



University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
**Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange**

---

Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

---

5-2011

## “Tentative Relations: Secession and War in the Central Ohio River Valley, 1859-1862”

Timothy Max Jenness  
tjenness@utk.edu

---

### Recommended Citation

Jenness, Timothy Max, ““Tentative Relations: Secession and War in the Central Ohio River Valley, 1859-1862.” ” PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2011.  
[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss/983](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/983)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Timothy Max Jenness entitled "'Tentative Relations: Secession and War in the Central Ohio River Valley, 1859-1862.'" I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

Stephen V. Ash, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Daniel Feller, G. Kurt Piehler, Dawn Coleman

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

---

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Timothy Max Jenness entitled "Tentative Relations: Secession and War in the Central Ohio River Valley, 1859-1862." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

Stephen V. Ash, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation  
and recommend its acceptance:

Daniel Feller

G. Kurt Piehler

Dawn Coleman

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges  
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Tentative Relations:  
Secession and War in the Central Ohio River Valley, 1859-1862**

A Dissertation Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Timothy Max Jenness  
May 2011

Copyright © 2011 by Timothy Max Jenness  
All rights reserved.

## **Dedication**

To Emily

## Acknowledgements

I have collected a great many debts while working on this dissertation. While the limitations of space preclude me from mentioning everybody by name, there are some who deserve special recognition. I would like to thank Stephen Ash for his guidance throughout the many years that it took to reach this point. His unwillingness to accept less than my very best and his confidence in my ability to rise to the occasion have made this dissertation much better than it would have otherwise been. I would also like to thank Daniel Feller, G. Kurt Piehler, and Dawn Coleman for their willingness to read and comment on this project. I will be forever grateful for all the assistance I received at the numerous archives and libraries that I visited while doing my research. On many occasions, I was pointed toward sources I may not have found on my own. Most particularly, I would like to thank Mark Wetherington and his staff at the Filson Historical Society. It was at the Filson where I felt the most welcomed and was treated as a colleague instead of just another graduate student working on his doctoral dissertation. Such collegiality made those long drives on Interstate 75 much easier. I would also like to thank Lynn Champion and Melissa Parker for providing me with opportunities to do what I enjoy the most – mentoring undergraduates. Lynn remains to this day one of my biggest cheerleaders and I feel blessed to count her among my friends. To Aaron, Jake, Paul, and Cinnamon, thanks for your friendship, encouragement, and the lunches we shared. My greatest debt, however, is to my family – my parents Max and Jane Jenness, my wife Emily, and our sons Kieran and Logan. Dad and Mom have always been a source of encouragement and I thank them for that. Kieran and Logan have never known a time when their Dad was not in graduate school. It was a random comment by Kieran one night at the dinner table that reminded me of the importance of family. Thank you, son, for helping me to keep my priorities straight. Thank you, Logan, for that smile that can light up a room. And lastly, whatever success I have already achieved is because of God's grace and my wife's support. Emily has sacrificed as much, if not more, than I and willingly put her promising career on hold so that I could pursue my academic dream at the University of Tennessee. Without her encouragement, prodding, and support, I may never have finished this project. I hope the results of my effort meet with her approval. Thank you, Emily. You are the brightest light in my life. I love you.

## **Abstract**

In the fall of 1859, John Brown launched a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and in so doing arguably fired the first salvo of the Civil War. That his raid occurred in the border area between North and South should come as no surprise because it was in that area where Americans were the most divided. Citizens across the border state region—that area that comprised the lower North and upper South—soon found themselves caught between two hostile sections. Based on an analysis of letters, journals, newspapers, and public documents, this dissertation is a study of one portion of that border region, the central Ohio River Valley, during the momentous years between Brown’s raid and the early weeks of 1862, when Indiana Senator Jesse Bright was expelled from the United States Senate for treasonous behavior. Citizens who lived in the river counties between Cincinnati and Louisville shared important economic, cultural, and socio-political views that united them and created a regional bond capable of withstanding the centrifugal pull of sectionalism despite the omnipresent influence of slavery. These trans-river bonds moderated their response to secession and reinforced their Unionist proclivities. Their fidelity to the Union strengthened Abraham Lincoln’s hand and helped to insure that the Union would endure.



## Preface

For years scholars viewed the growing sectionalism of the antebellum period from a narrow bisectional perspective, with an industrializing North confronting an agricultural South. That there was an overlapping border region in the middle was frequently overlooked, although the body of scholarship rectifying this omission continues to grow. The border region, comprised of the lower North and upper South, is a crucial area for historians endeavoring to understand the Civil War because of its tendency toward moderation in an era when extremism seemingly had gained the upper hand. The complexities and possibilities of human interaction reveal themselves most vividly in such areas. In the central Ohio River Valley, in particular, the antecedents of Civil War-era compromise and moderation are found in the expressions of community and regionalism voiced there repeatedly by previous generations. The region's tradition of compromise was embodied by the great Kentucky statesman, Henry Clay. The Kentuckian was respected, even revered, by many on both banks and his influence persisted long after his death. "Had Henry Clay never lived," wrote nineteenth-century historians John W. Barber and Henry Howe, "it is extremely doubtful whether Kentucky would have remained loyal to our common country." The Kentuckian, they said, "stands with the nation as one whose affections were filled with the idea of the glory and welfare of the American republic."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *The Loyal West in the Times of the Rebellion; also, Before and Since: Being an Encyclopedia and Panorama of the Western States, Pacific States and Territories of the Union* (Cincinnati: F. A. Howe, publisher, 1865), 101. Works emphasizing the importance and complexity of the border state region during the Civil War era include Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); William W. Freehling, *The South versus the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003); Jeremy Neely, *The Border between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2007); and Brian D. McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

Despite its wide expanse, the Ohio River bound the region together. It may have marked the northern limit of slavery, but as historian Darrel Bigham suggests, it “was no Berlin Wall.” Cultural geographers, according to Bigham, “have never located the regional boundary between North and South at the Ohio River,” placing it instead north of the river. In the nineteenth century, the river was an avenue rather than a barrier, a place where “people, commerce, and ideas” passed from shore to shore much like the river’s water. As George Prentice, the Unionist editor of the *Louisville Daily Journal*, reminded his readers, the “great artery of Western commerce” served, in many ways, to unite more than divide Kentuckians, Indianans, and Ohioans who lived along its banks, even as the stress of secession threatened to tear asunder existing trans-river relationships. The river was, he said, “a medium of continuous and far-reaching Union.” It brought Americans together in “one interest, one commerce, [and] one community.” The newspaper proclaimed the commonly held belief that “the river and both its banks must of necessity be for the common use and benefit of all this commerce and of all these citizens.” Summarizing the views of many North and South Bankers, Kentucky governor Charles S. Morehead reminded constituents in his 1855 inaugural address that the commonwealth’s interests were best protected by the Union of states: ““We occupy the same great valley in common with States differing from us as to domestic institutions sanctioned and protected by organic law—separated only by that beautiful streat [sic] which bears upon its bosom the commerce of all.”” Morehead reflected on the how the river’s water lapped against its banks and then mingled in the middle, symbolizing how the sentiments of people on both sides should unite in common fidelity to the national commonweal. Despite the centrifugal pressure of escalating sectionalism between the North and South and a diversity of views on the Union’s future, a border mentalite characterized by a hatred of extremes and a tradition of compromise,

embodied by antebellum leaders such as Clay, promoted a special regional perspective that traversed the Ohio River. This mindset shaped the way in which people living in the river counties of the central Ohio Valley reacted to sectional strife.<sup>2</sup>

Despite periodic threats to the Valley's harmony, many of which sprouted from the tensions over slavery and the natural give and take inherent in entrepreneurial competition, Prentice acknowledged the importance of Kentucky's relationship to its northern neighbors. "Kentucky has no hostile feelings against the people of the Border States with whom she has been so long connected, not only by business and by social intercourse, but by the ties of family and blood," he wrote. The editor recognized that the regionalism felt by many northern Kentuckians reached across the Ohio River into southern Indiana and Ohio---and vice versa. He believed that residents of the river's northern bank were "more nearly connected and identified with their neighbors on the South side of the Ohio river than with those politically their fellow

