it was variable mix of secretly courting and going against familial decisions, or courting according to parental decisions. Ultimately, advice literature usually stressed including parents in their decisions because, as mentioned before, family alliance was important to the literate people who read these books. As such, in a magazine analysis from 1741-1794, happiness, wealth, and status were the most discussed motives for entering a marriage.<sup>27</sup> Courting couples sought to match with a person of equal or higher status, so family was important to obtain this. All the same, advice literature of the Late Colonial Period conveyed the importance of parental approval.

In writing his *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, Benjamin Franklin explained why parental approval was so important in the courting process. He said, "There is a certain authority lodged in parents over their children, and in consequence thereof, a certain obedience due from children to their parents."<sup>28</sup> The *Art of Courting* is in itself an interesting piece of work because it contained real letters which seem to go against other advice books of the time period, as well as sample love letters to show couples how to court and not to court. Thus, the book offered a satiric sample letter of warning in the example of Bragadotius and Numskulida. The comedic name Bragadotius undoubtedly referred to arrogant, headstrong young men. Meanwhile, Numskuldia described the uneducated female, a societal stereotype. This fictional couple planned a secret engagement against Numskuldia's father's wishes. When Numskuldia's father found out, Bragadotius was inevitably run out of town and banned from corresponding with Numskuldia. This example of advice literature explained how

familial disapproval could undo a courtship.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, *The Lover's Almanac* also encouraged parents to take part in the courting process, by stating in the forecast for the month of May, "Marry your daughters."<sup>30</sup> Also comparable, Daniel Defoe's *Religious Courtship* offered the case of a religious family whose daughters "... had several gentlemen who made honorable and handsome proposals to their father for their marriage"<sup>31</sup> In another instance, in a sample letter from Thomas Lovewell to a young lady's father, he requested, "... by your influence, that I may approve myself worthy to you of that honor, to commend myself to her approbation."<sup>32</sup> *The Complete Letter Writer* offered several sample letters for gentlemen to follow in order to request an interview with a young lady.<sup>33</sup> Even other family members could become involved in the courting process. One model letter noted the interference of an aunt attempting to convince her nephew to become a better courtier and win the lady back who had rejected him.<sup>34</sup> Poetry also conveyed the importance of parental help. As such, in "Jonathan's Courtship," his mother dressed and prepared him to call on a milkmaid named Sal. As the poem proclaimed, "Always mind your mother."<sup>35</sup> According to almanacs and advice books, it was the supposed norm for courtiers to propose marriage or courting to the father first in order to obtain familial consent.

Perhaps love letters and journal entries are more tell-tale of how men courted women. Evidence suggests a mix of parental influence, and most of the time, parents, and family were included, or a least consulted in decisions. However, the following examples present the opposite idea. In Robert Bolling's journals chronicling his courtship with an Anne Miller, the two distant cousins were involved in "... the same group of young gentry involved in the social whirl of parties, dances, and entertainments in Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, and Prince George counties."<sup>36</sup> Both parents approved of the match, but Anne inevitably chose to court other men of whom her parents disapproved. Anne even married one of them, Peyton Skipworth.<sup>37</sup> Even more interesting was the fact that Anne Miller was of a lower class than Robert Bolling. While she was tutored at home, Bolling, a member of the Virginian aristocracy, studied abroad in England.<sup>38</sup> Class influenced their relationship because of the family inheritance and union at stake. Though Anne may not have been as wealthy as Robert, their family alliances marked approval of their courtship. When courting other men, Anne went against her parent's wishes and the societal norm of "marrying up."<sup>39</sup> In a related case in point, in *A History of Courting*, author E.S. Turner

offered an example of a young lady, also named Anne, who was in love with one man, but forced by her father to court someone else. To her forced courtier she wrote, "I therefore seize this opportunity of issuing you that your attempts are fruitless as they are pitiful, and my heart being engaged to a more worthy object I am determined to die before I sacrifice my hand."<sup>40</sup> In response, her more worthy object offered a proposal, "My dear Anne, apprised of your father's cruelty, and the baseness of your intended husband, I think in this case an elopement both praiseworthy and proper."<sup>41</sup>

Statistical information also provides confirmation of the decline of parental influence in courtships. Historical demographer Robert Wells estimated that around 1750, one to three percent of births took place outside of marriage.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, the premarital custom of bundling may have contributed to this. When a couple bundled, they were allowed to spend the night together in the same bed, but were often tied down or separated by a bundling board. "In the view of some historians, bundling may have emerged as an eighteenth-century compromise between persistent parental control and the pressures of the young to subvert traditional family authority."<sup>43</sup> Also, though many courtesy books denoted parental supervision of their children, in the reality of the Late Colonial Period, young people were free to go to un-chaperoned balls, visits, and on walks.<sup>44</sup> Ellen Rothman offered the example of David Shepard, Jr. of Massachusetts who, in his journal entries, wrote of the alone time he spent cuddling with "his girl" Ellen.<sup>45</sup>

While some went against parental advice, many seemed to have followed what advice books said and courted properly, that is with consent, interviews, and proper correspondence. In a letter from Robert Burns to his sweetheart, he said, "Cursed etiquette forbids your seeing me right now."<sup>46</sup> Though some courting couples may not have liked structured courtships, they appeared to have followed the rules of proper courting anyway. Young ladies and gentlemen probably courted by the book because their more conservative parents wanted them to. After all, it was parents who allowed visitations and ultimately contributed money to the marriage. In considering correlations between advice literature, and real love letters and journals, it appears that when parents may not have had a choice over the courtier, their opinion was highly valued. Thus, in the previous example of Anne eloping against her father's wishes, she eventually wrote him asking for his forgiveness. In her father's reply, he stated, "My dear child, in blaming you I must blame myself; my faults far exceed yours, which I shall endeavor to atone

for by giving (as far as I am able) a handsome allowance to your husband for the support of you both."<sup>47</sup>

In the reality of the Late Colonial Period, many women insisted on their courtiers having an actual relationship with their families prior to marriage. In John Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne, he often ended his letters with, "Remembrances to your mother."<sup>48</sup> In Eliza's letters to Stephron, she commented on the close ties she had with his family.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Stephron often visited Eliza's family without her presence. In one of his letters he stated, "I took my leave of your honored parents and dear family with a heart penetrated with gratitude for the many favors they bestowed on me."<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in Robert Bolling's courtship with Anne Miller, he "... informed Mr. Miller, by message, (and) of my intentions."<sup>51</sup> Perhaps by informing Mr. Miller of his purpose, Robert played himself into Mr. Miller's affections, thus explaining Mr. Miller's favoritism to Robert over Anne's other more ambiguous suitors. Notably, even in today's society, parental approval often plays an important role in dating and marriage.

More than power and parental influence, the romantic love factor was conceivably the most discussed subject in both advice literature and in letters and journals. In advice literature, love was considered an essential factor before marriage. Similarly, in letters and journals, love was definitely a prerequisite for marriage. However, romantic love can not be looked at in the same light as it is in present times. In the Late Colonial Period, passion was not an essential element in romance. Ultimately, advice literature of the time period warned against passion. *The Lover's Instructor* cautioned men, "Avoid her in whom the love of pleasure appears predominant passion."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, *Poor Richard's Almanac* remarked, "Should passion ever his soul deform."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage* explained, "Passions are extremely transient and unsteady."<sup>54</sup> In an example from real love letters, in Thomas Jefferson's ongoing correspondence with Maria Cosway, the two rarely saw each other and never physically consummated their emotions. It was their mutual interests and companionship that constituted the basis of their relationship. Clearly, romantic love of the Late Colonial Period consisted of an openness and sincerity in which courting couples discussed their reasons for marriage and discovered their mutual interests and emotions. As such, *The Virginia and North Carolina Almanac* said of love, "Yes, the sweetest drop in the cup of life is a friend."<sup>55</sup> Though some expressed passion for each other, most did not. Moreover, it can not possibly be proved

how exactly couples expressed this feeling for each other because it was rarely discussed.

In discussions of love, it can be noted that advice literature defined the concept of it, while love letters, poetry, and journals expressed it. An article from *The Lover's Almanac* noted that love as, "It melts the hardest heart, thaws the coldest bosom, enlivens the dullest fancy, beautifies the homeliest face, softens the shrillest voice, sweetens the sourest temper, and enlarges the narrowest soul."<sup>56</sup> Obviously, advice literature sought to tell people how to recognize love when they experienced it. Also from *The Lover's Almanac*, there was an astrological chart predicating weather and love forecasts for the year. For example, the month of April proclaimed cloudy skies, and "Wed for love and work for treasure."<sup>57</sup> While *The Lover's Almanac* provided astrological assistance in preparing for and recognizing love, *The Lover's Instructor* offered examples of love letters for courtiers to examine, including letters rejecting a lover, letters to parents, letters confessing love, and correspondence for courtiers miles apart from each other.<sup>58</sup> Courting advice literature also offered advice for particularly religious couples in Daniel Defoe's *Religious Courtship*, where he explained that the purpose of his work was, "It appears here how essential a share of religion and a harmony of principles in religion are to the felicity of a conjugal life."<sup>59</sup>

While advice literature seemed to prepare young people for courting, love letters and poetry were accordingly used to express feelings of romantic love. Poetry, whether borrowed or personalized, appeared to be a useful way for courtiers to convey their feelings. An example of a published poem from 1773 shows the romantic language prevalent in letters and poems from the Late Colonial Period. "With generous sentiment his heart expands, feels all that friendship, all that love commands."<sup>60</sup> Likewise, in love and correspondence letters, men and women often included a few lines of verse at the end of a letter. One such letter ended with the verse, "Be thou my love, forever true, and constant love shall be thy due."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, another epistle stated the purpose of the woman's letter in the following sentiment, "Tis but to write the dictates of my heart."<sup>62</sup> Robert Bolling often used his journal entries to compose poetry that summed up his feelings for Anne Miller. "For that softness seems to cure/ All the harm they did before. Yet in truth, it doth not heal/ Witness, Love, I suffer still!"<sup>63</sup>

Like poetry, the actual contents of letters were dually used to express emotions as well as hopes, fears, and everyday occurrences. An excellent instance of this was Thomas Jefferson's "Heads

and Hearts" letter to Maria Cosway. Cosway corresponded with Jefferson for thirty years until the time of his death. Though she was married, their letters to each other resemble those of courting couples. Upon leaving Europe after first meeting Cosway, Jefferson composed a note that appeared as an argument between his head and his heart. Jefferson wrote, "Seated by my fireside, solitary and sad, the following dialogue took place between my head and my heart."<sup>64</sup> In this dialogue, Jefferson eloquently analyzed his anxiety of separation from Maria, the unhappiness he carried because she was married, her opinion of him, and how highly he esteemed her. From the view of his heart, Jefferson wrote of his first impressions of her, "Hills, valleys, chateaux, gardens, rivers, every object wore its liveliest hue! Whence did they borrow it? From the presence of our charming companion. They were pleasing, because she seemed pleased."<sup>65</sup> Also romantic, in a letter, from Emilius to Olivia, Emilius wrote, "I need not tell you how much I esteem and love you..."<sup>66</sup> Besides expressing love, some couples openly uttered the pains they felt about being away from their loved one, which was often the case for a corresponding courtship. Alexander Hamilton wrote the following to his future wife, "I am wretched at the idea of flying so far from you, without a single hour's interview, to tell you all my pains and all my love."<sup>67</sup>

Other letters prove that couples were willing to be open with each other on a variety of subjects. In Stephron and Eliza's letters, Stephron told Eliza about another woman who had expressed her love to him, and he even went so far as to include the letter.<sup>68</sup> However, Stephron and Eliza also discussed books, gossip, and religion in their letters, while Thomas Jefferson discussed political matters with Maria Cosway. In a letter from John Keats to Fanny Brawne, he described the misery he felt when she flirted with other men. Hence, the language prevalent in advice books, poetry, and love letters is comparable, though love letters and poetry often sought to convey feelings of love that advice books movingly described.

The purpose of courtship advice books in the Late Colonial Period was to prepare young couples for courting. The ultimate questions that remains is, did the American populace follow this advice? In comparing and contrasting advice literature, versus real love letters and journals, the answer cannot be a simple yes, or no. While advice literature displayed overt male power over females, love letters from females convey that women held covert power by being coy with the expression of their emotions. Similarly, though

literature advised men and women to include parents in premarital decisions, sometimes they did and sometimes they did not. Last, advice almanacs and instruction manuals sought to purvey the feeling of romantic love, while love letters and journals thoroughly expressed the emotion thereof.

However, there is an apparent gap between the ideas that advice manuals purveyed, and reality. This gap ultimately existed because advice manuals upheld unrealistic and unattainable standards for the American youth. In returning to Michael Curtin's article, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," he explained that etiquette books replaced courtesy books because of their emphasis on moral virtue. He wrote, "Most people, so the common argument ran, were superficial observers, easily impressed by a show of good manners, but unable to appreciate the more difficult moral virtues."<sup>69</sup> In advice manuals, women were especially upheld to unachievable principles. In the Late Colonial Period, women not only had to look a certain way, but advice books also told them that they had to be domestic, religious, virtuous, humble, and courteous. Women had to be educated, but not to the extent of males, and they had to be loving, but careful not to express passion. Clearly, these standards made it merely impossible for women to turn what courtesy books said into reality. Hence, advice books served as a guideline of popular beliefs and morés that the populace could choose or not choose to follow in their own courting practices.

## Notes

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- 8 *Ibid.*, 409-12.
- 9 *The Lover's Instructor*, 1.
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- 14 Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac, 1760* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Mecom, 1760), 11.
- 15 *The Lover's Almanac* (Fredericksburg, VA: T. Green), 28.
- 16 *The Lover's Instructor*, 2-3.
- 17 Ibid., 2.
- 18 Lantz, Schmitt, Britton, & Snyder, 416-7.
- 19 *The Lover's Almanac*, 28-30.
- 20 *The Virginia and North Carolina Almanac*, 29.
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- 25 Nicole Eustace, "The Cornerstone of a Copious Work: Love and Power in Eighteenth Century Courtship," *Journal of Social History* 34 (2001): 4-6.
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- 28 Benjamin Franklin, *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage* (London: Wren and W. Hodges, 1784), 34.
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- 30 *The Lover's Almanac*, 7.
- 31 Daniel Defoe, *Religious Courtship* (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews, Faust's Statue, 1794), 6.
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- 38 Ibid., 14-25.
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- 41 Ibid, 117.

