national history through local

social evils and the
origin of municipal services
in cincinnati

alan i. marcus

Cincinnatians, beginning in the late 1830s, uttered frequent and bitter complaints about the state of their city. In particular, they claimed to face an unprecedented reign of crime, vice and filth. To deal with these disturbances, city residents engaged in a number of new endeavors. Their effors culminated in the late 1840s and early 1850s with the erection of several new municipal institutions; mid-nineteenth-century Cincinnatians inaugurated a system of municipal services to clean up their city.

These events seem neatly drawn and apparently can be explained in a straight-forward manner. The articulation of concern in Cincinnati suggests the onset of new social conditions, while the formation of municipal service agencies appears to stand as a natural response to and consequence of the new conditions. In fact, the creation of the institutions seems little more than a step on the road to modernization and indicates that the city copied them from other municipalities that had already progressed through that stage of development.

This paper takes a different approach. It argues that the discovery of urban problems in mid-nineteenth-century Cincinnati came not from real social changes, but rather from a new perception of social reality. Furthermore, it maintains that the discovery of mid-nineteenth-century urban problems — and, by extension, the perception of a new social reality — was neither unique to Cincinnati nor to any American locality. Instead, it contends that the perception of a new social reality was a nationwide occurrence, one peculiar to mid-nineteenth-century American civilization and one effecting many spheres

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of American life. It is this new perception that produced the articulation of discontent in American cities and permitted municipal services to be recommended as a suitable remedy.

By 1840, Cincinnatians, as did residents of other American cities, had discovered that their municipality was filthy, and for much of the next decade and a half harped on this condition. Complaining that the city "never was so dirty as at the present," one editor claimed that he "could name fifty streets and alleys whose depths of decaying vegetable and even animal matter sends forth an effluvia which no doubt deters even the scavenger from approaching them." Another journalist identified "alleys and gutters in the most frequently and closely inhabited parts of the city [as] so disgusting and offensive that one has to hold his nostrils in passing," and a third noted that "sink holes and hollows filled with stagnant water are much more common than spots of wholesome grass." He furthermore worried that the hollows, many of which had "been filled up with the scapings of the alley, and the filth of gutters," contributed to "breeding vermin and spreading disease." And a fourth reporter decried the odor emanating from the city markets which, he argued, smelled "so bad as to oblige us to shut our front doors." While these unsanitary conditions led "to the great enjoyment of the hogs," who seemed "to occupy more of the public highways than the citizens themselves," they produced "great annoyance" among the city's "more sensitive inhabitants."[1]

Similarly, Cincinnatians during this period claimed that they lived in a time of extensive social disorder and issued regular and constant complaints to that effect. C. B. Brough, a city court judge and the editor of the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer,* argued in 1847, for instance, that "the city was never so infested with criminals of every possible grade, as at the present time." To Brough and many of his fellow citizens, it seemed as if "one cannot walk the streets, after nine o'clock in the evenings, without meeting at every corner, men who are seeking means and opportunity for the commission of crime, women who are lost to all sense of shame, and boys who are much older in villainy than in years." James Perkins, a former lawyer, preacher and then the self-styled Charitable Intelligence Officer of Cincinnati, concurred. He identified "a very strong band of true paupers in this community, — a circle of them extending through the whole city," and likened this circle to a "high-school of vice and crime." There, children were "learning daily the lessons of iniquity . . . , and teaching them to children of happier birth in the great seminary of the street." It was not unusual, he recounted, "to hear from boys and girls of ten and twelve, and even of six and seven, accounts . . . of every evil practice, from simple drunken revelry down to theft and bloodshed."[2]

To men such as Perkins, then, certain segments of the city population demonstrated through their activities that they lacked the mental discipline and moral management necessary to make Cincinnati a fit

place to live. As a consequence of the apparent disregard by these members of society for the cultivation of manners and morals, the "social evils," which according to contemporaries was but a single condition — an inextricably intertwined maze of crime, street-begging, unsanitary conditions and disease — seemed to proliferate and threatened to overwhelm the municipality. It appeared that the continuance of these conditions menaced the future of the city.

Historians generally attribute the discovery in the late 1830s that many city residents engaged in crime and vice, contributed to the filthy state of the municipality, pleaded for alms on street corners and frequently succumbed to disease to rapid social changes — immigration, urbanization and industrialization — and suggest further that these dramatic changes led urbanites to institute city services on a full-time, regular basis.[3] The causal linkage between rapid social change, the emergence of constant concern about social disorder and the creation of municipal service institutions may not be as neat as it first appears, however, for historians often overlook the fact that the conditions that fomented concern in the mid-nineteenth-century were not new phenomena, but always had been part and parcel of American urban life. Indeed, the scholarship of Carl Bridenbaugh, Richard C. Wade and others has shown that crime, unsanitary conditions, street-begging and disease existed in American cities from their beginnings.[4] And early nineteenth-century city dwellers through their actions and statements themselves recognized many of these conditions. The creation of libraries, lyceums, mechanic's institutes and other voluntary organizations — the self-cultivation campaign of the 1820s — was but an acknowledgment of the existence of these conditions, while early nineteenth-century municipal governments likewise responded to them, though only during cataclysms, such as epidemics, fires, riots or cold winters.[5]