---

<sup>2</sup> Darrel E. Bigham, *Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 42-43; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 21 September 1861; Wallace B. Turner, "The Secession Movement in Kentucky," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 66 (July 1968): 260-61. Kim M. Gruenwald, *River of Enterprise: The Commercial Origins of Regional Identity in the Ohio Valley, 1790-1850* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), xi, observes that since the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the character Eliza crosses the frozen Ohio River to escape bondage, Americans have often seen the river as the proverbial boundary between slavery and freedom and between North and South. This has influenced the writing of Ohio Valley history. Many scholars have concentrated on the history of one side of the river or the other and in so doing, Gruenwald argues, they have ignored how the Ohio River bound the region together, especially during the nation's early years. Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf argue, to the contrary, that as sectionalism increased, middle-class Midwesterners "began to define their free states against the slaveholding societies across the Ohio River." This "sectional consciousness," they suggest, "converged with a middle-class vision of economic progress and cultural transformation" as support for the Republican party swelled in the 1850s. See Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), xvii-xviii. Cayton and Onuf make an interesting observation; however, the sectional mindset to which they refer was tempered in the minds of many people who lived along the river by the reality of location. It is easier to see the river as a clear line of demarcation if one lives some distance from it. But for those who lived on or near its shores, the river instilled a sense that the citizens living across the river were neighbors. From a historical perspective, it is wrong to argue that the Ohio River represented a clear line of regional separation. In this study, I will refer to "North Bankers" and "South Bankers" to identify the side of the Ohio River on which individuals or groups lived. North Bankers resided in the Indiana counties of Floyd, Clark, Jefferson, Switzerland, Ohio, and Dearborn and in the Ohio county of Hamilton. South Bankers lived in the Kentucky counties of Kenton, Campbell, Boone, Gallatin, Carroll, Trimble, Oldham, and Jefferson. All these counties lie adjacent to the Ohio River.

citizens who inhabit the northern slopes of those States.” For the sometimes acerbic newspaperman, the river did not prevent the region’s citizenry from joining together in a bond of western regionalism.<sup>3</sup>

After slavery dissolved in the North during the early years of the republic, the border area assumed greater importance, serving as a bridge between the free North and slaveholding South. The growth of antislavery sentiment in the North after 1830 put slaveholders on the defensive. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison’s publication of *The Liberator*, the Nat Turner slave rebellion in Virginia, the disagreement over allowing slavery in the newly-acquired western territories in the wake of the Mexican-American War, the anger over the Compromise of 1850, the violence in Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, and John Brown’s ill-conceived raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry all pushed North and South apart as the border region clung desperately to both. As sectionalism intensified, the border region took center stage.<sup>4</sup>

Earlier historians did not altogether ignore the border states and their importance to our understanding of the Civil War. Carl Russell Fish offered a cogent explanation of why historians should study the role of the Ohio River Valley during the secession crisis and subsequent conflict. “The utility of history is best served,” he insisted, “not by dividing it into north and south, but by treating the Ohio Valley . . . as a section with a life of its own, and the capacity and necessity for making its own decision in the great conflict.” This dissertation seeks to answer Fish’s clarion call to assess the Valley’s role in the secession crisis by looking at it from a regional perspective that considers the influence of national events.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 2 February 1861.

<sup>4</sup> For a good general account of these critical events, see James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Carl Russell Fish, “The Decision of the Ohio Valley,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1910* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 155. On the important role of the Valley in

The border area in the mid-nineteenth century was a kind of gray world, a world where rarely if ever did clear-cut solutions to sectional disagreements present themselves. As a result, this was a region where, as Amy Murrell Taylor reminds historians, Union-saving compromises “originated in the 1850s and where voters supported moderate candidates over the more radical Republicans and Southern Democrats in 1860.” But, she adds, “it was also where consensus was elusive” once the sectional split occurred and where states such as Kentucky remained loyal “despite vocal secessionist minorities.” It was a simple task for New Englanders to proclaim their hatred of slavery and equally easy for fire-eaters of the Deep South to spew their venom back because the two groups occupied different spatial arenas. Such was not the case for antebellum Americans living in the central Ohio River Valley. Kentuckians in Louisville, Warsaw, and Covington awoke daily to see their neighbors across the river toiling in the fields or going busily about their streets. Farmers in New Albany and Jeffersonville, Indiana, regularly brought their produce to the market in Louisville, and businessmen in Cincinnati completed bills of lading before sending their wares down the river to markets in Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans. In the course of their daily routine, people from both sides frequently met on the river.<sup>6</sup>

The river was also a place where slavery and freedom were juxtaposed. For some, the river was simply a fact of life; a watery street across which one ventured to visit family, to go on

---

early nineteenth century America, see Kim M. Gruenwald, “Space and Place on the Early American Frontier: The Ohio Valley as a Region, 1790-1850,” *Ohio Valley History* 4 (Fall 2004): 31-48.

<sup>6</sup> Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 4. See also Andrew Cayton, “‘Going Over the River’: On the Making and Unmaking of Borders,” *The Filson* 6 (Winter 2006): 4-7, and Christopher Phillips, “‘The Chrysalis State’: Slavery, Confederate Identity, and the Creation of the Border South,” in *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*, eds. Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 148. Cayton argues that the permeability and transience of borders is a major theme of borderlands scholarship and that inevitably all borders are “historically constructed.” Christopher Phillips contends that imposing a “static geographical line between the North and South” is too one-dimensional. Thus, as the border West came to the Union’s support, it actually “became the border South.” This illustrates how border regions are transfigured over time as outside forces come to bear on their perimeter.

vacation, or to go to work. For slaves, it represented freedom's lure; for their masters, it was a hurdle they hoped would keep their chattels at home. A New Albany, Indiana, man was "astonished," however, at the number of free blacks who routinely crossed back and forth between the Indiana town and Louisville. Such activity elicited a strong rebuke from Walter Haldeman, the Southern-rights editor of the *Louisville Daily Courier*: "an unrestrained intercourse of this kind . . . should not be permitted," he wrote. "The free negroes of Kentucky are bad enough; but those of Indiana and other Free States should not be allowed to come here at all." The wide body of water did not prevent abolitionists from crossing into Kentucky to escort slaves to freedom, nor did it preclude Kentucky masters from crossing northward to reclaim their stolen property or, worse yet, replace it with an innocent bystander. As Stephen Rockenbach observes, the river may have been the "legal boundary of slavery, but the farmland and communities flanking the river formed an area where the lines between slavery and freedom blurred." This nebulosity is one of the reasons why the border region has drawn historians' interest.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation focuses on the fifteen Ohio River counties between Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky. The river was omnipresent in the lives of those residing in these counties. If one's livelihood did not rely directly on the river's beneficence, one often had kinfolk, customers, friends, or professional acquaintances whose economic survival did. While the river's presence did not preordain people's behavior, it profoundly informed their perspective. Those Americans living in immediate proximity to the river were especially sensitive to its tangible and symbolic importance.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 27 December 1860; Stephen I. Rockenbach, "War Upon Our Border?: War and Society in Two Ohio Valley Communities" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2005), 10.

The presidential campaign of 1860, the secession crisis, the outbreak of civil war, and the occupation of portions of southern Kentucky by Confederate forces deeply affected everyone who lived along the Ohio River. Nevertheless, this study focuses primarily on the perspectives and behaviors of white adult males. Unlike women, free and enslaved blacks, and children, white males voted, determined public policy, conducted most of the significant commerce, and, initially, assumed the burden of military service. It is hoped that other scholars will investigate the role of those groups not covered here.

The introduction that follows explores the various ways in which the history, economy, and culture of the central Ohio River Valley moderated views and strengthened trans-river connections. The subsequent chapters, organized chronologically, examine the Valley's experience in the momentous years of 1860 and 1861. Chapter one analyzes the region's response to the presidential campaign of 1860. Chapter two takes the story through the five-month period between Lincoln's election and the attack on Fort Sumter. Chapter three explores cross-river relations during the early weeks of war and the difficulty in determining the region's proper role in the war. Chapter four looks at Kentucky Unionism, the continuing problems of interdiction, and early issues of defense. The conclusion takes the narrative into the initial weeks of 1862 and explains how notions of economy, regionalism, and nation helped to hold the Valley together.