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- 48 Antonia Fraser, ed., 76.
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- 52 *The Lover’s Instructor*, 3.
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- 69 Michael Curtain, 401.



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**Jessica E. Little**

## **African Muslims in Slave America: A Distinctive Life Style**

Americans became sharply aware of Islam after the assault on the World Trade Center in September of 2001. Before 9/11, few Americans gave much thought to the fact that Islam was a major religion in the United States with many followers. Actually, Muslims have been in America since the 1600s when some of the first slave ships unloaded their cargo in the New World.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Islam was first introduced to North America by enslaved Africans who had been kidnapped from the Muslim regions of West Africa.<sup>2</sup> Although there is limited indication that their beliefs were perpetuated through the early twentieth century, historical records imply, if not verify, that early African-American Muslims were able to maintain their religion and accompanying lifestyle through at least the colonial and early antebellum periods.

Numerous slaves, particularly those from West Africa, were Muslims. According to Sylviane A. Diouf, "Muslims were among the first Africans to be shipped and among the very last."<sup>3</sup> The lack of definitive information on Muslim slaves is reflective of the general lack of records of Africans who were victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Diouf related that, "It is a fact that most African Muslims, like the great majority of the first Africans in America, remain anonymous or are little more than names in slave lists."<sup>4</sup> However, in the case of Muslims, there were historical accounts of slaves exhibiting practices associated with the Five Pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, alms, pilgrimage, and fasting.<sup>5</sup> These accounts lend credibility to the distinctive role of Muslim slaves in the slave culture of colonial and early antebellum America. There were also narratives and accounts of individual Muslim slaves who exhibited exceptional characteristics and were able to assume leadership status among the slaves because they came to America with an Islamic education that they had received in Africa.

Although records of the African Diaspora are incomplete, estimates of the number of slaves shipped via the Transatlantic Slave Trade from Africa to North America exist for the period from

1505 until the early 1800s, when the slave trade was outlawed in the United States. It has been estimated that as many as eleven million Africans were taken from West Africa across the Atlantic to America and, of that eleven million, as many as 500,000 Africans were taken by force to the British North American colonies.<sup>6</sup>

Finding the approximate number of Muslims who landed in America has proven to be a painstaking task.<sup>7</sup> A publication by the Smithsonian, *Captive Passage*, identified the areas of Africa from which the majority of slaves were taken:

Fueled by the demand for human labor in European enterprises in New York, the transatlantic slave trade would bring millions of Africans to bondage in the Americas from eight major slave-trading regions—Senegambia, Upper Guinea, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, The Congo, and Angola.<sup>8</sup>

James Ciment narrowed the region from which the majority of the Muslim slaves came. The Islamic regions of Africa, including Mali, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, and Liberia, were the origins for the vast majority of Islamic slaves.<sup>9</sup> One source estimated that as many as thirty percent of the eleven million African slaves were Muslims. Of that thirty percent, approximately 150,000 African Muslims, may have gone to the colonies of North America during the period of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, Allan D. Austin estimated, “an immigration of 29,695 African Muslims to antebellum America — a sizeable number of people, whose influence was always greater than their number would suggest.”<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of the exact number of African Muslims, it was generally agreed that most came from Western Africa where Islam had been a strong influence for centuries. The teachings and traditions of Islam had both positive and negative consequences for the African Muslims enslaved in the colonies. It is unfortunate for the African Muslims that the teachings of Islam relative to slavery had a significant impact upon the slave trade and the subsequent enslavement of African Muslims. As Islam spread through West Africa, the Muslim attitude toward slavery came with it and, to some extent, contributed to the enslavement of their fellow Muslims. According to the Islamic religion during the period, slaves could not be made of other “believers,” but pagans and those with other religious beliefs were often taken as slaves as spoils of war. According to Austin, “Islam neither condemned nor forbade

slavery but stated that enslavement was lawful under only two conditions: if the slave was born of slave parents or if he or she had been a 'pagan' prisoner of war."<sup>12</sup> Several Muslim slaves reported that they were kidnapped and sold into slavery in error. Ayuba Suleyman Diallo of Bondu (aka Job Ben Solomon), in an account of his life, discussed how his own family owned slaves and ironically, when he had gone to sell two "Negroes" he was kidnapped and sold as a slave.<sup>13</sup>

On the positive side, when the Arab Muslims invaded and brought Islam to Africa, they also brought Islamic learning literacy because a very important tenant of the Islamic religion was the ability to read and understand the teachings of Mohammed as written in the Koran. According to Austin, "One invaluable innovation the Muslims brought, which would later be important to the Muslims shipped to the New World was literacy."<sup>14</sup> Not only were the elite men educated, but both peasants and girls were taught to read and write.<sup>15</sup> There were accounts of high levels of literacy exhibited by Muslim slaves that set them apart from the other slaves in the Americas. "A large proportion of the Muslims arrived in the New World already literate, reading and writing Arabic and their own languages transcribed in the Arabic alphabet."<sup>16</sup> Most Muslim slaves could read the Koran in Arabic and speak their own dialects. There was, according to Austin, "Much evidence that 75 African-born Muslims brought to North America between 1730 and 1860 – several literate in Arabic. ..."<sup>17</sup> Also many could write, but of course, these characteristics were practiced in secret.

The records do not show how many African Muslims, specifically, were brought to America; it is known that "Mandingans" or "Mandingoes," among other Muslim Africans, brought a higher price than other African slaves. Although credit was not necessarily given to the fact that they were Muslims, it was widely thought that they were more intelligent, more reasonable, and more dignified.<sup>18</sup> Thus, literate Africans who found themselves enslaved were also set apart from other slaves, not only by their religion, but also by their literacy. Both factors were significant to their survival. There is, of course, no evidence that the Muslims were more intelligent than the non-Muslims. They simply had received instruction in reading and writing and that may have given them an advantage over other slaves.

The exact date that Muslims arrived in the New World is not known. It is true, however, that "in 1619, a Dutch slave trader sold the first African slave in Virginia and the numbers of slaves grew

slowly at first.”<sup>19</sup> Eventually, English settlers in the American south found that African slave labor cost less, in the long run, than that of white indentured servants. Obviously, indentured servants could run away and more easily blend into the population than could the darker-skinned Africans.<sup>20</sup> As the demand for labor in the southern colonies increased, the demand for slaves began to expand dramatically. By 1700, slaves were common throughout the southern colonies and Virginia had a population of more than 10,000 African slaves.<sup>21</sup> Matthew T. Downey reported that, “At first, Africans and English slaves were treated similarly, but as the number of slaves increased, that changed. The colonies enacted slave codes that enslaved Africans and their descendants for as long as they lived. In essence, the slave owners (masters) controlled every aspect of slave life.”<sup>22</sup> According to the “Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina, 1831,” he, “considered his master a ‘complete infidel’ who had no fear of God.”<sup>23</sup>

The total control of slaves by their masters must have been extremely difficult for the enslaved Muslims. African Muslims were literate, with a rich cultural and religious heritage.

According to Diouf, Africans typically depended on oral histories and Muslims were the only ones who were literate, in large part because Muslims were expected to be able to read the Koran. One especially galling aspect of the condition of slavery for Muslims must have been the social stigma, especially for those who had been educated in reading and writing. It was noted by Diouf that, “In Africa, a social stigma was attached to the condition of slave but not an ethnic or racial one, so that when the slave became free, he or she could become a full member of society.”<sup>24</sup> In contrast, slaves in America were looked down upon because of their color, and, even if they were manumitted, they were historically seen as members of a lower class.<sup>25</sup>

Religion played a major role in helping enslaved Muslims maintain their dignity and it was an extremely important component of their self-preservation. For those African slaves who were Muslims, they struggled to practice their religion, albeit in secret. Whether or not the beliefs of these earliest American Muslims had a significant impact on the succeeding generations of African Americans is a matter for debate.<sup>26</sup> However, historic accounts of known Muslims, as well as those thought to be Muslims and accounts of their Muslim practices, indicate that faithful observation of the Five Pillars of Islam was extremely important to the enslaved.

Narratives from the descendants of Muslim slaves who lived during the colonial and early antebellum periods give verification that their ancestors practiced the tenets of Islam that all Muslims were expected to honor and observe. An example of observance of the First Pillar of Islam, affirmation of faith, was illustrated when a fugitive slave, Ayuba Suleyman Diallo (Job Ben Solomon) was found wandering in Pennsylvania in 1731. He could speak no English so he affirmed his faith in Allah by simply and plainly stating, "Allah, Muhammad."<sup>27</sup>

Prayer and the ritual of prayer, another pillar of Islam, were observed by the enslaved Africans, although in many instances it must have irked their masters. Some Muslims were able to observe their faith openly, but most had to observe it in secret. Prayers were said five times a day and the faithful were expected to wash their feet, arms, hands, and face before praying. Prayer mats and beads were customary and women wore veils when praying.<sup>28</sup> Bilali, a slave on Sapelo Island in the early 1800s, was allowed to pray and there are accounts that he followed the Islamic practice of using a prayer rug that, when he died, was buried with him. Another accepted Islamic practice was the use of prayer beads, which Bilali's wife was reported to have used.<sup>29</sup> According to narratives from one of Bilali's granddaughters, "Bilali's master did not interfere, apparently, with practices his Africans considered their right. This was not always the case in Georgia, however."<sup>30</sup> According to ex-slave and African Muslim, Charles Ball, while on a North Carolina plantation:

At the time I first went to Carolina, there were a great many African slaves in the country. ... I became intimately acquainted with some of those men. ... I knew several, who must have been, from what I have since learned, Mohammedans; though at that time, I had never heard of the religion of Mohammed. There was one man on this plantation, who prayed five times every day always turning his face to the East, when in the performance of his devotions.<sup>31</sup>

The Third and Fourth Pillars of Islam, the giving of alms and the pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) appear to have been nearly impossible for enslaved persons, no matter how devout. There would be a limited expectation for the giving of alms to the poor, considering how deprived the Muslim slaves were, themselves. They did, however, attempt to practice the Third Pillar, albeit in

a modified state. One example of creativity in captivity was the method by which alms were given to the needy. On both Sapelo Island and St. Simon's Island, descendants of Bilali and Salih Bilali told of their grandmothers making rice balls to give to children and to the needy.<sup>32</sup> Even though it was not required in the Koran that charity be demonstrated in hard times, these people managed to find a way to follow their religious beliefs.<sup>33</sup> The pilgrimage to Mecca, something that the Koran requires of all able and faithful Muslims had, in some instances, been accomplished prior to the time some of the slaves were captured.<sup>34</sup> There were also reports of pictures depicting Mecca in some slave quarters and the Muslim slaves recreated a dance similar to a ritual that took place on an actual trip to Mecca.<sup>35</sup> Even though they would never be able to make the pilgrimage, they symbolically made the trip and dreamed of making it through their images and actions.

The Fifth and final Pillar of Islam was probably the most difficult for enslaved individuals with virtually no resources. The life of a slave was one of continual deprivation. They worked long hours with very little decent food. Even though, they survived under brutal conditions, Muslim slaves practiced fasting. Amazing, as it may seem, they kept the Fast of Ramadan, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Diouf related that, "African Muslims enslaved in the Americas were not obliged to fast; they chose to do so. The Koran is not strict on the matter and allows a believer to abstain from fasting if he or she is far from home or is involved in strenuous work, which was the Africans' case."<sup>36</sup> It has been reported that Ramadan was observed by many Muslim slaves. Historical accounts show that slaves from St. Simon's Island, including Salih Bilali and his family, kept the various fasts. Allan D. Austin, reported the writings of James Hamilton Couper who was speaking of his slave, Salih Bilali, purchased in 1800 to work on the Couper plantation on St. Simon's Island. Couper stated that, "He (Salih Bilali) is a strict Mahomaten; abstains from spirituous liquors, and keeps the various fasts, particularly that of Rhamadan."<sup>37</sup> It is also documented that members of another large slave family, Bilali Mohamed of the neighboring island of Sapelo, also kept the fasts.<sup>38</sup>

Not all Muslim slaves accepted enslavement, according to an anonymous Muslim slave's legend,

They came directly from Africa; they were not second- or third-generation African Americans. The legend also implies that they brought their own belief

system to be modified by their new surroundings. In other words, they did not “djust.” On the contrary, they kept to themselves while plotting a return to their own country.<sup>39</sup>

Because of their ability to read and write, masters were cautious of the Muslim slaves. They were thought, by some, to be instigators of trouble and feared as possible troublemakers, even leaders of uprisings against their masters.<sup>40</sup>

According to Michael A. Köszegi and J. Gordon Morton, “The Muslim slaves conspired to create their own communities within the limits set by their slave conditions.”<sup>41</sup> Historical verification exists that the African Muslims in America were able to maintain their religion through observance of community-based traditions, by virtue of their high levels of literacy, and on account of the notoriety received by Muslim slaves who came to attention of white masters due to their intelligence and accomplishments.