Nor does the size of cities or the pressure of population help account for the establishment of municipal service agencies. In terms of sheer numbers, no American city in 1850 was as heavily populated as New York or Philadelphia had been twenty years earlier. Few mid-nineteenth-century cities may have been as compact as the New York or Philadelphia of 1830, moreover, for mid-century cities not only increased in population but also grew spatially; they annexed territory and therefore may actually have become less densely settled.[6] Despite evidence which suggests that early nineteenth-century New York and Philadelphia were more populous than all and more crowded than many of their mid-nineteenth-century counterparts, early nineteenth-century American cities, both those on the east coast and elsewhere, did not institute a program of municipal services but acted only during emergencies. It remained until the 1840s and early 1850s for American municipalities to offer city services on a full-time, regular basis, and during this later period, cities as diverse in socio-economic structure, demography, age, history or location as Philadelphia,

Rochester, Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and New Orleans all created municipal service institutions remarkably similar in both form and function.

The tendency in light of the wide geographical distribution of these agencies and the close proximity in the time of their creation is to assume that places like Cincinnati, far inland and on the western frontier, "learned" of their necessity through the experience and example of east coast cities, particularly New York, or from European precedents. This approach makes the historical issue the transmission of knowledge, which in this instance often carries an implication of the inevitability of the occurrence — as a step toward modernity — and relegates the debates in Cincinnati to the position of elucidating that theme. Several difficulties arise from this formulation, however, not the least of which is that it confuses the focus while reversing the significance of the phenomenon under investigation. Indeed, the fact that virtually every major American city undertook similar municipal initiatives at about the same time in the mid-nineteenth century points not to the event itself — the establishment of municipal service agencies — but to the problem for which the creation of these agencies was a suitable solution and suggests that the problem was not of local circumstance but fundamental to American civilization. The formulation of municipal service institutions in city after city did not take place because New York (or the east coast or Europe) recognized its necessity — if New York (or the east coast or Europe) was indeed first — but because that type of innovation apparently solved a problem that seemed to effect American cities, a problem articulated by the residents of those cities.

In short, then, the real historical issues are two, neither of which comfortably fits the transmission of knowledge question as generally posed. The first is the problem of American civilization in the mid-nineteenth century, a problem which the establishment of municipal service institutions was to solve and a problem for which the debates in Cincinnati as an American city were symptomatic. The second is the place of New York (or the east coast or Europe) in the mid-nineteenth-century American imagination, an issue studied but not addressed in the case of New York by Robert G. Albion and John Hope Franklin.[7] And while this paper seeks to investigate the former, it leaves other scholars to consider the latter.

Mid-nineteenth-century city residents asserted that the disordered state of society was a recent occurrence and hearalded a new and perilous era of urban living. But what separated the period after the late 1830s from the earlier era, what produced the regular outpouring of concern in city after city that resulted in institutional innovation, was not the recognition that crime, vice, street-begging, disease and unsanitary conditions existed, but that their existence was seen in a new way; it posed a threat of unprecendented magnitude. And the latter notion stemmed from the identification of a new problem, the

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presence in America of entire groups of people deviating from what shortly before 1840 had come to be seen as American—not just in the European sense civilized—behavior, a problem exposed by the fundamentally different manner that mid-nineteenth-century Americans classified people.

This new division, classification, and organization of people held profound implications for American society. In the early nineteenth century, individuals served as the basic unit of American civilization and Americans had focused on the behavior of single units or individuals when forming their institutions. Beginning in the late 1830s, however, groups or aggregates of individuals replaced the individual and this reconceptualization concentrated attention on behavioral norms, which expressed the essence of what made the group, in fact, a group. In the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of behavioral norms was central, indeed, for each norm, when used as a measurement of what seemed to constitute a "real" group of people, both transformed long-standing conditions or situations within the recently identified group into "problems" and caused new conditions or situations to be viewed as "problems," each of which demanded resolution.

Such was the case in Cincinnati. The notion that American civilization was characterized by a distinctly American behavioral type made the discovery of social deviants—those who engaged in the social evils—in Cincinnati, or any other city for that matter, extremely disconcerting. On one level, the discovery both of the existence and persistence of the social evils disturbed those engaged in the quest for a more precise definition of the American civilization, for the discovery as well as the response to that discovery immediately called into question what it meant to be an American. But the realization that the social evils existed also possessed another, equally important implication. While it seemed that the inhabitants of the city should necessarily behave in a similar fashion—they must all act like Americans—the discovery of the social evils suggested that the city's citizens acted in a heterogeneous manner, thus creating a discordant situation between what seemed to be and what ought to have been. This tension elicited calls both to correct the behavior of members of the non-American groups—an approach based on the assumption that each urbanite's behavior was not innate or fixed but might be changed to permit reclassification—and to regulate the social interactions between groups, processes that appeared never-ending, for although members of deviant groups might be converted into Americans, the divisions themselves seemed permanent.