## Table of Contents

Introduction: “A Brotherhood” of States .....	1
Chapter One: “The Campaign is Now Fairly Opened”: January – November 1860 .....	27
Chapter Two: “We Approach the Vortex”: November 1860 – April 1861 .....	63
Chapter Three: “No North, No South, but one [Tenuous] Union”: April – June 1861 ....	110
Chapter Four: “Those Patriotic Men of the River”: July – December 1861 .....	163
Conclusion: “The Cool, Health Giving Wind from the North”: Beyond 1861 .....	209
Bibliography .....	220
Vita .....	231



## **Introduction: “A Brotherhood” of States**

Be it resolved “that the States separated by the Ohio River, bound together by geographical contiguity and commercial dependence, as well as by a common political creed and lineage, should always be united,” declared the people of Cincinnati at a public meeting on January 21, 1860. Inhabitants of the region “should regard with execration the political demagogue, the fanatic and traitor, who would disturb the Union.” Aware that members of the Kentucky and Tennessee legislatures planned to visit Louisville to celebrate the opening of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Cincinnatians felt it was important that their stake in the region’s economy and their special relationship with Kentuckians be affirmed publicly. Five of the city’s leading citizens were instructed to visit Louisville to express the Queen City’s congratulations on the completion of the railroad and to underline its importance “to the commerce of the West, and to our intercourse, prosperity and union as a people.” The Southerners were invited to visit Cincinnati and enjoy the manifestations of its “profound regard” for its fellow citizens in Kentucky and Tennessee.<sup>1</sup>

Community leaders and the citizens of Louisville, Cincinnati, and Columbus spent the ensuing week basking in the glow of fulsome rhetoric and bountiful entertainment. Toasts and speeches frequently emphasized the trans-river relationship between North and South Bankers and their contemporaries who lived further away from the river. Indeed, one attendee called the ceremonies “a Union festival” as a parade of officials took the opportunity to reflect on the Union and the relationship between those who lived on either side of the Ohio. George Prentice devoted a considerable portion of one issue of the *Louisville Journal* to the coverage of the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Excursion Made by the Executive and Legislatures of the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, to the State of Ohio* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Company, 1860), 1-5.

banquet that had occurred two days earlier at Louisville's Masonic Temple. The dinner in his view was "a glorious epoch in the history of the Union." Indiana's Governor Ashbel P. Willard declared to the more than five hundred people in attendance that he had come to Kentucky to celebrate the fact that Kentuckians valued the United States Constitution more than their own state, and that therein lay the source of their deep-rooted Unionism. He told his audience that there was no reason why Kentucky and Indiana could not coexist happily despite the fact that one state permitted slavery and the other did not. Indiana, he said, "has no right to . . . say Kentucky shall be a free state." Appealing to a broader constituency, he continued, "All along the border line" between Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, the people are "friends of the Union." Alluding to federal legislation mandating the return of fugitive slaves, Indiana's chief executive asserted that "if we will but execute the laws that now exist" all would be well along the border. His Kentucky counterpart Beriah Magoffin echoed Willard's sentiment, urging the region's citizenry to support the "adjustment of 1850" because of the importance of remaining on "the middle ground." Future Republican president James Garfield followed suit by stressing how remarkable it was that the delegations of four states could "clasp hands" next to the Ohio with utter disregard for "party prejudice." He deemed it a "good omen" that in the midst of growing sectional rancor the states "of the Great Valley of the Great West . . . have met in social friendship, and are saying, with united voice to the angry waves, 'Peace, be still.'"<sup>2</sup>

While the Union's perpetuity was featured prominently in speakers' oratory, the binding nature of the Ohio River, regional trade with the South, and the benefits of moderation also drew orators' attention. Ohio legislator E. A. Parrott stressed the association he saw between the "bonds of commercial union" and the perpetuation of "our political Union." As if to second

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12-20; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 26 January 1860.

Parrott's observation, workmen in Cincinnati greeted the Southerners as they steamed up to the city's main wharf by marching on the roof of one of the city's foundries with an American flag. Cannon salutes from both banks greeted the visitors as they disembarked, a fact that did not go unnoticed by South Bankers. "The excursionists are having a grand time in Ohio" and have been well received, observed Louisville grocer John Jefferson. "The interests of Kentucky and Indiana are so nearly the same from products and position," declared one newspaper, "that any one who would aim to sever them would be a madman." Its editor believed that the region's "Union-loving conservatism" and the mutual respect held by many residents living along the border encouraged Indianans "to do [Kentucky] justice. The Ohio, a common servant, will be like a silver link binding the two states together." Like their Kentucky and Indiana neighbors downriver, Cincinnatians turned out en masse to demonstrate their affinity for their Southern neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

Once on Ohio soil, the visitors headed north by rail to Columbus. Wary of extremists, Kentucky legislator J. K. Goodloe challenged those who would "throw a fire brand between us, and destroy that which has been so dearly and gloriously achieved. . . . Why should not Ohio and Kentucky love and stand by each other?" Regional harmony carried the day as Goodloe trumpeted his regard for North Bankers. "It is true that a broad sheet of water flows between us," he acknowledged, "but instead of dividing it only unites us and forms a common highway for the transportation and passage of the products and commerce of our fruitful and wealthy States. And that same Ohio river is but a type of our nationality and oneness." The rhetoric

---

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Excursion*, 22, 29-30; John Jefferson Diary, 27-28 January 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; *Louisville Democrat*, reprinted in *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 3 December 1860.

grew effusive as the liquor flowed, but Goodloe expressed a view held by a great number of people in the region.<sup>4</sup>

The excursion north culminated with a return to Cincinnati, where the luminaries gathered at the opera house. In greeting the guests, Cincinnati judge Bellamy Storer alluded to the sectionalism dividing the nation. Speaking just three months after John Brown's attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, the jurist responded to slaveholders' outrage and fire-eaters' threats. "There must be mutual concessions, as well as respect," he insisted, and "no empty gasconade of offensive aggression, much less any direct effort to violate the code of a sister State." Conflict would arise as it does anywhere freedom reigned, he believed, but as long as discussions were "conducted in a manly spirit, and a proper regard to the rights of other sovereignties," truth would prevail and would "strengthen the national bond." He reminded the audience that early settlers had never regarded the Ohio River as a barrier because "Ohio and Kentucky [and Indiana] are the offspring of a common mother. The soil on which we stand was once a part of Virginia." On a number of occasions, orators referenced the nationalism of Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay to emphasize the degree to which the region's common antecedents united it in a filial bond of Unionism. Kentucky's Dudley Walker urged listeners to remember the precedent set by the late statesmen, believing that "as long as their example is remembered, neither personal rivalries, nor party excitements, nor sectional jealousies, can make us forget our patriotism." After a hearty banquet featuring a variety of local and exotic cuisine, the celebrants endured another round of speeches and then departed for home.<sup>5</sup>

Cross-river relationships remained intact in the years leading up to the Civil War in part because of the geography North and South Bankers shared. Indianan Harrison Burns

---

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Excursion*, 34-36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, 87-88, 104, 125.

remembered a time during his childhood when his acquaintance with a carpenter named Dupont encouraged him one winter to cross the river with the man to work in a Louisville pork house. When winter's cold bluster froze the river, Burns reminisced, "a well-beaten roadway on the ice" would appear between Louisville and Jeffersonville, Indiana, "over which teams [of horses] passed heavily loaded." Such fortuitous cold snaps also provided fugitive slaves the opportunity to begin life anew by crossing to freedom. North Bankers found it difficult to escape what one historian has described as the "geographical nearness to the slaveholding South and the influences arising from this relationship." By 1860, these geographical and economic realities were juxtaposed with considerations that forced people to acknowledge that their region was bound to the North by an increasing reliance on free labor while simultaneously tied to the South "by kinship and tradition." Unlike Hamilton County, Ohio, portions of southeastern Indiana faced Kentucky on two sides---the south and east. Kinship with Kentuckians coupled with this geographical oddity encouraged special "gentlemen's agreements" in the area. These agreements permitted a slave to cross the river into Indiana to transport goods or to hire himself out during the day provided he returned home before the evening curfew. Not surprisingly, though, such arrangements created tension among whites who did not take kindly to the presence of additional black laborers on the north side of the river. Nor was this movement of black labor a two-way traffic. While slaves traveled to Floyd County, for instance, free blacks were not expected to visit Louisville. Thus, some of the threads of concord that tied the region together were born out of perceived economic need rather than social congruity.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Harrison Burns, "Personal Recollections of Harrison Burns as written in 1907," Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 1975, Vol. 25, pp. 31-32 (born in 1836, Burns was about fifteen years old at the time); Henry Clyde Hubbart, "'Pro-Southern' Influences in the Free West, 1840-1865," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20 (June 1933): 46, 51 (Hubbart argues that in addition to geographical factors, the Democratic party appeared to be "tying portions of the West to the chariot wheels of the South"); Fish, "Decision of the Ohio Valley," 156; Pamela