Community-based traditions, dietary habits, and dress codes were maintained by the slaves, regardless of punishments and persuasion from their white owners.<sup>42</sup> To be a Muslim was more than just respecting the Five Pillars of Islam, it was a distinctive life style. It dictated and regulated the daily life, material culture, and demeanor of the faithful. Strict dietary rules were required and it was necessary to behave in a certain way, dress in a particular fashion, and to observe rules regarding the interaction of Muslims with non-Muslims.<sup>43</sup> Africans in bondage were no different; they believed that, regardless of their enslaved condition, it was still necessary to worship Allah and to observe the Muslim way of life. As a result, they formed close-knit communities within the slave community and distinguished themselves in numerous ways.<sup>44</sup>

In some ways, it was not difficult to sustain the community during the antebellum period. Since Africans made up twenty to forty percent of workers on the rice paddies and indigo plantation in South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana, individual African Muslims were not isolated from each other.<sup>45</sup> The southern colonial plantations grew tobacco, rice, and indigo. These were labor intensive crops that required long hours of manual labor. Therefore, slavery flourished in the southern colonies. West Africans also cultivated rice and indigo, and, as a consequence, slaves from West Africa were particularly prized for their knowledge of rice and indigo crop production.<sup>46</sup>

One important visible distinction that set Muslims apart from

other slaves was the way they dressed. Generally, slaves were given poorly-made clothing of cheap fabric, known as British-made "Negro cloth" or "homespun." The more fortunate slaves received two changes of clothing per year, although some were not given any clothing at all.<sup>47</sup> Muslims tried to avoid the slave dress code if possible and slaves who were Muslim began to take on an Islamic dress code. Muslim women were attired in long skirts, and a tunic or boubou. The women normally wore a head covering and often wore a veil when praying. If possible, the men wore traditional Muslim clothing that covered them from head to toe including long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and tunics.<sup>48</sup> The men favored some sort of headdress such as turbans or skullcaps and, in some instances, they donned a Turkish fez.<sup>49</sup>

Names and personal identity were other issues that African Muslims attempted to counterbalance by maintaining their religion and culture. Just as masters handed down ill-fitting clothes, they also gave the Africans strange "American" names, which was mainly for the convenience of the masters. Unfortunately, however, these American names also had the effect of annihilating the past for the bearer; it altered their sense of self and was an assault on their culture, kinship, ethnic origin, and religion.<sup>50</sup> In order to combat this assault on their sense of identity, African Muslims attempted to answer to their new names while maintaining their Muslim names in private. Parents also gave their American-born children Muslim names in addition to the ones given by their masters.<sup>51</sup> It was common practice to keep and retain their real names within their community and to use the slave names in the outside world.<sup>52</sup>

One particularly difficult religious tradition to maintain under slavery was the observance of Islamic dietary rules. Diouf noted that according to Islamic law, Muslims were not allowed to eat pork, certain procedures had to be followed when an animal was slaughtered in order for it to be consumed as food, and Muslims were forbidden to drink spirits.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, food provided to the slaves was often of inferior quality and almost always included pork. Even though rations for slaves were meager, numerous Islamic slaves practiced vegetarianism. There were some instances of slave owners giving the meat ration in beef, but others had to eat pork.<sup>54</sup> Luckily, for the slaves, their masters often encouraged them to keep small gardens and to supplement their diets with hunting and fishing. As a consequence, slaves had some autonomy in the selection of their victuals and as a result, Islamic slaves were able to follow dietary laws.

Liquor was also a staple on many plantations during the antebellum period and it was sometimes offered to the slaves.<sup>55</sup> Muslim slaves did not partake of liquor according to numerous narratives that inform us that slaves would not drink alcohol when it was offered. Muslim Senegambians abstained from drinking beer and eating pork.<sup>56</sup> For example, one slave, Yarrow Mamont, was quoted to say, "It is not good to eat Hog – and drink whiskey is very bad."<sup>57</sup> Another slave, John Mahomed Bath, "Chief of the Free Negroes of the Mohammedan religion" in Trinidad, told the king of England, "While slaves we did not spend our money in liquor as other slaves did and always will do."<sup>58</sup> The Koran (5:90) says, alcohol showed a sign of weakness, "an abomination" that "excite(s) enmity and hatred."<sup>59</sup>

The Muslims, as literate members of the slave society, were looked upon by many whites, as well as blacks, as being superior to their fellow slaves. In many instances, Muslim slaves behaved with merit. There were numerous accounts of individual Muslim slaves who distinguished themselves through significant accomplishments.<sup>60</sup> "By 1867, biographies on Job [Ben Solomon], [Abdul] Rahahman, and Omar [ibn Said], and autobiographies by the last two and by five others: Salih Bilali, Abu Bakr, 'Benjamin Cochrane,' Mahommah Baquaqua, and Mohammed Ali ben Said, had appeared in New World outlets."<sup>61</sup> Several outstanding Muslim slaves were able to preserve their faith and their life stories illustrated the uniqueness of their position in colonial and early antebellum America.

Yarrow Mamout was a famous Muslim slave in the Virginia-Maryland area in the nineteenth century. Even so far from home, "He would remain Allah's servant. Indeed, his name, which he somehow managed to keep, was probably a variation on the Prophet Mohammed's own – indicating a first born Muslim."<sup>62</sup> He dressed in a Muslim style. Mamout also ate no pork and drank no alcohol, and "felt his 'religion [came] from the heart."<sup>63</sup>

A Muslim slave bought and sold in Annapolis in 1731 was Job Ben Solomon. He was able to achieve manumission,

By means of his good temper, literacy, show of being above hard labor (and above darker slaves), on the American side, his string of good luck combined with shrewdness, his being lionized in England for slightly more than a year as a social and intellectual wonder (who wrote three complete Qurans from memory), and his eventual return home as a Royal

African Company representative in 1734 is a romance which has often been told – at some distance from American slaveholders – for 250 years.<sup>64</sup>

Two particularly interesting African Muslim slaves were the Bilalis: Bilali Mohammed from Georgia's Sapelo Island and Salih Bilali of St. Simons Island. Bilali Mohammed was originally from Guinea by way of the Bahamas. In the late 1700s or early 1800s he came to North America and became the sole manager of the plantation on Sapelo Island. There his master gave him authority over four hundred to five hundred residents of the Island.<sup>65</sup> He was known to be a Muslim, complete with Fez and prayer rug. It was also reported that he observed the fasts and feasts of Islam. When he died, he was buried with his prayer rug and the Koran.<sup>66</sup> In an interview with Bilali Mohammed's great-granddaughter, Katie Brown, she told of her remembrances of her great-grandfather Bilali and her great-grandmother Phoebe. She told the interviewers about Bilali's Islamic habits of prayer. Katie is reported to have said,

Yes'm, I knows about Belali. He wife Phoebe. Margaret and uh daughtuh Coto use tuh say date Belali an he wife Phoebe pray on duh bead. Dey wuz bery puhticulah bout duh time dey pray and dey bery regluh bout duh hour. Wen duh sun come up, wen it straight obuh head an wen it set, das duh time dey pray. Dey bow tuh duh sun an hab lill mat tuh kneel on. Duh beads is on a long string. Belali he pull bead an he, Belambi, Hakabara, Mahamadu. Phoebe she say, "Ameen, Ameen."<sup>67</sup>

Salih Bilali (or "Tom of Georgia" as he was known by his masters), was head driver on St. Simon's Island on the plantation owned by John Couper and later by his son James Couper. He was very powerful and accomplished. In fact, Salih Bilali was such a talented person that at one time a friend of James Couper urged him to "think of Salih as a human being."<sup>68</sup> According to Austin,

Salih Bilali was a shrewd and self-respecting man. From 1815-1846, he directed from 300-500 workers on plantations where field of cotton, rice, sweet potatoes, cow-peas, corn, and sugar cane and their rotation and experimented with under a very watchful manager.<sup>69</sup>

One interesting story about these two remarkable men was their involvement in the War of 1812. It was recorded by a slaveholder that gangs of slaves were kept from going over to the British side in 1812 and that this feat was accomplished by "influential negroes who were Africans; and professor of the Mahomedan religion."<sup>70</sup> Austin reported the reference was obviously regarding the "two Bilalis." Apparently the British did not land on Sapelo Island, where Bilali Mohammed was in charge, because armed slaves had driven them off. Bilali was said to have told his master, "'I will answer for every Negro of the true faith, but not for the Christian dogs you own.' No slaves were lost."<sup>71</sup> The St. Simons Bilali did not fare quite as well. Half of the slave force was lost to the British when John Couper and Salil Bilali were in charge.<sup>72</sup>

These black men, African slaves, who happened to be Muslims, were considered leaders and were trusted with important jobs. Apparently their literacy and their skills, as well as the self-discipline and concomitant self-respect obtained from years of religious observance made it possible for them to survive in slavery, to even enjoy some sense of triumph. Surely, abolitionists both in America and in Europe as well pointed to the accomplishments of Ali ben Said, Mamout, and the Bilalis as evidence of the inhumanity of slavery and the need for its abolition.

The battle between Islam and Christianity was not new to Africans. For years, Christians and Muslims attempted to convert Africans to one religion or the other. Although one of the first Christian churches was founded at Alexandria, Egypt, by the seventh century, Western Africa was predominately Muslim. Later, in the fourteenth century, Christianity was extinguished when the Nubian Christians were overcome by Muslims. By the time of the Atlantic slave trade, several generations of Africans had become Muslims.<sup>73</sup>

Through observation of their faith and their distinctive lifestyle, through adherence to the customs of their religion, and by virtue of their education, Muslim slaves distinguished themselves as intelligent and able. They demonstrated that under the most arduous, even heinous conditions imaginable, they could conquer the problems of daily living and emerged as outstanding human beings of great accomplishment. Today, Islam is enjoying a resurgence of interest among African Americans. Whether it will have the sustaining influence on twenty-first century African Americans that it had on their colonial and antebellum ancestors remains to be seen.

## Notes

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## Allison Balch

### Anti-Sexual Ideology, Women's Rights, and Female Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America

Nineteenth-century America was a turning point for women. The era was ending when women were subordinate to men – without an individual identity, without legal status, and with little privilege or ascendancy except in a few rare cases. There are many reasons why this change occurred; numerous forces came together to overturn the status quo and eventually lead to a new existence for American women. The industrial revolution was changing America from a rural-based culture to an urban-based one. People were leaving the home and the farm. Middle-class women's positions changed, as they were no longer part of a family economy, but rather were in charge of the home to which they were confined while their husbands worked outside of it. While these economic and social changes were occurring, sexual ideology was also changing; in the nineteenth century, there appeared a new culture that accepted the idea of female passionlessness and purity in a world in which both sexes needed to control their sexual practices. The cultural notion before the nineteenth century was that women were inherently sexually sinful, like their symbolic mother, Eve. However, the nineteenth-century moralists altered the traditional sexual view of women to suggest that women's sexual desires were muted in comparison to those of men.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, men in the nineteenth century lost the moral superiority that they had always held a claim to and women achieved one sector of power that, in turn, led to greater gains of power as well as a strengthening of the romantic view of women that disregarded their existence as real persons.

Though the point has been controversial for both modern and Victorian observers, it is obvious that the promotion of an anti-sexual ideology was more beneficial to women than it was harmful. It was not only a set of beliefs that helped women claim to have superior sexual natures, but it was also an ideology that helped them acquire political rights in matters that affected the home and the rights and opportunities to become outspoken public figures.

In this paper, various sources will be explored to show the presence of anti-sexual attitudes in nineteenth-century America. These will include the writings of doctors and moral reformers, because, despite their origin, the overriding theme in most sexual advice literature stressed male continence and female passionlessness.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, a much different sort of source will be evaluated and weighed against the moralist writers to become the center piece of this investigation. This source is the *Mosher Survey*, a compilation of surveys by Dr. Clelia Mosher that recorded the sexual attitudes of forty-five women who spent their formative years in the nineteenth century. The *Mosher Survey* – conducted in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century – gives a rare look at a demographic group that has been the object of much speculation and scrutiny. The *Mosher Survey* will be used to gain a greater understanding of the sexual attitudes and practices of middle-class women, precisely the group that sexual advice literature in the Victorian era targeted. Though these women were benefiting from the changing of sexual ideals in the nineteenth century, they often did not follow the careful prescriptions put forth by those hoping to create or describe women's sexuality as passionless. Some of the women suffered from the guilt of disobeying the prescriptions. Mosher's women reflected a liberated attitude and not necessarily an innately prudish one. Moreover, the writings of the moralists, feminists, and sometimes the respondents to the *Mosher Survey* will be consulted to show how the idea of female purity contributed to the movement for women's rights. Many ideas, arguments, and circumstances will be presented: the birthrate, opinions on artificial birth control, the effects of the pure and passionless woman in politics, the crusade against the double standard, and liberalizing attitudes toward women. These will be viewed in accordance with the existence and expansion of anti-sexual ideology and will be compared and contrasted with the responses of actual Victorian women.

The media force most responsible for propagating the idea of sexual purity in the nineteenth century was advice books. The advice books took the form of marriage manuals, medical manuals, health guides, religious publications, and guides for adolescents. Parents, relatives, husbands, and wives were no longer the purveyors of sexual knowledge as sexual matters increasingly became unseemly to discuss and, as a result, the use of advice books and manuals increased.<sup>3</sup> Advice manuals for sex existed in the previous century, but their publication and influence increased dramatically in the

nineteenth century. The women in the *Mosher Survey* displayed how important these books were and how widespread was their influence. For example, a substantial number of the women, when asked a question regarding their knowledge of sex before marriage, wrote responses stating that they had achieved their knowledge through advice books, not from relatives. For example, Respondent Number Two answered that she had learned a great deal from "books chiefly scientific, such as Dr. Trall's, Dr. Wilder's *Tokology*."<sup>4</sup> In fact, fifteen of the forty-five women, when asked about their pre-marital knowledge of sex responded that they had been educated primarily from books. Some mentioned specific titles, such as John Cowan's *Science of a New Life*,<sup>5</sup> but most of the women just stated that they gained their knowledge from texts in general. Of those who did not learn from books, many had no knowledge of sex at all before they married and only a small number responded that they had received advice from friends or relatives. The influence of books on sexual learning was undeniably important in the nineteenth century and the sexual advice books were evolving with the changes in sexual ideology.<sup>6</sup> One difference between the new sexual advice manuals and the ones that had existed before is that, while seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century manuals stressed pleasure, nineteenth-century manuals tended to de-emphasize or not mention it.<sup>7</sup> With the de-emphasis of pleasure and an increasing importance put on purity and sexual continence, women began to gain greater respect as figures of moral and political authority. Because women were perceived as the passionless gender, they embodied the ideology and therefore become the natural keepers of it.