In effect, then, the changed way that mid-nineteenth-century Americans classified people transformed the city and led to the articulation of the concept of the public interest. While in the early nineteenth century, the city was a collection of individuals who gathered simply to pursue the civilizing endeavors of commerce and manufacturing, it had become by 1840 a place in which groups, each of which

was composed of members defined only by their behavior, interacted. In this framework, the discovery that vast segments of the urban population failed to display behavior appropriate for America created a critical situation, for not only did non-Americans seem innocent of the ways to insure their health and well-being but their actions also seemed to hold the potential to wreak havoc throughout the city; they appeared to menace the public interest. While in the early nineteenth century each city resident seemed a free agent, capable of and responsible for maintaining civilized behavior and therefore of achieving health and success — a notion that made it necessary for city governments to establish mechanisms to cater only to catastrophes[8] — the shift from individual to group about 1840 and the attendant assumption of an American behavioral norm eliminated the idea of individual self-sufficiency. It implied not only that the campaign of the 1820s and '30s to expand the opportunity for individuals to develop civilized habits of character — the self-culture campaign — had been ineffective, but that it also had been misdirected and inappropriately structured. The new classification of people in the late 1830s placed a premium on the interactions among groups, created the idea of the public interest, and made it possible to see municipal government as one of the agents responsible for regulating the interactions of groups and therefore for maintaining or protecting the public interest. Indeed, residents of cities now seemed constantly threatened, almost in the midst of a perpetual crisis, for as part of the social unit known as a city, each appeared to depend at least in part upon others within the municipality for his well-being.

The search in the mid-nineteenth century for a full and precise definition of the distinctly American behavior led visitors to the United States, such as Harriet Martineau, Michel Chevalier, Frederick Von Raumer and the phrenologist George Combe, as well as Americans, such as Nathaniel P. Willis, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Catherine Sedgwick and Peter Pailey, to devote a great deal of time and effort to the examination of the character of American civilization.[9] Although the quest for this definition was marked by much consternation and soul-searching and while some investigators focused on institutions — such as lyceums which in the mid-nineteenth century, Carl Bode and the reality of the situation notwithstanding, were referred to as "curiously American inventions" that acted as "powerful social ligaments, binding together the vast body of people"[10] — as producers of the American civilization and, therefore, of the certain mode of behavior peculiar to that civilization, no complete agreement on the characteristics constituting that behavior emerged. Repeatedly during the mid-nineteenth century they asked such questions as what is an American, or what do specific acts or lack of action say about Americans, and subjected the various answers to endless re-examination.[11] But while contemporaries found it hard to agree on the parameters of the American behavior and, as a consequence, what an American

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was, it seemed simple for them to pin down what an American was not. Blacks, Mormons, the poor, immigrants and the like seemed to comprise real and distinctive behavioral classifications, the individuals that made up each group typified by certain habits marking its members, whether native-born citizens of the United States or not, as non-Americans.

With the notion of the existence of an American norm defined in behavioral terms, the realization that entire groups lived in America and deviated from that norm struck with particular force and emerged as the crucial issue in mid-nineteenth-century America. This was not to suggest, however, that each non-American group should be dealt with in the same manner. Many contended, for example, that experience had proven that Indians, Blacks and certain religious groups were incapable of developing the behavioral traits necessary to become Americans, and that they should be excluded from participation in American society or physically removed from the society itself. From that contention came the renewed drive for African colonization, Indian removal and the like.[12]

Exclusion or removal hardly seemed appropriate for two other large groups of non-Americans, the immigrants and the poor. To be sure, the poor taken as an aggregate, and immigrants taken as an aggregate, apparently constituted permanent behavioral classifications, an idea reflected in the new currency given St. Matthew's declaration "the poor we shall always have with us." Yet individuals who comprised these two groups seemed capable of being transformed into Americans, for members of both appeared neither genetically deficient nor inherently evil. Their deficiencies stemmed instead from a lack of training or knowledge of how to live in a way appropriate for America. And while the behavior of these particular groups well may have been suitable for other civilizations and while members of these groups often held American citizenship with all the rights and privileges of that station, they did not possess the American behavior, the only behavior suitable for the United States, and thus were incapable of protecting their health or insuring their well-being in America. Their indiscreet actions not only damaged themselves, moreover, but also reflected badly on those who claimed the American behavior as well as threatened the lives and livelihoods of others in the United States. It was in that context that Cincinnatians and other Americans discovered the new problem of the social evils.

Contemporary social critics in Cincinnati did not confine themselves to identifying and complaining about social disorder, however, but also attempted to explain why society was disordered; they sought the origin of the social evils as well as reasons for the persistence of that amalgam of conditions. Explanations featured a broad range of factors and included migration from farms, intemperance, decline in patriarchal influence, failure of mothers to breast feed their babies,

absence from sabbath services and immigration.[13] Despite the apparent diversity of explanations, though, all were similar in that they placed the blame for the existence of the social evils on specific groups of individuals, each member of which suffered from a deficient or inappropriate preparation for life in mid-nineteenth-century America. These explanations were based upon the notion that the past experiences of each group's members were similar, and that these common experiences held consequences for the manner in which its members behaved, causing them to act in deviance from the American norm. Their unfamiliarity with American behavior made it inevitable that they would engage in the social evils, that they would violate the law, beg on street corners, live in and cause unsanitary conditions and fall prey to disease. Their non-Americanness and their non-Americanness alone produced what was seen as a solitary problem, manifested by a pattern of activity that always seemed to include the same observable phenomena. And as such, crime, disease, pauperism and unsanitary conditions did not exist as separate or separable entities or problems, but only as undifferentiated and undifferentiable parts of a single problem, the problem of the social evils. C. W. Starbuck, publisher of the *Cincinnati Daily Times,* made this point neatly when he attributed "many, if not all, the social evils which afflict society" to the failure of mothers to fulfill their "duty in the family circle." Specifically, Starbuck railed against those mothers who ignored their child-rearing responsibilities. "The neglect," he wrote, of