The gray world of the antebellum border region had cultural, political, and economic characteristics that complicated decisions of national import. It was not unusual to find white residents who, according to Christopher Phillips, “believed themselves to be neither southern nor northern but something better than either.” Encouraged by the unifying presence of a great commercial highway, many South Bankers, for instance, reached symbolically across the Ohio River and considered themselves “westerners” without abandoning their identity as Kentuckians. Kenneth Stampf contends that Indianans particularly reciprocated when it came to their relationship with Kentuckians on the South Bank. “The inhabitants of the river counties,” he claims, “often felt a warmer friendship toward their neighbors in Kentucky than toward their fellow citizens in Indiana who dwelt north of the National Road.” Thus, the Ohio River tended to unify the Valley’s people instead of serving “as a line bisecting the nation.” In the decades after the American Revolution, Kentuckians streamed across the river to help settle the old Northwest. Estimates vary, but it appears that at least 68,000 men, women, and children from the commonwealth settled in Indiana, among them the family of young Abraham Lincoln, while another 15,000 or more made Ohio their home. In both instances, they tended to settle in the southern half of the state, with many choosing to remain close to the Ohio River. Their status as citizens of the American republic, their membership in national political parties, and their self-identification as Westerners encouraged a persistent sense of unity with those on the southern bank. In 1860, many people who had helped to settle the old Northwest were still living, thereby providing tangible links between the citizens on opposite banks. According to Stephen Rockenbach, pledges by the Indiana legislature to help defend Kentucky homes were not merely

---

R. Peters, *The Underground Railroad in Floyd, County, Indiana* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, 2001), 8.

rhetoric but promises understood by Kentuckians “to be an affirmation of a regional partnership based on the legacy of the frontier.”<sup>7</sup>

But even as trans-river links bound people together, cultural conflict simmered for years in places such as Cincinnati. The ongoing immigration of a diverse group of people threatened to increase social anxieties despite the fact that many citizens considered themselves Westerners. Although the proximity of river county Indianans, Ohioans, and Kentuckians encouraged toleration, Daniel Aaron avers that the presence of native New Englanders, for instance, tended to create resentment because of their attempts to cling stubbornly to New England institutions and their efforts to “impose them on every community.” Thus, in a border world where compromise played an important role in peoples’ lives, antipathy, tension, and rivalry percolated just under society’s surface.<sup>8</sup>

The citizenry of the central Ohio Valley river counties in 1860 was predominantly white and native-born. Certain areas, however, had a sizable foreign-born population, mostly German or Irish immigrants who had fled political or economic upheaval in their homelands. In Indiana’s Dearborn County, for instance, 24 percent of the population was not born in the United States. In Hamilton County, Ohio, the proportion was 41 percent. Nearly 24 percent of Kentucky’s river residents were of foreign birth. Campbell County, across from Cincinnati, had

---

<sup>7</sup> Phillips, “Chrysalis State,” 149; Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), 13; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 13; Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), xii; Rockenbach, “War Upon Our Border,” 17.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West, 1819-1838* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 146-47. See also Etcheson, *Emerging Midwest*, 127. Etcheson argues that when secession came, Midwesterners north of the Ohio River were forced to confront their divided loyalties, loyalties linked to their Southern ancestral heritage. Although they were no longer Southerners, many Indianans and Ohioans possessed generations of “memories and values drawn from the South.” When a “Western solution” failed in 1861, she says, most Midwesterners chose the Union by wearing Union blue or by passively “refusing to support a Republican Party which seemed to use the cloak of war to label all dissent treason.”

the highest proportion of immigrants among the Kentucky river counties, nearly 30 percent, followed very closely by Jefferson and Kenton counties. Considerably fewer immigrants lived in the Valley's more rural counties. Only 5 percent of the people in Ohio County, Indiana, for example, were of foreign origin. A small number of blacks lived along the river. On the North Bank in Indiana, the black population was negligible; in Hamilton County, Ohio, blacks comprised just 2 percent of the total population. The numbers were higher on the South Bank, where blacks made up over 15 percent of the population, the vast majority of them enslaved. In the principal river ports of Covington, Louisville, and Newport, slaves comprised approximately 5 percent of the population. With free soil just across the river, free blacks were very few in number.<sup>9</sup>

Long before the arrival of European settlers, the Ohio River had served as a commercial and cultural thread binding native communities together in a network of socioeconomic relationships. Such linkages continued after European settlers arrived, as the river became a conduit of westward expansion, its tributaries extending the river's economic beneficence into what would become Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky. As Richard Wade pointed out many years ago in his ground-breaking study of the Ohio River Valley, the region was "the spine of the new country." He emphasized the key role commerce played in regional urbanization, a role facilitated by the Ohio River, which he considered "the chief agent" in the Valley's regional development. The growth of Cincinnati and Louisville, particularly, was fostered by the steamboat, which afforded more efficient transportation of large volumes of goods. Economic considerations contradicted the claim that the Ohio River was a clear line of demarcation

---

<sup>9</sup> Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860-The Eighth Census*, Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 112-29, 168-85, 364-96.



between two very different worlds. Mutually beneficial trade fosters a sense of unity and a tendency toward toleration among the people involved. Despite their slaves and a culture with many Southern features, border Kentuckians valued their relationship with the North, in large part because of the daily trade that linked them to North Bankers. One historian insists that such unifying economic factors encouraged political Unionism. In his view, “it was because the North stood for the Union that Kentucky could feel an alliance with that section, and both stood for the Union because their economic prosperity . . . depended absolutely upon its preservation.” Louisville and its hinterland enjoyed both business ties with the North and a prosperous Southern trade network. Orders for hogs, hemp, tobacco, and whiskey came from both directions. Cincinnati thrived on a similar economic dynamic, as did smaller river towns such as Madison and Jeffersonville, Indiana. Railroads connected Indianapolis, Columbus, and Nashville with the Ohio River, providing merchants and farmers an efficient way to get their goods and produce to larger markets. Lines such as the Louisville and Nashville enabled river communities, particularly North Bank ones like Cincinnati, to attract trade from Kentucky’s interior and allowed Northern goods to penetrate the commonwealth’s Bluegrass region. Rail links going south into Kentucky served Cincinnati’s long-term interests. Thus, despite the growth of east-west railroads and the critical links to eastern ports such lines provided, the Ohio River remained a key agent in the larger trade network in which the central Ohio Valley participated. The secession of the Southern states of the Mississippi River Valley, should it ever occur, would threaten North and South Bankers’ “most natural route” to the world’s markets.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), v, 66-71, 286-87; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 17; Robert Emmett McDowell, *City of Conflict: Louisville in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Louisville: Louisville Civil War Round Table, 1962), 3-4; Kincaid Herr, *The Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1850-1963* (Louisville: Public Relations Department, Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1964), 3; John Alan Boyd,

The region's commercial strength was bolstered by a growing agricultural and manufacturing base. Sheep and swine provided an ample livestock supply for the burgeoning woolen and meat-packing industries, but it was the agricultural crops and access to the Ohio River that encouraged the development of a broad-based economy. Dearborn County, Indiana, Hamilton County, Ohio, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, led the region in the production of wheat, rye, corn, and oats. Tobacco and potatoes grew on both banks but the former competed with corn as the preferred crop of Kentucky farmers. In Jefferson County, Kentucky, where a majority of the river-county slaves lived, tobacco placed a distant second to corn. Barley, wine, garden vegetables, and butter were also produced in significant quantities while the production of hemp, so prevalent in other regions of Kentucky, was virtually nonexistent. An analysis of the region's manufacturing sector reveals interesting parallels among individual counties' top five products. Several categories of agriculture-based manufacturing were common on both banks of the river. The production of flour and meal was most prevalent, appearing among the leading products in twelve of the fifteen counties. Lumber and wood products were particularly important in eleven counties while liquor in various forms was important in roughly half of the region's counties. Pork and beef provisions were especially important to four of the more urbanized counties: Floyd and Jefferson counties in Indiana, Hamilton County in Ohio, and

---

"Neutrality and Peace: Kentucky and the Secession Crisis of 1861" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1999), 25-26; John D. Barnhart, "The Impact of the Civil War on Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 57 (September 1961): 191-92. A perusal of the commercial pages of many of the region's major newspapers such as the *Louisville Daily Journal*, *Louisville Daily Courier*, *New Albany Daily Ledger*, *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, and *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* reveals the degree to which the Ohio River remained a busy avenue for goods going south to St. Louis and New Orleans.