As advice manuals became increasingly opposed to sex, they tended to use many of their pages to exalt the female gender, while simultaneously assigning shame to the male gender whose natural licentiousness they thought was necessary to restrain. Dr. William Acton's *Diseases and Functions of the Reproductive Organs* is well-known for claiming that women did not have the same lustful desires as men and were blessed because of it.<sup>8</sup> Many sexual advice books acknowledged women's lesser sexual desire as a fact that was not to be disputed. Mosher's survey is a long way from proving that the women of this era were passionless beings uninterested in their sexual relationships. Mosher's women could be described as both receptive to sexuality and eager to engage in it. The first respondent, most likely taught the fact that women did not desire sex, reported being surprised after her marriage that women did

indeed desire sex.<sup>9</sup> Overall, twenty four of the forty-five women found sex pleasurable and only nine reported having no sexual desire. However, out of the accepted “truth” that women were passionless did evolve an idea that proved liberating. It was that women had more control over their own bodies than did men, but also that they had more control in regulating their husbands’ sexual desires. Advice manual writers were lending, often unknowingly, great support to the women’s rights movement by glorifying female temperance. Women, therefore, were put in charge of men — at least sexually — as advice writers assigned them the right to choose both the frequency of intercourse and the frequency of conception.

In Eliza Duffey’s book for maturing girls and young women from 1873, *What Women Should Know*, the author made a less-than-subtle case for the control of men’s desires by women. In a section entitled “Responsibilities of Young Girls,” she made it clear that girls must work to control boys and not to accidentally erupt their passions, which “are much stronger and more easily inflamed than their own.”<sup>10</sup> According to Duffey, an innocent girl must protect the boys she knows from falling into ruin and visiting prostitutes because “they have not only their own moral safety, but that of their companions of the other sex, in their keeping.”<sup>11</sup> Even at a young age, females were expected to be the guardians of male purity. Of course, older, married women had the same duty to control their husbands about sexuality.<sup>12</sup> Clelia Mosher’s survey showed that the women adhered to the idea that wives were supposed to exercise control over marital sexuality. Respondent Number One, describing what knowledge she had of sexuality before marriage, replied that she “considered that it sh’d be regulated largely by the woman.”<sup>13</sup> Respondent Number Six stated that intercourse should be engaged in when wanted by the wife and when the husband will agree<sup>14</sup> and Respondent Number Eleven said that she “has always chosen [to have sex] about 2 [times per week?].”<sup>15</sup> A pattern can be seen in *The Mosher Survey* and it points to the fact that women saw themselves as at least equal partners in the sexual act. Often, however, they viewed it as necessary that they were the controlling partner. This control became a very powerful tool for women who, otherwise, had little advantage in a patriarchal society. It was, to the respondents of Mosher’s survey, more than an ideal. It was in many ways the reality of their lives.

Previously acceptable, marital rape was considered a dangerous and immoral act in married life. Though still legal in the United States, it was drawing its detractors from both writers

and feminists. Advice manual writer Dr. John Cowan considered a husband practicing his "marital rights" by force a dangerous and cold-blooded individual. Not only would he place his wife on the "sickly list," but also he would, certainly, through "the ignorance of his animal nature ... eventually, slowly but surely kill her."<sup>16</sup> Women of course, could do the same to men, but most writers did not see this as a likely occurrence. The emerging idea of marital rape was of course another gain for married women. It was a symbolic step away from being regarded as property to being regarded as autonomous individuals whose moral guidance and leadership were an important part of the marital union.

In the *Mosher Survey*, the women confirmed the idea that sex should be of a mutual nature, and not forced by the man. Many of the women explicitly described that sex should be "a compromise between two,"<sup>17</sup> "mutual,"<sup>18</sup> or "left at my preference."<sup>19</sup> None argued for, or accepted, male control of sexual acts. Respondent Number Forty-one said that her husband was "considerate" and that she "could not endure a man who forced it."<sup>20</sup> The responses from the survey regarding sexual mutuality shows that the women had a high degree of control over sex and that they were unquestioned in their beliefs about its necessary consensual nature. These women considered marital rape taboo; none ever gave any opinion in favor of the traditional idea of a man's right to nonconsensual sex with his wife, or for the control of sexuality by men. For the most part, the Mosher women viewed mutual sexuality as the healthiest kind. In several of the cases, they supported the wife's control of sex within a marriage.

For women, gaining control over sexuality and conception was a vitally important step in achieving other rights. It gave women a small, though important, foothold in society. It gave them a way to begin gaining recognition as equals, both in the public and private spheres. Like the sexual moralists and advice writers, early feminists emphasized a woman's right to deny sex and promoted her right to control reproduction.<sup>21</sup> The fact that one of the earliest suffrage slogans was "Votes for Women, Chastity for Men" demonstrates that this was an entering point for women into the public sphere. If women were within their rights to control men in new ways in the private sphere, one might ask why they would not do the same in the public.

One of the first ways that women were able to enter the public sphere was through social purity organizations. In reality, these were mostly sexual purity organizations that sought to create a single

standard of morality for men and women, destroy prostitution, discourage artificial birth control, promote chastity, and champion “voluntary motherhood.” None of Mosher’s women was outspoken social purists or feminists except for Dr. Mosher herself who worked to destroy the traditional notions of female fragility and considered overindulgence in sex to be a possibly destructive force. The women who left the domestic sphere to fight on behalf of sexual purity did not see sex as a private matter, but rather a public and political issue.<sup>22</sup> These women were often part of the feminist movements of the nineteenth century. It is often argued that feminists and social purists did not have the same goals — that they sought differing ends and felt differently about the status of women. In fact, though they were often separated by some of their political goals, feminism and social purity were intimately linked and often it was difficult to distinguish a feminist from a social purist.<sup>23</sup> Both groups sought to prevent the use of artificial birth control, to overturn the double standard of sexuality, to give more control to women in sexual relationships, and to legalize prostitution.

One similarity between the movements is the position that both groups took concerning birth control — both the feminists and social purists were largely against it. While today’s feminists perceive birth control as serving women’s interest, the majority of nineteenth-century feminists did not. Nineteenth-century feminists reasoned that birth control was bad for women because it allowed men to use them for sexual pleasure without commitment. In other words, if women had less passion and if women did not like sex as much as men, then birth control took some of the power out of women’s hold and gave men license to be unchaste without the consequence of pregnancy. Elizabeth Blackwell disliked birth control because she believed it indulged men while turning women into sex objects.<sup>24</sup> Purity-minded organizations thought it would turn wives into prostitutes.<sup>25</sup> Women’s rights activists wrote publicly against both abortion and contraception for the same reasons.<sup>26</sup> In twenty-first century America, both women and men are assumed to have a natural interest in sex; therefore, birth control serves women’s interests and feminists see effective birth control as a necessary part of women’s advancement in society. In the nineteenth century, when women were assumed inherently less sexual, birth control was perceived to help only men and force women to acquiesce to non-procreative sex. Therefore, nineteenth-century social purists and many feminists thought that birth control was only another vehicle for male sexual license, and another reason not to adhere to the rules of chastity and continence.

The information we can obtain from *The Mosher Survey* introduces a very different opinion on birth control. Nearly all of the women in the survey had practiced some kind of birth control during their marriages and only a few thought that any harm had come of it. Many of the women expressed a desire only to have intercourse when they were sure that they would not become pregnant. The methods of birth control did not vary greatly. Most of Mosher's women were like Respondent Number Thirty who stated that her method was a "plain water douche; practically always."<sup>27</sup> Other forms included "incomplete intercourse" as stated by Respondent Number Twenty-six<sup>28</sup> and the rhythm method and utilization of safe periods. Though none of the respondents reported having had an abortion, Respondent Number Eleven commented without any reservation that her mother had "possibly one early abortion."<sup>29</sup> Though many of the respondents did state that they thought reproduction was the primary purpose of intercourse, a great number also sought stringently to avoid unwanted pregnancies while engaging in intercourse with their husbands. Respondent Number Twenty-two said that her ideal habit of sex would be "not more than from four to six times a month & then at the period that conception is least likely to occur (and ideally I should never have it take place then)."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Respondent Number Ten said she would like to have "occasional intercourse, with control over conception."<sup>31</sup> While thirty out of the forty-five women formally stated that reproduction was the primary purpose of sex, most of the women had no problem using artificial and natural methods to prevent conception and most wished to carry on non-procreative relationships with their husbands. This is another area in which there is a considerable gap between the women's actions as reported in the survey and the opinions of the advice writers and public social purity figures. Those who condemned artificial birth control possibly did not understand how much it was desired and needed by women whose lives could be irrevocably altered by unintended pregnancies.

The attempt, and at least partial success, of destroying the double standard was probably one of the purity movement's greatest feats. The single standard was one of chastity, which women were always expected to follow while men naturally disobeyed it. Those committed to creating this single standard strove to equalize the moral code and prove that men should adhere to the female standard, for the good of society. One mission of those seeking to overturn the double standard was to create greater solidarity between middle-

class women and prostitutes—casting away the guilt from women who sold their bodies and onto the men who bought them.<sup>32</sup> Though purity-minded groups sought a single standard, so did many renowned women such as Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell and Caroline Winslow.<sup>33</sup> Many feminists recognized that women were adhering to a much stricter standard, but they reasoned that this was a perfectly acceptable standard — one, in fact, that everyone should follow. It was not uncommon for women to argue for greater rights because men had greater passion and women could more easily lead a moral life because of their lack of desire. Sarah Grimke frequently offered the argument with pride that women were less sexual than men were and, therefore, deserved rights at least equal to them.<sup>34</sup> In her lecture entitled “Social Purity,” Susan B. Anthony condemned male sexual intemperance, while at the same time supported greater opportunities for working women in order to end prostitution. She also advised women not to marry impure men.<sup>35</sup> Overturning the double standard was a major gain of women’s rights; it gave women private and public rights about a tremendously important matter. While men received a privilege that proved destructive to their families, women were being degraded through a harsh standard implemented by a society that usually ignored male lasciviousness and punished the slightest offense of women who disobeyed the sexual code. With a single standard finally being accepted (and that standard being the woman’s standard) not only did family life improve greatly, but also women became slightly closer to being equal to men — it brought them from a code of degradation to a code of moral respect.

The establishment of the single standard speaks to an underlying morality guided by spirituality. Though none of the Mosher women addressed the problem of male incontinence outside of their marriages, they testified to the fact that they held their marital bond as a spiritual union and sex as the outward sign of its significance. Most did not believe the sexual act to be immoral, but believed it glorified God and brought men and women closer to spiritual harmony with each other. In fact, the spiritual union of sex seems to be one of the reasons that the women felt that they might take part in it without feeling that they were immorally indulging in sin; the women in the survey overwhelmingly discussed sexual spirituality. Respondent Number Ten offered a typical response when asked if there was a reason, aside from reproduction, to engage in intercourse: “I think to the man and woman married from love, it may be used temperately, as one of the highest manifestations of

love, granted us by our creator.”<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Respondent Number Fifteen reported that sex was not a physical desire but a spiritual one,<sup>37</sup> and Respondent Number Twenty-two believed that “the perpetuation of the race ... should be done carefully & prayerfully.”<sup>38</sup> The common response that spirituality should be at the center of sexual relations is undoubtedly an important factor to consider. Could this be a change from earlier notions about sexuality and a set of beliefs that also favored women’s rights? If it was women that were the holders of spirituality and morality—and if sex could be seen as a healthy expression of faith—then certainly women were once again the one’s who stood to gain from a change in sexual ideology.

Women experienced immediate benefits because of the anti-sex movement. Ideologically, they gained respect, established a single standard of behavior, fought artificial birth control (which was not necessarily a good thing for ordinary women), and achieved a degree of leverage in society. Important, concrete benefits also came because of the change in sexual attitudes. These changes included liberalized divorce laws, a dramatic drop in the birth rate, and increased public exposure for women activists. The anti-sex movement proved to be a huge windfall for most women in establishing a basis of credibility for which to seek greater rights and power. The women who responded to Mosher’s survey were able to claim some of the benefits, but very few had what modern feminists would consider an independent and liberated life. Mosher’s women did have more sexual freedom than their mothers did but, for the most part, they were not employed outside of the home and were dependent upon their husbands as providers. Only one respondent to the survey had had a divorce. For the Mosher women, marriage was still a permanent bond and their primary duties were in taking care of their home and children. These were women whose power still rested in the home and not anywhere outside of it — and these were mainly middle-class and upper-class, college educated women.

The Mosher women’s greatest area of privilege in comparison to the previous generation was their small number of children. The choice of whether or not to become a mother and how many children to bear became an important factor of consideration for women in the nineteenth century. Limiting births became more important in the nineteenth century as children were losing their value as part of the family economy and were becoming an expense that might jeopardize middle-class standing. Whether women

actually were anti-sexual and prudish or not is not the major consideration of this paper; however, if any one thing can possibly prove that an anti-sexual ideology was being put into practice it is an examination of birth rate statistics. What the statistics show is a dramatic decrease of births to white married women during the course of the nineteenth century – from 7.04 births in 1800 to 3.56 births in 1900; and this decrease did not accompany an invention of better means of birth control. If one relies on the *Mosher Survey* as a key for understanding this shift, some evidence can be found to support the idea that births were being limited because the women despised sex, but not much. In her research, Mosher did conduct a brief analysis about the fall of the birth rate. Most of the reasons she discovered for the limitation of births had nothing to do with anti-sexual ideology, but rather with economic reasons, physical maladjustments, and what she regarded as selfish reasons such as men who do not want children because they wanted unhampered companionship with their wives. The one brief statement she made about anti-sexual women and the falling of the birthrate blames the fact that women had been *taught* to dislike sex: “too often her training has instilled the idea that any physical response is coarse, common and immodest.”<sup>39</sup> Anti-sexual ideology might have been a cause of the drop of the birth rate, but it probably was not. Instead, it could have been caused by the fact that men and women abstained from sex in order to prevent conception or that, despite the fact that better forms of birth control had not been invented, more information about the existing forms of birth control became more readily available and were put to successful use.

