



# Historical Studies Journal

Spring 2013 • Volume 30



University of Colorado  
Denver

# Historical Studies Journal

Spring 2013 . Volume 30

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# Preface

This year marks the 30th edition of University of Colorado Denver's *Historical Studies Journal*. The *Journal* has grown up along with the institution. It serves as a department-wide portfolio of our students' best work and as an example to incoming students to show them "how it's done." The *Journal* is an important repository of research, and showcases the excellent work UCD history students are capable of producing. This year's edition features a broad variety of topics in social and political history as well as historic preservation and other aspects of public history.

Kayla Gabehart's paper "The Flapper, Gender Roles & the 1920s 'New Woman,'" exemplifies excellence in our department by placing a seemingly innocuous early-twentieth century mode of style and dress into a broader historical context. "Flapper culture was by no means an isolated fad," Ms. Gabeheart wrote, "but rather the result of nearly a century of female activism" which allowed women to seize previously masculine prerogatives and set the stage for later phases of the fight for equality. Michele Lingbeck's "Desperate Letters" offers a fascinating look into the reproductive health issues faced by women in the nineteenth century American Southwest, by investigating the practice of Dr. Michael Beshoar, a frontier physician who aided them with medicine, prophylactics, and abortions. Ms. Lingbeck's research with the doctor's original correspondence takes the reader inside the hardscrabble lives of frontier women and their struggles to survive inhospitable circumstances where medical help and expertise were hard to come by. Douglas Fowler's thoroughly researched study of the Historic American Building Survey shows how the federal government's historic preservation mission progressed from neglected bureaucratic necessity to an important, influential, and institutionalized function of our government. Pam Milavec's "Another Face in the Crowd" examines the American tragedy of lynching with a focus on efforts to raise awareness of this stain on our history through public commemorations. Ian Stewart-Shelaf's paper thoughtfully considers the ways in which the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 impacted the fate of the American Whig Party. Last but not least, Shay Gonzales and Alan Pershing revisit the personalities and ideologies of the notorious Salem Witch trials of the colonial period. It has been an honor and a pleasure to edit this fine collection of papers.

The *Journal* would like to thank Shannon Fluckey of Auraria Higher Education Center Integrated Marketing and Communications for her invaluable assistance in creating the layout and printing the *Journal*. We would also like to thank Dr. Thomas J. Noel and Dr. Pamela Laird for their strong support of the *Journal*.

**CRAIG LEAVITT**

Editor

America rose out of World War I into the prosperity of the 1920s. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the “Roaring Twenties” as “characterized by the optimism, buoyancy, and extravagance that followed the somber years of World War I.”<sup>1</sup> The term the “Roaring Twenties” attempts to capture the speed and tumultuous nature of the period, as it ushered in not only the beginnings of contemporary notions of credit and consumer culture, but also saw the birth of the 1920s “New Woman.” The turbulent and unbridled environment that was 1920s America, in conjunction with events leading up to the era, set the stage for the flapper to establish a new persona for women, and to revolutionize traditional notions

# Blending Gender:

## The Flapper, Gender Roles & the 1920s “New Woman”

by Kayla Gabehart

of femininity. Historian Kenneth Yellis affirms that in stark contrast to the feminine ideals of the previous era, “the flapper could hardly have been a more thorough repudiation of the Gibson girl if that had been her intent, as, in a sense, it was.”<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Dunbar Bromley describes flappers as a “generation who sought to refute the behavior and values of their ‘perfect lady’ predecessors.”<sup>3</sup> These flapper women defied and manipulated traditional female gender norms and fashioned a new place for themselves in mainstream American society, while also adopting typically male roles and activities. From this amalgamation of both traditionally male and female gender roles, flappers and the culture that they built around themselves re-defined mainstream notions of womanhood.

Women of all races and classes across America adopted aspects of this flapper culture, such as the short haircuts and the wearing of hats. The more radical flappers, such as the

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*Standing Out in the Crowd. "Images of the Jazz Age."*

*Available from [classes.berklee.edu/llanday/fall01/jazzage/crowdweb](https://classes.berklee.edu/llanday/fall01/jazzage/crowdweb). Accessed September 5th, 2012.*

woman portrayed above, embodied the movement not just in terms of fashion, but socially and economically. These radical flappers were predominantly white, urban, young, single, educated women of the middle class.<sup>4</sup> In terms of fashion, the flapper women wore short skirts with exposed legs or silk stockings, had short “bob” haircuts over which they often donned hats, applied heavy makeup, and heavily accessorized their wardrobes, often with long strands of pearls and flamboyant brooches. These radical flappers, the women who had a hand in the redefinition of femininity, engaged in flapperism by partying with men and frequenting night clubs, utilizing birth control methods freely while engaging in promiscuous sex, often choosing to remain single past the typical marital age for women, smoking and drinking publicly, engaging as active participants in consumer culture, actively seeking a place for themselves in the workplace, and generally practicing open independence and rebellion against social norms. For these radical women, flapperism was not a fashion or a fad, but an innovative and progressive lifestyle.

Flapper culture was by no means an isolated fad, but rather the result of nearly a century of female activism. Women’s movements emerged with some degree of force in conjunction with the abolitionist movement, in hopes that if and when African Americans were granted suffrage, so too would women. American suffragists first formally outlined their desire for the right to the vote at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. Playing on the language of the Declaration of Independence, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leader in the first generation of American suffragettes, declared “that all men *and women* are created equal,” and that the history of mankind was nothing but “a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward women, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.”<sup>5</sup> Even with the intense and passionate activism of

Stanton and others like Susan B. Anthony, over six decades would pass before Alice Paul and a younger and more radical generation of suffragists would see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. In 1920, on the threshold of the “Roaring Twenties,” three-fourths of the United States ratified the words originally written by Anthony, in which she asserted female equality saying that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States by any state on account of sex.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, an emerging flapper culture in which women were interacting with men in new ways corresponded with the granting of a social liberty women had never had before, putting them on closer to equal footing in the political sphere.”

Also in the decade that preceded the “Roaring Twenties,” feminists like Margaret Sanger, advocated the idea that women should control their own bodies and promoted the use of birth control methods. Sanger, a nurse and advocate of female birth control, led the fight for reproductive rights in America. These were radical notions as the concept of coverture, the social model in which men essentially controlled and “covered” their wives, thrived in mainstream Victorian society. Sanger wrote and spoke widely on the topic, and empowered women by declaring that allowing men sexual control of the female body “increases our degradation, and places us in ideals lower than animals,” and asserting that women could “become a new being, sexually awakened.”<sup>7</sup> Sanger also called for the defiance of the Comstock Law, which forbade the dissemination of birth control and information regarding it.<sup>8</sup> In the 1920s, the idea of a female controlling her body was not new and no doubt influenced the sexually promiscuous and independent flapper.

At the same time that notions of birth control were being reconsidered, anarchist Emma Goldman condemned marriage as a hindrance to the independent woman. Goldman, a Russian immigrant, traveled widely before her deportation during the Red Scare, proclaiming that a woman pays for a husband “with her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life.”<sup>9</sup> Goldman’s idea of the single woman, in addition to ideas disseminated by Victoria Woodhull and other nineteenth century “free love” advocates, formed a framework that would later influence radical flapper women.

The flappers founded a famous, and some might say infamous, appearance and lifestyle. Flappers rebelled against Victorian ideals of beauty and femininity, but so too did their precursor, the Gibson girl: an embodiment of the Edwardian era ideal of beauty. Charles Dana Gibson’s drawings and short stories based on his wife, introduced this Gibson girl ideal at the turn of the century.<sup>10</sup> Camille Clifford became the iconic image of the Gibson girl in popular culture. Like the flappers of the 1920s, the women who embraced the Gibson girl persona rebelled against their Victorian mothers and grandmothers. These women flaunted their voluptuous, curvaceous figures in tight, mermaid-style dresses, and though their hemlines remained long, they were overtly and consciously displaying their sexuality. Lynn D. Gordon, a women’s studies historian at the University of Rochester, asserts that magazines in the early 1900s celebrated the Gibson girl as “beautiful, charming, and fashionable, praising their health, athletic abilities, and intelligence.” These Gibson girls, particularly those of the upper class that embraced progressive goals, also attended college. Gordon asserts that at the turn of the century “women could have both higher education and social approval.” Gordon characterizes the Gibson girl as “a modern woman,





*Camille Clifford and Leslie Stiles. Hulton Archive, 1906. Getty Images. Available from <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/actors-leslie-stiles-and-camille-clifford-one-of-the-gibson-news-photo/3301288>. Accessed December 11th, 2012.*

unencumbered by bustles of convention.”<sup>11</sup> The Gibson girls dealt a blow to mainstream Victorian ideals, and in so doing began re-defining femininity by defying and manipulating its accepted definitions. The flappers of the “Roaring Twenties” picked up where the Gibson girls left off.

By defying and manipulating traditional notions of femininity, radical flappers had only fought half the battle. The creation of the 1920s “New Woman,” an ideal that would influence succeeding generations of women, entailed more than just rebellion and the refusal to wear corsets and long dresses. These radical flappers also had to adopt masculine practices to truly re-define mainstream ideals of womanhood. They had to devise methods in which they could stake out for themselves an equal footing with men. And so, they smoked, they drank, they partied, and they worked.

Like the woman in the 1920s photograph, one can hardly picture the prototypical flapper without a cigarette between her lips. Today smoking is no more male than female, but for the flappers, smoking in public was radical and new, as in the 1920s a social taboo still surrounded the act. These women, at least initially, did not smoke to satiate a nicotine addiction, but rather they smoked because men smoked and there was no legitimate reason they could not do exactly the same. A.E. Hamilton, arguing in his article that individuals did not adopt smoking to satisfy an addiction but rather as a social custom, contemporaneously observed this phenomenon saying that “both men and women have assumed that smoking is a masculine affair,” until “the picture of the flapper without her cigarette had become like a portrait of Charles G. Dawes without his pipe.”<sup>12</sup> The seemingly simple act of smoking a cigarette had much deeper symbolic implications for women in the 1920s, for the flapper took smoking and called it her own.

Prohibition and the 1920s coincided, but by no means was the “Roaring Twenties” bereft of alcohol. Bootlegging and moonshining flourished during the Prohibition Era, and the nightlife so characteristic of the period thrived on alcohol consumption. Radical flapper women decided that the act of drinking alcohol in public could also be theirs just

as much as it could be any man's. That is not to say, however, that many nineteenth century women never drank alcohol, but they generally did not do so publicly. Mainstream thought among the gentry assumed ladies drank alcohol because they were deprived, prostitutes, or both.<sup>13</sup> Female drinking threatened gender identity; alcohol consumption was reserved for men to drink in bars with other men, while women were moral "angels," often suffering at the violent hand of these drunken men.<sup>14</sup> Out of these nineteenth century assumptions emerged a strong temperance movement, and that movement coincided with the push for woman's suffrage. Here, radical flapperism presents a paradox: flappers were not concerned with maintaining moral authority, but with rebellion and outright independence. Scholar Catherine Gilbert Murdock, in her book analyzing the transition from women as supporters of temperance to flappers adopting social drinking as an act of independence, asserts that many critics held a negative view of the actions of the flapper, founded in the accomplishments of feminists before her, as "she appeared to snub older feminists' temperance goals." Women's Christian Temperance Union members openly "fretted that the girls have adopted the boys' standards instead of raising them to their own," while the *Union Signal*, a WCTU publication, affirmed the necessity of equality with men, though lamented the consumption of alcohol for that purpose, saying, "a phase of present-day feminism demands every privilege for women that man claims for himself. Concerning the justice of this demand there can be no question."<sup>15</sup> These flappers drank publicly and heavily, despite its illegality. Again, they claimed the masculine and demanded that it could also be feminine.

Radical flappers did more than simply smoke cigarettes and drink gin. These women penetrated the night life, previously reserved for men. Joshua Zeitz characterizes the prototypical flapper as one who "passed her evenings in steamy jazz clubs, where she danced in an immodest fashion with a revolving cast of male suitors." In this way, too, when flappers adopted the masculine they shrugged off their previous role as a moral authority, and members of older generations lamented their flippant attitudes.<sup>16</sup> The frivolity and promiscuity that characterized the nightlife of the "Roaring Twenties," and the smoking, drinking, and partying that accompanied it, made women a fixture amongst men where they had never been before. Women, then, entered not only the nightlife, but also the workplace.

During the nineteenth century, female work outside the home was associated with poor, working class women forced into factories or shops in order to supplement their husbands' insufficient wages. Respectable elite women did not work outside the home. Single women, however, did enter the workplace out of necessity. America's plunge into World War I accelerated trends of female employment, and essentially forced a realignment of mainstream American values. Men left their jobs in large numbers, leaving women to take over their positions in factories and elsewhere. Massive numbers of women now worked in offices, industrial settings, and department stores, making female employment commonplace. Whether or not traditional definitions of womanhood condoned this, it became necessary, and furthermore proved that women were not passive property, but capable of the same jobs and physical labor that men were. When the war ended and men returned home, many women departed from the workplace. But roughly a quarter of the female work force persevered and continued to work outside the realm of the

home, as war had provided an opportunity for women to stake a place for themselves in the working world.<sup>17</sup> Employment opportunities and wages for women remained limited. However, the war effort made the female in the workforce more commonplace and acceptable, fundamentally shattering the Cult of Domesticity and separate spheres of gender responsibility. Radical flappers, ever seeking independence, exploited this trend. Notoriously single, they worked and made money, as self-sufficiency proved the easiest way to independence from parents or a husband. A female in the workplace was no longer synonymous with working class poverty, but rather became a symbol of liberation and freedom; a symbol of equality and modernity

Had the atmosphere of mainstream American society in the 1920s been less socially progressive and less consumer-driven it is possible that the media and those with the wealth and power to motivate public opinion would have rejected the flapper in all her rebellious glory. Instead the media, particularly film and advertising, took this new persona, disseminated it, and promoted it.

Scholar Philip Scranton explains how advertising harnessed the flapper persona and influenced flapper culture and mainstream America's consciousness of it. This process consequently established the boyish flapper as the 1920s archetype of beauty. Scranton defines beauty as a distinction "between high and low, normal and abnormal, virtue and vice," and thus helps to define "morality, social status, class, gender, race and ethnicity."<sup>18</sup> When advertisements harnessed the flapper persona as the model for beauty for the time, they marketed flapperism to consumer society and flappers themselves. Lever did this in 1925 when they advertised their soap being used in boudoirs rather than simply the tub or kitchen sink.<sup>19</sup> So, in the spirit of making money, advertisers transitioned from marketing the Gibson girl to marketing the prototypical flapper, the ideal beauty of the decade, to a receptive public.

The film industry also harnessed the consumer potential of the flapper persona. Film historian Sara Ross asserts that exploiting the promiscuous flapper identity in film had to be approached with caution, despite its massive box office potential.<sup>20</sup> The Victorian ideal was outdated following World War I, but continued to be overrepresented in film in the early 1920s.<sup>21</sup> To compete in a consumer driven, modernizing society, most mainstream film production companies introduced the promiscuous flapper persona, because even prior to the 1920s, sex sold. Flappers embodied sexuality, and thus lent themselves to this marketing ploy. However, films countered the radical nature of the flapper lifestyle by utilizing comedy and portraying the flapper as a young, naïve comedienne.<sup>22</sup> This reconciliation in film between the traditional and the radical helped transition society into accepting the notion of the independent woman.

Before the emergence of the radical flapper lifestyle in 1920s America, many women throughout history attempted to defy traditional notions of femininity. Rather than just confronting and blatantly disregarding traditional definitions of womanhood, radical flappers also encroached on male domains and made them their own realm in public society while media made the flapper persona widespread and profitable. This very intentional blending of gender roles, present in a societal environment fertile for new ideas, ushered in the 1920s version of the "New Woman."

It is imperative to recognize how radical the activities and attitudes of these flappers remained to older generations. Historian Joshua Zeitz contextualizes the profound risks that these women undertook, for “as late as 1904, a woman had been arrested on Fifth Avenue in New York City for lighting up a cigarette.”<sup>23</sup> Murdock further explains that the flapper stereotype “attests to the profound divisions between parent and child, old and new, good and bad, that marked America in the 1910s and 1920s.”<sup>24</sup> The flapper persona presented an escape from restrictive femininity and provided an alternative that meant self-reliance and independence. Many young women deeply desired this autonomy, and their old-fashioned parents often objected to their subscribing to flapper fashion and ideals. Laura Davidow Hirshbein, a psychiatrist at the University of Michigan Hospitals, describes the emergence of flapper culture as a clash between young and old, saying that “when contemporary critics exclaimed over a crisis of youth, they articulated a clash between a new generation and its predecessor.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, when parents and grandparents lamented the radical flapperism practiced by their daughters and granddaughters as a crisis of youth, this “older generation” was demonstrating the intergenerational divergence of world views. At the same time, born into an era of consumption and progressivism, flapper women simply could not identify with the more conservative values of their parents and grandparents. Hirshbein explains that “the young woman’s representation of the younger generation identified with the nation itself... the younger generation was doing the important business of gaining experience. There was no value in the knowledge gained by the older generation because it was of a world gone by.”<sup>26</sup> Changes in social trends ushered in by World War I, such as the emphasis on consumer culture and more liberal outlooks on gender roles, constructed a mainstream society in which the once primary role of women as the moral authority was no longer pervasive. These flapper women lived in a decade conducive to change, and the changes they wrought conflicted with the views of an “older generation,” and were thus perceived as the crisis of misguided youth.

Newspapers also played up this crisis between young and old. When her mother refused to allow her to leave the house donned in flapper fashion, a fourteen year-old Chicago girl took her own life when she put a rubber hose in her mouth and turned on the gas on her mother’s range.<sup>27</sup> Though this incident represents anecdotal evidence of a personal and familial disorder, headlines playing up similar tragedies were common. Such headlines served as a scare tactic directed towards parents, designed to suppress radical flapperism and prevent other families from suffering the same fate.