Jefferson County in Kentucky. All of these goods were in high demand in markets to the east and south.<sup>11</sup>

As river towns grew, so did their commercial relationship with budding entrepôts nearby. Slavery may have stopped at the river's edge in Kentucky but the entrepreneurial impulse that spurred the region's growth did not. The rapid development of the urban centers of Louisville and Cincinnati and their smaller neighbors of New Albany, Madison, and Covington in the early years of the century united North and South Bankers in an increasingly urban "orbit" that led one traveler to observe that Covington's streets appeared to be an extension of Cincinnati's. Louisville's rapid growth had a comparable effect on its Indiana neighbors in New Albany and Jeffersonville. Drawn to the region in many cases by the prospect of enhanced opportunities, roughly one-third of all Kentuckians called a border river county home by 1860.<sup>12</sup>

The axis on which central Ohio Valley trade revolved was the commercial activity between Cincinnati and Louisville. Communities in between played an important role by augmenting the skilled labor necessary to build mechanical devices such as steamboat engines and boilers, in addition to providing market access for rural consumers. Workers in secondary ports such as New Albany, many of whom were immigrants, built chairs and cabinets and stitched clothing and shoes, helping to create a diverse economy independent of slave labor. A majority of tailors and shoemakers in New Albany, for instance, were German. In the furniture industry and leather shops, Germans accounted for approximately one-third of the labor force. Workers in Louisville's northern satellite communities depended considerably on the southern

---

<sup>11</sup> Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860-The Eighth Census*, Volume 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 38-45, 58-65, 112-15; *Manufactures of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 116-36, 168-90, 453-56.

<sup>12</sup> Wade, *Urban Frontier*, 306; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 15-16.

river trade. Most of the steamboats constructed in New Albany participated in that trade, creating what Lawrence Lipin argues was a “sense” of a trans-river community that many southern Indianans, even more than southern Ohioans, shared with Kentuckians.<sup>13</sup>

Louisville’s founding on the falls of the Ohio soon enabled it to become Cincinnati’s largest trading partner. During drier times of the year when the river’s water level dropped dangerously low, Louisville teamsters helped boat captains circumvent the falls by carrying their loads over land. Completion of a canal in 1828 improved the flow of goods and continued to provide many in the city with a valuable source of revenue. Daily packets between the two ports allowed goods and people to travel the river with increasing comfort and affordability. While Louisville’s connections to New Orleans were more substantial than its Northern neighbor’s, its leaders still acknowledged that the Valley accounted for 70 percent of the city’s trade. Even with the construction of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in the 1850s, such remained the case as city leaders sought to entice traders from central Kentucky and points further south to send their produce and wares to Louisville. Success, it was believed, would enable Kentucky’s most important urban center to counter Cincinnati’s hegemonic designs. The opening of a

---

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence M. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-1887* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 20-23. The introduction of steam power may have been the most important change to occur in the Ohio River Valley prior to the arrival of the railroad. Steven J. Ross argues that the steamboat enabled Cincinnati merchants and their trading partners on the river to “exploit new commercial possibilities” because it was cheaper before the railroads arrived to ship goods to New Orleans than to deal with the cost of transporting goods across the Allegheny Mountains. While the railroads eventually pushed steamboats aside, steamboat construction in places such as New Albany, Louisville, and Cincinnati remained important to the Valley in 1860. See Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 11-12, and Isaac Lippincott, *A History of Manufactures in the Ohio Valley to the Year 1860* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 183-84. Elmer Duane Elbert discusses the importance of the region’s smaller river ports, as cities such as New Albany (population of 12,000 in 1860) and Madison (8,000) vied for their piece of the commercial pie. See Elmer Duane Elbert, “Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War, 1858-1861” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1967), 5-7. Sweeping contentions that ignore the degree to which North and South Bankers continued to rely on water transportation in 1860 discount a key component of Ohio Valley regionalism, and ultimately ignore an important factor that led many North and South Bankers to urge moderation when secession confronted the nation. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians*, 24, 56-57.

railroad line connecting northern Kentucky to Nashville and the interior of the lower South would inevitably contribute to the ever-present commercial rivalry between Louisville and Cincinnati. If secession came, such a rivalry would assume new dimensions, potentially threatening the Union's survival.<sup>14</sup>

During the late antebellum period, a burgeoning railroad network engulfed much of the North and extended its tentacles into portions of the upper South. This new infrastructure expanded markets and reduced transportation times; however, plans proposed by Cincinnati's business community to establish railroad connections between their city and Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, Chattanooga, and Atlanta belie sweeping generalizations that the west-east direction of lines such as the Baltimore and Ohio negated any economic relationship that had existed previously with Southern customers. Cincinnati's businessmen and politicians feared alienating the South because of the city's dependence on Southern commerce. Thus, the presence in the city at one time of noted abolitionists James G. Birney and Harriet Beecher Stowe had a minimal effect on public opinion; many, if not most, of the city's influential citizens opposed abolition during the waning years of the 1850s. Even as the Ohio River continued to be an important factor in the livelihood of merchants and businessmen, the proposed expansion of the Valley's rail network led one historian to conclude that by 1860 "Southern trade had never appeared more necessary to Cincinnati's progress."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Paul B. Trescott, "The Louisville & Portland Canal Company, 1825-1874," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (March 1958): 686-87. Louisville's early settlement and growth was facilitated by the existence of limestone rock in the Ohio River which created a twenty five foot falls. This impediment could not be navigated except when the spring runoff raised the water level sufficiently. According to Trescott, this was "the only serious obstruction in the river's thousand-mile course." For years Cincinnatians wanted a canal on the north bank partly because of their commercial competition with Louisville. John G. Clark, *The Grain Trade in the Old Northwest* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 39; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> Ruth C. Carter, ed., *For Honor, Glory & Union: The Mexican & Civil War Letters of Brigadier General William Haines Lytle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 3; Eugene H. Roseboom, *The History of the*

Cincinnati's self-appointed status as the "Queen City" of the Valley was built on its strategically important position in the center of Western and Southern trade. The antebellum creation of a Chamber of Commerce and Merchants' Exchange helped to determine the direction trade took, reduced business risks, and provided a venue in which businessmen could agree on policy. Those entrepreneurs whose trade network included dealings with Southern interests, argues Clinton Terry, "remained convinced that free trade, free capital, an agrarian economy supplemented by manufacturing, and slave-labor supported agriculture were consistent with strong local government, weak central government, and the city's regional hegemony." Ports downriver often chafed in the shackles of Cincinnati's hegemonic plans. Madison, Indiana, nevertheless remained the largest grain center on the Ohio River between 1847 and 1861 because of its rail connections to the interior. Such links increased the town's sources of supply, in large part because the railroad passed through several of the more productive Hoosier counties. Lacking Cincinnati's size and resources, however, Madison did not enjoy the tremendous growth experienced by its larger neighbor.<sup>16</sup>

The Queen City's predominance exasperated Louisville's leaders as they sought to reconcile their location in a border slave state with the fact that Cincinnati was the port's largest competitor. Consequently, Louisvillians called for a rail line south as early as 1832. A mass meeting in 1850 resulted in a resolution committing \$1,000,000 in city funds to a Louisville line and the creation of a committee to study the feasibility of such a project. With the approval of the Kentucky legislature in hand, construction soon began on the Louisville and Nashville

---

*State of Ohio: The Civil War Era, 1850-1873* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Clinton W. Terry, "'The Most Commercial of People': Cincinnati, the Civil War, and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism, 1861-1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2002), 5-6; Clark, *Grain Trade in the Old Northwest*, 150-51.