It would be naïve to state that the anti-sex and purity movements of the nineteenth century freed women from their position in life and brought them into a state of equality. However, it is perfectly reasonable to assert that the anti-sex movement and its supporters helped women to achieve a basic platform from which to work on achieving greater accomplishments and that the ideology it provided was beneficial to women, whether or not real women actually adhered to the stereotype of passionlessness. Supporters of women’s political rights were able to exploit the traits assigned to women by the movement for seeking expanded rights. Even those opposed to women’s rights did not deny women’s “moral” traits; they accepted them but characterized them as infantile.<sup>40</sup> With women’s superior morality being largely unquestioned, it only seemed natural that women be able to exercise greater control in a society in need of continence and prudence. Medical and sexual advice

author Dr. Charles Meigs – who did not believe in the intellectual equality of women – made this exact point without realizing the strength of his message: “See then what and how the influence that women exert on the morals of society, of whole nations, of the whole world; wherever there is a true civilization, woman reigns in society. It is not until she comes to sit beside him, in view of all the people, that man ceases to be barbarous; or semi-barbarous, and cruel, and ignorant.”<sup>41</sup> Though Meigs was not a feminist, this could be regarded as a feminist statement if we disregard the fact the he said it; Meigs argued not only for an end to women’s conscription to the private sphere but also their ascendance into a state of equality in which they could sit side by side with men. If women could only escape their prison, Meigs believed, they could “spread the light of civilization” to man.<sup>42</sup>

From the new, strongly anti-sexual ideology that developed in the nineteenth century, women were able to construct new identities. The *Mosher Survey* does not reveal a completely liberated group of women. Instead, it testifies to a burgeoning freedom in which women were slowly gaining power within the home. Moreover, as women gained greater power in their own homes, they were assigned the duties of protecting their husbands from the dangers of uncontrolled sexuality and intemperance. Having gained some control in their own homes, a larger campaign was launched stressing the values of sexual purity; leaving their homes to fight for the purity of homes across the nation, women gained a public voice, political influence, and a platform from which to seek expanding rights to control their own bodies and the morality of society. The sexual purity aided the feminist movement and the two movements were often indistinguishable; the two divisions that accepted the need for greater power for women fought for similar ends and in many cases belonged to the same organizations. For the perceived benefit of nineteenth-century women, access to birth control and the legalization of prostitution were curtailed and divorce became an increasingly viable option. However, many of the white, middle-class women that these new powers and new restrictions were created for did not witness many of the benefits. Had the *Mosher Survey* been conducted only a generation later, the responses may have been much different as women’s power grew and women’s equality no longer needed a moral ideology based on passionlessness to justify it. Nineteenth-century women did utilize the anti-sexual ideology, however, and the accomplishments they attained by exploiting it are probably innumerable. The

consequences of the anti-sexual movement — despite all of its short-comings — are certainly far reaching and an important part of the history of women’s ascendance to equality in America.

## Notes

- 1 John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Washington: Harper and Row, 1988), 70.
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- 4 Clelia Duel Mosher, *The Mosher Survey: Sexual Attitudes of 45 Victorian Women*. Eds. James MaHood and Kristine Wenburg (New York: Arno, 1980), 21.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 195.
- 6 Haller and Haller, 92.
- 7 Carl N. Degler. “What Ought To Be and What Was: Women’s Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century,” *The American Historical Review* 79 (Dec., 1974): 1467.
- 8 William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age and Advanced Life Considered in Their Physiological, Social and Moral Relations* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1867), 174.
- 9 Mosher, 9.
- 10 E.B. Duffy, *What Women Should Know* (Cincinnati: Queen City, 1873), 97.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 98.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 118.
- 13 Mosher, 9.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 90.
- 16 John Cowan, *The Science of a New Life* (New York: Source Book, 1874), 103.
- 17 Mosher, 210.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 114, 163, 266-7.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 82.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 415.
- 21 Freedman, 208.
- 22 D’Emilio and Freedman, 139.
- 23 Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 290.
- 24 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 123.
- 25 Haller and Haller, 124.
- 26 D’Emilio and Freedman, 64.
- 27 Mosher, 340.

- 28 Ibid., 306.
- 29 Ibid., 118.
- 30 Ibid., 254.
- 31 Ibid., 114.
- 32 D'Emilio and Freedman, 143.
- 33 Ibid., 149.
- 34 Ronald G. Walters, *Primers for Prudery: Sexual Advice to Victorian America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 67.
- 35 D'Emilio and Freedman, 149, 153.
- 36 Mosher, 113.
- 37 Ibid., 175.
- 38 Ibid., 254.
- 39 Ibid., 5.
- 40 Haller and Haller, 73.
- 41 Charles Meigs, *Females and Their Diseases; A Series of Letters to His Class* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), 45.
- 42 Ibid., 45.



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## Christina Bearden-White

### Growing Pains: Williamson County Builds a Jail

Williamson County, Illinois, a rural county approximately sixty miles from the Kentucky border at the southern tip of Illinois, has a long history of violence and bloodshed. It received national attention in the 1860s and 1870s as home to a violent and deadly feud that lasted nearly ten years. In 1922, the county made international headlines with a mine labor strike that ended in a bloody massacre that stunned the entire nation.<sup>1</sup> Yet as Williamson County entered the twentieth century, leaving behind its lawless past and unaware of its bloody future, it entered an era of positive change.

In the early years of the twentieth century, typically referred to as the Progressive Era, the United States experienced unprecedented change.<sup>2</sup> The country moved away from a traditional agrarian lifestyle to an urban industrial economy. The nation struggled to keep up with domestic growth such as overcrowded cities and strained infrastructure. Crime was on the rise. Homicide rates increased from 1.2 to 4.6 persons per 100,000 from 1900 to 1910.<sup>3</sup> A form of journalism often labeled “muckraking” increased in popularity and focused the nation’s attention on a variety of areas in need of change. Progressive reformers sought to alleviate the poverty, despair, and disorder of rapidly expanding cities, which they saw as the root of crime. Laws meant to improve the basic conditions of life and give the federal government some control over these rapid changes passed in succession. The Municipal Court Act of 1905 and the 1909 Criminal Code revised outdated systems. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was officially founded in 1908. Reform came on the state level as well, as many states adopted new and innovative laws and programs.

Like the federal government, Illinois addressed growth and change within the state.<sup>4</sup> The Illinois state government passed landmark legislation with the Occupational Diseases Act of 1911. That same year, Illinois became the first state to provide public assistance to mothers with dependent children. Chicago’s municipal courts underwent massive reform and change. Illinois created

the juvenile court system to deal with rising crime rates among children. In 1912, Illinois elected as governor Edward F. Dunne, a Democrat and progressive reformer, who initiated changes in the outdated, overcrowded prison system during his term. Across the nation, people in the United States were addressing and attempting to alleviate the problems caused by expansion, urbanization, and rising populations.

Mirroring the country and the state, Williamson County entered an era of unprecedented growth. Between 1900 and 1910, the population rose by more than thirty-six percent, from 27,796 in 1900 to 45,098 in 1910.<sup>5</sup> The county saw a continuing rise in population of more than twenty-six percent to 61,092 by 1920, the highest population in Williamson County in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Because of the rising population, Williamson County faced the same problems as the federal and state governments.

A rapidly rising population meant an increased strain on municipal services, higher poverty, and increased crime rates. Aging public buildings added to the strain. One obvious example was the Williamson County jail.

The county jail needed to be replaced, as the rapid growth in population and deteriorating conditions of the building made it a hazard to its occupants. The local newspapers brought pressure to bear on the County Board of Supervisors with a series of articles on the conditions of the declining building. The sheriff, Milo "Lem" Duncan, pressured the County Board of Supervisors to build a new jail. In 1912, the County Board of Supervisors approved the building of a new jail on South Van Buren Street in Marion. Although local historian Violet Lee Carter Grisham has compiled extensive works on the history of the jail's famous inmates and events during the operation of the facility, little research has been devoted to events leading to the actual construction of the Williamson County jail in 1912 and 1913, a significant part of the county's history.<sup>7</sup> The new jail not only reflected the adaptation of the county's citizens to the rapid changes within their community, but also mirrored the nation's need to address the problems of expanding urbanization and rising crime rates. It reflected the growing need in the early twentieth century for control and change.<sup>8</sup>

In 1912, Williamson County continued to utilize a thirty year old building to house citizens awaiting trial in the county as well as those sentenced to serve time in jail. It was a simple, square two-story building, with prisoners housed both upstairs and downstairs.<sup>9</sup> The building had major roofing problems and

newspapers reported serious leaks on a regular basis.<sup>10</sup> The jail was also seriously outdated. The building had been built to serve a much smaller county population. Overcrowding was a periodic problem from 1900. The jail failed to pass inspections conducted by the Illinois Board of Health and the Illinois State Charity Commission in 1911.<sup>11</sup> Something had to be done. The local newspapers, *The Marion Evening Post* and *The Egyptian Press*, drew attention to the problem and called for a new facility.

In the spring of 1912, *The Marion Evening Post* ran a series of articles that described the conditions of the old building. They also called for immediate change. "Few hog pens or cow sheds in the county are in worse shape than the cell room of progressive Williamson county's jail was following the flood that came the night before," began an article in *The Marion Evening Post* on 2 April 1912.<sup>12</sup> The article went on to state that several members of the County Board of Supervisors were opposed to building a new facility or repairing the old one. The writer finished the article by suggesting that the dissenting members should "be caused to occupy one of the cells in the jail one night when one of those big floods is on," and threatened to print the names of the supervisors who voted against the jail's improvement.<sup>13</sup> The four-page daily printed a second article about the jail on 2 April that further emphasized the deteriorating conditions. "Monday night and all night long the prisoners had to hustle around to keep themselves from being washed through the cell bars," *The Marion Evening Post* claimed.<sup>14</sup> The article described the bailing and mopping efforts of the prisoners the night before and stated that they kept "the water from getting over six or eight inches deep."<sup>15</sup> There was definitely a problem at the jail, and *The Marion Evening Post* made the public aware of the conditions. The newspaper also wanted the citizens of Williamson County to act.

On 15 April, *The Marion Evening Post* urged the county citizenry to demand change. The newspaper posed the question, "Will not the people in a mass go before the board and tell the members that Williamson County must not longer bear the disgrace of maintaining such a vermin trap, disease breeding jail?"<sup>16</sup> The article reiterated the failure of the facility to pass state inspections and demanded that the County Board of Supervisors take up the issue at an upcoming meeting. "If the board of supervisors can't remedy things," the author condemned the Board bluntly, "then township organization is not worth three yells in Halifax."<sup>17</sup> The condition of the county jail was widely considered a reflection on the residents

of the county, and a new facility or massive renovation of the old building seemed imperative.<sup>18</sup>

Sheriff Milo Duncan agreed. He had been elected to office two years earlier, in 1910.<sup>19</sup> Duncan was one of the main proponents of building a new jail instead of remodeling the old building. He used his position to exert pressure on the County Board of Supervisors through both indirect and direct means. Sheriff Duncan allowed representatives from *The Marion Evening Post* access to the old facility, thereby indirectly facilitating the articles that appeared in the local paper.<sup>20</sup> The newspaper repeated and reported the comments and actions of members of the Board of Supervisors while they were visiting the jail after the April flood.<sup>21</sup> *The Marion Evening Post* reported the visit lacked positive direction and that nothing was accomplished. However, the Board of Supervisors created a committee to look for a possible site for a new building. The committee reported to the board at its next meeting on 12 June 1912. Officially, Duncan pressured the board more directly at that meeting.

During the 12 June meeting of the Board of Supervisors, the sheriff promised to make cost-saving arrangements with the sheriffs of Jackson and Hardin Counties, as well as with the police chiefs of Herrin and Marion, to house Williamson County's prisoners if a remodel took place. However, he pointed out that prisoners could be housed in the existing jail if a new building was constructed.<sup>22</sup> It was no secret that Sheriff Duncan wanted the county to build a new jail and he would use legal means to force them to action. Reporting later on 17 June, *The Egyptian Press* noted:

In fact the sheriff is so 'hard sot' against the present old shack that he lost no time ... telling the board that it better get busy and do something towards building for if a new jail was not at least promised for the near future he personally would take the action that was recently taken in Cairo relative to Alexander county's old jail there - starting a mandamus against the county and force it to quit keeping prisoners in the place.<sup>23</sup>

Duncan wanted the board to decide in favor of a new building on a new site immediately, but a decision could not be reached that day.

The County Board of Supervisors had a full agenda on 12 June. The issue of the county jail dominated discussion in both

the morning and afternoon sessions. It was no longer a question of whether a jail should be constructed, but where.<sup>24</sup> The Committee of Public Buildings and Grounds submitted a recommendation for a new site, owned jointly by the lodges of the Knights of Pythias (K. of P.) #236 and the Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons (A.F. & A.M.) #89, on South Van Buren Street. The committee had secured an option to purchase the lot for \$2,750.00. The Board of Supervisors voted down the recommendation and turned to other matters. Before the end of the morning session, committee members made a motion to reconsider the vote to purchase the site on South Van Buren Street. The motion was ruled out of order. The Board of Supervisors adjourned the morning session without a decision, but planned to vote on the matter again in the afternoon session.<sup>25</sup> Before the afternoon vote, the *Egyptian Press* reported, "a delegation of people owning property in the vicinity of the proposed site appeared and kindly entered a protest."<sup>26</sup> Six Marion residents, along with an attorney, appeared before the board to protest the building of a jail on the lot owned by the K. of P. and A.F. & A.M. lodges.<sup>27</sup> The property owners expressed concern that a jail in their neighborhood would depress their property values, and the vote was again postponed.<sup>28</sup> *The Egyptian Press* expressed hope that a decision would be reached at a Board of Supervisors meeting on 20 July.<sup>29</sup>

The matter was finally decided in a series of votes during the afternoon session of the 20 July meeting. A proposal to build on the site of the old jail was defeated by an 8 to 7 vote. A vote to approve the new site and pay the K. of P. and A.F. & A.M. lodges a total of \$2,750.00 for their lot followed and carried, 8 to 7. The Board of Supervisors accepted bids from two architects for plans and specifications for the new jail. The board awarded the contract to the architectural firm N. S. Spencer and Temple, by a vote of 9 to 6. In its first unanimous vote on the issue of the jail, the board approved the preliminary plans from the architects and appointed a committee to oversee the construction of the new jail. It further empowered the committee to receive and approve bids for the construction of the jail.<sup>30</sup> The question of the site had been divisive but, once approved, the Supervisors eagerly moved the project ahead. Although the board had made its decision, the debate was not over.