This younger generation of women, growing up in a society that preached progressivism, craved their own identity. Liberated by consumerism and a changing society, they did not adhere to the conservative ideals that many of their parents cherished, and 1920s advocates of modernity implored parents to see the method to their madness. One such appeal appeared in *Outlook Magazine* in December, 1922. Self-proclaimed flapper Ellen Welles Page beseeched parents, “grandparents, and friends, and teachers, and preachers—you who constitute the ‘older generation’—to overlook our shortcomings, at least for the present, and to appreciate our virtues.” Welles attempted to soften the flapper persona by claiming that times “have made us older and more experienced,” and that “outlets for this surplus knowledge and energy must be opened.”<sup>28</sup> Welles’ appeal, and others like it,

proved successful in so far as they contrasted the widely held assumption that flappers were base, unintelligent, and superficial. Well-written articles like Welles' portrayed flappers as intelligent and capable, attracting young women to the flapper lifestyle, and provided a vehicle through which women could manifest their intellectual abilities.

While many of the "older generation" denounced the flapper movement as dealing a blow to the era of feminism that preceded it, many others acknowledged flappers for their modernity in the sense that they were re-defining what it meant to be a woman in mainstream America. In her 1928 piece on consumption of explicit material in theatre and film, Catherine Beach Ely characterized flappers as demanding the uncensored "raw" life, as it "appeals to the restless girl, alert to bite into the wormy fruit of the moderns."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Harriet Monroe, quoting Vachel Lindsay, praised the flapper by saying that "America needs the flamboyant to save her soul," and that "flamboyance expresses faith in that energy—it is a shout of delight, a declaration of richness. It is at least the beginning of an art." Within her essay, Monroe makes the claim that America refuses to be "humdrum" and "drab," but "suppressing its feelings and censoring its artists... fearing emotion as the gateway to perdition—America finds the flamboyant in the courts."<sup>30</sup> The flappers, no doubt, embodied this flamboyance and progress that America craved, but they did so beyond of the "courts" of cinema and entertainment. Rather, they took their flamboyance and made it a lifestyle, which made them controversial in the public, but revolutionary in historical terms.

The woman in the 1920s still photograph presented at the beginning of this article is iconic today. The word "flapper" stirs up visions of jazz, parties, short dresses, and hats. Costume companies market flapper regalia on Halloween, allowing girls and women to adopt the beauty of another era. I always picture scenes from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* when I hear the term. We cannot possibly know, without extensive research, the background of that girl in the photo; but like other radical flapper girls, she was probably just a young girl caught up in a tumultuous decade, trying to stake out a place for herself in society. She probably worked and supported herself by day, and danced the Charleston with various suitors and sexual partners by night. She probably used birth control, tobacco, and alcohol. She was provocatively feminine and beautiful, but ever adopting the masculine as if to say, "this world is mine too." She made decisions on her own accord and embraced her independence. She probably had no idea that she would change what it meant to be a woman forever, and make inroads for every successive generation of females since. She lived in a societal atmosphere fertile for change and revolution, a society that bought the flapper, a society teetering on the edge of modernity in terms of challenging gender roles. By blending these gender roles, she planted the seeds of even more profound change to come.

Trinidad, Colorado has always been a stopping point for travelers. Before the automobile and I-25 arrived, folks travelled through what is now Trinidad on horseback, oxcart, Conestoga wagon, stagecoach and by railroad. Trinidad is nestled in the Purgatoire Valley of the Sangre de Cristo Range, just north of the famed Raton Pass where traders and settlers traversed the arduous mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail. Trinidad has a colorful history filled with many notorious Wild West characters. “Uncle Dick” Wooten maintained the toll road over Raton Pass. Doc Holliday, Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson mingled with Ute Indians and Hispanic settlers on the dusty streets of the town. In 1867, a doctor entered

# Desperate Letters:

## Abortion History and Michael Beshoar, M.D.

by Michele Lingbeck



*Dr. Michael Beshoar*

the Valley, took in the beauty of the scenery and decided to stay. His legacy was profound. Dr. Michael Beshoar helped to transform Trinidad from an uncivilized outpost into a large Colorado community. During his time in Trinidad he helped countless people, but none needed him as desperately as the women who sought medical advice and aid for their health issues. The letters written by patients to their trusted doctor are valuable historical proof of the hardships endured by women in Colorado during the nineteenth century.

Beshoar was born in 1833 to a deeply religious Pennsylvania-Dutch family. After graduating from the University of Michigan School of Medicine, he made his way to Pocahontas, Arkansas where he farmed and opened a medical practice, a pharmacy and a newspaper. Married twice into prominent local families, he tragically lost both

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wives to consumption. With successful business ventures and deep personal connections to the region, he accepted a Civil War commission as a Confederate Army surgeon in June of 1861. During his time in the Confederate army, he cared for wounded soldiers and suffering Arkansas civilians. After being captured by the Union Army in 1863, he denounced the Confederacy and pledged his loyalty to the Union. For the remainder of the war, Beshoar practiced medicine in Missouri and attempted to convince colleagues and customers of his loyalty to the United States.

Worn out by the constant scrutiny of his citizenship and the shady character of his Missouri patients (many of whom sought treatment for venereal disease), Michael jumped at an opportunity to head west as a United States Army Surgeon. In 1865, shortly after the end of the Civil War, he enlisted and moved to Nebraska Territory where he became Fort Kearney Post Surgeon and Medical Purveyor of the Western Territories. During his year at that post, he witnessed the devastating effects of Manifest Destiny on the Native American tribes of the Plains. He documented the medical practices and homeopathic remedies of the tribes and incorporated many of these into his own practice for the remainder of his medical career. After a year in this role, Michael Beshoar resigned from military service for good and headed west into the Territory of Colorado to seek his fortune and find a new home. Following the advice of friends, he travelled first to Denver and then to Pueblo, where he was acquainted with some of the town's leading businessmen, John A. and Mahon D. Thatcher. In Pueblo, Beshoar immediately opened a medical practice and drugstore, and then worked toward providing the town with a much-needed newspaper. The *Colorado Chieftain* began operation in 1868 and provided a Democratic Party voice to the citizens of Pueblo. Beshoar maintained the newspaper and medical offices in Pueblo, but found his true home further south in the Purgatoire River Valley.

While touring the region, Michael Beshoar ventured south into into Trinidad and immediately began to fill a void in the community. According to his biographer,

Within a hour after his arrival, he had acquired several patients, who quickly spread the word that a real doctor was in town, bringing still more to ask for his professional assistance. In the course of his first twenty-four hours, he took care of a couple of dozen men and met most of the little town's leading citizens: Postmaster William Bransford, Don Felipe Baca, merchant Jesus Maria Garcia, Henry Barraclough, and a number of others both American and Mexican. They were unanimous in declaring that Trinidad urgently needed a doctor and a drugstore and would welcome Michael Beshoar.<sup>1</sup>

Opening up the first medical office and drug store within ninety miles, Beshoar found much work to be done in Trinidad. During his 40 years in the town, his personal impact would be profound. Eventually, his reach would extend from farming and mining to journalism and even deep into the region's political foundations. Always a public servant, Beshoar lost a close election in 1886 to become the state's Lieutenant Governor and in 1904 won a seat in the state senate only to see it taken by a fraudulent election committee controlled by a corrupt Republican Party. Beshoar worked relentlessly to represent the people of Trinidad. Whether he was speaking for the Hispanic citizens during the

Christmas Race Riots of 1867 or denouncing the abuses of the coal mining companies against the workers, he served as a voice for the downtrodden and desperate in a region filled with hardship.

Most notably, Beshoar served the people through his medical practice. While his practice catered to patients suffering from all types of ailments including gunshot wounds, measles, addiction, dental problems, biliousness (stomach problems), pneumonia, scalpings and any other imaginable disorder, his work with the women and children of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico truly showcase his role as caretaker to the needs of the most desperate. Since Dr. Beshoar was the only physician to be found between Pueblo and Santa Fe in 1867, his practice encompassed Anglo as well as Hispanic patients in both Colorado and New Mexico. "Before he returned to Pueblo, he made two major decisions: he would open a drugstore in Trinidad and he would learn Spanish as quickly as possible," wrote Dr. Beshoar's grandson and biographer, Barron Beshoar. "He spoke German fluently and had a solid background in Latin and French, but he would need Spanish in the Southwest for the sort of close and intimate relationship a doctor must have with his patients."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Beshoar was successful at developing those close personal relationships because patients wrote letters to him in Spanish from all over the region seeking his advice, or begging him to send medicine. Many of these patients were women, and many were unable to pay and begged for his help "sine dinero" or without money. He learned to individualize his practice for the cultural differences of the Hispanic population. Early in his practice among the Mexicans, he encountered two ailments that were completely novel to him: empapelada (papering) and oxalote (salamander).<sup>3</sup> These were actual gynecological disorders (probably vaginitis and endometriosis) that were believed to be the result of invasion by foreign intruders (literally a paper or salamander) into the bodies of the women. Beshoar learned to treat these disorders by using a powerful combination of medicine and psychological trickery. He also gained the trust of the Hispanic population of the region by his role in vaccinating children during the horrific black smallpox epidemic of 1877. His grandson and biographer remembered:

The black smallpox may have been slow wending its way from Santa Fe to Red River, but it didn't take long to hit Las Animas County. By the tenth of June it was epidemic. The odd thing was that it was pretty much confined to Indians and to Mexican children between the ages of four and thirteen; few Mexican adults contracted the disease and practically no Anglos. Virtually all of the remaining Indians in the county, regardless of age were stricken and died. Michael dropped everything to cope with the epidemic. He and Father Pinto, traveling by buggy, went to the most remote parts of the county, visiting isolated ranches and tiny little adobe hamlets. The physician used scabs to vaccinate on a mass basis with Father Pinto serving as his assistant.<sup>4</sup>

With the exceptions of black smallpox, epapelada and oxalote, the problems faced by Hispanic and Anglo women were very similar. Medical access was limited, reproductive choice was non-existent, and death was always on the doorstep trying to take children



away from their mothers. Beshoar worked tirelessly during his medical career in Trinidad to aid women and help protect them from a number of dire threats..

Modern obstetrical and gynecological medical care has taken much of the risk out of the process of pregnancy and childbirth. But, in the nineteenth century, pregnancy was extremely dangerous especially in older women who had given birth multiple times. “One of women’s major concerns in the West, as it had been in the East, was finding themselves in a ‘family way,’” wrote historians Duane A. Smith and Ronald C. Brown. “Even under the best of nineteenth-century conditions, this aspect of the ‘female ritual’ could be life threatening. An estimated one of every thirty mothers died giving birth; others suffered from depression and anxiety.”<sup>5</sup> Dr. Beshoar advertised his services as an accoucheur or male deliverer of babies. Midwives and family members had traditionally filled that role before it became a medical practice. As with all other areas of his practice, he kept meticulous records of the children he delivered. In 1886-1887, he recorded the birth of thirty-five babies. Seven of the thirty-five were stillborn or dead, one was noted as being very feeble, several required the use of forceps and one mother had to have the placenta manually removed after the delivery.<sup>6</sup> The percentage of at-risk deliveries and stillborn infants is shocking. In 1884-1885, Dr. Beshoar recorded similarly alarming statistics in his medical records. The ages and number of pregnancies for each mother were also noted in the record. For example, Mrs. Tafoya was twenty-seven years old and had ten prior pregnancies. That year, Mrs. Clellan, thirty-three, gave birth to her twelfth baby.<sup>7</sup>

With access to contraception extremely limited, one must wonder how many more pregnancies these women had to endure during their reproductive years. It also must be noted that many women in the Frontier West did not have access to a physician when they went into labor and underwent the birthing process with the help of family members or neighboring women. If complications arose, a doctor was often far away and the results might be devastating. Mr. Cruz wrote an urgent note to Dr. Beshoar to describe the problems faced by his pregnant wife:

Dear Sir, My wife is very sick at present. She is about to have a child and has been very sick for the last four days. The child cannot be borned for it is dead and I presume he cannot be borned unless my wife has some medical assistance.<sup>8</sup>

This husband had already lost a child and feared that his wife was soon to follow. Whether Mrs. Cruz became the one of thirty who did not survive childbirth is unknown.

Many other problems existed for pregnant women and new mothers in the 19th century west. Post-partum hemorrhaging was a grave concern. One husband wrote a desperate plea for the doctor to come to the Trinchera Pass Ranch, his home “at the top of the mountain” to help his wife who had been hemorrhaging for two months and needed treatment for “the fall of the womb.”<sup>9</sup> After multiple pregnancies, many women experienced prolapsed uterus or “fallen womb”. Dr. Beshoar treated this condition by the insertion of a rubber pessary into the women’s uterus. He purchased these pessaries by the dozen from Chas. Truax, Greene & Company physicians supply in Chicago.<sup>10</sup> Many babies died in the week and months following their birth from sepsis due to unsanitary

conditions during delivery. Whether a baby lived or died, women were expected to return to their work and household duties within days of delivery. This alone put tremendous strain on their bodies as they were healing from the traumatic experience of childbirth. As women continued to have babies into their forties, it is no wonder that the life expectancy of women in the United States was a shocking 40.5 in 1880<sup>11</sup>.

If a baby survived pregnancy, birth and sepsis, childhood disease became the next life-threatening risk for the family to face. In his study of medicine in early Colorado, Dr. Robert Shikes noted that

Childhood mortality was terribly high in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and most of these deaths were due to infectious diseases. Among infants, the widely feared cholera infantum, or “summer diarrhea,” was due to several bacterial, and probably viral, forms of gastroenteritis. Croup, whooping cough, pneumonia and other respiratory tract infections, as well as scarlet fever, measles, erysipelas, meningitis, smallpox, and tuberculosis, all contributed to the fact the one-third of all deaths in the U.S.A occurred in the pediatric population.<sup>12</sup>

Pediatric care was a vital part of Dr. Beshoar’s practice. His medical records and letters from patients prove that vaccination to prevent illness was very common. He sent vials of vaccine with instructions for use to countless mothers in the region and his patient records show in-office vaccination was a daily part of his regular medical practice. His Trinidad patients were fortunate to have the doctor close by in case of emergency. On the other hand, some patients were hindered by distance and/or financial constraints. Indalecio Valdez wrote to Dr. Beshoar in 1897 from Madrid, Colorado. Her letter describes a small child, aged one year, five months who had suffered twenty days of diarrhea and vomiting. She asks to pay in a month: “if those terms are not acceptable, I will borrow money for medicine”.<sup>13</sup> Whether this child survived is unknown, but it can be assumed that the altruistic doctor treated his pediatric patients regardless of ability to pay. Sadly, Dr. Beshoar was not able to save many of the region’s children from deadly infection. His patient records include a log of deaths that occurred under his care. In 1884-1885, he recorded the loss of one-year-old Burnett Holmes, and one-and-a-half-year-old Estela Sales to pneumonia.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the physical strain of pregnancy and childbirth and the financial burden of having a large family, many women sought contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. “Birth control became increasingly popular among middle and upper class Americans towards the end of the nineteenth century,” noted Shikes. “A variety of techniques was used, ranging from coitus interruptus to rhythm methods to various prophylactic devices (condoms, tampons, womb veils or tents, cotton pledglets attached to string) and douches (carbolic acid, bichloride of mercury, vinegar, and other chemicals).”<sup>15</sup> These methods varied greatly in their efficacy and reliability.

Dr. Beshoar gained a reputation throughout Las Animas County and beyond as a medical practitioner who was willing to provide women with birth control and had the expertise to do so. Women wrote letters from as far away as Texas asking for prescriptions

and devices for this purpose. The majority of Dr. Beshoar's patients were not from the middle and upper economic classes, but poor, hardworking women who pleaded for his help and for secrecy. Mrs. L. Foster Whited, a teacher of vocal and instrumental music, wrote to the doctor and asked his advice in "preventing raising a family, or having kids." She implored Dr. Beshoar to "tell me something sure because I will die if I get in that fix again."<sup>16</sup> Mrs. A. W. Harker from Florissant, Colorado wrote:

Being informed that you have safely prevented contraception by placing a gold bullet in the uterus of the patient, I write to know if it is true. I do not ask from curiosity and I shall respect your confidence as I wish you to mine.<sup>17</sup>

In one of the rare cases where a response is included on the correspondence, Dr. Beshoar advises Mrs. Harker that it is not a gold bullet, but rather a contraption that can be purchased from him for \$3 and inserted for three days at a time into the womb. This contraption "will never disappoint" and is "perfectly harmless". He was most likely describing an early rubber diaphragm or "womb veil" that he prescribed to countless patients throughout his practice. The doctor also used a variety of chemicals and homeopathic remedies in combination to prevent pregnancy. His invoices from homeopathic drug companies and wholesale pharmacies include items such as pennyroyal, quinine, aluminum, zinc, sulfate, iodine, carbolic acid and potassium. While having many medical uses, these herbs and chemicals were also believed to aid in the prevention of pregnancy.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, these methods were not foolproof because Beshoar received many letters from women who claimed that his birth control treatments had failed. Many of these women grew increasingly despondent and frantically sought a solution to the problem.

When birth control failed, Dr. Beshoar also provided abortions to women. Birth control and abortions were both illegal in the United States since the passage of the Comstock Laws in 1873. Michael Beshoar worked outside of the law to help women who often saw this as a last resort when all else had failed. Dr. Beshoar received letters from countless pregnant women from Colorado, New Mexico and elsewhere seeking his help in this matter. Few asked directly for abortion, but rather sought help for a "blockage", or "a return to regular monthlies," or a "treatment for delayed periods". Clearly, Dr. Beshoar had gained a widespread reputation as an expert in this subject. He received a letter from H. Humphrey who sold general merchandise in Texas asking his advice on journalism and newspaper advertising. In the same letter, Humphrey posed the question:

What is the least harmful treatment whereby ladies (married, of course) prevent themselves becoming pregnant, and relieve themselves of the early stage of pregnancy? Kindly give full course, and tell me how much, if any injury to health results? And send bill of your charges.<sup>19</sup>

Women had many reasons for seeking abortions. Many women feared that their bodies could not physically withstand the rigors of pregnancy. G.W. Blethen of Hicks, Colorado wrote:

We are two months past now and it is simply getting unbearable having children come so fast. It is completely ruining my wife's health and disposition also. This having a baby every year is clearly driving us both wild. So could you possibly send something, and send enough to do the work.<sup>20</sup>

Other women were shamed by their pregnant state. A.J. Padilla writes multiple letters from Bent Canyons, Colorado begging the doctor for help. She clearly is despondent over her situation and laments:

I want you to send me some medicine to have a miscarriage. I am in a family way. I have gone 3 month now and it is commencing to show very bad and I feel so shamed of it that I can't get out of the house.<sup>21</sup>

Some women worried for the loss of a job because of their pregnancy. Mrs. Cone of Folsom, New Mexico wrote to Dr. Beshoar in 1898 and informed him that the "rubber womb protection she purchased from him has failed". She stated:

I have gone several days over my time for menstruation and every morning I am very sick at my stomach and I am positive I am in a family way, and I would like to get rid of it some way because I agreed to finish this term of school here, the other teacher having resigned. I would hate dreadfully to give up this school.<sup>22</sup>

Also in 1898, a woman from Raton, New Mexico wrote a letter in Spanish to Dr. Beshoar requesting an abortion for similar reasons. She states "I have a job in the kitchen which I like very much, and I would lose everything- Todo lo que pereda!"<sup>23</sup> Regardless of their reasons, the women were equally despondent and saw abortion as their last resort.