Railroad. According to railroad historian Maury Klein, when regular runs began in October 1859 residents of both Nashville and Louisville considered the road “their chief weapon in the battle not only against each other but against . . . outsiders” such as Cincinnati, Chattanooga, and Memphis. The railroad offered a more direct route to the South from the old Northwest. Lines such as the Jeffersonville and Columbus and the New Albany and Salem enabled Indiana farmers to bring goods to the northern bank of the river. From that point, goods were often loaded onto river packets or ferried across the river and taken to the loading docks of the Nashville road. Essentially serving two masters, the Louisville and Nashville provided both North and South Bankers direct access to the states farther south.<sup>17</sup>

These economic connections contributed to the “Southernness” of the river’s North Bank and the “Northernness” of its South Bank. The location of Madison, Indiana, halfway between Cincinnati and Louisville, made it a popular stopping point for packets operating between the two larger cities. Commercial links with the South often made North Bank communities such as Madison sensitive to Southern needs and desires. The views of residents were in many cases informed and sometimes even molded by those of their Kentucky neighbors, particularly when it came to hunting for runaway slaves in the surrounding hills and valleys. Similarly, as William Freehling points out, “great border cities” such as Louisville “resembled northern more than Lower South cities.” A relatively small slave population, considerable numbers of free blacks and foreign immigrants, a preponderance of Northern trade, factories, and “Yankee-style politics” gave Kentucky’s most important city something of a Northern flavor. As Cincinnati and Louisville continued to enlarge their economic hinterland to include the maintenance, if not

---

<sup>17</sup> Maury Klein, *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 3-5, 13-17; Herr, *Louisville and Nashville Railroad*, 3.

expansion, of ties with the South, many North Bankers exercised restraint toward the South's peculiar institution. Caleb Atwater spoke for many Cincinnatians when he opined that the city's Southern trade was very important and its value was increasing daily, making Cincinnati akin to a "southern city on free soil." Not surprisingly, patronage from Southern customers in the city's shops and hotels and shared "feelings of prejudice" toward blacks encouraged pro-Southern sentiment among many residents.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1850s, Democrats dominated elections on both banks regardless of who they faced: Whigs, Americans, or Republicans. It was, however, relatively unusual for any one Democratic candidate to win in a landslide; congressional races particularly tended to be competitive. As the decade progressed on the North Bank, Republicans made inroads as Democratic infighting took its toll. In Hamilton County, Ohio, Democrats tended to dominate until, by the end of the decade, there emerged a rough parity between the supporters of First District Congressman George H. Pendleton, a Democrat, and his Republican counterpart in the Second District, John A. Gurley. The decade witnessed a more complicated scenario in Kentucky. Individual Whig candidates enjoyed marked success in Jefferson County until mid-decade, when their organization gave way to the American party. By the end of the decade, however, Democrats were largely in control of the South Bank, although Jefferson County remained an outpost of opposition. It was the only county, for instance, that did not support the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Beriah Magoffin, in 1859. The results in the decade's two presidential elections reflected more clearly the extent of Democratic power. In 1852, South Bankers in every county but Boone went decidedly for the Democrat Franklin Pierce. Four years

---

<sup>18</sup> Freehling, *South versus the South*, 23; Thomas E. Wagner, "Cincinnati and Southwestern Ohio: An Abolitionist Training Ground" (M.A. thesis, Miami University, 1967), 2-4.



later, Boone, Gallatin, and Jefferson counties supported the American party candidate Millard Fillmore, while the rest went for the Democrat James Buchanan. On the North Bank, Pierce won a majority or plurality in every county except Switzerland County, Indiana, which Whig nominee Winfield Scott narrowly claimed. In 1856, Buchanan received the support of every county except Jefferson County, Indiana, which went comfortably for John C. Fremont, the Republican. Despite Buchanan's success, he failed to win as convincingly as Pierce had four years earlier. Thus, as the 1860 campaign approached, the cracks in the Democracy's political armor were clearly evident.<sup>19</sup>

In the face of growing extremism a tradition of compromise endured across the border region, notes David Potter, a tradition that "commanded the primary allegiance of almost all politicians, whatever their party labels might be." The ideal of moderation was kept alive by the surviving disciples of Kentucky's Henry Clay, who believed the late statesman's conciliatory nationalism was the most effective policy. The senator's shadow extended well beyond the grave, leading a visitor to Lexington to comment that the monument constructed in his memory was "the most prominent feature" in the area, "a beautiful pillar" standing nearly a hundred feet high. While the events of the 1850s hardened the views of many Americans and made compromise more difficult, the desire to conciliate endured in the central Ohio Valley.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth C. Martis, ed., *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789-1989* (New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), 103-13; Michael J. Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-1860, the Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson and London: McFarland and Company, 2002), 121-24, 129, 140-41, 143-44, 150; *Guide to U.S. Elections*, Fifth Edition, Volume II, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2005), 918-33; Jasper B. Shannon and Ruth McQuown, eds., *Presidential Politics in Kentucky, 1824-1948, A Compilation of Election Statistics and an Analysis of Political Behavior* (Lexington: Bureau of Government Research, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Kentucky, 1950), 26-36; Noma Dix Winston, "George D. Prentice and Secession in Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1930), 54.

<sup>20</sup> James [last name unknown] to Josephine [?], 18 August 1860, Folder 104, Plunket Correspondence, Brown-Ewell Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 58-59. Potter argues that in seeking to elect men of moderate views to public office, voters sought "to banish the slavery question from Congress."

The presence of abolitionists such as Delia Webster and a community of like-minded individuals in enclaves like Lancaster, Indiana, ten miles northwest of Madison, remained a continual source of irritation but did not diminish the sense of attachment countless North Bankers felt for their neighbors across the river. Anti-abolitionism on the North Bank was reinforced by the relocation of racist nonslaveholders who left Kentucky in order to avoid living among blacks. Orville Vernon Burton characterizes these migrants as part of a “cultural south” that included those Midwesterners of “southern descent living in areas adjacent to the border.” Indeed, the vast majority of white citizens on both sides of the river rejected the abolitionists’ creed, sometimes going so far as to drive abolitionists violently from their midst. During the late 1850s, a mob in Newport, Kentucky, destroyed the press of the *True South*, an abolitionist newspaper published by William S. Bailey. Trained as a cotton machinist and steam engine builder, Bailey had incurred the public’s wrath by urging Kentucky’s white laborers “to vote to abolish slavery in order to secure better wages for themselves, as well as to help blacks.” Even had his press survived, however, Bailey would have won few converts in the Valley, for white laborers on both banks regarded with alarm the potential flood of free black labor and social discontinuity that emancipation would release. In this milieu, then, it was not out of character for the *Louisville Daily Courier*, a Southern-rights organ, to praise North Bankers for capturing fugitive slaves.<sup>21</sup>

The abolitionist presence in the Valley reminded citizens that consensus was not all-inclusive, and that there were those whose agenda ran counter to the predominant regional sentiments. But having duly acknowledged that reminder, most citizens continued to embrace

---

<sup>21</sup> Orville Vernon Burton, *The Age of Lincoln* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 47, 129; Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 30. In January 1860, Bailey sued the men he believed were responsible for the destruction of his press. The lawsuit was reported in the 27 January 1860 issue of the *Louisville Daily Journal*. Peters, *Underground Railroad in Floyd County, Indiana*, 15.