> the moral education of youth by the female parent . . . has originated the moral pestilence which now infects our atmosphere; the profanation of the Sabbath day; the neglect of divine worship; the excessive indulgence of the sensual appetites, not only drunkenness, but of lust and impunity; and in a word, the notorious, universal, and admitted profligacy and corruption, which stalks unrebuked throughout the land.[14]

Although contemporary investigations of the social evils in Cincinnati suggested that the immigrants and the poor chose through their ignorance to live in deplorable conditions, many city residents considered it the duty of those who exemplified the American behavior to change this disastrous situation. Indeed, to permit entire classifications of people to waste their lives did not speak well of Americans. Frequently in these years, Americans asked what does it say about Americans, if they assist, through processes such as tenantage, or condone, by ignoring the situation, the ruination of people in their midst who suffered either from inappropriate or improper training, for these questions struck at the validity of America as a distinct civilization. What type of people are we, worried one Cincinnatian, when we allow "foreign emigrants, lately arrived in the country, unaccustomed to our climate, or our mode of living, to crowd themselves into rooms already occupied, . . . [and when we permit] the owners of the

premises or their agents [to] disregard the loathsome condition, as well as the health and comfort of the neighborhood?"[15]

Reformation of members of these groups seemed imperative not only as a demonstration of American benevolence, however, but also because of their impact on American society. Indeed, these non-American groups appeared likely to spew their noxious habits throughout the city, and as improper and unhealthy influences on the innocent, the reformed and the reforming, these groups threatened the fabric of society. E. D. Mansfield, a member of Daniel Drake's circle, sounded the call to arms. We must act now to deal with this problem, he asserted, for "if we do not this class of population visit back, as they daily do, upon society all its hardships, with ten-fold interest."[16]

Cincinnatians responded quickly to the threat portended by the discovery of the social evils and beginning about 1840 embarked upon a campaign to rid the city of this ill. Their initial efforts took the form of benevolent activity and these new associations differed from ostensibly similar early nineteenth-century institutions in several ways.[17] Each new organization was comprised of a distinct segment of the city's citizens — whether so defined by religion, occupation, sex or place of origin — and each singled out a specific group of people on which to concentrate its activities, classifying each of these apparently homogeneous groups according to the particular causes responsible for its degraded condition, showing the group's members the errors of their ways, and trying to transform them into Americans by furnishing them with characteristically American experiences. This campaign not only seemed likely to produce Americans, but it also served to alert other citizens to the dangers in their midst and, through the example of good works, helped to define this type of organized benevolence as a distinctly American characteristic.

The New England Society of Cincinnati provided a good case in point. Formed in 1845 by descendants of the early settlers of New England, the society proposed "to extend charity to the needy of New England birth or descent, their widows and orphans" and "to promote virtue" among the members of this group. As a consequence, the organization established a fund and created visiting committees to journey to the dwellings of the poor of New England descent, provide these degraded beings with monies to ease their plight and alert them to their mistakes.

Nor was that all the society did. It also sought to propagate throughout the city "New England principles and character." This was essential, members complained, because the city had become a social "amalgam resulting from the fusion of different elements," and "the gold of New England" was needed to give "lustre as well as solidity to the mass." To provide those Cincinnatians with the background they lacked, the society not only established a library of histories of the colonial period, but also instituted several series of public lectures on "the Pilgrim Annals," each of which aimed to "win the ear and com-

mand the attention of the hundreds and thousands of our city" igno-
rant of the distinctly American heritage.[18]

Although the benevolent effort took many forms, it proved no
match for the social evils. And while it offered members of societies
some indication of success in the war, many realized even as they par-
ticipated in the work that additional weapons were needed.[19] As a con-
sequence, many proved steadfast in their benevolent efforts but at the
same time looked to city government for assistance in their task.

City government as then constituted could do little to advance the
cause, however, for it had been neither established to bear on the
problem of the social evils nor equipped to tackle it. The situation in
Cincinnati was typical of that throughout the United States, more-
over, because early nineteenth-century municipal governments all
were remarkably similar; they were conceived from the assumption
that the individual functioned as the fundamental unit of civilization
and its corollary, that health and success were the province and nor-
mally within the reach of each person. As a consequence, they were
endowed with similar authority. Indeed, state legislatures during the
first forty years of the nineteenth century provided city governments
with only those powers necessary to restore the opportunity for citizens
to achieve these twin goals. The authority delegated to municipal gov-
ernments in their charters included the creation of a number of ad
hoc, emergency-oriented institutions, such as health boards, volunteer
fire companies, poor law wardens and private riot control forces,
which, although they often stood ready year-round like the militia,
operated only during those extraordinary periods when the security of
the city and, hence, the ability of residents to look after their well-
being and health, appeared at stake; these institutions sought not to
deliver social services but rather only to remove those impediments
that hampered that individual quest.[20] To sum up the case, then, the
discovery of the existence and persistence of the social evils was a
manifestation of the transformation of the nature of the city—the shift
from individual to group—and this transformation elicited calls for a
new role for city government. These calls suggested that municipal
government should focus not on the restoration of individual opportu-
nity for civilization—this seemed no longer sufficient or appropriate—
but instead on regulation, protection and the possibility of conversion
of the members of the non-American groups. And in the decades after
1840, Cincinnatians worked, as did citizens of other cities, to change
the direction of city government so as to make it conform to their new
reality.