It is highly likely that the method by which Dr. Beshoar conducted a majority of his abortions involved a patient self-administering a dose of the drug ergot, which was sent to their homes with detailed instructions for use. His pharmaceutical invoices from the years 1869-1898 document the purchase of large amounts of this chemical. "Drugs were employed to induce miscarriage, but their use involved the high risk of side effects," wrote historian Jeremy Agnew in his book *Medicine in the Old West: A History 1850-1900*. "Ergot and quinine were two of the drugs used. Ergot, which was utilized by doctors to control excessive bleeding following childbirth could be given in large doses to induce miscarriage."<sup>24</sup> Some of Dr. Beshoar's patient correspondents requested ergot by name and others described the cramping and bleeding they experienced as the drug produced contractions powerful enough to expel the fetus from the womb. If the ergot failed, as it often did, many women sent letters to the doctor requesting a different treatment. Mrs. Jessie East wrote:

I got some medicine from you last Friday which made me quite unwell, but it did not any good! I do not feel able to pay for that medicine unless you will send me something that will do some good and if you can, I wish you would please do so at once! <sup>25</sup>

Clearly, Mrs. East was becoming anxious because of the failed treatment. Another patient stated: "I am in distress! The treatment did not work!"<sup>26</sup>

As a last resort, Dr. Beshoar provided surgical abortions from his office in Trinidad. According to a receipt from the Chas. Truax Greene & Company Physicians' Supply, Dr. Beshoar purchased a set of new abortion snares in 1897.<sup>27</sup> These snares might have been used on Mrs. R.B. Bracket, who sent an inquiry in 1888 asking: "What is the least you charge for such operations, and when could I come over... I presume there are nice places in private families where I could find a room and perhaps meals."<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Beshoar included a record of all of the in-office abortions he performed in his leather physician's account book and visiting list. In the aforementioned birth records of 1886-1887, two of the dead were noted "abortion"<sup>29</sup>. In the years 1884-1885, his records show three abortions performed as part of his practice. Along with the names and ages of his patients, Dr. Beshoar noted the fetal age at the time of the termination, all of which were under three months. While women seeking to terminate pregnancies were obviously a very small part of his thriving practice, they were probably some of his most desperate patients.

Birth control and abortion were not acceptable topics of conversation during this era in American History. Not only was it illegal to discuss and promote these medical practices, but it also went against the societal norms of the prim and proper Victorian age. Women during this time often felt uncomfortable even mentioning their reproductive organs and genitalia, referring to these body parts euphemistically as "that place you examined" or "down below." Many of Dr. Beshoar's patients stressed the need for secrecy in their letters. A woman who signs her letter "Judge Trujillo's daughter" begged for privacy:

Doctor, would you please write me and tell what to do in regards to my womb and whether I can attend to it myself or must I have a Doctor. I have left my husband and don't want him to find me so don't lay this on your desk and forget it so someone will see it.<sup>30</sup>

The state of her marriage and womb are unknown, but her condition was dire enough to cause her to flee her husband and the security of her home. Judge Trujillo's daughter was just one example of the scores of desperate women who sought out the advice and medical help of the legendary frontier doctor.

The women discussed in this paper represent a mere fraction of the female patients served by Dr. Beshoar. Their struggles are typical of so many women of the nineteenth century American Southwest. Financial insecurity, death of loved ones, pain, lack of choice and fear were constant companions to these frontier women. Life was short and full of hardships, but in many ways, the women of Trinidad were lucky for they had a trusted doctor who was willing and able to help. Dr. Michael Beshoar spent his days working for these women, his male patients and the other downtrodden and marginalized people in Southern Colorado. He not only served as a champion to his patients, but his influence extended far beyond medicine into the coalmines, courtrooms and classrooms of Trinidad where he gave voice to the people through public service, politics and

journalism. Because of his work providing abortion services to the women of Colorado and New Mexico, Michael Beshoar may be remembered as a hero to some, and a criminal to others. Regardless of political persuasion, it is impossible not to recognize him as a man who listened to the cries of the suffering and tried to help whenever he could.

Witch hunts allowed 17th century American Puritan communities to traverse their collective anxieties and interpersonal tensions. In the most extreme cases, only the ritual process of witch hunting could make threats to their community visible and expel them along with their underlying cause: the sins of the body social. Through the cathartic public performance of confession, the witch carried the sins of her accusers to redemption. Her remorse represented their own, brought into the open. Her execution closed the ritual with the symbolic reabsorption

# Confessors and Martyrs:

## Rituals in Salem's Witch Hunt

by Shay Gonzales



Cotton Mather, c. 1700

of both her and their deviance into a new whole. In New England, witch hunting had been a ritual for both individual and community-wide purgation. In the context of Salem, confessions were cultural texts produced by the collective effort of witches, their accusers and the authorities. To be successful, a confession had to follow certain prescriptions.<sup>1</sup> By contrasting the development and content of Abigail Hobbs and Mary Warren's contemporaneous confessions, this paper aims to show how confession operated as a cultural form in New England and how it ultimately failed to reunite Salem.

To the residents of Salem in 1692, witchcraft meant conspiracy. Witches threatened a precariously Puritan New England and so they manifested collective anxieties about community stability. Salem did not so much fear a particular witch, or even her act of *malificium* (*mischief*), but that she was a member of a plot to undo their way of life. They believed

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that witches were heretics who joined with the devil to destroy the kingdom of Christ, therefore witches represented general instability and community strife.<sup>2</sup> This prophetic anxiety was entrenched with any individual's sense of sin. Puritans in Salem worried that their children's illnesses were the natural result of their sins.<sup>3</sup> They worried they could be responsible for witchcraft because it was a judgment, or a message from God that sin had permeated their community and must be rooted out.<sup>4</sup>

Salem was divided by major ecclesiastical, legal, and personal tensions.<sup>5</sup> As a village with limited autonomy, it had no structure or authority to handle its overwhelming number of disputes. The village's constant antagonisms were becoming notorious in the region.<sup>6</sup> Disputes over Salem Village's ministers spanned more than a decade—first James Bayley who departed in 1680, then George Burroughs in 1683, and Deodat Lawson in 1688. These disputes over village leadership and the division of power between families and commercial interests were present through and after the Salem witch crisis. The continual controversy surrounding Samuel Parris's ministry made the deep factions which fractured the village increasingly visible.<sup>7</sup> These interpersonal and societal tensions caused the residents of Salem Village an inordinate amount of guilt. Their guilt also came from the complicated cultural meanings of authority as well as wealth and mobility. Puritans believed that authority came to their ministers and other leaders from God himself. They were also deeply sensitive to abuses of power. Near-constant conflict with authority gave them the guilt of disobeying God. Wealth signaled good character in the Puritan system of values, but the desire for it brought the shame of covetousness.<sup>8</sup> In addition to factions in Salem Village, Catholic conspirators and traumatic Indian wars on the frontiers constituted tangible threats to the power of the Puritan God.<sup>9</sup> To the residents of Salem, their interpersonal tensions and requisite guilt as well as contemporary crises in the region were seen as evidence that God imposed the judgment of witchcraft upon them. Social historians Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum relate these tensions to the oncoming commercial capitalist paradigm and its attendant individualism and materialism. The villagers of Salem experienced their divisions as evil and a sin against God. They needed to remove the weight on their souls by locating evil in the real world and violently eliminating it.<sup>10</sup> In short, Salem needed a witch hunt.

The acts of accusation and confession formed the containing, opening and closing rites of a ritual aimed at curing the body social. For Puritan children raised to believe in community cohesiveness, accusing someone of being a witch was a socially acceptable venue for their aggressive impulses.<sup>11</sup> These impulses were often motivated by the feelings of guilt outlined above. Witchcraft accusation enabled the accuser to both attack the witch for whatever wrongs and maintain a socially acceptable role as afflicted victim.<sup>12</sup> The first component of the witch hunt was a fast day, or a day of humiliation. The ritual then required the invisible be made visible. By confessing her sins, the accused would deliver the community from fear of the unknown to safety and "sight of sin." To the larger project of the witch hunt, this meant finding the extent of the conspiracy. The final component of the witch hunting ritual was a reaffirmation of authority. The witch would express remorse and affirm that her covenant with Satan was fraudulent and the Puritan God was supreme. Execution was the final affirmation of the strength and righteousness



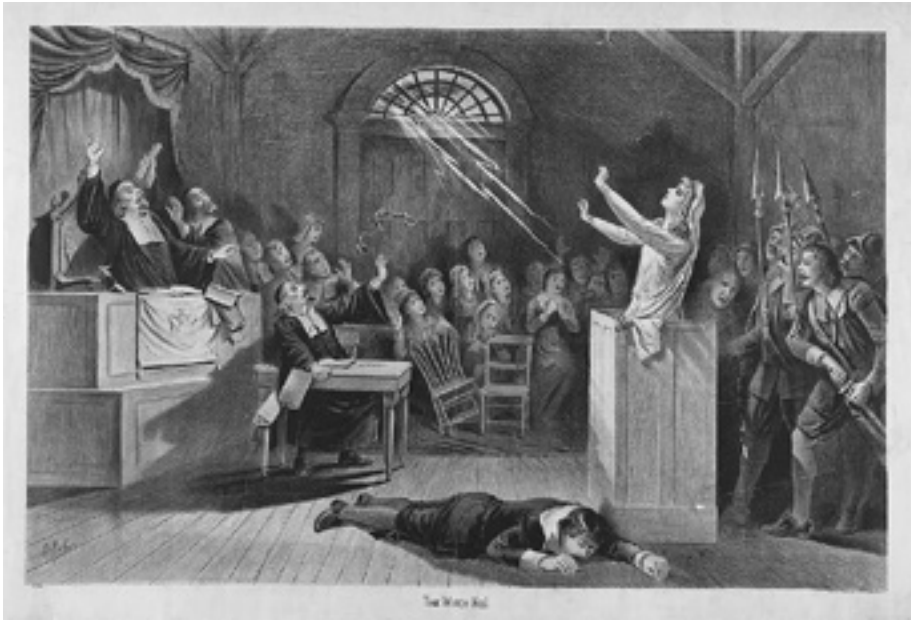
of authority.<sup>13</sup> This ritual was repeated until the depth of the conspiracy was discovered, the conspirators made to confess, and the threat was violently eliminated.

Confessions were joint productions or “cultural negotiations” between the witch, and the magistrate interviewing her as well as the afflicted, who were often present.<sup>14</sup> Each party contributed with dialogue to determine the construction of the ultimate document.<sup>15</sup> In her confession the witch would validate the authority of the judicial and ecclesiastical process. As a cultural negotiation, the heretical witches of New England and their accusers crafted confessions to serve as vehicles for expelling collective guilt. Confession was a feature of the Puritans’ regular fasts, a genre of their literature, and the highlight of the spectacle of public executions.

In Salem, the crisis resulted in a cultural shift away from the form witch hunting had previously taken because Salem’s factionalism proved too much for a witch hunt to heal. Witch hunting and its necessary rite, confession, failed and were abandoned. Confessions were rare because the community was so fraught. Only eight of the sixty-five accused in the Salem period of the witch crisis confessed.<sup>16</sup> They came from the least empowered segments of society: an Indian slave, a young child, two indentured women, the mentally unstable and their relatives. Their confessions didn’t contain close to the ideal amount of depth and remorse to give force to the witch hunting ritual. Salem’s witches did not produce adequate confessions to carry the fears and guilt of their accusers.

New England’s suspected witches nearly universally denied the charges before Salem’s crisis. Some confessed at arraignment, but they were still executed.<sup>17</sup> Many of the elite started to believe that there were innocents among executed witches. In the quiet after 1663, when a witch panic in Hartford subsided, only one witch was executed in New England.<sup>18</sup> This may explain the mercy magistrates initially showed Salem’s confessors. Cotton Mather advised John Richards early in the trials that in cases of “lesser criminals,” “lesser punishments” would be appropriate if they “put upon some solemn, open, public and explicit renunciation of the devil.” He added that the death of some of the offenders could be either “diverted or inflicted, according to the success of such their renunciation.”<sup>19</sup> Cotton Mather chose confession to fill the ritual role previously given to execution. Possibly the three decades of judicial restraint in pursuing witches led him to moderation. Salem’s teeming social conflict required a politician’s diligence. In witch hunting, confession resulted in death, but now confession took death’s place. When Bridget Bishop was first accused of witchcraft in 1680, her denial was enough to maintain her innocence. Previously, the demand to prosecute witchcraft was motivated by common people and suppressed by the educated.<sup>20</sup> Salem signaled a reversal. Magistrates collaborated extensively with the afflicted and the accused to produce an effective ritual.

Mary Warren and Abigail Hobbs confessed during the same period in the trials with wildly differing results. Their confessions’ progress through the witch hunt may trace a map of its demands. On April 19th, the court examined Mary Warren, Abigail Hobbs, and Bridget Bishop as accused witches. Bridget Bishop was later the first to hang. Mary Warren and Abigail Hobbs are useful contrasts as they both confessed, but their confessions and later documents performed different roles for the judicial and ecclesiastical process. As case types they exemplify how confessions, which fit the needs of the witch



hunt, were both constructed and rewarded by authority. Abigail Hobbs's dry and shallow confessions, while highly voluntary, neither garnered much value in the witch hunt nor resulted in a pardon. Mary Warren's multiple confessions and graphic testimony were gradually coerced by the magistrates and served progressively greater cultural purpose. As a result, she gained greater status and was eventually released from jail to rejoin the afflicted.

Early in the trials, both the afflicted and those accused as witches wanted Mary Warren's testimony discredited. She had been among the afflicted but later suggested they were dishonest when she said that the afflicted "did but dissemble." In her first examination, the afflicted claimed her specter attacked them, and in response she too had a "fit." After continued hesitation and stammering, she began to confess. She was then unable to maintain composure. According to the record, the afflicted interpreted her fit as sign of an eventual confession: "Now Mary Warren fell into a fit, and some of the afflicted cryed out that she was going to confess, but Goody Corey, and Proctor, and his wife came in, in their apparition, and struck her down, and said she should tell nothing."<sup>21</sup> Her fits prevented her from carrying on, so they sent her out. Mary Warren gave nothing useful that day.

Abigail Hobbs was also examined that day. Only fourteen years old, she was a survivor of the Maine frontier.<sup>22</sup> She began to confess immediately, "I have seen sights and been scared, I have been very wicked, I hope I shall be better, (and) God will keep me."<sup>23</sup> Abigail's heartfelt confession was of a known and desirable form. She first spoke of her own wickedness and her generalized desire for forgiveness. Puritan women were likely to correlate the charge that they were witches with their own sinfulness and guilt.<sup>24</sup> After she announced her position as repenter, it was appropriate that the details of her heresy follow in what was ritually known as "sight of sin."<sup>25</sup> True to the genre, she answered Hawthorne and Corwin's questions with specific features of her encounters with the devil.

Mary Beth Norton and Wendel Craker both find it significant that Abigail repeatedly related her encounter with the devil to when she lived at Casco Bay during the Indian Wars four years prior. It is possible her easy confession referenced that experience. She was certainly an unruly and dangerous child. Her instability is obvious in the depositions put forth as evidence of her witchcraft. She bragged about her involvement with the devil on multiple occasions.<sup>26</sup> She had also thrown water on her stepmother, Deliverance, and claimed to baptize her.<sup>27</sup>

Despite her cooperation, Abigail denied attending any great meetings of witches. She also denied conspiring with the other witches to “do hurt,” and instead only told of being spectrally approached by the devil, a cat, and Sarah Good to covenant with them. She failed to validate the depth of the Salem’s anxiety by neglecting to name additional witches. Abigail Hobbs’ confession was otherwise coherent and effective and Samuel Parris noted that, “the afflicted were none of them tormented during the whole examination of this accused and confessing person.”<sup>28</sup>

Curiously, despite that note and another that states the afflicted were sympathetic towards Abigail, there are three surviving depositions against her for spectral witchcraft that day. This followed the established formula of Salem’s trials wherein the accused were always charged with spectrally attacking a member of the afflicted during their initial examination. All of the depositions claimed that, “as soon as [Abigail] began to confess she left off,” afflicting them.<sup>29</sup> The contradictory record shows both Salem’s reliance on established ritualized procedure and the relationship between confession and the favor of the court. Confession may not have always been the viable strategic or rational option that Bernard, Rosenthal, and other historians claim it was. Not all who confessed were spared. The accusers and magistrates directed the witch hunt to produce confessions that validated their cultural and social concerns. Those few witches who conformed were rewarded for their participation.