*The Marion Evening Post* reported the decision of the County Board of Supervisors on the following Monday. The article was tempered with references to earlier lethargy on the board's part, but

the newspaper informed its readers, with confidence, that a jail was assured on the new site.<sup>31</sup> The decision met with “stormy protest” from property owners near the newly purchased site.<sup>32</sup> An article in *The Marion Evening Post* on 25 July stated that the protestors, “in their willingness to keep the institution away from them have agreed ... to give a cash bonus large enough to enable the county to trade the newly purchased site for either of two places on East Main Street.”<sup>33</sup> The article speculated on the possible arguments for and against the two Main Street properties and suggested that a special meeting of the board might be called to discuss the issue before the scheduled meeting in August.<sup>34</sup> No special meeting was called. The tone of the protest became aggressive. Before the Board of Supervisors met in August, *The Marion Evening Post* suggested the argument might become a legal battle.<sup>35</sup>

The scope of the argument grew as another group of Marion residents made an appearance at the board meeting. This second citizens’ group opposed building on East Main Street and, the *Marion Evening Post* reported, was “present to use their influence against such a move.”<sup>36</sup> The Board of Supervisors never officially considered changing the site; private conversations and community speculation fueled the controversy.<sup>37</sup> Details of the debate were not preserved in the minutes of the meeting for 3 August 1912, and it is unknown if the second group of residents did, indeed, influence the outcome. *The Marion Evening Post* and *The Egyptian Press* reported the construction on South Van Buren Street was moving forward, and gave no hint of the earlier debate.<sup>38</sup>

With the site issue finally behind them, the board began the process of building the new jail. The architects, Spencer and Temple, presented their final plans to the board. The Board of Supervisors expected the building to be safe, sanitary, and secure. The design included three floors and a basement, and possessed a number of unique features. The facility would house not only prisoners, but also the sheriff and his family. This was a cost saving feature for the county and a time saving feature for the sheriff. The sheriff would be at the jail both day and night. Only five other buildings in the United States featured the same combination at that time.<sup>39</sup> The sheriff’s living quarters and private office were in the front section of the first and second floors. Cells reserved for male prisoners were located behind the sheriff’s quarters, also on the first and second floors. Separate cells on the second floor were reserved for female prisoners. The cells were divided into blocks, with no more than four inmates per cell. Increased capacity, as well as segregation of

male and female prisoners, reflected the county's commitment to the increased personal safety of its prisoners. The facility could house eighty-one men and six women at one time, with a total prisoner capacity of eighty-seven. The third floor contained space for sequestered juries, as well as a children's playroom. Because of the presence of the sheriff's family, extra security measures were added. Thirteen inches of concrete, as well as two solid steel doors, separated the sheriff and his family from the lockup sections.<sup>40</sup> The plans included a dumb-waiter to serve meals to prisoners in the basement section and jurors on the third floor when needed. This was meant to increase efficiency, as well as to reduce costs to the county for meal preparation and delivery. The sheriff's wife cooked for family, staff, and prisoners.

It was important that the building be attractive, as it would represent the citizens' need not only for a new jail, but also for a public building that was aesthetically pleasing. The national attitude towards imprisonment changed dramatically during the Progressive Era from one of punishment to greater emphasis on rehabilitation.<sup>41</sup> Reformatories and jails built during this time period reflected this change and addressed the problems of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions. The designs of these facilities moved away from utilitarian buildings to attractive additions to local government. Williamson County reflected this changing attitude in its choice of architecture.

Spencer and Temple delivered a modern design utilizing a new and innovative architectural style called Prairie School. Prairie School style featured open interior spaces, rows of windows, and a low pitched roof.<sup>42</sup> This marked a significant change from the previous facility, which was utilitarian but unattractive. From the street, the building appeared to be a modern brick home. Barred windows were kept discretely on the sides of the jail. The front featured a wide porch with barless windows. "From the exterior," *The Marion Evening Post* stated, "the building will look well and in fact will be an ornament."<sup>43</sup> The committee immediately accepted the plans at the August meeting.

Once the plans were in their hands, the committee voted to advertise for bids. The bids were opened on 31 August 1921 and presented to the board on 12 September 1921. The projected cost of construction was \$36,867.00. The board accepted committee recommendations and established a date for construction to begin. Equipment and building materials were scheduled to be delivered to the site on 31 March 1913.<sup>44</sup> The construction of the building, unlike

the controversy surrounding the need for a new facility or possible locations of the new jail, went unreported in the newspapers. The new jail committee reported to the Board of Supervisors for a final time on 17 September 1913. "We ... beg leave to state that we met on Saturday, September 13, inst. and inspected the new jail and find the same in accordance with the contract and specifications and received the same and ask the Board of Supervisors to ratify the action of this Committee."<sup>45</sup> With the construction complete, the committee presented a bill for \$36,966.07.<sup>46</sup> Williamson County had a new jail.

The jail officially opened on 1 October 1913. Sheriff Duncan, his wife, and their seven children moved into the jail the day before.<sup>47</sup> Sixteen county jail inmates and twelve guards marched three blocks to the new facility. Although the march took them through the town square, the transfer was without incident. *The Egyptian Press* reported, "They were all highly pleased with the change notwithstanding that in a way their freedom will be less and their chances for escape practically at an end."<sup>48</sup> In contrast to its uneventful first day, Williamson County jail was later to play a part in the most violent events in the history of the county.

The jail on South Van Buren Street served the citizens of Williamson County from 1913 until 1971. Sixteen sheriffs and their families lived in the building, as well as some of Williamson County's most notorious criminals. The combatants from the mine riots in 1922 filled the jail beyond capacity to an estimated 125 prisoners.<sup>49</sup> The riots, one of the most bloody in the history of labor strikes, became known as the Herrin Massacre, and nationally the county received the name "Bloody Williamson."<sup>50</sup> Members of the notorious Charlie Birger's gang spent time in the jail. One of these gangsters, Rado Millich, was convicted of murdering a fellow gang member, and was the last man to be hanged in the county. On 17 October 1927, Millich was executed in Paradise Alley next to the jail.<sup>51</sup> During prohibition, members of the Ku Klux Klan clashed with bootleggers, and both spent time at the facility.<sup>52</sup> The last sheriff to reside in the jail, Russell Oxford, left the building in 1971, and the facility moved to its present location inside the newly built Williamson County Courthouse.

In 1912, Williamson County addressed a need within the county. The county replaced a jail that was outdated, overcrowded, and dilapidated. The events surrounding the building of the county jail reflected the changes that took place throughout the United States during the Progressive Era. The actions of *The Marion Evening Post*

and *The Egyptian Press* echoed actions of muckrakers throughout the country. Sheriff Duncan's role in events surrounding the construction of the jail mirrored actions taken by other reformers during the period. Williamson County, like the nation, addressed the need to control rapid expansion and growing crime rates during an era of unprecedented population growth and change.

The Williamson County Historical Society (WCHS) purchased the old jail in 1972 from the County Board of Supervisors for one dollar. Society member Ethel A. Ashby "was concerned that much of the items of the County's history were being lost."<sup>53</sup> The old Williamson County Courthouse, vacated the previous year, had been the WCHS's first choice. The goal of the WCHS was to create a museum within a building that had historical significance for the county, thereby ensuring the preservation of the building as well as the artifacts it held. However, the County Board of Supervisors resisted preserving the eighty-one year old courthouse, stating the cost of repairs would be prohibitive.<sup>54</sup> The old jail was presented to the WCHS as an alternative to the courthouse, "with the stipulation that [the WCHS] must demonstrate ability to develop and manage it within five years."<sup>55</sup> Because of the important role the building played in the county's history during the early twentieth century, the WCHS accepted the building and immediately began renovations. Currently, the Williamson County Museum houses exhibits highlighting county history, and the history of southern Illinois. Native American artifacts, pioneers' tools, and replicas of a one room school and county store are among the displays. The museum also houses the Historical Society's library, a collection of books devoted to southern Illinois history.<sup>56</sup> In its new role, the building continues to serve the people of Williamson County.

## Notes

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- 6 Ibid.
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- 9 Grisham, *Sheriffs of Williamson County Illinois*, 6.
- 10 "That County Jail Flood," *The Marion Evening Post*, 2 April 1912.
- 11 "County Jail Flooded Again," *The Marion Evening Post*, 2 April 1912; "New County Jail Assured," *The Marion Evening Post*, 22 July 1912.
- 12 "That County Jail Flood," *The Marion Evening Post*, 2 April 1912.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 "County Jail Flooded Again," *The Marion Evening Post*, 2 April 1912.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 "What About A New Jail," *The Marion Evening Post*, 15 April 1912.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 The sheriffs in Williamson County were elected to four year terms and were not allowed to succeed themselves, see *Dedication Program: Williamson County Courthouse*, (Marion Illinois: Williamson County Legal Secretaries Association, 1971), 32.
- 20 "County Jail Flooded Again," *The Marion Evening Post*, 2 April 1912.
- 21 "What About A New Jail," *The Marion Evening Post*, 15 April 1912.

- 22 "Sounds Like A New Jail," *The Egyptian Press*, 17 June 1912.
- 23 Ibid.
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- 28 "Sounds Like A New Jail," *The Egyptian Press*, 17 June 1912.
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- 32 "Maybe Another Jail Site," *The Marion Evening Post*, 25 July 1912.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 "Jail Committee Meets Saturday," *The Marion Evening Post*, 1 August 1912.
- 36 Ibid.
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- 50 Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 28-43.
- 51 Grisham, *Sheriffs of Williamson County Illinois*, 116 -27.
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- 53 Grisham, *Old Williamson County Jail and Williamson County Museum Building*, 2.
- 54 Williamson County Historical Society, *Report of the Society's Activity Concerning the "Old" Williamson County Courthouse*, 1 August 1971.
- 55 "Urges Support of Work for Historical Museum," *The Marion Daily Republican*, 29 November 1973.
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## Joseph Sanios

### Disney's Fight During World War II

There was much excitement all over the world during World War II. Nations were being conquered, alliances were being made, and soldiers were fighting and dying for their countries in battle. When the United States joined the war it not only brought about great military changes, it also brought about many changes for the common civilians working at home. The war made soldiers out of young able-bodied men. But what about those who were not soldiers? What could those not fighting in the war do at home and what did they need to know about the war? There were many documents written, propaganda posters made, and radio newscasts to help inform those at home about the war. The film industry also realized this need to spread information to the American public and did its part. One of the most influential and well-known efforts was made by Walt Disney. He felt that it was his duty to help inform the American people in order to win the war. Walt Disney used his animated shorts to spread information to the American people about what they could do to help the war effort; through the use of educational films, Disney was able to spread propaganda and to create stereotypes. Disney's wide audience of American people and his use of humor and familiar characters in appealing to the people made his cartoons the ultimate medium in spreading information about the war.

After the initial attack on Pearl Harbor, America made an effort to be prepared in case another attack was to come. People wanted to be ready to face the worst circumstances in the event of a possible attack. The United States Government wanted to help in preparing America for these possible attacks by keeping Americans ready for any circumstance.<sup>1</sup> The Office of Civilian Defense published *The Handbook of First Aid* in 1941 that dealt with caring for and treating injuries that might have come about in everyday life and in case of an attack-based emergency. The handbook dealt with everything from bandaging wounds to the inhalation of war gasses.<sup>2</sup> The book became a best seller in 1942 and sold more than eight million copies.<sup>3</sup>

Walt Disney shifted his focus to preventing any physical harm by getting vaccinated. In his animated short *Defense Against Invasion*, he explained how to get vaccinated and why it was important to do so. He used a war theme to demonstrate how a virus entered into a body and caused harm and how a vaccine can help prepare the body for an invasion from a virus.<sup>4</sup> In the film, small spider-like black figures entered into a person's body, which looked like a city with a population consisting of friendlier-looking human-like red blobs. The invaders were a virus while the red blobs were blood vessels. The spider-like invaders grew in number and ate the red blobs until there were none left. The cartoon then explained how a vaccination could have prevented all of this. In a similar scenario, the vaccine was introduced to the city of red blobs. The vaccine blobs were harmless to the red blobs in the city but they sparked the city to begin production of defense machines such as guns and planes. The production of tools for defense allowed the red blobs to easily defeat the vaccine blobs and making the city prepared for any further attack. It was a perfect scenario, linking the war to the subject of vaccinations in order to educate and persuade people during wartime. Though *The Handbook of First Aid* had different subject matter than *Defense Against Invasion*, the underlying theme of healthiness and survival was prevalent in both works.

Disney studios spent much of their time helping to educate the public about what they could do to help in conserving materials for use in the war. At the time, such things as food and gas were all rationed in order to conserve for the military.<sup>5</sup> Though he did not make any short films on the topic of food rations, Disney did make a point of recognizing the farmers of America and their amazing contributions toward the war effort. In his short *Food Will Win the War*, he shows that the power of American agriculture had the ability to feed all of the allied nations in need. He referred to the thirty million farmers as armed with their machinery, as if they too were fighting to win the war. The cartoon focused on one specific crop or animal at a time. The narrator introduced the crop and explained how much of it was produced and then incorporated the product into the war. Corn, for example, if made into one giant ear, would make a bridge from London to the Black Sea. The narrator then made the claim, "That hangs right over your head Adolf."<sup>6</sup> Many other examples were given in this format in order to make the point that America had amazing farming capabilities and that the food produced was used to help win the war against the Axis powers.