The realization that city government should take part in the war
against the social evils yielded two broad kinds of legislative enact-
ments. Though similar at first glance to our responses to our problems
of crime, disease and the like, these mid-nineteenth-century initiatives
should not be confused with later approaches, however, because they
were undertaken only to provide a solution to the solitary mid- nine-

teenth-century problem of the social evils and were tailored for that purpose. The first of these new initiatives aimed specifically at non-Americans and sought to prohibit the actions of this group deemed not in the public interest. In this category, council included a ban on "rioting or reveling, drunkenness, lewd or disorderly conduct," underage drinking, and gaming in coffee houses, taverns and restaurants, made it illegal to sell "any indecent, immodest, and lascivious books, pamphlets, papers or pictures" within the city limits, and forbade all "sporting, rioting, quarrelling, hunting, fishing, shooting, trading, bartering, or selling or buying any goods, wares or merchandize (sic) or [working] at any common labor" on the sabbath.[21] In essence, these laws outlawed and provided penalties for engaging in those non-American activities that apparently threatened the health and well-being of the city's population. By their very nature, then, these ordinances were restricted to regulating interactions among city residents. Due to the essential unity of the social evils, however, each piece of this type of legislation not only seemed to deal with the non-American actions expressly prohibited in the statute, but also to mitigate against non-American behavior generally. To contemporaries, it appeared as if regulation of a specific act would have a beneficial impact on each non-American — it would begin to show him the American behavior — and produce a modification in his other actions. Put more simply, city government operated under the assumption that laws banning gaming would, for example, result in an improvement in the city's sanitary condition and that sabbatarian legislation would diminish street begging.

Though forceful in their tone, these prohibitions could not accomplish their goal, for city council lacked the authority as well as the mechanisms necessary to enforce them on a full-time basis. As a consequence, Cincinnatians turned their attention to the state legislature and sought permission both to expand the purview of council and to institute new taxes to finance the regular enforcement of the city's ordinances. The desire to get the state to authorize the redirection of municipal government not only sparked an intense lobbying campaign among councilmen to sway the legislature,[22] but also it led city residents to convene a citywide convention in the mid-1840s to draft a new municipal charter. The charter convention proved the more dramatic of the two initiatives, moreover, for at its sessions citizens established a formal agenda for municipal action. These men investigated the feasibility of and called for a general tax to finance street cleaning; setting up full-time, paid police and fire fighting forces; erecting a house of reformation; improving street-lighting as a means of detering criminal activity; and reducing the growing number of paupers in Cincinnati. Provisions for implementing each of these services were included in the charter, and the convention forwarded the document to the legislature.[23]

Despite its broad support in Cincinnati, the citizens' charter failed to win approval in Columbus. The legislature did not prove intractable, however, and granted city government new powers to fight the social evils, though it moved more slowly than Cincinnatians might have wished. This new authority came in the form of charter amendments passed around 1850 and the general law of 1852, which replaced individual city charters and established a single legislative code to govern the affairs of all Ohio municipalities.

One of the new charter amendments, later reaffirmed in the general law, allowed the city to levy taxes to pay for the regular enforcement of its ordinances. Council quickly accepted the terms of this legislation, passed an enabling ordinance, and formed the city's first full-time police force. Unlike the city watchmen of the earlier period who maintained their posts near the city's markets and could hold other jobs while off-duty, members of the newly created police force were to serve as full-time municipal employees and to insure on a regular basis that the citizenry obeyed all city ordinances. The force was headed by a chief of police and his six lieutenants, who set up regulations for the behavior of the force's members and established a duty roster. To maintain coverage of the entire municipality, moreover, the chief divided the city into beats and assigned pairs of officers to walk those areas both day and night.[24]

In light of the authority provided the municipality through the charter amendments and in the new general law, city government undertook a second type of legislative approach to the problem of the social evils. These ordinances sought not to prohibit non-American activities per se, but to repair damages inflicted on the city by the publicly visible actions of deviants. And while these laws aimed to protect the public interest, they also seemed to come to bear on the problem of non-American behavior. By repairing the city, which often included the temporary removal of deviants from society at large, these new mechanisms not only guarded the health and well-being of Americans and non-Americans, but also created an environment encouraging the regular and speedy transformation of deviants, an environment that would permit benevolent organizations to do their work.