In her later prison examination, Mary Warren gave evidence that Elizabeth Proctor had told her she was a witch. She also gave details about Giles Corey’s clothes that suggest the magistrates’ interference with her testimony. Mary, knowing the ritual form from her time as a member of the afflicted, manipulated her narrative toward the expectations of her examiners. On her second attempt, she did much better than name the various solicitors of the devil’s covenant. She gave details of her actions against Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, and Abigail Williams. She described “a great meeting in Samuel Parris’s pasture [where] they administered the sacrament,” the devil’s red bread and red wine, and validated a motivating concern of the witch hunt, heretical conspiracy.<sup>30</sup> Mary Warren was examined again a few days later on April 21st. On that day she stalled in the doorway of an adequate confession. She insisted, without irony, that she had only sworn herself to the devil with the tip of her finger, and that she was unsure it was the devil’s book at all. Although her confession lacked the “solemn, open, public and explicit,” qualities that would feed the spirit of the witch hunt, it served as evidence against the Proctors. Simon Willard, who recorded this examination, noted “she would not own that she knew her master to be a witch or wizard.”<sup>31</sup> That day another half dozen were named as witches and issued warrants. It is unclear that any of the examinations of the day before led to these accusations.

Mary Warren improved her confession with a statement made against John and Elizabeth Proctor sometime later in April; in that document she finally “charge[d] them personally,” with witchcraft.<sup>32</sup> She then re-joined the accusers, although she remained in jail.

Both Abigail Hobbs and Mary Warren were reexamined on May 12th. At this time Abigail answered the leading question of the examiner, “Did Mr. Burroughs bring you any of the poppets of his wives to stick pins into?” with an appropriate openness: “I do not remember that he did.”<sup>33</sup> Later in the document the examiner asked, “How did you know Mr. Burroughs was a witch?” to which Abigail replied she did not know, only that she herself had been a witch for the past six years. Rosenthal, in his collection of the documents cited here, notes that whenever Burroughs was mentioned on this document the letter “B” appears in the margin.<sup>34</sup> George Burroughs, a former minister of Salem, had been arrested and brought back to Salem from Maine. His ministry was a point of contention in the village and testimony that he had covenanted with the devil tied the ritual witch hunt to the community’s actual ills. The witch hunt was more necessary and meaningful with Burroughs named as leader of the conspiracy.

Mary Warren’s May 12th examination was rich with the detail her earlier fits prevented. During her examination, the specter of Goody Parker tormented and bit her. Even to contemporaries, Mary’s performance was frightening. Her affliction on record validated the necessity of witch hunt and the authority of the court that administered it. Her testimony went on to describe the specters of witches already accused. They described to her how they had afflicted others and one even avowed herself to a murder 8 years prior.<sup>35</sup> Mary Warren still had a particular role in the proceedings. She was still in prison as late as May 23rd, and her examinations were from her position as a confessing witch.<sup>36</sup> Therefore her performances carried the weight of a witch’s repentance and were bolstered by her supposed intimate knowledge of the devil. Mary Warren was a remarkable actor in furnishing the witch hunt with names, detail, and most importantly a dramatic depth. She was released from jail in early June, perhaps because other accused witches - Edward Bishop, Sarah Bishop, Mary Esty, and Mary English - testified that she had lost her grasp on reality. They said that in prison a month earlier, Mary Warren said she could not tell what she said and that “hir head was distempered.”<sup>37</sup> Her quick and diligent acclimation to the “hysteria” of the witch crisis was likely the result of the magistrate’s pressure on an extant instability.

Abigail Hobbs’ traumatic frontier experience and Mary Warren’s mental illness were both vehicles for the court to affirm its authority and strengthen its cultural ritual. Both testified together on June 1st against a group of witches led by George Burroughs.<sup>38</sup> According to their testimony, the feast of witches in Parris’s pasture included Sarah Good, Sarah Osborn, Bridget Bishop, Rebecca Nurse, the Proctors, and others known and unknown. Mary Warren’s statement that Rebecca Nurse and Elizabeth Proctor had claimed “they were deacons” and that their blood wine was “better than our wine” must have resounded strongly with the Puritan fear of conspiracy and heresy. Thomas Newton, the recorder, noted that the specter of Rebecca Nurse afflicted Warren and choked Abigail Hobbs. Mary even found a pin ran into her hand. She had been completely drawn into the necessary drama of the witch hunt. In the beginning of June, she was released from

prison.<sup>39</sup> On June 2nd, Bridget Bishop was tried and convicted of witchcraft. A little more than a week later, she was the first to be executed.

In this intervening period between Bishop's execution and the second trial on June 29th, no one else was accused. However evidence continued to accumulate, and the court examined Abigail Hobbs for the case against John Proctor.<sup>40</sup> This was her last recorded examination until, despite her cooperation, she was indicted for covenanting with the devil and for afflicting Mercy Lewis on September 18th. Her confessions had produced sympathy, and she had done her job in the hunt to cleanse Salem of the heretical conspiracy of witchcraft. The afflicted had encouraged her confession and she had followed some of the judges' leads to the correct results. Her testimony lacked the drama and detail needed to add depth and meaning to the trials' cleansing. Abigail's performance proved lackluster.

Mary Warren's level of detail and conspiratorial depth in her revised confessions expanded and strengthened the community's ritualistic purge of witchcraft. As a confessed witch, her testimony validated the ultimate authority of the Puritan God to heal and reincorporate deviance and division. She had fallen to the devil, and despite his repeated attacks on her in open court she had confessed with an abundance of detail and drama. Her testimony remained open ended and available to coproduction with the magistrates. Mary Warren left the accused to rejoin the afflicted. Later in the trials, she bled from her mouth in the presence of the accused witches. Mary Warren's instability and her early recanting furthered, rather than inhibited, the depth and power of the ritual. Salem's few confessors were precious. Most lacked credibility, and others lacked performative depth and ritualistic value. Only Mary Warren validated the procedure of the court and served as a model of the type of redemption the witch hunt ritual was meant to incur.



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None of those who entered and kept to their confessions during the Salem Crisis were executed. It is unclear how easy it was for the accused to see the pattern. In June, when Bridget Bishop was the first to hang, most confessors had been waiting in jail and had already been examined several times.<sup>41</sup> After Bridget Bishop's death, the court attracted scrutiny from Boston's baptists.<sup>42</sup> The judges took pause to ask the advice of the ministry. In a letter delivered on June 15th, Cotton Mather and others advised the court to exercise a "very critical and exquisite caution," and expressed reservations about spectral evidence.<sup>43</sup> The trials took a fortuitous new direction when the afflicted began to accuse the residents of Andover. The accused Andover residents – Ann Foster, her daughter, and granddaughter as well as Richard Carrier and his brother, Andrew – all confessed before the second round of executions.<sup>44</sup> This temporarily gratified the court. Cotton Mather was overcome with relief and joy when he wrote,

Our good God is working of miracles. Five witches were lately executed, impudently demanding of God a miraculous vindication of their innocence. Immediately upon this, our God miraculously sent in five Andover witches, who made a most ample, surprising, amazing confession of all their villainies, and declared the five newly executed to have been of their company, discovering many more, but all agreeing in Burroughs being their ringleader, [...] since those, there have come in other confessors; yea, they come in daily. About this prodigious matter my soul has been refreshed with some little short of miraculous answers of prayer, which are not to be written; but they comfort me with a prospect of a hopeful issue.<sup>45</sup>

The prospect of a fruitful witch hunt comforted Cotton Mather. The number of repenting witches in Andover proved the supremacy of both the Puritan God and the rule of law. Salem's abundance of unrepentant witches had threatened to turn over the witch hunt by becoming martyrs. Andover's confessions were a sign for the magistrates that they would be successful and Essex County would be cleansed of both witchcraft and its underlying social division.

Cotton Mather's optimism was misplaced. The Andover confessions, despite their overwhelming volume, did not remedy the crisis. Margo Burns claims that the Andover confessions were so numerous because "common speech," or gossip circulated that confessors would be spared.<sup>46</sup> Despite the florid confessions of the Andover witches they were still passed over to prosecution. This tragically flawed strategy resulted in enough confessions as to exhaust the judges' good faith.<sup>47</sup>

Salem Village was deeply divided. Some have claimed Andover suffered from similar divisions over their ministers, but the crisis manifested in Samuel Parris' home because that was where the cultural catharsis of a witch hunt was needed. An ideal witch hunt would have allowed the accusers from one side of the fracture in Salem to bring their aggression toward the other into the open and to process that aggression and its resulting guilt collectively.<sup>48</sup> The process could have reaffirmed the accusers' commitment to the community and its Puritan values, and also allowed the accused to re-join them. Elizabeth Reis, a scholar specializing in US women's history and gender, asserts that the cultural

performance of confession could create a “paradigm of perfect redemption” for both the accusers and the confessing witches.<sup>49</sup> It was necessary that the accused conform to certain prescriptions: conspiratorial depth, detail, and transformation, to complete the cycle of ritualized violence and to reaffirm authority and belief in the community. After Salem, confession ceased to be culturally salient.<sup>50</sup> The sacrament neither renewed coherence in the body social nor validated the authorities who desperately called for affirmation. Because Salem failed to produce an adequate number of repenters, and even fewer capable of producing the appropriate form, the rite of confession functioned not to heal but to exacerbate tensions. The witch hunt in Salem could not achieve its culturally cathartic and transformative purpose without adequate confessions. Without confessors, Salem was left with martyrs.



*HABS Team.  
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In 2016, the National Park Service (NPS) will celebrate its centennial.” Throughout its long tradition of preserving America’s scenic wonders, the NPS has also perpetuated programs for the American public that, though not as visible, are of equal value in preserving our national heritage. The Historic American Buildings Survey is one of those programs. The survey not only constitutes a vital resource in

# The Historic American Building Survey:

## Preservation of the Built Arts

by Douglas Fowler

documenting our national heritage but it also helps its citizens understand their past so that they may better chart a course for their immediate and long-term future. In order to plan that route, they must first look back and comprehend just how they arrived at their moment in history.

After World War I, the American economy thrived, leading to the exuberance of the “Roaring Twenties.” That era of prosperity came to an end on October 29, 1929: Black Tuesday. The stock market crash sent the U.S. spiraling into a Great Depression that would be exacerbated by the great dust bowls of the 1930s. During this time severe drought conditions began to prevail across most of the mid-western region due to the poor farming practices of improper crop rotation and the over-planting of nutrient-exhausted soils. These two major catastrophes and other factors plunged the nation into an agricultural, economic, and social crisis that would forever change the nation. Nonetheless, the adversity

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of the Great Depression laid the groundwork for important new programs of historic preservation and conservation that would be enacted for future generations to follow. Out of the depths of poverty emerged a stronger nation and with it the beginning of a historic preservation program that would become the longest-running program of its kind in the nation, the Historic American Buildings Survey.

By 1932 the national unemployment rate had risen to over thirty-five percent. Upon accepting the presidential nomination on July 1, 1932, New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed a “New Deal” for revitalizing the American economy through the establishment of work relief programs for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed citizens. Within his “First One Hundred Days” of office he called the 73rd Congress into emergency session on March 9, 1933 to propose an unprecedented initiative. Roosevelt’s plan would put to work unemployed young men by creating a peacetime civilian army and engaging them in conservation work across the nation. Initially known as the Emergency Conservation Work Act, the program later came to be known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The legislation passed rapidly; Roosevelt’s inauguration was on March 4, 1933, and on March 27th Senate Bill S. 598 passed both houses of Congress. It was signed by the president four days later on March 31st. On April 5, 1933, Executive Order 6101 authorized the program and the first induction of an enrollee took place on April 7, only thirty-seven days after the president’s inauguration.

To kick start and coordinate such a massive and complex undertaking, four governmental agencies were called on to administer the program: the Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture, and Interior. From the beginning, logistics were a daunting obstacle. According to one history of the CCC, “[t]he bulk of young unemployed youth was concentrated in the East while most of the work projects were in the West. The Army was the only department capable of merging the two and they quickly developed plans of managing this peacetime mission of transporting personnel and materials to the Project work camp sites.”<sup>1</sup> Using regular and reserve officers, the Army ran the operations of the camps themselves, while personnel from the Departments of Agriculture and Interior staffed the camps with superintendents and foremen to direct and run the work crews. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior were responsible for planning and organizing the work that was to be performed by the CCC in the National Forests, State Parks, and the National Parks.

Horace Albright, who had succeeded Stephen Mather on January 12, 1929 to become the second director of the National Park Service, “represented the Department of the Interior on the CCC advisory council and put considerable effort into getting the Program started in the Spring and Summer of 1933.”<sup>2</sup> He immediately recognized that the CCC was a potential bonanza for the national parks.

From the beginning, the CCC was able to accomplish useful work in the parks because each unit in the park system had prepared a master plan for developmental and protective work. This was generally kept six years ahead of date in order to provide a full program of long-term development in the event that appropriations were enlarged in any year. These plans were

quickly refurbished in early 1933 because Albright and his associates in the Washington office had anticipated that the national parks might be used for economic 'pump-priming' public works projects.<sup>3</sup>

During this time frame, a new ideology developed within the National Park Service that would be the impetus for the creation of the Historic American Building Survey. This program would initially be linked directly with the Civilian Conservation Corps under the charge of the National Park Service.

When Albright became the new director of the National Park Service he immediately declared that his job would include going "rather heavily into the historical park field."<sup>4</sup> Until this time the National Parks had primarily been created to preserve and promote the nation's natural landscapes, yet Albright wanted to build upon another aspect which had until then not been adequately addressed. According to one source, "[t]he act that created the NPS was commonly known by its unofficial title, the 'Organic Act,' and the act that created a national park the 'Enabling Legislation' which described the particular national park's purpose, boundaries, resources and the mechanism for revisions."<sup>5</sup> The Organic Act establishing the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior is contained within Title 16, Chapter 1, Subchapter 1 of the United States Code:

"...the service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified...for the purpose of conserving the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."<sup>6</sup>

The Organic Act not only defines the mission of the National Park Service, it also defined the purpose of the national parks as a collective system:

"...the national parks though distinct in character, are united through their inter-related purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage; that, individually and collectively, these areas derive increase national dignity and recognition of their superb environmental quality through their inclusion jointly with each other in one National park system preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States."<sup>7</sup>

Believing that national parks could convey the story of an emerging national heritage, Albright wanted to conserve the historic objects as well. Later he would recall:

"I had a dream I wanted to make real. For years I had wanted to get the many national military parks, battlefields, and monuments transferred out of the War Department and Department of Agriculture into the National Park Service so we could give proper protection and interpretation to these

great historic and cultural treasures. It had become something close to a crusade for me...I was motivated by a fascination with history that I had felt from early childhood.”<sup>8</sup>

In the early months of 1933, the National Park Service began to develop an organization to direct the activities of the CCC. These Park Service personnel were assigned to various supervisory roles to coordinate CCC work. One of these roles was given to Charles E. Peterson, Chief of the Eastern Division and Branch of Plans and Design, who would oversee all plans and designs in the eastern parks. With a strong administrative staff in place coordinating the CCC work, Albright had an opportunity to “finally put the agency squarely into the field of historic preservation and development.”<sup>9</sup> On Sunday April 9th Albright had a fortuitous personal conversation with the president and petitioned him to place all Federal sites and monuments into the care of the National Park Service. His vision was that the National Park Service should be a system of parks and monuments that stressed the large patterns of American history. He believed that every park and monument had historical significance and could contribute to the public’s understanding of the development of the American republic. The president’s quick acquiescence resulted in executive orders 6166 and 6628 on June 10th and July 28th 1933. Authorization of the transfer became effective on August 10th of that year. As one historian noted, “Now the service, previously most visible as a natural wilderness manager, was firmly in command of federal historic preservation activity as well.”<sup>10</sup> “Using Emergency Conservation Work funds, which was the Civilian Conservation Corps, staff was hired with backgrounds in history and archeology to work in the new parks and monuments,” according to historian Jan Townsend.<sup>11</sup> “This administrative unification of the government’s historic sites was important to the development of a comprehensive, coherent federal preservation program,” historian Barry Mackintosh of the NPS wrote in *The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program*.<sup>12</sup> Charles Peterson would initiate the last contribution.

On November 8, 1933 Franklin D. Roosevelt unveiled another New Deal Program that would create jobs for millions of unemployed citizens: the Civilian Works Administration (CWA). This would create mainly construction jobs that would last through the winter of 1933-1934. The CWA was a project created under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration that had been enacted on May 12th of 1933, authorizing immediate grants to states for relief projects. Working along with the CCC, the CWA projects were put under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service as well, “where they were organized and supervised using as many workers as could be used profitably in connection with work in the national parks and monuments.”<sup>13</sup> Harry L. Hopkins, who had been instated as Director of the Civil Works Administration, solicited ideas for employment initiatives, including initiatives for professionals most impacted by the Depression. An epiphany came to the young landscape architect working as the Chief of the Eastern Division of the National Park Service, and on May 13, 1933, Charles Peterson wrote out the ideas and concepts of that inspiration. Six months prior, when Executive Order 6133 transferred the parks and monuments under the War Department and Forest

Service to the National Park Service, the number of sites under NPS management had quadrupled. Though instigated by the need for unemployment relief, Peterson's idea revealed an ambitious philosophy that emphasized the danger of cultural loss associated with our American heritage. Peterson wrote,

“...the plan I propose is to enlist a qualified group of architects and draftsmen to study, measure and draw up the plans, elevations, and details of the important antique buildings of the United States. Our architectural heritage of buildings from the last four centuries diminishes daily at an alarming rate. The ravages of fire and the natural elements together with the demolition and alterations caused by real estate improvements form an inexorable tide of destruction destined to wipe out the great majority of the buildings which knew the beginning and first flourish of the nation. The comparatively few structures which can be saved by extraordinary effort and presented as exhibition houses and museums or altered and used for residences or minor commercial uses comprise only a minor percentage of the interesting and important architectural specimens which remain from the old days. It is the responsibility of the American people that if the great number of our antique buildings must disappear through economic causes, they should not pass into unrecorded oblivion... The list of building types should include public buildings, churches, residences, bridges, forts, barns, mills, shops, rural out buildings, and any other kind of structure of which there are good specimens extant... Other structures which would not engage the especial interest of an architectural connoisseur are the great number of plain structures which by fate or accident are identified with historic events.”<sup>14</sup>

Peterson presented his idea to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, Assistant Director of the NPS Arthur E. Demaray, and newly installed Director of the NPS Arno B. Cammerer. Winning quick approval from them and Harry L. Hopkins, the program was funded by the newly established CWA and operated from November 28, 1933 until April 28, 1934.