*Food Will Win the War* was shown to the people fighting in the war and the people at home in order to give a sense of pride in what America could do. It made the American farmers look like an amazing productive force and it could not have been closer to the truth. American farmers during World War II produced enough crops to feed the entire population of the United States, including American soldiers overseas. In addition, surplus food was available for allies in Britain, the Soviet Union, and China – countries that were too surrounded by the war to produce their own. Farm production in the United States grew by approximately seventeen percent. The war made farming in America more efficient and profitable.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the mighty American farmers, average citizens used their back yards to plant their own “Victory gardens,” that helped to feed themselves and prevented them from buying the food that could be used for those fighting in the war.<sup>8</sup>

There was also a push by the American government to save kitchen fats and grease because they could be made into glycerin, which was used to make explosives.<sup>9</sup> The short *Out of the Frying Pan into the Firing Line* made this point extremely clear. This cartoon gave in-depth details of what should be done in order to conserve, store, and put grease into the hands of the American government. It showed a skillet of grease as being a little munitions factory.<sup>10</sup> The information given on saving grease was, of course, accurate. Grease was to be stored in a can that would not get contaminated and that could be given to a local butcher.<sup>11</sup> In the short, Minnie Mouse cooked some bacon and offered the left over fat to Pluto the dog. Pluto became extremely excited but, just when Minnie was about to pour the grease into his dog dish, the radio interrupted and said, “Don’t throw away that bacon grease.”<sup>12</sup> Pluto got angry at this point, but after the radio explained further why the fats needed to be saved, he was happy to help. When the radio referred to the troops overseas, Pluto looked at a picture of Mickey Mouse in a soldier’s uniform on the wall and saluted. He then became happy to help because he knew that it would help Mickey in his fight overseas. Pluto then was happy to take his grease to the butcher’s. In real life, everyone except dogs were doing the same. Like Pluto, kids became extremely helpful in contributing to the grease supply. With school-sponsored drives and door-to-door contributions, the kids contributed a great deal.<sup>13</sup> In the cartoon, Pluto helped do the work of his “mom” Minnie whereas, in real life, children were doing the same for their mothers.

The war also put a strain on gasoline supplies, which meant those on the home front had to ration gas as well. The United States government gave drivers a certain sticker to put on their cars, which allowed them a certain amount of gasoline per week.<sup>14</sup> Each sticker had a letter ranging from "a" to "e"; "e" cars could use the most gasoline. This sticker was given to emergency vehicles. Rationing created a new need for carpooling in the United States. People were urged to carpool, not only to save their ration of gasoline for other occasions, but to defeat Hitler. The American Office of Civil Defense explained that an empty car seat was a gift to Hitler.<sup>15</sup> With this gas shortage obviously came other ways of getting from place to place. Disney made light of the situation in his short, *Victory Vehicles*. In this cartoon, many different characters used many different humorous methods to get around other than using a car. The primary method that was eventually discovered was the pogo stick. The short film contained a catchy tune about hopping on a pogo stick.<sup>16</sup> The context of the cartoon was quite humorous but the theme was clearly about helping to remind people that it was their duty to conserve gasoline in order to help win the war.

The main concern, however, was not about conserving gasoline or food; it was about obtaining money to fund the war. The two methods America used to promote funding the war were the buying of war bonds and paying income taxes. Persuading people to buy war bonds was not an easy task. The United States government made posters of all shapes and sizes that encouraged the purchase of war bonds. The manner of persuasion differed in each poster. Some used fear of invasion, some made people sympathetic, and some were patriotic. They were all geared toward the purpose of earning money to fund the war.<sup>17</sup> Previous to the United States entering the war, Disney made four shorts, *The Thrifty Pig*, *Seven Wise Dwarfs*, *Donald's Decision*, and *All Together*, all of which used common characters and stories to persuade Canadians to buy War Certificates.

Disney's contribution to the United States was not about buying War Bonds as it was for Canada; it was about paying income taxes. Income taxes were higher due to the increased war spending and the government wanted to make sure that people would compute and pay their taxes correctly and on time.<sup>18</sup> Disney's short, *The New Spirit*, explained that Americans who were eager to help in winning the war could contribute by doing their taxes. Donald Duck was portrayed as a common person who claimed that he would do anything to help the war effort. It turned out that all he needed to

do was file his income taxes.<sup>19</sup> The second of these shorts, *The Spirit of '43*, shows Donald getting paid; two sides of his conscience told him what to do with his newly acquired money. One told him to save the money so that he could pay taxes while the other wanted him to spend it all. Donald, of course, was persuaded by the saver and he did not spend and waste his money.<sup>20</sup> In each of the shorts, the ending was about how taxes were used to purchase or build weapons and ultimately to defeat the axis powers.

All of this information about every different aspect of the war was somehow made into many different entertaining animated features by the Disney studios. It seems almost impossible to imagine that a subject so grim as war could spawn a series of cartoons in which people could watch to be both entertained and to learn a variety of information about the war. These animated films had to be geared toward the mass population, not just to adults or children. They had to convey an overall message while appealing to the mass population. Disney found many different ways of achieving this almost impossible goal.

Disney found ways of adding humor to his cartoons to increase their appeal to the entire American population. In the short, *Victory Vehicles*, he incorporated many different wacky inventions that helped the American population to remember to save gas.<sup>21</sup> In the short, *Education for Death*, Hitler was portrayed in a fairy tale as a babbling red-nosed fool with sloppy hair and an awkward skinny stature. He and an incredibly overweight Viking-like blond-haired opera singer, symbolizing the actual country of Germany, met and fell in love in a German version of the classic story of *Sleeping Beauty*.<sup>22</sup> Even in the short, *Food Will Win the War*, there is a hint of humor about the subject. When comparing the weight of the amounts of food produced by America during the war, Disney used an extremely fat young girl — as wide as she was tall — wearing a cute little dress.<sup>23</sup> These details in the cartoons were unnecessary to the messages but made the cartoons much more entertaining.

Disney also had a way of finding something that made the cartoons memorable, such as a catchy phrase or song. In *The Spirit of '43* and *The New Spirit*, the narrator chattered on and on about how paying taxes would help win the war but added, at the end, "Taxes to defeat the Axis." It gets across the exact point that the cartoon was trying to make, it rhymes, and it all fit into one easy-to-remember phrase. Even easier to remember were the songs incorporated into shorts such as *Victory Vehicles* and *Der Fuhrer's Face*. Both songs, especially the one about hopping on a pogo stick

and the title song from *Der Fuhrer's Face* stuck in the listeners' heads. The song about hopping on a pogo stick emphasized how fun it was while, at the same time, denounced automobiles saying, "No stopping for red lights, no worrying about headlights."<sup>24</sup> *Der Fuhrer's Face* emphasized Germany's complete dedication to the war saying, "When the Fuhrer says, he is the master race, we *heil, heil*, right in *Der Fuhrer's face*."<sup>25</sup> The songs definitely got the subjects of the cartoons across to the public.

The catchiness of songs and phrases in the cartoons and the incorporation of humor made these cartoons the ultimate medium to influence the public. Propaganda posters were put in strategic places, allowing them to be seen by a majority of people. The posters helped spread information about the war campaign just as Disney's cartoons did. However, these posters could not be as effective as a Disney cartoon. By using humor and likable songs, the viewer of the cartoons remembered them. He or she would also have been likely to share the humor of a particular cartoon or even be heard whistling a catchy song, thereby reminding someone else about that same cartoons. The cartoons transformed their viewers into walking and talking propaganda machines. A poster may have had an effective message, but it could not compete with the cartoons.

The cartoons, however, were quite similar to the poster propaganda in terms of their techniques of persuasion. They both used animation to convey their messages and they both appealed to emotion in order to improve their propaganda value. The drawn characters on the posters and the moving animation in the cartoons were used to help make American soldiers, workers, and farmers look like heroes. Their might and strength were evident in every picture. There were pictures of strong Navy men preparing depth charges in order to sink Axis submarines and there were pictures of strong-gloved hands holding a wrench to explain the might of American industries.<sup>26</sup> Disney also portrayed the might of the American factories in *The New Spirit* and in *the Spirit of '43*. The American factories in this short film looked like horses that are blowing fire out of their nostrils. The smelting machines holding tons of glowing red liquid metal looked like strong hands, symbolizing the people behind the machines.

Disney's cartoons and the propaganda posters also promoted the overall war effort by comparing it with the American Revolution. Posters with pictures of Americans in 1776, wearing the appropriate colonial war apparel of the time, with guns fixed with bayonets at their side, were set beside soldiers from 1943, marching

with their guns on their shoulders.<sup>27</sup> Both sides had a flag to show how American freedom had lasted and would continue. Disney used the same theme in cartoons such as *Food Will Win the War* and *Out of the Frying Pan into the Firing Line*. The Three Little Pigs, symbolizing the pork production power of the United States, were portrayed marching and playing on a snare drum and holding an American flag.<sup>28</sup> Pluto the dog, in *Out of the Frying Pan into the Firing Line*, marched happily from the butcher where he just gave away his kitchen fats, with an American flag attached to his tail that waved in the wind.<sup>29</sup>

As one might expect, when symbolizing the American character as a hero, the axis enemy characters were seen as terrible super villains that had to be stopped. Posters of Japanese soldiers holding naked women with crooked sneers on their faces made an obvious enemy of them.<sup>30</sup> Disney studios portrayed Japanese characters as having extremely slanted eyes, shielded by massive glasses, and with large buck teeth. This stereotype was common at the time and was widely used in propaganda of all types.<sup>31</sup> In *Commando Duck*, Donald Duck parachuted behind Japanese enemy lines and was on a mission to destroy a Japanese air base. He encountered Japanese snipers who shot at him only after Donald had passed by because it was supposedly a "Japanese tradition" to shoot someone in the back.<sup>32</sup> Though Donald did not get hurt from the snipers shooting at him, the scene still gave the American viewers an idea of the alleged inherent evil of the Japanese enemy.

In addition to the propaganda against the Japanese, there was also propaganda against the Germans. Different from that of the Japanese, the German villain was almost always portrayed in the figure of Adolf Hitler. Germany's evil could be shown as a single evil person whereas Japan needed different characters with different roles in the war. There were posters printed of Hitler's face among the flames of burning churches behind piles of dead bodies that focused mainly on one body of a mother with a child crying beside her.<sup>33</sup> The image is horrifying and makes anyone who sees it feel sadness and hatred toward Hitler and all that he stood for — such as burning churches and killing thousands of innocent people. The Disney approach was once again less violent. Disney films made Hitler look like a fool in the fairy tale portion of *Education for Death* and did not show him as a title character afterward. Instead, Hitler was shown in a painting looking over Nazi children and reacting with facial expressions. He was made into the overseer who was not doing all of the terrible deeds but was still responsible for them.

The overseer theme is evident in both the Disney posters and the Disney cartoons and was to make the American public feel as if all of the wrongs done by Germany were a direct result of Hitler's influence.

Walt Disney's influence on society was significant. An average of ninety million people went to the movies every week at a time when Disney's popularity was soaring.<sup>34</sup> Disney himself noticed his impact on American society during the war and hoped to use his amazing influence to educate people on other topics. He felt that the possibilities were endless.<sup>35</sup> His cartoons were well made and heavily funded so that people knew how much he cared about helping the American people get through with the war. Those involved in the Great War (World War I) were slowly fading. Their stories of unity and valor would never be told with the same emotion. Written words could only do so much when describing the expression and the feelings people had during this amazing time. Strangely enough, the medium of cartoons could help tell the story that the books could not. They gave the viewer a sense of being there at the time, and introduced people to a new historical medium.

## Notes

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## Nathan J. Brouwer

### **A Period of Transformation: A Study of Chicago's Ghetto from 1940 to 1960**

Housing in Chicago, since the city's inception, has been based on ethnicity. Neighborhoods consisted of the same ethnicities living together in a specific area. This was no different for the city's African-American population. However, when other ethnic neighborhoods began to intersperse at the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans were unable to do the same. Facing unique discrimination, their movement was restricted. The neighborhoods they lived in became rigidly segregated, forming a vast African-American ghetto. The period from 1940 to 1960 was an important time in the housing of African Americans in Chicago because the ghetto underwent transformation, in terms of its deterioration, expansion, and subsequent reconsolidation along racial lines. Restrictive covenants, real estate and speculator practices, politics, and the protest and racism inhabitants of the ghetto faced by many opponents of integration all contributed to the maintenance and deepening of segregation in the city during this period of transformation.

Segregation was not new in Chicago; events at the turn of the century set the precedent for the segregation already present in 1940. The formation of the first ghetto in Chicago spanned the period from 1890 to 1920.<sup>1</sup> Located on the city's south side, deep segregation in the area led to it being referred to as the "Black Belt." By 1920, the majority of the city's African Americans lived in the area, forming the backbone of black housing in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> The period after World War I was an extremely important time for the ghetto. The "Great Migration" started, changing conditions in the ghetto. The "Great Migration" was the mass movement of African Americans from the southern part of the country to the north. They migrated to cities like Chicago, which was unequipped to handle the large numbers of migrants. Therefore, a process began that led to the deterioration of the area. Deterioration occurred because many people were forced, because of the lack of alternatives, into overcrowded dwellings, leading to decay and disrepair. During

the Great Depression of the 1930s, there was a period of slowed migration and almost no new housing was constructed in the city. However, the consequences of the WWI-era migration caused a housing shortage that continued into the 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

The first obstacle that Chicago's African Americans faced in the 1940s was this severe housing shortage. According to Arnold Hirsch, in *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*, the severe housing shortage that was already prevalent became more extreme because of the "renewal of massive black migration to Chicago."<sup>4</sup> This migration was the result of the involvement of the United States in World War II. Immediately following the Japanese bombardment of Pearl Harbor, people rushed to the nation's cities, like Chicago, seeking defense-related jobs.<sup>5</sup> Although Chicago had ample jobs, there was almost no housing available, especially, in the black community.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, according to Hirsch, because of WWII, "men and material were diverted to the production of the necessities of war."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, new housing construction all but stopped during the war.<sup>8</sup> The lack of existing housing combined with the lack of material for new housing resulted in an ominous housing situation. The housing shortage became dangerous. In 1940, according to Hirsch, "the 1940 vacancy rate for Chicago was a dangerously low 3.9 percent; the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Commission believed a 5 percent rate to be the 'danger line' below which a genuine shortage existed."<sup>9</sup> By April 1942, this level was at a staggering 0.9 percent.<sup>10</sup> However, the lack of housing available to African Americans was not the only thing maintaining segregation in the city.