This approach led to the creation of several new municipal institutions, one of which was the house of refuge. Established for boys under 16 years of age and girls under 14, the Cincinnati house stood as "nothing more or less than a School of Reform" in which "the system of discipline, classification, and instruction" was made "as perfect as possible." Not only did the inmates of this institution, through "solitude and the reforming influences of a quiet and orderly life," have their "hearts exercised and corrected," but they also received training in a trade. Vocational preparation appeared as an essential facet of the refuge experience, contemporaries agreed, for by bringing regimen to the lives of unfortunate adolescents, it prevented them upon their readmission to society from reverting to old habits.[25]

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Cincinnati also created a poorhouse farm that, though it aimed at a different class of non-Americans, performed functions similar to those of the house of refuge. Operated by a popularly elected board of directors who oversaw the farm's finances and who appointed a super-intendent and matron to run its daily affairs, the poorhouse was located six miles north of the city and catered to the adult poor, especially those found begging on street corners. Within its portals the poor lived in a strictly regimented environment, engaged in the be-calming routinization of agriculture, learned the errors of their ways, and, from this experience and in the serene atmosphere of the coun-tryside, reflected on their past indiscretions. Though all inhabitants were to work to support the farm, they were required only "to perform such reasonable labor as may be suited to their ages and bodily strength."[26]

Although a significant factor in the battle against the social evils, the poorhouse remained only part of the municipal effort. Under the terms of the general law of 1852, the poorhouse directors were retitled the Board of the City Infirmary and given authority to establish an outdoor relief force. Headed by a clerk, who compiled statistical in-formation and managed the board's finances, the outdoor relief force of the city infirmary consisted of an overseer to the poor and a grocer for each of the city's sixteen wards, and of two physicians and two apothecaries for each of the city's six poor relief districts. Directed to canvass the entire city, overseers sought to uncover and to classify all cases of poverty, and to determine what type of relief — institutionali-zation or outdoor assistance — should be provided. Overseers then reported their conclusions to the clerk who, if institutionalization was deemed inadvisable, ordered either the district physicians or ward grocers to relieve the suffering. Apothecaries filled whatever prescrip-tions physicians suggested.[27]

Cincinnati was also permitted according to the general law of 1852 to establish and finance a board of city improvements and this board stood as the city's sole agency in charge of restoring order to the municipality's physical environment. It was empowered to distribute building permits, to recommend the awarding of contracts for storm sewer construction and for street paving, cleaning and repairs, and to insure that private contractors complied with their contracts. To be sure, various committees of council previously had authorized some of these tasks. They did so not as a matter of course, however, but only when the immediacy of the situation dictated. In the case of street cleaning, for instance, this ad hoc approach limited the municipality's responsiblity to those periods in which an epidemic was anticipated or actually had stricken the city. By 1840, though, the existence and pro-liferation of non-American behavior had seemed a regular feature of urban life. Council responded to this "fact" by establishing the board of city improvements, which operated on a permanent, year-round basis and which was placed in position both to regulate and to coor-

dinate those different, but then essential and related functions of municipal government.[28]

Even the city's creation in 1853 of a municipal fire force appeared to stem from the existence of the social evils, though not as a solution to the problem but as a manifestation of that discovery. Indeed, in the 1840s, Cincinnatians expressed alarm at what they claimed was a rapid increase in the number of fires in the city and proceeded to explain this increase in several ways. They blamed the increase on the unconscious acts or carelessness of the immigrants and the poor, on the deliberate actions of youths and vagabonds — some firemen were included in this category — and on the present method of fighting fires.[29]

Proponents of the last proposition agreed that reliance on volunteer fire companies contributed to the disastrous situation. Competition among volunteer companies did not insure the prompt quenching of fires, they argued, but instead led some companies to set fires in hope of reaching the scene first and picking up the reward offered by grateful property owners or insurance companies. Council initiated an investigation into the matter, and soon after the legislature provided the authority, established Cincinnati's first full-time, paid fire fighting force, a force complete with a chief engineer, assistant engineer, lieutenants, and hook and ladder companies.

These institutions as well as the forementioned legislative enactments constituted the limits of the mid-nineteenth-century municipal campaign against the social evils. Contrary to our expectations, however, neither city government nor residents of Cincinnati apparently felt confined or restricted by the relatively few institutions or ill-equipped to wage the fight. Instead, the municipality acted as if it needed no other powers; it seemed to possess a full and complete arsenal with which to battle the menace. The confidence with which city government and its citizens greeted the new authority arose not from ignorance or naivete, moreover, but from their analysis of the problem they confronted. They defined their problem in behavioral terms and designed measures to come to grips with non-American behavior, which always seemed to manifest itself in a pattern of activities that included disease, vice, unsanitary conditions, street begging and crime.

The new city government needed, in essence, only to deal effectively with the visible consequences of deviant behavior and to regulate full-time the nefarious habits of its practitioners. This led municipalities to pass legislation prohibiting certain actions, to hire men to enforce the ordinances, and to establish institutions to repair the city from the effects of non-American behavior, not to solve the individual problems of disease, street begging, vice, crime and unsanitary conditions. Additional institutions seemed superfluous, for the essential unity and singularity of the problem of the social evils made it appear susceptible to a simple yet comprehensive solution. Indeed, the form

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of municipal governance adopted during the 1840s and early 1850s remained intact until the late 1850s when the social evils was replaced by new issues, the articulation of which set off a new round of institutional innovation.

notes

1. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, July 15, 1844, 2 and August 26, 1845, 2, *Daily Cincinnati Commercial*, May 5, 1846, 2, and *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, May 25, 1848, 2.

2. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, September 2, 1847, 2 and William H. Channing, ed., *The Memoir and Writing of James Handasyd Perkins* (Cincinnati, 1851), 2 vols., I, 116-117.