According to John A. Burns, author of *Recording Historic Structures*, this ‘Preservation through Documentation’ principle which Peterson proposed recommended that

“the survey should not document structures built after 1860. A logical end point, the date determined the type and style of buildings that would dominate the early recording efforts of this newly enacted Historic American Buildings Survey. The recommendation implied that buildings should be at least seventy-three years old to be considered historic, and it eliminated from consideration the huge number of buildings constructed in the last part of the nineteenth century.”<sup>15</sup>

These limitations would curtail the number of buildings to be documented, and narrowed the architectural style as well since before 1860, brick, stone, and wood were the predominant means used for the built environment. Thus, this position undoubtedly created a biased result. According to cultural resource historians Lisa Pfueller Davidson and Martin J. Perschler,

“Buildings prioritized for documentation typically exhibited the pre-industrial aesthetics and historical associations prized by the Colonial Revival movement. While Native American and Spanish Colonial structures were given special mention, the pre-1860 focus and general interest in the earliest possible structures revealed a bias towards the architecture of the eastern seaboard.”<sup>16</sup>

Though slightly flawed and narrow, Peterson’s proposal was widely applauded and implemented. The program’s success in employing architects, photographers, and draftsmen to record significant examples of the American architectural heritage was so great that when the program ended in April 1934, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) was created administratively under a tripartite agreement between the Library of Congress, the American Institute of Architects, and the National Park Service in July of 1934. Each group was assigned a specific task. The NPS set the standards, organized the projects, and sought the necessary funding through congressional appropriations or private or state sources, depending upon the projects. The members of the American Institute of Architects offered counseling services, while the Library of Congress preserved the records and made them available to the public. While the National Park Service was overseeing the preservation work of the CCC through developing state historic sites and the preservation work of HABS through documenting state historic sites, “both programs cut across federal and state lines involving the Service with historic properties and preservation functions regardless of jurisdiction. Yet their activities were administrative improvisations, lacking specific legal authority. To insure that it could continue its broad-based involvement, the Service needed the sanction of law.”<sup>17</sup>

Legislative authority would come two years later with the passage of the Historic Sites Act, drafted by the Interior Department in January 1935. Secretary Harold L. Ickes summarized its purpose while promoting its legislation before the House Public Lands Committee in April of that year: “to lay a broad legal foundation for a national program of preservation and rehabilitation of historic sites and to enable the Secretary of the Interior to carry on in a planned rational and vigorous manner, an important function which, because of lack of legal authorization, he has hitherto had to exercise in a rather weak and haphazard fashion.”<sup>18</sup>

Passed on August 21, 1935 the preamble of the Historic Sites Act stated “it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States.”<sup>19</sup> The Secretary of Interior was given the power through the jurisdiction of the National Park Service “to secure, collate, and preserve drawings, plans, photographs, and other data of historic and archaeological sites, buildings, and objects” and “to make a survey of historic

and archaeological sites, buildings, and objects for the purpose of determining which possess exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States.”<sup>20</sup> By defining a thematic approach to historic site selection, this Act gave preservation powers to the National Park Service and authorized the continuation of the HABS Program which had come to be defined as “a cooperative agreement with state and local governments, organizations, and individuals for the care of non-federal historic properties not specified as nationally significant.”<sup>21</sup> This legislation fueled the HABS program so that by the time it came to a halt in 1941 due to the onset of World War II, “more than 23,765 sheets of measured drawings and 25,357 photographic negatives of some 6,389 structures had been recorded.”<sup>22</sup>

After World War II, several legislative initiatives failed to reinstate the Historic American Building Survey as a vital federally mandated historic preservation program. This was mainly due to a lack of enthusiasm for the program, especially among governmental bureaucrats. Attempts at using the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a primer for the program failed. Chartered by Congress in 1949, the Trust existed to further the purpose of the Historic Sites Act “by accepting and administering donations of property and money and otherwise promoting private preservation efforts.”<sup>23</sup> Created as a liaison between the public and private sectors to bolster the Historic Sites Act, the Trust was still too young and fragile to launch such a massive financial and public agenda so soon after its creation. Therefore the plan for the National Trust to help activate the thematic landmarks program never came to fruition. But a ten-year development program called Mission 66 initiated under Director Conrad L. Wirth in 1956 aimed to improve facilities throughout the National Park System in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the Service, creating a new opportunity for progress in historic preservation.<sup>24</sup>

The parks had become victims of World War II, neglected since Roosevelt’s New Deal era of the 1930s and in need of funds for basic maintenance and to deal with an increasing number of visitors. Conrad Wirth took over as director of the National Park Service in 1951 and found the problem of funding for new construction and facility maintenance still remained unresolved.<sup>25</sup> Wirth became increasingly alarmed by the upsurge in park visitation spurred by the strong postwar economy, the growing popularity of automobiles, and an explosion of vacationing Americans visiting the parks. In 1955, fifty million visitors visited national parks that were equipped to accommodate half that number.<sup>26</sup> The solution to the Park Service’s dilemma came to Wirth in February 1955 when he conceived of a comprehensive program to modernize the Park Service. Wirth’s insight occurred once he considered the Park Service’s situation through the eyes of a congressman. Instead of submitting a yearly budget, as in the past, he would request an entire decade of funding, locking in money for building projects that could last for years. Those congressmen who sought real improvements for the parks in their own districts would understand the need to secure appropriations over significant durations. With adequate funding, Wirth was able to proceed with the Mission 66 program.<sup>27</sup>

From its conception, Mission 66 was touted as a program to elevate the parks from their birth in an archaic age of romanticism to a modern, streamlined operation offering comfort and efficiency, as well as an attempt to conserve the now well-worn natural

resources within their jurisdiction. A prospectus for Mission 66, sent by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay to President Dwight D. Eisenhower in February 1956, proposed an array of activities that the Service had previously been unable to undertake due to its limited yearly budgets. It included a proposed reactivation of the HABS. The prospectus, describing the survey as “approximately half completed when terminated by the war,” declared that HABS should be completed, brought up-to-date, and kept current.<sup>28</sup> Upon approval of the Mission 66 program by the Eisenhower administration and Congress, National Park Service personnel immediately began reactivation of the Survey Program and resumed activities in July 1957, with the Department of the Interior and the National Trust for Historic Preservation signing an agreement to share in the administration of the Survey.

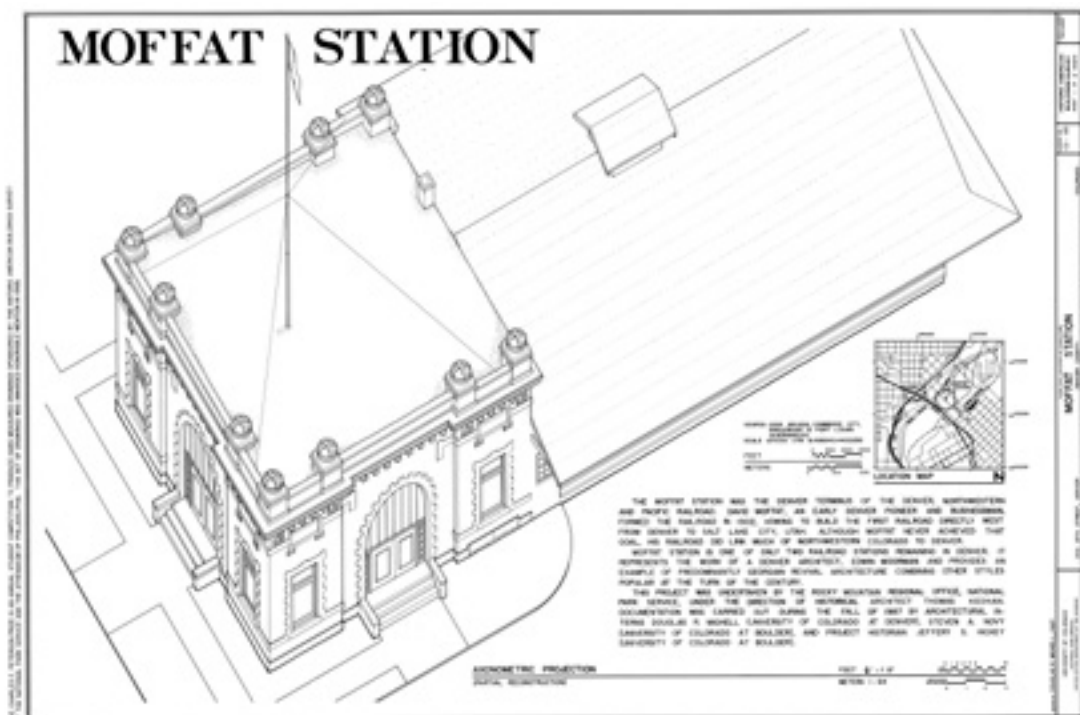
With the Mission 66 Program projected to last ten years, the subordinate Historic Sites Survey program was to last only four years until its anticipated conclusion in 1961. Yet, as is typical with governmental processes, once the work began in earnest it was soon realized that more time and money would be needed. By the middle of 1963, only twenty-seven of the forty planned theme studies were finished. In an effort to reassure the administration, a booklet published by the National Park Service in 1964 stated that the Survey was scheduled for completion in 1966. However, an internal memo of the same date stated that “recent plans called for the completion of the major portion of the Survey by the close of the 1966 calendar year, however, some additional studies will be made at the request of the Secretary, Congress, etc., and as new information from historical and archeological research becomes available.”<sup>29</sup> New political developments would bolster the Survey and put its future on a firm footing.

President Lyndon B. Johnson praised the National Landmarks Program in his February 1965 message to Congress on natural beauty. With Johnson’s firm endorsement, the future of HABS was secured; he succeeded in framing conservation as a patriotic imperative beyond criticism. Later that year another published review of the progression of the Survey failed to mention any time line for its completion and the Survey continued forward in an open-ended fashion, without a set termination date. According to Barry Mackintosh, author of *The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program*, the institutionalization of the landmarks program meant it was “no longer necessary or politically correct to speak of completing any of the theme studies, for the mindset was that if elements of the program could be completed, so could the whole program, putting it out of business.”<sup>30</sup> The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 gave the Survey total immunity from termination and made it out-of-bounds for political attacks.

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act broadened the National Park Service’s responsibilities to include properties of local, state and national significance. It authorized matching federal funds to the states to identify, acquire, and preserve historic properties. It also required that federal agencies weigh the effects of their projects on historic properties. The properties covered by the act were to be listed in a comprehensive National Register of Historic Places, initially comprising the national historic landmarks and historical units of the National Park System, and then supplemented by properties nominated by historic preservation officers in the respective states.<sup>31</sup>



After World War II the National Park Service worked diligently to obtain the funding to reinstate the Historic American Building Survey Program; first and foremost to fuel its own internal program, The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, commonly shortened to the Historic Sites Survey, and two decades later in response to Congressional legislation establishing the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. These Acts mandated the surveying of properties deemed historic and the documentation was needed for several different reasons. First, they were needed by the Park Service itself to fulfill a theme-park ideology to establish a national park system showcasing the evolution of our national American Heritage. Second, the federal government needed to know if the historic properties slated for destruction were of considerably more intrinsic cultural value than the economic resource value in order to weigh the consequences of its own proposed projects that would destroy and replace them. Third, HABS was a tool being used for private, local, state, and national jurisdictions and municipalities to mitigate the negative effects upon our history and culture through the rapidly vanishing architectural landscape. Though at times seen by some as ‘the Death Mask of America,’ the HABS administered by the National Park Service’s Heritage Documentation Program, is the nation’s first and oldest federal preservation program dealing with the built environment. HABS continues to create a record of endangered buildings that could not be preserved through other means. By recording the physical remains of earlier eras of our American heritage the intangible qualities of earlier American architecture and culture might not



*This typical page from a Historic American Building Survey building portfolio should prove useful in the planned restoration of the Moffat Station at 2101 15th Street in Lower Downtown Denver.” Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division*

be lost to the winds of progress. Structures surveyed by HABS teams are insured against complete and total loss because the documents survive even though the buildings do not. With archival documentation that is required to last five hundred years by the Library of Congress, the drawings, photographs, negatives, and written histories of our American Heritage have been preserved for future generations.

Currently at the turn of the 21st century, the Historic American Buildings Survey continues to be an active program in the National Park Service's Heritage Documentation Program due to the legislation of Section 106 in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; but by various means, the built environment of our American heritage slowly disappears. At the Intermountain Regional Offices of the National Park Service in Lakewood Colorado, documentation of HABS sites continues to be processed and submitted to the Library of Congress. Though seen by some as an obituary on the back page of Americas' historical legacy, our built heritage merits more than an honorable mention. Each successive generation is rooted in those who came before. Recognition of the past can include honoring and acknowledging the hearths and havens of those citizens who have come before us. Volunteering in the archival processing of documentation gleaned for the HABS program in the Intermountain Regional Offices has revealed the tremendous amount of work that goes into that effort. Although not a highly visible branch of the National Park Service, it deserves considerably more recognition than it receives. For preserving our heritage is not only the valuing of the natural and environmental wonders of scenic America, but it is also the honoring and preserving of the cultural resources that have helped establish and form our national American heritage. This insight into our storied past can inform a foundational vision for the future.

The commonality of crowd-sounds spans millennia, the dull rumble-roar connecting the past to the present with its constancy. Whether gathered for a sporting event, concert, protest, or celebration, the mass of humanity within any given crowd shares a camaraderie, if only briefly. Individual participants of the group share some mutual trait or goal, which adds commonality to the atmosphere. Outside the throng may be others, unable to attend, who share the crowd's collective consciousness.<sup>1</sup> When a particular group adopts immoral ideologies or practices, any failure to

# Another Face in the Crowd:

## Commemorating Lynchings

by Pam Milavec

oppose the crowd implies approval. Albert Einstein, a civil rights activist in addition to his more acclaimed scientific achievements, referred to this type of social consent when commenting on America's race relations, asserting that he could "escape a feeling of complicity only by speaking out."<sup>2</sup>

At the time Einstein spoke those words, hate crimes including lynching had a long history in the United States. While the popular image of lynching involves vigilante justice and assumed guilt leading to a hanging, the reality of lynching lent an air of civility to that scenario. Often performed as spectacle in front of crowds who heard by word of mouth or who read about the upcoming event in their local newspaper, lynching served as both entertainment and as a form of social control over those considered racially or otherwise inferior. Couples on dates, families on outings, young and old alike came to watch their fellow United States citizens tortured and dehumanized before being murdered. However, the crowd

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was really much larger than the thousands who flocked to watch the gruesome display. There were those who chose to stay home, or who learned about the lynching after the fact, but the largest group by far were those silent accomplices who allowed the mobs to assemble unabated. The violence continued albeit in a less exhibitionist fashion, until the second half of the twentieth century— and the perpetrators went unpunished.

Of course, not all were silent. The act of lynching and sometimes even the lynching victims themselves found commemoration in the arts. Langston Hughes wrote over twenty poems devoted to the topic of lynching.<sup>3</sup> The crucifixion of Christ served as a common theme in lynching literature. In the 1922 poem, “Christ Revisited,” Countee Cullen declared that “[t]he South is crucifying Christ again,” whose “awful wrong is that he’s dark of hue.” Claude McKay’s *The Lynching*, which also referenced the crucifixion, admonished that “little lads, lynchers that were to be, [d]anced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.”<sup>4</sup>

Author Richard Wright, who alluded to lynching and its effectiveness at instilling fear in several of his writings, “stumble[d] upon” a lynching victim reduced to “white bones slumbering forgottenly upon a cushion of ashes” in his poem, *Between the World and Me*. He effectively described the scene:

A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat,  
and a pair of trousers stiff with black blood.  
And upon the trampled grass were buttons, dead matches,  
butt-ends of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a  
drained gin-flask, and a whore’s lipstick...<sup>5</sup>

Wright reanimates and becomes one with the victim as his tormentors pass “[t]he gin flask from mouth to mouth...” and “the whore smeared lipstick red upon her lips...” After reliving the night’s atrocities, the narrator himself becomes “dry bones and [his] face a stony skull staring in yellow surprise at the sun...”<sup>6</sup>

Secure in their conviction of superiority, the perpetrators themselves commemorated the lynchings. Those not fortunate enough to procure some body fetish, piece of clothing, or other item that held a direct connection with the victim, purchased post cards. Images of human beings hanging, or burning, often after being cut, castrated, or subjected to other tortures, became mementos to be stored away, or sent to friends and family, the way more civilized people send postcards from places like Yellowstone or Paris. As horrific as the images of the lifeless bodies are, the faces in the crowd are far more grisly. Children smile or sneer, lovers hold hands, and men and women freeze in place, posing for the camera.

One participant at the lynching of seventeen year old Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas wrote to his parents, “This is the barbecue we had last night,” and pointed out his position in the crowd.<sup>7</sup> Another postcard from an unknown lynching site wrote to whoever might come across the card, “Warning: The answer of the Anglo-Saxon race to black brutes who would attack the womanhood of the South.”<sup>8</sup> The fact that such images could legally be sent through the United States Mail until 1918, evidences the silent complicity. Similarly, efforts to pass a federal anti-lynching law never came to fruition.

Though the Civil Rights Movement brought about positive change, little dialogue took place to heal past wounds. The names of victims and the sites of their suffering faded into obscurity. As Kenneth E. Foote stresses in his book *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, "white culture [had] had two centuries to develop and mark its myth of origins in the landscape." It takes "tremendous effort...to overcome the power of shame and to position the sites in interpretive scaffolding capable of challenging the one accepted by the ascendant majority."<sup>9</sup> Antiques dealer and author James Allen confronted the lynching issue with the 2000 publication of his book and subsequent exhibit, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. The book, a collection of postcards and photographs such as those mentioned above, brutally forces an acceptance of our less than idyllic past.