Restrictive covenants were one of the main ways used to deter black migration into the white areas of the city. Wendy Plotkin, in *Deeds of Mistrust*, described restrictive covenants "legally enforceable provisions of deeds prohibiting owners from selling or leasing their residences to members of specified racial groups."<sup>11</sup> They were agreements, or contracts, made between groups of white neighbors vowing not to sell their homes to African Americans. They were an effective tool against the movement of African Americans into white neighborhoods. Therefore, they kept the borders of the black ghetto where they had been since the beginning of the century. Restrictive covenants were most often placed "in the communities adjacent to the 'black belt,'" according to Hirsch, enabling white homeowners to legally bar African Americans from moving into their neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup> The effectiveness of covenants was compounded by the fact that they were enforceable in the court

system. A judge could, and usually did, rule that it was illegal for a black person to live in a property covered by a covenant. They also led to hardened segregation because the high number of people moving into the ghetto greatly outnumbered the few people able to leave the ghetto. The land area covered by restrictive covenants was listed as high as eighty percent, according to the vice-chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, Robert Taylor.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in the rare case that a white person, bound by a covenant, did sell a property to a black person, he was faced with a lawsuit, according to the *Chicago Defender*, Chicago's African-American newspaper.<sup>14</sup> Restrictive covenants made a dangerous housing situation even worse for most black Chicagoans by preventing their migration out of the ghetto.

These covenants were blamed for a number of deaths in the black area of the city. By restricting the ability of inhabitants of the ghetto to escape, they caused further overcrowding, making for perilous conditions in black housing. For example, according to the *Defender*, in 1947 allegations were made that covenants were responsible for the deaths of ten African Americans.<sup>15</sup> The article states "negroes must live in fire traps ... because they are hemmed in by the written law, which takes the form of restrictive covenants."<sup>16</sup>

In 1948, restrictive covenants were challenged in the Supreme Court. On 3 May 1948, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, that these covenants were unconstitutional.<sup>17</sup> This victory was paramount for African Americans. They could now buy property outside ghetto lines. As an article in the *Chicago Defender* stated after the verdict, "the racial bigots in the field of housing have been completely routed."<sup>18</sup> This turned out to be a premature assessment of the situation. Although the court decision ended one form of discrimination, black Chicagoans now faced other means of discrimination.

After the court decision, opponents of integration set out to foster other means of maintaining segregation. Immediately, they began looking for ways to get around the Supreme Court decision.<sup>19</sup> They gathered to protest the decision, and promoted the use of violence against African Americans. They even advocated the use of bombs to deter the migration of blacks into white neighborhoods.<sup>20</sup> Soon violence became the favored means to stop the black movement into white areas. However, violence was not the only thing keeping African Americans from leaving the ghetto.

African Americans faced another adversary in the real estate industry. When restrictive covenants no longer proved to be a useful

tactic for the opponents of integration, African Americans were free to escape from the deteriorated boundaries of the traditional ghetto. Because more blacks were employed (and better employed), they were able to afford housing in white areas. As Hirsch states, "the increase in black income was crucial to the destabilization of old racial borders."<sup>21</sup> However, when African Americans tried to purchase property, they were unlikely to find a home, and less likely to get a fair deal if they did. Dealing with the real estate industry frustrated the city's black citizens. When it was realized that "racial succession" was on the verge of taking place, the realtors tried to lower rent and purchase prices "in the futile attempt to attract white residents," according to Hirsch.<sup>22</sup> When this failed, the area went into a state of limbo. As Hirsch states, "with the future of the area uncertain and income restricted, landlords and homeowners often cut back on the maintenance of their properties; deterioration thus frequently set in before blacks moved into the community."<sup>23</sup> The result was that future black homebuyers inherited property already in decay.

Financing was another complication that African Americans faced. The financial institutions in Chicago were not in the practice of lending money to potential African-American homebuyers. They knew that white citizens did not want blacks to move into their areas. Knowing that white people were the majority in the city, businesses were cognizant of the financial repercussions of dealing with black customers. The result was almost complete inaction by reputable real estate companies. For instance, according to Hirsch, "a survey of 241 white savings and loan associations found that only one made an initial mortgage to a black family in an all-white area in a single year."<sup>24</sup> The outcome of this was detrimental to African Americans attempting to leave the ghetto behind. Their only choice was to do business with land speculators.

Speculators took advantage of home buyers unable to do business with reputable lending institutions. Speculators bought homes from white homeowners and sold them to black homebuyers. They exacted a huge profit from doing this, and the tactics they used facilitated the deterioration of the neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup> The common practice used by speculators was the concept of "on contract" home buying.<sup>26</sup> Speculators gave black homebuyers low down payments, and then charged exorbitant amounts for repayment.<sup>27</sup> The average markup on the price of a home, according to Hirsch, was as high as 115 percent, with the average of 72 percent.<sup>28</sup> The worst part was that, even after dealing with price increases, African Americans

did not even hold the title to the home. The speculator still had sole ownership of the home. The speculator held the title until the entire contract was paid. Since they had no ownership, African Americans were legally renters, rather than homeowners. They were often evicted for missing as little as a single payment on the contract.<sup>29</sup> Speculators controlled the lives of many in the community. The high prices they were paying each month on the property left African-American families with little money for anything else, including home improvements. In addition, because the people did not actually own the property, and could be evicted at any time, they were less likely to invest in home improvements. Therefore, the practices speculators employed contributed to the deterioration of the new areas the black people lived in, turning them, eventually, into part of an expanded ghetto.

Although speculators contributed to the deterioration of these newly inhabited areas, they also provided a desperately needed service to black people. Using speculators allowed black citizens to escape the overcrowded and deteriorated ghetto that had resulted from decades of overcrowding. Speculators made it possible to finance houses in previously white areas. This caused the ghetto lines of the 1920s, which remained the same through the 1940s, to be shattered. This started a trend towards the integration of whites and blacks in the city. By the 1950 census, areas of black housing included the black ghetto, but also included areas that were now "mixed race," especially on the West Side.<sup>30</sup>

However, integration was only short-term. The only reason it occurred at all, was usually that the white people that lived in these neighborhoods had not moved out. They eventually did, however. This created room for more black people to move in. Therefore, the migration of whites to the suburbs contributed to the renewal and expansion of segregation. Although the areas of black housing expanded, the reconsolidation of the larger ghetto along racial lines had already begun.

Public housing was one way the ghetto was reinforced in Chicago. Public housing started in the New Deal era of the late 1930s. Its implementation started with the United States Housing Act of 1937.<sup>31</sup> Public housing was created to provide housing for the nation's poor. Chicago started on the right foot when Mayor Edward Kelly appointed Elizabeth Wood as director of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA).<sup>32</sup> "The more poverty and deprivation she encountered, the more convinced she became that the root cause of these ills was the deficient conditions in which people

lived," according to *American Pharaoh*.<sup>33</sup> She also believed that public housing was a great way to institute integration within the city.<sup>34</sup> However, Wood faced opposition and legislation that limited her ability to institute change in the CHA. The Neighborhood Composition Rule, instituted on the federal level by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, was the first, and arguably, the largest obstacle she faced. This rule, according to *American Pharaoh*, "stated that the racial mix of tenants in a new housing project had to match the racial composition of the residents who had previously lived on the site."<sup>35</sup> The rule made it legal to institute renewed segregation in Chicago. This meant that Wood could not change the racial makeup of Chicago by integrating the city's public housing projects. However, she did try, and the outcome was racial violence in Chicago.

The first attempt by the CHA to integrate public housing was at a public housing project called Airport Homes. This attempt led to the first violent encounter between opponents and supporters of public housing. The CHA designated 5 December 1946 as the day to move the first families into the homes. The CHA had been careful to select tenants with distinguished backgrounds. They chose two war heroes from World War II. They thought this would eliminate some of the opposition to the integration. This, however, mattered little to the opponents of the integration. When the moving vans showed up, opponents of the integration began to riot. The families that were trying to move in, and the drivers of the moving vans, were only able to escape the violence by running into the office inside Airport Homes. The rioting continued into the next day. Only after four hundred police became involved, violently at times, did the rioting stop. The damage was already done. All of the black families that were slated to move in withdrew their names from consideration. Airport Homes never received any black occupants. The successes of the rioters in preventing the integration established the groundwork for other groups in the future to use the same tactics. The rioting at Airport Homes was the first surrounding the issue of public housing; however, it would not be the last. The dispute over integration culminated at the Trumbull Park Homes.<sup>36</sup>

The integration of Trumbull Park Homes ushered in a new, more potent, era of violence. Black migration, through public housing, into white areas of the city caused widespread anger among opponents of integration. In July 1953, the Howard family moved into the Trumbull Park Homes. The CHA, however, did not know that Trumbull Park had been integrated until a week later.

Because Betty Howard was light-skinned, and looked white, her application for housing was granted. Elizabeth Wood used this as an opportunity to integrate Trumbull Park.<sup>37</sup> The white opponents of the integration of their neighborhood came out in force. They organized an effort to drive the family out of the project. The South Deering Improvement Association was the voice of these integration opponents. The main voice in support of integration was the NAACP. They "accused the CHA of discrimination and demanded the integration," according to Hirsch.<sup>38</sup> As opponents and supporters of the integration battled with words, the real battle was at the Trumbull Park Homes.

The violence at Trumbull Park Homes escalated when the CHA moved in additional black families. The Howards, being the first family in Trumbull Park, faced the brunt of the violence and intimidation. According to an article in *The Journal of American History*, by Arnold Hirsch, "crowds repeatedly threw bricks, stones, and sulfur candles through their windows, forcing the Howards to replace their living room window-panes with plywood."<sup>39</sup> Protestors, on some nights, set off as many as one hundred bombs outside of the Howard's apartment.<sup>40</sup> As if this was not enough to live with, they were unable to go anywhere without a police escort.<sup>41</sup> The violence was so severe that the Chicago Police Department had to use 250 police officers, at all times, to "keep the peace."<sup>42</sup> The violence became so widespread that even black people driving through the neighborhood on their way to work faced violence. Rocks thrown at them in June of 1954 alone injured eight workers on their way to work.<sup>43</sup> When the police began cracking down on adult protestors, protestors recruited children to carry out the violence, because of their immunity from prosecution.<sup>44</sup> The violence and disorder continued, off and on, at Trumbull Park Homes for the next ten years.

The Trumbull Park incidents were catastrophic for supporters of integration, black and white. Chicago's most influential supporter of integration in public housing, Elizabeth Wood, who was white, was fired. The opponents of integration had won, by creating civil unrest. Many of the black residents left the Trumbull Park Homes. The rest of the area around Trumbull Park remained segregated. In addition, Chicago's next mayor, Richard J. Daley, led the charge for renewed segregation in Trumbull Park, as well as in the rest of Chicago.<sup>45</sup>

The election of Richard J. Daley as mayor of Chicago in 1955 had a drastic effect on black housing. It resulted in the consolidation of

the black ghetto, through increased segregation. Chicago already had a long-standing Democratic Party that was extremely powerful and Daley was, by far, the most powerful politician in Chicago. Intent on keeping that power, Daley was a master at manipulation. He was able to make people think they were making progress with him, when in reality they were not. For instance, he knew "he had to formally support the right of black tenants to live anywhere they wanted to in the city,"<sup>46</sup> according to *American Pharoah*. However, when a number of Trumbull Park residents came seeking his help, he "offered vague expressions of sympathy," and sent them on their way, continued the *Pharoah*.<sup>47</sup> The residents were left waiting for political support for their fight against segregation, which never came. The Daley administration was not the place to look for support. The mayor not only neglected to help, his decisions promoted further segregation.

Furthermore, the stance that Daley took on public housing served to consolidate the black ghetto. When he took office, he decided to go ahead with all public housing projects already under consideration in black neighborhoods. The result was five new housing projects. All of them were in black neighborhoods with deep segregation already prevalent, effectively making a destructive situation even worse. All five of these were built in areas that already had black population percentages of ninety-eight percent or higher. Next, Daley made plans for the Robert Taylor Homes, which later became famous nationwide for their example as failures of public housing, and the Clarence Darrow Homes. Both were located directly in the center of the Black Belt. It was also during this time that the CHA decided to forego the background checks of inhabitants of public housing. One of the outcomes of this policy was seen in the crime-ridden Robert Taylor Homes. Furthermore, another problem was that many of these projects were high-rises, making them difficult to police. Daley's actions, basically, amounted to the warehousing of black people. In addition, the building of all of these projects reconsolidated the boundaries between races. However, Daley's next move solidified these boundaries.<sup>48</sup>

The building of the Dan Ryan expressway, beginning in 1957, was one of the last and most important events of the period, reinforcing the new boundary lines between the black ghetto and white neighborhoods in the surrounding area. Originally, the Dan Ryan was slated to dissect Chicago by going through Bridgeport, the white neighborhood where Daley grew up and still lived. The mayor quickly set out to change the course of the expressway. His

revised proposal, which was passed by the City Council, called for the Dan Ryan to run directly along the border that divided the “Black Belt” and Bridgeport. Moreover, the Dan Ryan was not the average expressway. The plans called for it to be a fourteen lane highway. Segregation was now preserved with a physical barrier. In short, Daley’s actions during the 1950s were instrumental in establishing the racial lines that formed the modern ghetto in Chicago.<sup>49</sup>

The period from 1940 to 1960 is paramount in the history of black housing in Chicago. It started with traditional lines intact, and ended with them having been shattered, and redrawn. The expansion of black housing was restricted by the housing shortage, restrictive covenants, and the lack of available financing. All of these further exacerbated the effects of the housing shortage on the African-American communities, and the dangerous overcrowding was the main contribution to the deterioration of the areas. When the housing shortage eased, restrictive covenants were ruled unconstitutional, and speculators provided “financing,” the movement of black people was no longer restricted. Areas of black habitation multiplied. However, through violence from opponents of integration, and governmental policies, the lines of an expanded ghetto were drawn, with increased segregation. The outcome was that African Americans, by 1960, faced similar problems to those they had faced in 1940. The problems they overcame were replaced with new ones. Because of segregation, the opportunity to correct some of the society’s ills had passed. Chicago, therefore, remained segregated, and this segregation affected the lives of millions of African Americans for generations.

## Notes

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- 7 *Ibid.*, 19.
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