3. See, for example, James F. Richardson, *Urban Police in the United States* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1974), 20-22; Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years. The United States in 1832, 1849 and 1866* (Chicago, 1962), passim; John Duffy, *A History of Public Health in New York City 1625-1866* (New York, 1968), especially pp. 271-279; Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Evolution of Urban Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1975), 64-89, and Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory. Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860* (New York, 1973), 209ff.

4. On this point, see both Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness. The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (New York, 1938: New York, 1971), 55-93, 206-248, and 364-407 and Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, Ma., 1959), 72-100 and 287-303.

5. For the self-cultivation campaign in general, see Bruce Sinclair, *Philadelphia's Philosopher Mechanics, A History of the Franklin Institute, 1824-1865* (Baltimore, 1974), 28-134; Raymond A. Mohl, *Poverty in New York, 1783-1825* (New York, 1971), 241-258; and Henry D. Shapiro and Zane L. Miller, eds., *Physician to the West: Selected Writings of Daniel Drake on Science and Society* (Lexington, Ky., 1970), especially xi-xxxiv. For some examples of the emergency-orientation of early nineteenth-century city governments, see, for example, John Duffy, "The Impact of Asiatic Cholera on Pittsburgh, Wheeling, and Charleston," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 47 (1964), 203 and 210; James F. Richardson, *The New York Police. Colonial Times to 1901* (New York, 1970), 18-22 and 27-34; Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington. A History of the Capital, 1800-1950* (Princeton, N.J., 1962), 94-95; and Blake McKelvey, *Rochester, the Water-Power City 1812-1854* (Cambridge, Ma., 1945), 218.

6. For the population of early and mid-nineteenth-century cities, see Blake McKelvey, *American Urbanization: A Comparative History* (Glenview, Ill., 1973), 37. New York and Philadelphia were more populous in 1850 than in 1830. For the spatial expansion of cities, see David R. Goldfield and Blaine A. Brownell, *Urban America: From Downtown to No Town* (Boston, 1979), 142-146.

7. Robert G. Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1815-1860* (New York, 1939) and John Hope Franklin, *The Southern Odyssey* (Baton Rouge, 1967).

8. For a more complete discussion of the individual in the early nineteenth century and the implications of that notion for American society generally, see Alan I. Marcus, "In Sickness and In Health: The Marriage of the Municipal Corporation to the Public Interest and the Problem of Public Health, 1820-1870. The Case of Cincinnati" (University of Cincinnati, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1979), Chapters 1 and 2.

9. See, for example, Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, two vols. (1837; N.Y., 1962); Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States* (Boston, 1839); George Combe, *Notes on the United States of North America During a Phrenological Visit*, Vol. III (Edinburgh, 1841); and Frederick Von Raumer, *America and the American People*, William Turner, trans. (New York, 1846). Also see Nathaniel P. Willis, *Hurry-Graphs; or Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society, Taken from Life*, 2nd edition (N.Y., 1851), 300 and 322; Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," Phi Beta Kappa Address, delivered in 1837 at Harvard University, reprinted in William H. Gilman, ed., *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York, 1965), 223-240; C. M. Sedgwick, *Morals of Manners* (New York, 1846); and Peter Pailey, *Manners and Morals of the Principal Nations of the Globe* (Boston, 1845), 20-23. Also of use is Stow Persons, *The Decline of American Gentility* (New York, 1973), 1-71.

10. *Cincinnati Daily Times*, November 21, 1856, 2. For lyceums in early nineteenth-century America, see Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum. Town Meeting of the Mind* (1956; Carbondale, Ill., 1968), 7-130.

11. Fred Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle. Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom, 1815-1860* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967), particularly 1-54, and R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam. Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1955), acknowledge that these were central questions to nineteenth century Americans. Both authors argue, however, that these questions emerged in the 1820s.

12. See, for example, Phillip J. Staudenhaus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1815-1865* (New York, 1961), passim; Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi* (Norman, Ok., 1962), 47ff; and Robert F. Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana, Ill., 1965), 306-341.

13. See, for example, *Daily Cincinnati Chronicle*, February 3, 1846, 2; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, December 20, 1851, 2 and April 14, 1852, 2; *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, July 12, 1853, 2; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, February 15, 1855, 2; and John L. Vattier, M.D., "Health of the City," *Journal of Health*, published by the members of the Cincinnati Dispensary and Vaccine Institution, 1 (1845), 201.

14. Starbuck's comments were reprinted in the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, March 4, 1844, 2 and March 7, 1844, 2.

15. *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, July 4, 1849, 2.

16. *Daily Cincinnati Chronicle*, November 17, 1846, 2.

17. For works that make little or no distinction between the organizations created in the early nineteenth century and those formed later, see, for example, Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis, 1944); Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44 (1957), 423-444; and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York, 1978), 145-192 and passim.

18. Ohio, *An Act to Incorporate the New England Society of Cincinnati, Statutes* (1845) 43: 187 and *Second Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the New England Society of Cincinnati, January 5, 1847* (Cincinnati, 1847), 10-12. For other organizations of a similar slant in Cincinnati, see, for instance, Horace Bushnell, *Fifth Annual Report to the Ladies' City Missionary Association* (Cincinnati, 1847), 4-18; Ohio, *An Act to Incorporate the Hebrew Beneficent Society of Cincinnati, Statutes* (1838) 36: 163-164; Ohio, *An Act to Incorporate the "Emigrants' Friend Society of Cincinnati," Statutes* (1838) 36: 208-209; and Ohio, *An Act to Incorporate the Stone Masons' Benevolent Society of Cincinnati, Statutes* (1844) 42: 39.