the prevailing racist ethos. Slavery was simply not a significantly divisive factor among Valley whites. These views enabled many North Bank entrepreneurs, for example, to virtually ignore the peculiar institution even though a majority of slave owners in places such as Louisville were merchants, the very people with whom they conducted business. As Darrel Bigham points out, “free and slave blacks who were draymen, hackmen, and teamsters traveled to and fro across the river via ferries,” conducting business for both themselves and their masters, while on the riverboats that plied the river, slaves served as waiters musicians, stewards, roustabouts, and firemen. Occasional close contact with the chattels of South Bankers did little or nothing to sensitize North Bankers to the cruel predicament of black men and women. In most white eyes the blacks seemed merely another part of the Ohio River Valley landscape, a part with which whites need not be concerned.<sup>22</sup>

North Bankers’ relationship with their chattel-owning neighbors was intermittently strained by the problems caused by fugitive slaves and free blacks. Key crossing points to

---

<sup>22</sup> See Randolph Paul Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 125-29, for a discussion of abolitionist activity in Madison, Indiana, in the late antebellum period. Webster chose to live in Madison after her expulsion from Kentucky because the town’s location on the Ohio River offered convenient access to the slaves she sought to free. Cincinnati blacks “actively encouraged” slaves to abscond, but in so doing they put their own security at risk by antagonizing the city’s proslavery whites. See Darrel E. Bigham, *On Jordan’s Banks: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 48-49. For another discussion of Cincinnati blacks’ role in the Underground Railroad, see James Oliver Horton and Stacy Flaherty, “Black Leadership in Antebellum Cincinnati,” in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 75; and Bigham, *On Jordan’s Banks*, 16. Richard Nation makes a somewhat different argument, contending that southern Indians’ localism, sense of “moral community,” and belief in people’s depravity discouraged them from “imposing” their own moral views on others and from actively participating in efforts to weaken slavery even though they despised the institution. Many southern Hoosiers were “Upland Southerners” and as a result detested slavery, its victims, and the perceived interference both inflicted on their desire to live apart from blacks. See Richard F. Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 188. Historians acknowledge that black men and women crossed the Ohio River regularly in spite of the hurdles they faced, but that was not the image often presented to slaves in Kentucky. Chattels were led to believe that the river was hundreds of miles away, that it was “ten miles wide,” and “that there were terrible men with vicious dogs to catch or shoot every slave who crossed.” Canada was reported to be thousands of miles beyond the river. See Victor B. Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky: Emancipation and Freedom, 1862-1884* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 5.

freedom included Cincinnati, where the many Quaker communities in southern Ohio made it an especially popular route for escaping slaves, and the Indiana towns of Jeffersonville, Madison, Rising Sun, and Lawrenceburg. Nevertheless, despite the tug of slavery and commercial competition that occasionally made regional relations quite thorny, antebellum North and South Bankers remained cordial to one another because they recognized the social and economic connectivity inherent to their lives. As Keith Griffler maintains, “the close interconnection of the commercial interests of Ohio’s booming river ports and the South’s ‘peculiar institution’ created a region economically dependent on enslavement and the slave trade” even as the forces of free labor spread their doctrine in the North.<sup>23</sup>

White racism and the similarly harsh treatment of blacks tied North and South Bankers together. Kentucky masters punished their chattels with the whip, but the Northwest’s Black Codes punished blacks in other cruel ways by circumscribing their rights as free men and women. Both Ohio and Indiana denied blacks suffrage, although Ohio was less hostile to black civil rights than its western neighbor. Hoosiers went so far as to prohibit blacks from settling in the state. Neither proslavery nor antislavery, most white southern Indianans of the mid-nineteenth century are more accurately labeled anti-black. Their racial animosity provided the impetus for the state’s Black Codes, which were passed even though few blacks lived in Indiana. The state’s constitution of 1851 limited voting rights to white men and prohibited blacks from giving court testimony in cases involving white men. The penal code outlawed miscegenation and barred blacks from attending public schools. Ohio did not treat its black population much

---

<sup>23</sup> Roseboom, *History of the State of Ohio*, 342-43; J. Winston Coleman, Jr., *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 218-22; Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 1.

better, despite being the home of such antislavery luminaries as Joshua Giddings and Salmon Chase. The state erected similar barriers, requiring blacks as early as 1803 to carry certificates of freedom. Blacks could not testify in court and were forbidden to attend public schools. Like their western neighbor, Buckeyes believed the Black Codes were necessary to prevent what the *Cincinnati Enquirer* referred to as “the introduction of an ignorant and depraved class, whose color, and the prejudice existing against it, make an amalgamation of the races, or a *social* equality of condition impossible.” Many antebellum Ohio Democrats, argues Stephen Maizlish, judged black immigration a threat to the economic freedom of the state’s white community. Those who did not judge it so nevertheless agreed with the principal assumptions of such a view. Ohio modified its Black Codes in 1849, but even though the changes allowed blacks to attend segregated schools and awarded them the right to testify against whites in court, they were still denied other basic rights, including suffrage. Up and down the northern bank of the Ohio, free blacks by and large remained socially ostracized.<sup>24</sup>

North Bankers’ prejudice toward black Americans strengthened Kentuckians’ belief that their peculiar institution was not immediately doomed, as did the legislation passed by their neighbors to the north. Indianans and Ohioans feared the influx of blacks to their cities if slaves were freed, leading Indiana to go so far as to offer Kentucky the use of its militia if a slave rebellion occurred. Increasingly during the late antebellum period, argues a scholar of Indiana history, Democrats played on whites’ racial fears by raising the “specter of racial equality,” claiming that their Republican opponents cared only for black slaves and not white workers. The

---

<sup>24</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 14-17; Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983), 7-8, 137 (the *Enquirer* quote is from the 8 September 1846 issue); Joe William Trotter, Jr., *River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 30; Hubbart, “Pro-Southern’ Influences in the Free West,” 48-49.

*New Albany Daily Ledger* cautioned readers that abolition would throw open the doors to a multitude of blacks who would cross the river to compete for jobs with white laborers, thus threatening to lower their wages.<sup>25</sup>

For white Americans, the Ohio River fostered opportunity, community, and regional understanding, but it played a different role for marginalized free blacks and slaves. For them, says Joe William Trotter, Jr., it served as both a barrier to freedom and the ever-present voice of liberty across which lay the chance to begin life anew. Black Americans often referred to the Ohio River as the “River Jordan” because it “symbolized [the potential of] passage from southern bondage to the ‘land of hope’ or ‘promised land’ farther north.” The region, he suggests, “holds great symbolic significance” for black Americans because it “represented the boundary between slavery and freedom during the antebellum era.”<sup>26</sup>

Such was the distinctive environment in which citizens of the central Ohio River Valley lived as John Brown launched his raid on Harpers Ferry, an event that left a fearfully bitter taste in Southerner’s mouths and elicited criticism from conservative Northerners. Slaveholders and their supporters believed that the attack was sufficient proof that one way or another the Republicans and their allies intended to dismantle slavery. Many of Northern Kentucky’s leading Southern-rights’ advocates such as the editor of the *Louisville Daily Courier* were convinced that Brown’s raid and the activism of other abolitionists were designed “to inaugurate servile insurrections in all the border States” by establishing “Abolition colonies in our midst.” While many cheered the recent expulsion of Garrisonian abolitionists from Madison County, Kentucky, as a step toward resisting such incursions into the commonwealth, South Bankers rejected not only the extremism of malevolent radicals such as Brown but also the more

---

<sup>25</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 30; Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Trotter, Jr., *River Jordan*, xiii.

tempered behavior of abolitionist “settlers.” At a January 1860 political meeting in LaGrange in Oldham County, Kentuckians condemned the Harpers Ferry raid but acknowledged that it did not reflect “the feelings of the intelligen[t] and major portion of the masses of the non-slaveholding States.” The answer, they resolved, lay in the formation of a trans-sectional party that would strengthen the Unionist bonds holding the region and nation together. Ohio Valley newspaper editors condemned Brown’s raid. George Prentice, the senior editor of the moderate *Louisville Daily Journal*, declared that the seizure of the Harpers Ferry arsenal was “unquestionably treason” and the conspirators deserved to be “hung on high.” Prentice’s Democratic counterpart in New Albany, John B. Norman, was moved by the news of Harpers Ferry to reiterate Indianans’ desire to keep free blacks from their midst. Years earlier, Indiana voters had passed, “out of a sense of [white] self preservation,” a constitutional provision that prevented blacks from migrating to Indiana. The *New Albany Daily Ledger* warned readers that “abolition philanthropy . . . has already produced . . . evil consequences,” the most obvious of which was Brown’s raid. The paper feared that an influx of blacks, whether they were freed by abolitionist raids, individual manumission, or state law, would introduce into the region a population that “are notoriously idle, thriftless, and shiftless, and are a most undesirable addition to the population of a State.” James J. Faran, the Democratic editor of the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, expressed a desire to see John Brown and Ohio abolitionists such as Joshua Giddings “hang together in the future” because they “have hung so well together in the past.” Any Ohio resident, he said, who engaged in or provided assistance to a slave rebellion in Virginia was “guilty of a great wrong, and should be exposed.”<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 6 January 1860. The paper was referring to Rev. John G. Fee, who was converted to the abolitionist cause before the war. The son of a Kentucky slaveholder, Fee and his fellow abolitionists were expelled from Madison County, Kentucky, because residents believed their antislavery activism