The exhibit debuted at the New York Historical Society in 2000. Since that time, the traveling exhibit has drawn record crowds, though not without opposition. Many people think it best to remain in blissful silence, rather than confront our past. When scheduled for exhibit at Atlanta's Emory University, many people in the city "too busy to hate" found the time to express their concern against publicly airing our dirty historical laundry. Some expressed concern that the exhibition "would serve to further divide rather than to unite" and "incite feelings of rage and resentment among black people." Many were concerned that visitors to the exhibit would recognize family members among the lynching attendees in the numerous photographs. Though much of the resistance came from white Atlantans, many Africa-Americans also rejected the need to revisit such a painful part of history.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Umoja of Georgia State disagreed, stating "lynching is etched into the memory of black people," and insisted that "until you have an honest discussion, you can't have any real healing."<sup>11</sup> Most sociologists would agree, particularly those whose field of study includes the topic of social trauma. It is only when the truth of a traumatic event is faced that "survivors can begin their recovery."<sup>12</sup> However, the "central dialectic of psychological trauma" is the "conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud." Kenneth E. Foote notes, "few societies seem to have the moral courage needed to confront directly a legacy of genocide and racism."<sup>13</sup> The recent, however small, trend toward commemoration of lynching victims and sites may well mean that the United States will eventually come to represent one of those "few societies." Far short of that goal, the current trend has at least propelled our country into the second of three necessary steps toward recovery, "remembrance and mourning."<sup>14</sup>

Before James Allen's exhibit, Dr. James Cameron founded America's Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Inspired by a visit to the Yad Veshem Holocaust Memorial in Israel, the museum's mission statement is "to educate the public of injustices suffered by people of African American heritage, while providing visitors with an opportunity to rethink their assumptions about race and racism."<sup>15</sup> Dr. Cameron had first-hand knowledge of the subject, having been the near-victim of a lynch mob on 7 August 1930 in Marion, Indiana when he was just sixteen years old. He, along with two other teenagers had been accused of murdering a white man. After his friends had both been lynched, members of the mob came after him. Cameron recalled the mob "chanting

his name as if it was a football match cheering on a favorite player...We want Cameron. We want Cameron....” The crowd beat him all the way to the tree where his friends’ lifeless bodies hung. The rope had been placed around his neck when someone from the crowd spoke out for him.<sup>16</sup>

The crowd spared his life, perhaps having sated their craving for blood through the brutal double murder of the two young men, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith. Pictures of the murders are among the more infamous images of its type. A postcard of the event, framed with a lock of hair, found its way into James Allen’s exhibit. The caption written on the frame’s matte states, “Bo points to his niga.” And, there in the center of the photograph is Bo, his extended arm pointing to Cameron’s friend, Abe. Abe had been stripped from the waist down, but someone from some distorted sense of decency, wrapped a cloth around his body at some point prior to the photo session. Blood stains down the center of the cloth hint at the extent of the crowd’s barbarity.<sup>17</sup>

Though no marker commemorates the lives of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, the photograph of their lynching so horrified New York schoolteacher Abel Meeropol that he wrote a poem, *Bitter Fruit*. The poem, published in 1937 in the *New York Teacher* under the pen name Lewis Allen, was adapted into Billie Holliday’s song, *Strange Fruit*. Ms. Holliday’s talent catapulted *Strange Fruit* to the status of “anti-lynching anthem.”<sup>18</sup> Despite the fact that the teenagers who inspired the poem met their end in Marion, Indiana, the last verified lynching to occur in a northern state, Meeropol juxtaposes the genteel and pastoral self-images of the South with the reality of lynching:

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,  
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,  
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,  
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.<sup>19</sup>

Holliday milked the song’s effect by saving it for last during her live performances. The audience would leave and “[t]heir insides burned with” the song.<sup>20</sup>

James Cameron carried a piece of the rope used to kill one of his friends as a reminder of “a terrible time in American history.”<sup>21</sup> House Resolution 867 recognized James Cameron as “the last living survivor of a lynching until his death on June 11, 2006, at age 92” and honored his “lifelong commitment to civil rights that included creating the America’s Black Holocaust Museum.”<sup>22</sup> Though Cameron received both an apology and a pardon in 1993 from the governor of Indiana, no plans for a memorial for the two young men who were killed are in the works.

Some lynch sites require no specially placed plaque to serve as commemoration; sometimes a particular landmark links the site to its past. Such is the case with Shubuta, Mississippi’s infamous “Hanging Bridge.” For years the existence of the bridge served as a form of social control, “a symbol of what would happen if you spoke out, spoke too loudly, or spoke about being wronged.”<sup>23</sup> Six known people lost their lives on the bridge, though rumor holds that “white mobs brought black people from neighboring states to be hung from its trellises.”<sup>24</sup>

While the bridge served as a silent reminder, the topic of lynching remained a taboo in Shubuta until recently. Under the guidance of 90 year old Reverend Jim McRee, dialogue about Shubuta's past has opened up. The United Methodist Church's Mississippi Conference Commission on Religion and Race held a commemoration for the lynching victims on January 22nd, 2009. A conference held in February of the same year focused on the Shubuta killings. These two events are part of a yearlong series called "Journey Toward the Light," sponsored by the same commission. Also part of the initiative is The Peacemakers Program, which "encourage[s] relationships between those who have lived in fear and those who want to see change."<sup>25</sup> Discussion on whether to save the decaying bridge provided mixed results; some want to restore the Hanging Bridge as "a reminder of how hatred and fear can torment and terrorize communities," while others "are determined to keep seeking new ground to cover and new bridges to build."<sup>26</sup>

The first known killings on the Shubuta bridge occurred in 1918. After thirty-five year old alcoholic dentist E. I. Johnston was shot, his employee and tenant, Major Clark, carried the fatally wounded Johnston to his house. Despite his efforts to assist the dentist, Major immediately came under suspicion because Johnston had fathered the unborn baby of Clark's fiancée, Maggie Howse. Johnston had also impregnated her sister, Alma. The three, in addition to Major's brother, Andrew, all lived and worked on the Johnston farm.

All four young people were arrested and placed in custody in surrounding communities. Law enforcement officers in Meridian, Mississippi, "extracted a confession from [Major] by smashing his testicles in a vice."<sup>27</sup> When the four were brought back to Shubuta for their arraignment, the deputy in charge allowed a mob to restrain him and remove the Howse sisters and the Clark brothers from the jail. From there, the four were taken to the bridge over the Chickasawhay River where four ropes were secured and placed over the victims' heads. When Maggie tried to defend her innocence, "a mob member silenced her with a monkey wrench to the mouth, which knocked out some of her teeth. He then bashed Maggie in the head, leaving a half-inch wide gash in her skull."<sup>28</sup> The brothers and Alma Howse all died immediately after being thrown from the bridge, but Maggie managed to catch herself on the "side of the bridge" twice before dying. The mob members found amusement in the "big black Jersey woman[s]" struggle for survival.<sup>29</sup>

The outrage in the community had little to do with revenge for the life of a failed dentist; the four were lynched because Major Clark "dared to oppose the sexual relationship that [Johnston] was having with [his] fiancée and her sister."<sup>30</sup> Johnston's own father, former Mississippi state legislature member, thought Clark innocent "and even pleaded for Clark's life."<sup>31</sup> Most believed the motive for Johnston's murder stemmed from an affair he was having with a married white woman. As was typical after a lynching, the black community refused to claim the bodies, and the four were buried without services or markers just outside the white cemetery. Fearing more bloodshed, many black tenants fled Shubuta and the surrounding areas.<sup>32</sup>

The next known lynching to occur on the bridge in Shubuta was that of two 14-year-old boys, Charlie Lang and Ernest Green on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1942. The two boys, charged with attempted rape, had scared a 13-year-old white girl while crossing a different bridge. When the mob came for the teenagers, the deputy sheriff took "the keys to the locked

jail cell and toss[ed] them to the ground, giving the lynch mob easy access to the boys and sealing their fate.”<sup>33</sup> Langston Hughes, who dedicated his poem *Bitter River* to the two young boys, wrote of the frustration and hopelessness shared by African-Americans in light of the precariousness of their lives.

There is a bitter river  
Flowing through the South.  
Too long has the taste of its water Been in my mouth.  
There is a bitter river Dark with filth and mud.  
Too long has its evil poison  
Poisoned my blood.  
I’ve drunk of the bitter river  
And its gall coats the red of my tongue,  
Mixed with the blood of the lynched boys  
From its iron bridge hung,  
Mixed with the hopes that are drowned there  
In the snake-like hiss of its stream  
Where I drank of the bitter river  
That strangled my dream;  
The book studied—but useless,  
Tool handled—but unused,  
Knowledge acquired but thrown away,  
Ambition battered and bruised....<sup>34</sup>

The perpetrators drug the two boys through town behind a truck either before or after their deaths. Their bodies again remained unclaimed and were later buried north of “the white people’s cemetery.”<sup>35</sup>

An article in *Time* magazine, written at the time of the boys’ murders gives credence to rumors that the bridge in Shubuta served as the site for more lynchings than those already discussed. The article states, “in the last 20 years, three Negroes have been lynched” from the bridge, adding that there had “again...been dark passions at the bridge” and the two boys lynched.<sup>36</sup>

Lynch mobs often chose bridges for the site of their crime. Ralph Ellison incorporated the symbolism of bridges and lynching in his 1952 book, *Invisible Man*. Ellison’s narrator dreams that a mob forces him to a bridge and castrates him, “I felt the bright red pain and they took the two bloody blobs and cast them over the bridge.” The narrator admonishes his tormentors, “[t]hat there not hang only my generations wasting upon the water, but your sun, and your moon, your world. There’s your universe, and that drip-drop upon the water you hear is all the history you’ve made, all you’re going to make.”<sup>37</sup>

A bridge also served as the site of the lynching of four people in Monroe, Georgia in 1946, known as the Moore’s Ford Bridge lynching. Though the wooden bridge where the lynching occurred has been replaced by a concrete span, the biracial Moore’s Ford Memorial Committee, Inc. in cooperation with the Georgia State Historical Society succeeded in placing a marker at the site. The Committee also searched for and located the



missing graves of three of the four victims and properly installed monuments which they inscribed, "May your suffering be redeemed in brotherly Love."<sup>38</sup> The group continues to keep the memory of the victims alive and to "work for cultural healing, racial harmony, and social justice through education and community action."<sup>39</sup>

During the 1946 attack, a mob waylaid relatives Roger and Dorothy Malcom and George and Mae Murray Dorsey, at the bridge crossroads and dragged them from the automobile of wealthy white farmer Loy Harrison, who had paid \$600 to bail Roger Malcom from jail and had offered the group a ride home. No harm came to Harrison, but the mob tied the four African-American victims to trees on the banks of the Apalachee River and pelted them with a barrage of bullets. Harrison later claimed not to recognize any of the assailants. One witness who watched "cars lined up bumper-to-bumper rattling toward the bridge," since relayed, "I thought they were having a party down there. They were having a killing party."<sup>40</sup>

Speculation about the lynch mob's motives surround both of the male victims. Roger Malcom had been arrested for participating in a knife fight that resulted in the stabbing of a white farmer, Bob Hester. When arrested for their altercation, Malcom reputedly shouted, "I ain't gonna get out of this! They gonna kill me."<sup>41</sup> Others speculate that the focus of the lynching was George Dorsey, an honorably discharged World War II veteran, home only nine months after serving in the Pacific. Rumor had it that Dorsey had secretly been dating a white woman. Regardless of the inspiration, the mob viewed the two women as collateral damage, showing no pity even for the seven months pregnant Mae Dorsey.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to their other efforts to commemorate the Malcom-Dorsey lynching, the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee, Inc. saw that George Dorsey finally received a military service, complete with a flyover by a World War II aircraft, on Memorial Day 1999. More controversially, the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials commemorates the injustice with a yearly reenactment on the anniversary, 26 July. Family members of the victims especially raised concern over the 2008 reenactment which involved the naming of Mae Dorsey's unborn child, whom the group dubbed Justice.<sup>43</sup>

President Harry S. Truman ordered an unprecedented FBI investigation at the time of the lynching, most likely because of George Dorsey's military record. Though several suspects were named, the FBI met with resistance from both the white and black community and no charges were filed. White people with information held to their code of silence, while people in the black community remained silent for fear of reprisal. In 2006, the FBI reopened the case and continues to pursue leads.<sup>44</sup> The FBI searched a 12-acre area in Walton County, Georgia in June 2008 and collected evidence believed linked to the crime.<sup>45</sup> Over sixty years after the murders, there are still those either afraid or unwilling to talk.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, suspects and potential witnesses continue to die off.

Another lynching that has been recognized with a state historical marker is that of Rosewood, Florida. Rosewood actually involved a week-long orgy of violence and lynching that occurred in January 1923 and wiped an entire African American community off the face of the earth. Rosewood was declared a Florida Heritage Landmark in 2004 and the marker placed in front of the only building left standing that of the only white resident, storekeeper, John Wright. The Rosewood Heritage Foundation, founded by

survivors, descendants and other interested parties, facilitated the marker's acquisition. The foundation also supports a traveling exhibition, "The Beginning that Never Ends: The Rosewood Traveling Exhibition" and maintains a permanent display on the second floor of the Bethune-Cookman College library in Daytona Beach. The foundation's greatest achievement came in the form of a \$2.1 million compensation bill passed in 1994 by the Florida Legislature, the result of the Florida Board of Regents 1993 investigation into Rosewood.

As is the case in the majority of lynchings, events began with an accusation by a white woman, Fannie Taylor, who claimed she had been assaulted by a black man. The white community accepted her version of events, but a black woman, Sarah Carrier, later killed in the violence, claimed to have seen a white man leave the Taylor residence around the time of the alleged assault. She further claimed that she had seen the man at the Taylor's on several occasions.<sup>47</sup>

Sam Carter, accused of hiding Fannie Taylor's attacker, became the first Rosewood victim. Carter was tortured, hung and riddled with bullets. Whites from the surrounding area joined in the hunt and meted justice as they saw fit. The violence escalated after the death of two whites who were shot when trying to storm the home of Sarah Carrier. Newspapers further incited the violence. The Gainesville *Daily Sun* reported the "horror of the tragedy at Sumner and Rosewood" to be not the attack on innocent black citizens, but "a brutish negro [who] made a criminal assault on an unprotected white girl." The article continued with the endorsement, "as long as criminal assaults on innocent women continue, lynch law will prevail, and blood will be shed."<sup>48</sup> Though the mysterious black man was never found, several African Americans were killed, as well as the two aforementioned whites, and the entire town of Rosewood burnt to the ground, the residents displaced and unable to return. Rosewood, Florida simply ceased to exist.

The better-known Emmett Till lynching elicited an apology from the Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, County Board of Supervisors on October 2nd, 2007, at a memorial ceremony fifty two years after the teenager's murder. A resolution put forth by the Emmett Till Memorial Commission was also read. The resolution stated that "We the citizens of Tallahatchie County believe that racial reconciliation begins with telling the truth" and called on "the state of Mississippi, all of its citizens in every county, to begin an honest investigation into our history" in order to "move forward together in healing the wounds of the past, and in ensuring equal justice for all of our citizens."<sup>49</sup> The ceremony also unveiled the first of a series of historical markers relating to Emmett's killing and a driving tour of related sites. Additionally, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History awarded \$50,000 for the restoration of the courthouse where the trial and acquittal of Emmett's killers, Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam occurred.

Fourteen year old Emmett Till from Chicago reportedly whistled at Bryant's wife, Carolyn, while visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi. Shortly after, the teenager was taken from his cousin's bed, on 28 August 1955, beaten beyond recognition and his body thrown in the Tallahatchie River. His mother, Mamie Till Mobley recalled viewing Emmett's lifeless body for the first time. She related:

I didn't want that body...That couldn't be mine. But I stared at his feet and I could identify his ankles. I said, those are my ankles. Those are my knees. I knew the knees...and then I began to come on up...until I got to the chin and mouth...those were Emmett's teeth, and I was looking for his ear. You notice how mine sort of curls up...Emmett had the same ears...the one eye that was left, that was definitely his eye, the hazel color confirmed that, and I had to admit that that was indeed Emmett and I said that that is my son this is Bobo.<sup>50</sup>

The two men indicted by a Mississippi Grand Jury were tried and acquitted after the all-white, all-male jury deliberated for only an hour. Bryant and Milam later confessed to the killing, admitting to the murder in a *Look* magazine article for which the two received \$4,000. Throughout the article, Emmett is referred to by his nickname, Bobo. According to the killers, their intent had been to scare the boy. In the end, they claimed, Emmett caused his own death by refusing to be scared. Milam told the reporter, "Well, what else could we do....As long as I live and can do anything about it, niggers are gonna stay in their place. Niggers ain't gonna vote where I live. If they did, they'd control the government.... And when a nigger gets close to mentioning sex with a white woman, he's tired o'livin."<sup>51</sup> The two claim that they "were never able to scare him. They had just filled him so full of poison that he was hopeless."<sup>52</sup> Emmett remained defiant to the end, even after a pistol-whipping. The article closes with the summation that "[t]he majority—by no means all, but the majority—of the white people in Mississippi 1) either approve...or else 2) they don't disapprove enough to risk giving their 'enemies' the satisfaction of a conviction."<sup>53</sup> Letters to the editor in later editions seem to support the author's conclusion.

A three year FBI investigation led to a Leflore County grand jury investigation in 2007, but failed to issue any indictments. According to informants, Carolyn Bryant-Donham, one of those examined by the grand jury, had identified Emmett for his killers as the one who "made a pass" at her.<sup>54</sup> Bryant died years ago from cancer; the fact that his widow chose to retain his name even after remarrying suggests that she supported her husband's actions.

The monument to three circus workers, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie, lynched on June 15th, 1920 in Duluth, Minnesota is by far the most touching and effective to date. The Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial is the largest lynching monument in the United States, taking up the entire block opposite the corner where the lynching occurred. What gives the memorial its impact is not its size, but the three seven foot tall bronze statues of the victims. The trio are reanimated, their humanity restored through the sculpture. Another effort to honor the victims saw fulfillment with the location and marking of their previously unknown gravesites. On October 26th, 1991 granite headstones were placed on their grave, returning their identities with the additional inscription, "Deterred but not defeated."