19. *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, September 28, 1848, 2.

20. Compare, for example, Ohio, *An Act to Incorporate and Establish the City of Cincinnati, and For Revising and Repealing All Laws and Parts of Laws, Heretofore Enacted On that Subject, Statutes* (1827) 25: 40-56; Maryland, *An Act to Erect Baltimore-Town, in Baltimore County, Into a City, and to Incorporate the Inhabitants Thereof, Laws of Maryland* (1786-1800), 361-367; Massachusetts, *An Act Establishing the City of Boston, Statutes* (1822) 188: 734-753; Pennsylvania, *An Act to Incorporate the City of Pittsburg, Statutes* (1815-1816), 160-170; Kentucky, *An Act to Incorporate the City of Louisville, Statutes* (1828), 208-224; Rhode Island, *An Act to Incorporate the City of Providence, Statutes* (October, 1831), 21-30; New York, *An Act to Incorporate the City of Rochester, Passed April 25, 1834, Statutes* (1834) 57: 281-342; and New Jersey, *An Act to Incorporate the City of Newark, Statutes* (1835-1836), 185-203. For a fuller analysis, see Alan I. Marcus, "The Strange Career of Municipal Health Initiatives: Cincinnati and City Government in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Urban History*, 7 (1980), 3-29. For other interpretations of early nineteenth-century city governments, each of which suggests that they delivered social services, see Wade, *The Urban Frontier*, passim; Jon C. Teaford, *The Municipal Revolution in America. Origins of Modern Urban Goverment, 1650-1825* (Chicago, 1975), 47-116; and Zane L. Miller, "Scarcity, Abundance, and American Urban History," *Journal of Urban History*, 4 (1978), 136-140.

21. *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, February 24, 1843, October 23, 1843, October 4, 1846, and February 24, 1847.

22. For details of the lobbying effort, see *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, December 7, 1844, 2 and *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, December 15, 1844.

23. *Daily Cincinnati Chronicle*, June 10, 1846, 2, June 17, 1846, 2, June 24, 1846, 2, and June 30, 1846, 2.

24. *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, April 22, 1850. Many municipalities tampered with their law enforcement mechanisms and established full-time police forces in the 1840s and 1850s. See, for example, Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885* (Cambridge, Ma., 1967), 39-102; Richardson, *The New York Police*, 39-82; Jacob Judd, "Policing the City of Brooklyn in the 1840s and 1850s," *Journal of Long Island History*, 6 (1966), 13-22; Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, The History of a City* (Madison, 1948), 231-233; and Russell F. Weigley, "'A Peaceful City': Public Order in Philadelphia from Consolidation through the Civil War," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia. A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia, 1973), 155-161.

25. *Cincinnati Daily Nonpareil*, June 18, 1850, 2; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, July 31, 1850, 2, August 17, 1850, 2, and December 2, 1850, 2; *Daily Cincinnati Chronicle*, August 12, 1846, 2; and *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, August 20, 1851, 2.

26. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, May 1, 1851, 2 and *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, November 12, 1851, 2. For the creation of other city-controlled asylums in the mid-nineteenth century, see Marie George Windell, "Reform in the Roaring Forties and Fifties,"

Missouri Historical Review, 39 (1944-1945), 293-294; McKelvey, *Rochester*, 337-339; and David R. Goldfield, *Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism. Virginia, 1847-1861* (Baton Rouge, 1977), 145-147.

27. Ohio, *An Act to Provide for the Organization of Cities and Incorporated Villages*, *Statutes* (1852) 50: 223-259; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, December 15, 1852, 1 and 2; and *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, March 10, 1853.

28. *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, April 8, 1853, 2 and Ohio, *An Act to Amend the Act Entitled "An Act to Provide for the Organization of Cities and Incorporated Villages," Statutes* (1853) 51: 360-374.

29. *Daily Cincinnati Chronicle*, July 9, 1846, 2 and July 11, 1846, 2; *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, July 8, 1846, July 10, 1846.

30. J. H. Walker, William P. Stratton, J. W. Piatt, Charles F. Wilstach, and D. T. Hoke, Special Committee of Council, *Report of the Re-Organization of the Fire Department* (Cincinnati, 1853), passim; and *Minute Books of the City Council of the City of Cincinnati*, March 16, 1853. The committee report includes a concise history of the problems attributed to volunteer companies. For similar complaints in other cities and for the creation of full-time, paid city fire fighting forces, see Arlen Dykstra, "Rowdyism and Rivalism in the St. Louis Fire Department, 1850-1857," *Missouri Historical Review*, 69 (1974-1975), 48-64; Jacob Judd, "Brooklyn's Volunteer Fire Department," *Journal of Long Island History*, 6 (1966), 29-34; McKelvey, *Rochester*, 251; Goldfield, *Urban Growth*, 147-148; Green, *Washington*, I, 159-160 and 256; and Bruce Laurie, "Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark: The 1840s," in Davis and Haller, eds., *The People of Philadelphia*, 71-88.