The men had been roustabouts with the John Robinson Circus. Two teenagers, Irene Tusken and James Sullivan attended the first night's performances in Duluth. The following morning, June 15, 1920, Sullivan's father called the police with a report of rape. The

claim made by the young man, alleged that “six black circus workers had held the pair at gunpoint and then raped Irene Tusken.<sup>55</sup> An examination of the girl by her family physician, Dr. David Graham, “showed no physical signs of rape or assault,’ but in 1920 evidence was not a prerequisite if the accused was a black man.<sup>56</sup> Six circus workers were rounded up and the news of their arrest immediately reported in the local newspaper. That evening, a mob of between 5- - 10,000 people gathered, demanded the prisoners and three were selected for a “hasty mock trail.”<sup>57</sup> Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson and Isaac McGhie were subsequently, beaten, dragged to a “light pole on the corner of First Street and Second Avenue East” and lynched.<sup>58</sup> Photographs taken at the scene show two of the men hanging from the light pole with the third laying beneath them on the ground. The sheer number of people crowded into the small area, all vying for a view of the dead men, is staggering.

Long after the lynching, folk singer Bob Dylan, who was born in Duluth, commemorated the event in his song, *Desolation Row*:

They're selling postcards of the hanging  
They're painting the passports brown  
The beauty parlor is filled with sailors  
The circus is in town  
Here comes the blind commissioner  
They've got him in a trance  
One hand is tied to the tight-rope walker  
The other is in his pants  
And the riot squad they're restless  
They need somewhere to go  
As Lady and I look out tonight  
From Desolation Row.<sup>59</sup>

In stark contrast to the impressive Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, the majority of lynch sites remain unmarked. Photographer and Art Professor, Karina Aguilera Skvirsky recently used this lack of community acknowledgement in the state of Maryland as a commemoration of otherwise forgotten lynch victims. The photographs in her exhibit, *North East South*, of the locations of lynch sites, long removed from the event, are haunting for their peaceful innocence, their beauty again perpetuating the myth of the genteel South. Each photograph is titled with the name of a lynch victim and the location.<sup>60</sup> The label on one of the photographs, a lush, thick trunked tree in front of a graceful, Georgian style courthouse reads, “Matthew Williams, lynched in Salisbury, Md., 1931. Williams’ lynching is also featured in Sherrilyn A. Ifill’s *On the Courthouse Lawn*. Accused of the murder of his employer, Daniel Elliot, Williams was doomed as word spread quickly of the upcoming lynching. Whatever happened in Elliot’s office, Williams had been seriously wounded himself. The alternative story, particularly among Salisbury’s black community, was that the killer “wasn’t nobody but [Elliot’s] son. He killed his father and then shot this colored fellow so he wouldn’t be there to be against him.”<sup>61</sup> The *Salisbury Times*, played an integral role in the lynching when it posted a special bulletin announcing that

Williams was alive and providing his location in the nearby hospital. The bandaged and straight-jacketed Williams was literally drug to the courthouse lawn. One witness observing that, "his buttocks did not have God's bit of skin left on them."<sup>62</sup> He was hung on the majestic tree outside the courthouse and his body dragged to a bridge outside the black community before being tied to a lamppost and set on fire "[s]o all the colored people could see him."<sup>63</sup>

Commemoration came quicker for more recent lynch victims, James Byrd, Jr. and Matthew Shepherd. Neither were their deaths met with silence, but rather with a public outcry. In many ways, their deaths helped to expose the ugliness of intolerance to some accustomed to looking the other way. Another contrast is the conviction of perpetrators in both cases.

In June 1998, James Byrd, Jr., a 49 year old disabled African American, accepted a ride from three white men in Jasper, Texas. The three men severely beat the husband and father of two, before chaining him to the back of a truck and dragging him through town, then dumping his decapitated body outside the black cemetery. Two of Byrd's killers received the death penalty; a first in the state of Texas where previously no white man had been given the ultimate sentence for the killing of a black man, and only one prior case in the entire history of the United States. The third perpetrator received life in prison.

The James Byrd, Jr. Memorial Park serves as a memorial to his life and as a reminder of the dangers of intolerance. Byrd's family also set up the James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Healing to support "working toward the end of racism."<sup>64</sup> His sister, Louvon Byrd Harris, made the following statement while speaking on the prevention of further hate crimes: "Hate is a disease. Hate is a learned behavior. And anything learned can be unlearned....Have open dialogue, express your feelings and let others have compassion in listening. Be proactive instead of reactive."<sup>65</sup> Though James Byrd, Jr. was laid to rest in a cemetery for blacks only, the fence that once separated the black and white cemeteries has since been removed in his honor.<sup>66</sup>

Just four months after Byrd's murder, on October 7th 1998, Matthew Shepherd, a 21 year old openly gay student at the University of Wyoming, was pistol whipped, tortured and left to die near Laramie, Wyoming. The man who found him tied to a fence at first thought the comatose Shephard to be a scarecrow. Shephard died 12 October 1998 at the Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado from severe head injuries. The two men who carried out the crime each received two consecutive life sentences.

English musicians Bernie Taupin and Elton John collaborated on a song, *American Triangle*, after learning of Shephard's death. Included in the lyrics are the following lines:

Western skies don't make it right  
Home of the brave don't make no sense  
I've seen a scarecrow wrapped in wire  
Left to die on a high ridge fence....

See two coyotes run down a deer  
Hate what we don't understand.  
You pioneers give us your children  
But it's your blood that stains their hands<sup>67</sup>

Memorials to Shephard include Chris Navarro's sculpture, "The Ring of Peace," located on the grounds of the First United Methodist Church in Casper, Wyoming. The sculpture is also dedicated to the victims of Columbine. The Matthew Shephard Human Rights Triangle Park in West Hollywood, California is dedicated to Shephard's memory and was unveiled on December 21, 1998, just two months after his death. Additionally, The Matthew Shephard Foundation founded by his parents, Dennis and Judy Shephard, serves as a memorial to Shephard by seeking "to replace hate with understanding, compassion, & acceptance through its varied educational, outreach and advocacy programs and by continuing to tell Matthew's story."<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps most enduring is the Matthew Shephard and James Byrd, Jr. Act, intended to extend federal hate crime legislation to include gay and lesbian people, as well as people with disabilities. The legislation was introduced in the U. S. Congress in 2007 and subsequently passed both the House and Senate before being vetoed by President Bush. President Barack Obama signed the Matthew Shephard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law 28 October 2009.

Even more recently, filmmaker Keith Beauchamp investigated allegations of modern day lynchings in his Discovery Channel series *The Injustice Files: At the End of a Rope* which aired in February 2012. Beauchamp examined four hanging deaths, all officially ruled suicides and considered closed cases, despite inconsistencies and family objections.<sup>69</sup>

The exact number of lynch victims will never be known, though the total is no doubt much higher than the nearly 5,000 known victims. The number of memorials is small in comparison with the volume of victims and hardly constitutes a major movement. Still, the movement, however small, has begun and long repressed dialogue has been initiated. Efforts for victim memorials are being pursued in several cities, including a memorial for a young man, Jesse Washington, publicly burned to death in Waco, Texas, whose suffering was referred to as "a barbeque" in an aforementioned postcard. Other efforts, such as the University of Washington's memorial reading of all known lynch victims during Black History Month 2008, keep the conversation alive. Truth is much harder to rebury once it has been uncovered. The real fear is not so much that we will recognize relatives in the faces of the crowds who participated in the torture and murder of fellow citizens, but that we will recognize ourselves.

In the late seventeenth century, Salem Village was a cauldron of animosity steeped in insecurity and supernaturalism, the perfect environment in which a defeated and unscrupulous merchant could begin life anew. Conservative farmers and liberal merchants divided the village. In an attempt to bridge the gap, villagers, most notably merchants, petitioned for a church independent of the First Salem Church in Salem Town. In their search for a minister, the villagers looked to Boston. They needed a minister uniquely qualified to unify the divided Salem Village. In Boston, they had a nearly unlimited choice of well-qualified ministers. However, as the majority of candidates were Harvard graduates and likely conservative, only a clergyman with

# Manufacturing Terror:

## Samuel Parris' Exploitation of the Salem Witch Trials

by Alan Pershing

experience in both trades would suffice. This created a need uniquely suited to Samuel Parris's qualifications. He was not a Harvard graduate and, therefore, not regarded as completely conservative. And at the time of his calling to the Salem Village pulpit, he had not completely abandoned his business interests in Boston.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Parris was an opportunist who saw the potential to profit amongst the unstable and divided population. When he accepted the call to Salem Village, the master manipulator became the catalyst for one of the most controversial events in colonial history.

Most contemporary historians argue that Parris's role in the Salem witch trials was not essential. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum are leading authorities on the Salem trials. In their book, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*, Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that "Samuel Parris did not deliberately provoke the Salem witchcraft episode."

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They attribute the witch trials to factionalization among the villagers. However, upon conclusion of an entire chapter dedicated to Samuel Parris, Boyer and Nissenbaum concede, “his was a crucial role.”<sup>2</sup>

Samuel Parris’s own sermon notebook offers the most incriminating evidence regarding his intentions as minister of the Salem Village church. As Larry Gragg states in his book *A Quest for Security: The Life of Samuel Parris*, “Parris was able to mingle his personal failures and the villager’s frustrations and transform them into a cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan.”<sup>3</sup> Samuel Parris did not directly cause the crisis, but he perpetuated it and manufactured terror among the population. As a minister for Salem Village, he was nothing less than a fraud. His role in the Salem witch trials was more than crucial; it was deliberate.

Insecurity pervaded Salem life for over a decade prior to the trials. Massachusetts colonists, reluctant to admit that the King of England exercised any authority over the colony, enacted laws in the name of the Commonwealth and excluded the king. In June 1684, the English chancery court formally annulled the colonial charter and colonists faced the certainty that they had lost the near independence they previously enjoyed.<sup>4</sup> Following the English revolution in 1688, Massachusetts authorities moved to reestablish the government under the vacated charter. As a consequence of the revolution, the Massachusetts colony became a front in King William’s war. Frontier communities including Salem frequently fell victim to raids organized by French and Indian parties.<sup>5</sup>



The colonists' own beliefs added to their insecurity. In addition to the societal belief that witchcraft was a credible threat, predestination was fundamental to colonial Puritanism. God determined a person's destiny before he or she was born. Under this doctrine, a person could lead a pious and just life and still face damnation after death. Only the "elect" could ascend to heaven. This resulted in the colonists striving endlessly for an uncertain reward.

In 1686, faced with mounting debt, legal difficulties, and economic uncertainty, Samuel Parris all but abandoned mercantilism and pursued a career in the ministry. Despite numerous obstacles including a lack of a degree and a job market saturated with qualified clergymen, Parris managed to secure a temporary position in the frontier community of Stow, Massachusetts. His decision to turn to the ministry is not difficult to understand. The ministry offered what mercantilism in colonial New England could not: economic security.

Parris's experience as a merchant was not altogether in vain. It afforded him political connections. In 1682, Parris purchased commercial real estate, thereby becoming a freeman of the colony.<sup>6</sup> As a freeman, Parris was eligible to participate fully in political life in Boston. These political connections are likely the reason a committee of village representatives approached Parris with an offer to minister the newly founded Salem Village church in 1688.

Parris's service as a minister in Stow lasted less than one year. Brief mentions of Parris's name in friend and fellow merchant Samuel Sewall's diary indicate Parris remained active in the clergy.<sup>7</sup> However, it is unknown if he attained any other significant ministerial positions until 1688 when the people of Salem approached him. It is also unknown why the people of Salem specifically chose Parris considering the surplus of far more qualified ministerial candidates in Boston.<sup>8</sup>

When the people of Salem Village offered the position at the head of their newly independent church in 1688, Parris employed the skills acquired during his career as a merchant in negotiating a favorable contract. It took nearly one year for Parris to supply Salem Village with a commitment. Moreover, that commitment came with stipulations. In negotiating his contract, he neglected no detail. In addition to a set salary that would adjust advantageously in periods of economic prosperity, Parris insured that market fluctuations in corn, barley, rye and other commodities had no effect on his family.<sup>9</sup>

Parris's ordination sermon was a preview of the years to come. The sermon he delivered simultaneously castigated those that put him in the pulpit, lambasted those who had not committed fully to the church before his arrival, and demonstrated his authority over the village. His sermon opened with Joshua 5:9, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you."<sup>10</sup> In this context, Parris used Joshua 5:9 as a direct affront to the merchant men who elected him. In the same sermon, Parris asserted, "It is an Egyptian-like disgrace & Reproach to any people to be out of visible & Sacramental communion w<sup>th</sup> [sic] God in his Ordinances..."<sup>11</sup> Paris was giving a stern warning to those who did not attend his sermons and commit to regular prayer.

Immediately after his ordination, Parris made his position of authority known, first by placing Salem Village's long-standing deacon on probation and then publicly ostracizing one of its model citizens. Mere days after his ordination, Parris named Nathaniel Ingersoll "to officiate in the place of a Deacon for a time."<sup>12</sup> As a deacon, there were few better qualified than Ingersoll. He was a professor of religion, a "patron, benefactor and guardian of the Salem Village parish from its formation," and had long held the title of deacon.<sup>13</sup> Yet, despite his qualifications, Parris did not feel Ingersoll was worthy of confirmation until 18 months after he was named "for a time."<sup>14</sup>

In the months following his ordination, Parris continued to demonstrate his authority over the church by publicly ostracizing one of its members, Ezekiel Cheever. An entry by Parris in the church record book states, "Brother Cheevers who having in distress for a horse upon his wives approaching travell [sic] about five or six weeks past [had] taken his neighbor Joseph Putnam's horse out of his stable & without leave or asking of it."<sup>15</sup> Based on this entry alone, one might believe Ezekiel Cheever was a thief. In fact, he was an esteemed member of the community and a highly respected teacher and schoolmaster. Cheever borrowed the horse to call upon the village doctor while his wife was in labor, or "approaching travell."<sup>16</sup> Instead of allowing Cheever and his neighbor to conclude the matter, Parris saw fit to make an example out of Cheever to remind his followers of his authority and position within the community.

Parris conducted himself as minister in a dictatorial fashion. He demanded church members' complete attention at all times during his sermons, which usually lasted several hours. Parris berated those caught nodding off or wandering in thought, declaring "Some sit before the preacher as senseless as the seats they sit on."<sup>17</sup> Later sermons became more menacing with threats of damnation.

By the second year of his appointment, Parris's popularity wavered. Issues arose with the contract he so artfully negotiated. He made these issues known throughout his sermons. The most conspicuous was his plea for firewood following his weekly lecture on October 8, 1691. Parris urged "the inhabitants to take care that I might be provided for."<sup>18</sup> His situation worsened eight days later when a village committee convened and voted against the collection of taxes specifically for his salary.

The most haunting allusion of things to come occurred on November 22, 1691. Following the denial of his salary, many members of the community maneuvered to have Parris ousted. Acknowledging this attempt, Parris opened his November sermon with Psalm 110, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, untill [sic] I make thine Enemies thy footstool."<sup>19</sup> Parris bluntly stated that he would remain the minister until his enemies and the enemies of the church were vanquished. His situation was dire. It seemed Parris was desperate to maintain his position in the pulpit, whatever the cost. In February 1692, a solution presented itself in his own home. Supposedly unbeknownst to Parris, his daughter, Elizabeth, and niece, Abigail Williams, had been experimenting with techniques of fortune telling. Individuals, particularly merchants and young women, frequently sought the assistance of fortunetellers to determine their economic prospects or "what trade their sweet harts [sic] should be of."<sup>20</sup> Soon after, the girls began to act strangely, exhibiting fits and convulsions.

Many historians have asserted that Parris was complacent in the events of 1692 and merely a victim of circumstance. However, his sermons following the initial panic did not follow Puritan tradition and convey neutrality. Instead, they perpetuated fear and capitalized on the villagers' constant anxiety of predestination. Through his sermons, he manufactured a crisis by preaching about the errors of neglecting prayer and church attendance. Parris asserted that church membership alone did not guarantee salvation. He had hinted at this in previous sermons. Now a formidable terror existed in Salem Village and the only way to defeat it was to give one's self completely to the church. In his sermon on March 27, 1692, Parris exclaimed, "Our Lord Jesus Christ knows how many Devils there are in his Church, & who they are."<sup>21</sup> He also accused members of his church of being hypocrites for professing their love for Christ but not giving in to Him completely. To these hypocrites, Parris preached, "Corruptio optimi es pessima."<sup>22</sup> That is, the corruption of the very best is the worst wickedness. This was a direct assault on the enemies of the church. Through his sermon, Parris illustrated that the enemies of the church, namely the Porters and the Nurses, were the reason the village had fallen into a war with the Devil. The intent of the sermon was to rally his supporters. This was not the first time he resorted to a direct assault from the pulpit. Only two months prior, Parris preached of the "Wicked and Reprobate Men (the assistants of Satan to afflict the church)" and how "Christ defends his Church against three great enemies", "Against inward enemies in their own souls."<sup>23</sup> In one breath, Parris managed to throw the Porters and their allies "down the gauntlet" while also chastising those who professed their allegiance to the church but failed to fully commit.<sup>24</sup>

The incident that sparked one of the most renowned and controversial witch hunts in history began in the minister's kitchen. Who would be better qualified to deal with matters of faith in his own kitchen than a minister? Ministers were "the experts, the leading tacticians, the mightiest warriors in supernatural combat."<sup>25</sup> Parris did opposite of what was expected of him. He created doubt within the community by sending his afflicted daughter to live with Captain Samuel Sewall in Boston. While there, Elizabeth continued to exhibit fits. She later confided in Mrs. Sewall that "the great black man came to her and told her, if she would be ruled by him, she should have whatsoever she desired, and go to a *Golden City*." Mrs. Sewall immediately told Elizabeth, "it was the Devil, and he is a liar" and told her to tell him so if he came back.<sup>26</sup> Upon doing so, Elizabeth Parris's affliction apparently ceased. It seems a captain's wife was better qualified in warding off the Devil than the minister.

If the conversation with Elizabeth had occurred with Mr. Parris instead of Mrs. Sewall, the situation would likely have not escalated beyond their kitchen. Prominent New England preacher Cotton Mather had even suggested that any names the afflicted children called out in their fits be kept in confidence because, he argued, "we should be tender in such Relations lest we wrong the reputation of the Innocent by stories not enough enquired to."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the names of the women the young girls accused for causing their affliction became public without restraint. If the names had not become public knowledge, Parris would not have been able to deliver his sermons revealing the destructive nature of the crisis within the community.

Elizabeth and Abigail first accused Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osbourne for their maladies. Under examination, Tituba also identified Sarah Good and Sarah Osbourne as perpetrators of witchcraft. However, after Tituba's confession and jailing, she declared that Parris "beat her and otherways abuse[d] her to make her confess and accuse (such as he call'd [sic]) her Sister-Witches."<sup>28</sup>

Within a few weeks, the girls named additional perpetrators of malice, Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse. While the community considered Good and Osbourne to be socially undesirable, Corey and Nurse were known supporters of the anti-Parris Porter faction. Parris perpetuated the accusations and animosity by lacing his sermons with allegories from the witch trials. He frequently alluded to the "war" between Satan and the Lambs of God.<sup>29</sup> The most provocative of his sermons brought fear that one of the Devil's workers had infiltrated the church. Parris opened with "After condemnation of 6 Witches at a Court in Salem, one of the Witches viz. Martha Kory in full communion was [in] our Church."<sup>30</sup> He further suggested that there might be more witches in Salem Village.<sup>31</sup> Parris continued to preach, perhaps more fervently than before, that attendance at church alone would not guarantee salvation. Only the act of prayer and strict adherence to ordinances would provide sufficient protection.<sup>32</sup>

As in the previous year, Parris zealously continued to preach warning to those who opposed the church. He abandoned mere suggestion and pursued a more direct approach by saying "Caution & admonition to all & every one of us to beware of making War with the Lamb,"<sup>33</sup> and "When men will not receive the Gosple [sic], this is to make war with the Lamb."<sup>34</sup> Parris likely directed the latter statement at the Nurses and Tarbells who had ceased attending church after the execution of Rebecca Nurse.

In November 1692, Governor William Phips dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer and brought an end to the witch hunts in Salem Village. The end of the crisis coincides with the renewed effort by community members to oust Parris from the pulpit and a concurrent, more sympathetic tone in his sermons. In response to the changing situation, Parris changed the nature of his sermons to entice long-absent members back to the church. But as Salem Village began to slip back into welcome anonymity, the division amongst the villagers intensified. After numerous community meetings, the veracity of those that opposed Parris apparently rattled him. Throughout much of 1693, his sermons made sparse mention of dissent. By the end of the year, Parris was outright begging the dissenters to attend church. When they refused, he returned to the pulpit once again and spewed his venomous words. He sought to isolate the dissenters and absentees, and attempt to convince his supporters that the dissenters were responsible for all the village's problems.<sup>35</sup> The dissenters countered by seeking council with officials in Boston. A bitter battle ensued over the next three years and culminated in Parris's stepping down from the pulpit in Salem Village.

The evidence pertaining to the Salem witch trials that survives today suggests that Samuel Parris acted reprehensibly and selfishly. His sermon notebook, the most incontrovertible affirmation of Parris's character, contains notes in the margins alluding to pages that have since vanished. When put into context with the accompanying pages, those notes might indicate a less sinister motive. However, based upon other evidence

surrounding the trials, including Tituba's confession after being jailed and Parris's actions documented by other villagers, Parris appears to have fabricated a crisis. His sermons indicate that he glorified the importance of the church far beyond traditional Puritanism in a way that made it subservient to his authority, wielding it as a weapon against those who opposed him. Parris used his influence to manipulate Salem Village for personal gain. By manufacturing terror, he endeavored to maintain financial security, an enhanced status in society, and the gratification of delivering a superstitious population from the threat of a supernatural menace.

The Mexican American War was a divisive issue amongst Americans which initiated lengthy debate over the direction the country was developing. The war was a key issue amongst the Whigs, many of whom would form the Republican Party in the decade after the war. The war itself built upon issues dating back to the Missouri Compromise which would eventually lead the country into a civil war. To explore part of the national debate over the issue of the Mexican American War, I will be presenting a speech delivered by the fictional Whig senator Barnabas White to the United States Senate, during the debate over the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854. This act was passed in 1854, and was

# The Whigs and the Mexican War

by Ian Stewart-Shelafó

a direct response to the new territories gained from Mexico during the war. 1854 is also a useful year because the Whig Party was declining, and many of its members were joining the newly formed Republican Party.

The Whig Party was formed in 1833 by Henry Clay in an effort to enact legislation on a national level, which would result in the modernization of the United States through internal improvement projects. This party was to stand in opposition to the Democratic-Republican Party, which was led by Andrew Jackson, who preferred expansionistic agrarianism. When Jackson sought to destroy the national banking system, he gave Clay a reason to found the Whigs.<sup>1</sup> The Whigs saw things such as the national bank as necessary for the growth and modernization of the country. The use of credit, and the promotion of business, were key Whig issues which stood in opposition to the Jacksonian ideal of all monies being in specie.<sup>2</sup> The goal of the Whigs was to

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support the expansion of industrial capital and infrastructure, in order to provide a strong economic base for social improvement.” The real core of the tensions between the Whigs and the Democrats is that their ideologies were part of a debate between industrialization and agrarianism. The Whigs sought industrialization in their efforts to promote modernization. The Democrats preferred an agrarian society where land ownership determined status. In order to promote internal growth within the country, the Whigs favored protective tariffs to give an advantage to American produced goods over foreign imports.<sup>3</sup> This was also part of an agenda which would see the expansion and improvement of transportation systems, and the founding of a public school system to promote education. Temperance was another issue that many Whigs supported.<sup>4</sup> The issue of slavery was more of a regional concern amongst the Whigs, with those in the North more likely to support abolition, while those of the South usually supported slavery. Both Henry Clay and President Taylor, who was elected as a Whig, owned slaves. The Whigs were known as the party of compromise, because they sought to limit factionalism between the parties, especially on the issue of slavery. Over time this resulted in increased factionalism as regional politics took precedence over party politics.

When the United States entered the Mexican-American War it was initially to reaffirm control of the newly annexed Texas, but was quickly expanded to include conquest of the territories of California and New Mexico. As part of this plan Santa Anna, the former president of Mexico, negotiated to return to Mexico from exile in Cuba, in exchange for selling the United States the territory in contention.<sup>5</sup> He quickly engaged in a coup, retook the presidency of Mexico, and began fighting the US invasion. Though a costly war for the United States in terms of casualties, this war served as a training ground for the generals of the Civil War. The prominent officers on both sides of that conflict served during the Mexican-American War. Amongst those who served were Ulysses Grant, Stonewall Jackson, Robert Lee, and Jefferson Davis, who all served as junior officers.<sup>6</sup>

The major effect of the Mexican-American War was the reopening of the debate over slavery, which had been addressed by the Missouri Compromise in 1820. With the expansion of new territory, which was mostly on the southern side of the compromise line, proponents of slavery sought to extend that institution into the southwest. The resulting Compromise of 1850, with the inclusion of the Fugitive Slave Act, served to anger many who opposed slavery.<sup>7</sup> It also deepened the tensions between the North and South. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 was passed, it effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise and allowed for the citizens of each territory to determine whether they would be slave or Free states.<sup>8</sup> This led to the events known as Bleeding Kansas, where supporters of both sides moved into the Kansas Territory in order to influence the vote there. Violence erupted between the two sides which would continue into the Civil War.<sup>9</sup>

The effect that the Mexican-American War had on the Whig party was dramatic. By reopening the debate on slavery, it forced Whigs to consider the issue directly, and caused a schism in the party which resulted in the party’s collapse. Members in the South either joined the Democrats if they supported slavery, or the Know-Nothings if they wanted a moderate stance on the issue. In the North, Whigs joined the Free-Soilers, or eventually the Republican Party. In addition, by trying to encompass wider platforms to attract more

votes, the party did itself harm by appearing to the public to have little difference from the Democrats on the issues they supported. The Whig party enjoyed just over twenty years of political life, during which it enacted many of its goals such as education and industrialization, which remain important today. During their time they had two elected presidents, and two vice presidents who succeeded to office after the death of the sitting president. The Whigs' demise gave rise to the Republican Party.

Greetings, fellow senators. For those of you who do not know me, I am Barnabas White, the newly elected junior senator from Vermont. On this day, the third of March 1854, I wish to speak of two related issues. The first is the Kansas-Nebraska Act which we are to vote upon today.<sup>10</sup> The other is the forthcoming vote to ratify the Gadsden Treaty with Mexico, which is scheduled to take place next month. Why do I say that these issues are related? This Kansas-Nebraska Act has come about directly in response to the new territories that were acquired during the Mexican War, and the Gadsden Treaty seeks to further expand that territory by purchasing another piece of land from Mexico. Both of these issues serve only to exacerbate tensions between the northern and southern states of our country. The act we vote upon today will do nothing less than repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and open all of our western territories to the expansion of slavery. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Let me begin with a history of how we got to this moment. In 1820, when this body assembled to discuss bringing the territory of Missouri into the Union as a state, it was unclear whether it would be admitted as a free state or a slave state. As our people expanded into the West, it was inevitable that this issue would accompany them. Eventually it was decided that no slaves would be permitted in the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase above the thirty-sixth parallel. The only exception was that area which was within the proposed state of Missouri.<sup>11</sup> Being almost entirely above this line, Missouri was permitted slaves as a compromise for the rest of the territory not being permitted them. It is this balance between the powers of the slave and free states which the proposed Kansas-Nebraska legislation will destroy.

Henry Clay, one of the founders of the Whig party to which I belong, was chief in bringing this matter to a close. He founded the Whigs in 1833 in response to the tyranny of Andrew Jackson, and his efforts to destroy any modernizing process in this country. His destruction of the national bank was detrimental to the progress of the country.<sup>12</sup> How are we to overtake the British as an industrialized nation if we have no system of credit or tariffs to promote the expansion of business, and fund internal improvements? Jackson, and his disciples, would have us all believe that this country needs to retain its agrarian roots in order to thrive, but that path will leave us detrimentally weak in comparison with our competitors in Europe. This plan would only benefit the wealthiest amongst our people, those who own property, not the many that toil for wages in the factories. By promoting the growth of business and industry, we as a people will make progress towards erasing many of the ills of our society, not by redistributing the wealth that we already have, but by generating much more so that everyone has the potential to improve themselves. This is coupled with the proposal for universal education of our



citizens. Through education this country will be able to out-produce, and out-innovate the nations of Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Around the same time that we Whigs were taking our first forays into political organization, some of our expatriates in Mexico were fighting a war to secede with the area that comprises the state of Texas. This was part of a larger event comprising a Mexican civil war.<sup>14</sup> While this was not of a great concern to many in this country in 1836, it was an event of great importance ten years later. After the death of President Harrison, and the expulsion of Tyler from the Whig Party, Henry Clay was nominated for the 1844 election. He lost the election to President James Polk by a very small margin. Though he lost the popular vote by thirty-nine thousand, it would only have taken about seven thousand in New York to get him the electoral votes needed for a victory.<sup>15</sup> Polk, who was relatively unknown at the time, campaigned on a platform that included the annexation of Texas, and resolving the dispute with the British over the ownership of Oregon country.<sup>16</sup>

It was precisely this kind of greedy territorial warmongering that has put us into the situation we find ourselves in today. By attempting to gain more territory below the Missouri Compromise line, we have resumed the debate over slavery that was addressed over thirty years ago. There is also the matter of Mexico stating that they would declare war if our country attempted to annex Texas.<sup>17</sup> In 1845, with the annexation of Texas, President Polk sent General Taylor to the area to secure the borders. This led to the Thornton Affair in April 1846, where one of our patrols was killed by Mexican soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Polk used this as an excuse to have Congress issue a declaration of war against Mexico, as he claimed that Mexico had killed Americans on American soil. Though some of my fellow Whigs voted against this action, it passed with a strong majority on May 13, 1846.<sup>19</sup> This measure had strong support from the Democrats of this body. Because of the greed of you Democrats to acquire more territory below the Missouri Compromise line, we were engaged in the deadliest war in our history in order to steal land from a sovereign nation. This war was used to gain California, and the ports on the western coast, but resulted in expanding American territory by more than a third.

Though the territories of California and Nuevo Mexico were ultimately what were gained from this war, many of you Democrats were pushing for the annexation of the entirety of Mexico.<sup>20</sup> How much more territory is needed for the expansion of slavery? With the rapid advance of General Taylor, who was elected president in 1848 due to his conduct in the war, the northern areas of Mexico were firmly under American control. It was at this point that President Polk sent a second army, under the command of General Winfield Scott, to land at Vera Cruz and advance towards Mexico City. With the capture of the city in September 1847, the rest of the war was quickly resolved.<sup>21</sup> This led to the treaty Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

This treaty was signed on February 2, 1848, and in it was detailed the terms of the Mexican Cession. Mexico relinquished any claim on Texas or the rest of Northern Mexico, and in exchange was paid fifteen million dollars, and our government assumed debts between Mexico and our citizens. Those Mexican citizens within our new territory were to become American citizens under the terms of the treaty. Additionally, we are required to recognize Spanish land grants to the citizens of our new territory.<sup>22</sup> All of this because

of President Polk's war of conquest to gain Texas, California, and New Mexico, which was begun under false pretenses.<sup>23</sup> In December of 1847, Representative Abraham Lincoln of Illinois issued his Spot Resolution, to compel President Polk to show where the Thornton Affair had taken place.<sup>24</sup> Polk claimed that this was upon American soil, but it was actually in a disputed area where the border between the United States and Mexico was not defined.

Now I wish to speak of the human cost of this war. Over a hundred thousand soldiers were raised to fight in this war, and many were undertrained and underequipped. In addition to casualties from battle, many of them died from disease.<sup>25</sup> Ill-training and unpreparedness caused this to be the deadliest war we have ever engaged in. Nearly a quarter of the soldiers we sent to war were killed, or disabled through a combination of battle casualties and disease.<sup>26</sup> Some of our soldiers, mostly state militia volunteers, also left less than favorable impressions on many of our new citizens in the former Mexican territory. By being unruly, and killing and looting in some of the towns we now control, the process of integrating these new populations has become more difficult. An additional factor is the increasing unpopularity of the war as it progressed, with many calling for the war to be ended as quickly as possible.<sup>27</sup>

Following the war, General Taylor was nominated for president as a Whig. Despite the ridicule towards the party, which was widespread during the 1848 election, Taylor won. Due to his war record, especially during the recently concluded Mexican war, he was supported by many from across many different backgrounds, from both North and South, Whig and Democrat. He broke away from many of the ideals of the Whig Party by not supporting internal improvements of the country, or protective trade tariffs, but he also did not support the expansion of slavery into our new territory.<sup>28</sup> When he died after little more than a year in office, Vice President Millard Fillmore assumed the presidency. While also a Whig, he alienated many of the Northern members of the party through his efforts at reconciliation with the South over slavery. He proposed to allow slavery in the former Mexican territory, which was addressed in the Compromise of 1850, which allowed the potential of slavery in the territory of New Mexico, while also admitting the California territory as a free state.<sup>29</sup> This has allowed the proponents of slave-holding to avoid the reintroduction of the Wilmot Proviso to Congress. This bill, originally introduced in 1847, would have completely prevented the expansion of slavery into any new territory gained from Mexico. It failed to pass a Senate vote, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to add it to the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.<sup>30</sup> This compromise has given us four years of stability, as it has satisfied the South by allowing slavery below the Missouri Compromise line in the territories of the Mexican Cession, while elevating California to statehood as a free state to keep the balance. The major issue of contention, especially for my fellow Whigs, is the Fugitive Slave Act that was passed alongside the compromise. This act compels citizens of the Free states who do not support slavery, to aid in the return of fugitive slaves to their masters.<sup>31</sup>

This is why the issue that is before us today is of such importance. If the Kansas-Nebraska Act is passed it will nullify the Missouri Compromise. This cannot be allowed to happen. It threatens the very stability of our American system of governance. By

allowing the decision of slavery to rest upon popular sovereignty of the residents of the territories, the very balance of power between the slave and Free states is threatened. If this act is passed, it will be the cause of great upheaval and strife as the balance of slave and free swings back and forth. The related issue of the Gadsden Purchase, aside from the fact that it increases the amount of territory that has been acquired from Mexico, places yet more territory in the hands of the slave-owning South.<sup>32</sup> This, combined with the proposed popular sovereignty of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, has the potential to prove disastrous for our country.

In addition, there is the issue of the decline of the Whig party, which has been occurring on a nationwide scale, since the defeat of General Winfield Scott as presidential candidate in 1852. This has been particularly prominent in the southern states. My fellows in Louisiana have, in particular, ceased to exist in any meaningful form. Having to support the institution of slavery in the South in order to succeed, they lost much of their support due to the anti-slavery leanings of General Scott. Many of those who supported slavery joined the Democrats, and many others eventually joined the recently founded Know Nothing Party.<sup>33</sup> This election drove a wedge between the northern and southern members of the Whig Party, which has greatly contributed to our decline over the last few years. Those who support slavery have either joined the Democrats, or any of a number of smaller parties, while those who oppose slavery are becoming more hardline about their views, with many joining the Free Soil Party.<sup>34</sup> It has been a failure of the Whigs, the party of compromise, to keep our constituents united. However, with the southern states pushing for the expansion of slavery, the only outcome is that those who oppose slavery will attempt to push the agenda of abolition into the national arena. There have already been talks about forming a new party, the name Republican has been mentioned, which will oppose slavery.<sup>35</sup> This will attract not only the Free Soilers, but also many of my fellow current and former Whigs, especially in the North, who will find this attractive.

If this happens, and that new Republican Party achieves any sort of national success, an irreconcilable wedge will be driven between the forces of slavery and abolition due to increased aggression on the part of the South to expand slavery, and the equally unmovable proponents of abolition pushing forth that agenda. Thus, in the interests of national unity and harmony, I implore this body to vote against the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Gadsden Purchase. We must preserve the Missouri Compromise for the continued welfare and benefit of the entire country. By denying the passage of these acts we can halt the spread of extremism in the political landscape. Better than repudiating the Missouri Compromise, should we not strive for a new compromise that will benefit all?

# Notes

## Blending Gender: The Flapper, Gender Roles & the 1920s "New Woman"

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## Another Face in the Crowd: Commemorating Lynchings

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