North Bank Republicans also censured John Brown's extremism. Michael Garber, editor of the *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, characterized the Harpers Ferry raiders as "desperately wicked men," although partisanship led him to brand the raid not an "insurrection" but a mere "riot" that was "wild and reckless." The editor insisted that it would not have attracted much attention had it occurred in a free state, but he admitted that the fear of a servile "insurrection" weighed heavily on the minds of slaveholders, to whom he referred as "those blessed people who work slaves." Garber reserved his harshest language for the abolitionists, for whom at the moment he had little sympathy. As a border resident, he expressed solidarity with the Virginians and Marylanders whom Brown and his followers frightened so horrifically. "The rioters deserve death for taking such a liberty," he declared, but it was "the height of absurdity" to blame the Republicans, who "have nothing to do with them." Taking a swipe at his political rivals, Garber blamed the Democrats for fertilizing the soil in which abolitionists planted their seeds of discontent. He reminded South Bankers and their brethren that the federal government protected the slaveholding states from the intrusive interruptions of extreme filibusterers such as William

---

threatened slavery's stability in the region. See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 223; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 19 January 1860; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 37; Captain Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons-The Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 75; David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 99; and James M. Prichard, "Champion of the Union: George D. Prentice and the Civil War in Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, Wright State University, 1988), 11-12. A native of Connecticut, Prentice had moved to Kentucky years earlier to work on Henry Clay's biography. Described by Thomas Speed as "the most brilliant newspaper writer of his day," the old Whig developed a reputation as a staunch Unionist who was able to maintain his independence "because he was as quick with his gun and his fists as he was with his pen." Deft with the written word, Prentice frequently used just a few words to carve opponents in two; his caustic wit often being "more effective than a lengthy polemic." *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 10, 26 January 1860. The paper was reacting also to a report that Arkansas was expelling its free blacks. According to reports, those blacks remaining in the state after 1 January 1860 were "to be sold into slavery." It condemned such cruelty but did not want emigrating blacks to come to Indiana. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 27 October, 3 November 1859. Faran had earlier opined that it was not a newspaper's responsibility to discuss whether a charged man was guilty or innocent, nor his punishment if he was found guilty. The editor insisted that the Virginian authorities were entirely "competent" to adjudicate the case "whatever their political principles or party relations." He noted that the North's "threatened indignation" over Brown's possible fate was "at once silly and mischievous."



Walker. Thus, he suggested, fire-eaters should “respect the rights of other sovereignties” and “talk no more treason against the Union.”<sup>28</sup>

The Harpers Ferry “business,” as the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* referred to it, highlighted the conundrum confronting border state Republicans. How could they remain true to their party’s position on national issues such as slavery and at the same time maintain their presence on the predominantly moderate border? The *Gazette* straddled the fence by questioning the evidentiary approach used in Brown’s trial. The abolitionist was indeed guilty of a “heinous crime against the laws of Virginia . . . but his actual crime . . . is not a capital one,” the paper argued. How could a defendant who was not a Virginia citizen be guilty of committing treason against the commonwealth? The paper questioned whether “murder was satisfactorily shown to have been committed by any one,” yet Brown was convicted of first degree homicide. Furthermore, charges of a slave conspiracy had not been proven; the chattels had merely been “invited by him to run away, and forced to follow him, even against their will.” The paper did not see how it had been irrefutably proven that Brown was “*conspiring with slaves* to create an insurrection.” While intent on toeing the party line, the newspaper also recognized that such border violence threatened to inject a vile poison into the Valley’s body politic. North Bankers lived with slavery right in front of them, but most of them preferred to leave the institution as it stood, existing on the river’s southern bank. Believing that slavery was not a national institution and not desiring its indefinite survival, the *Gazette* reminded its readers that the peculiar institution rested “solely upon local law.” Many North Bankers preferred regional harmony

---

<sup>28</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 19, 22 October 1859. In an editorial on 25 October 1859, Garber referred to John Brown and his followers as “fanatical desperadoes.”

occasionally punctured by the thorn of slavery to the socio-economic upheaval that would come with the immediate, unconditional emancipation desired by abolitionists.<sup>29</sup>

Historians have often focused on the “extreme” events leading up to the Civil War because, in many ways, doing so provides a more compelling story. Looking at the bloodshed along the Kansas-Missouri line and John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, for instance, offers a window into the violent side of border state society, but it does not present a comprehensive picture of the attitudes of Americans who lived between the sections. In “calmer” border areas such as the central Ohio River Valley ordinary Americans demonstrated an affinity for moderation and compromise. The value they placed on temperate behavior reflected an understanding of their role in the American commonweal and ultimately helped to strengthen their pro-Union proclivities.

As the nation entered the presidential election year of 1860, the central Ohio River Valley braced for what many people believed would be a turbulent time. Most North and South Bankers were drawn together by a web of cross-river links. Their reliance on the Ohio River’s commercial beneficence, a common dislike for radical rhetoric and disunionist threats, a shared racial bigotry toward blacks, familial and cultural ties, and a deep appreciation of the distinctiveness of their border location promoted Unionist sentiment. As many other Americans moved to the extremes, the citizens of the Valley would endeavor to stand fast in the center.

---

<sup>29</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 2 November, 1 December 1859.

## **Chapter One**

### **“The campaign is now fairly opened”: January-November 1860**

As the national convention season of 1860 approached and voters prepared to render their verdict on the Union’s future, slavery remained a troublesome issue that threatened the Valley’s tranquility even though it was interwoven with the region’s economy. Overseers and their whips may not have crossed the river, but the institution’s influence was always present, informing the views of both casual and serious political observers. White citizens knew that slave labor contributed to the region’s productivity, allowing them to benefit from such toil, but most Valley whites thought it more important to maintain the status quo than to disrupt that which was a fact of daily life. South Bankers lived among slavery’s victims, while North Bankers lived with both the knowledge of slavery’s existence and the hope that abolitionists would not release a flood of black emigration across the river. But fear of a black exodus northward did not prevent a minority of North Bankers such as Salmon P. Chase from stirring up dissension by supporting selectively the abolitionist agenda. Since the 1830s, Chase had labored tirelessly for black Americans’ rights, advocating in Cincinnati courts for those charged in cases involving fugitive slaves, even while he called for harmony as he vacated the state’s gubernatorial chair.<sup>1</sup>

In January, as public officials celebrated the new economic opportunities associated with the opening of the Louisville-Nashville line, the trans-river connections of the Underground Railroad remained intact and fully operational. Attorneys with political views similar to Chase’s enjoyed ample opportunity to make use of their legal training on behalf of oppressed blacks, both free and enslaved. The raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry stirred the North Bank’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983), 100.

small black population to redouble its effort to aid brethren across the river. In their eyes, writes Keith Griffler, Brown's martyrdom "sounded the tocsin for an all-out assault" on slavery. That the leader of the Virginia raid had begun his antislavery career working on Ohio's Underground Railroad, coupled with the fact that the region supplied many of the raids "combatants," undoubtedly unnerved South Bank slaveholders. Living in Louisville at the time, antislaveryite Eliza Otis noted in her diary how slaves held onto the idea that they were created free and that such an idea stayed with them because they have "the right to the hope of immortality." Later in the spring, as she traveled up the Ohio River on a packet, Otis noticed that one of her fellow passengers was a young mulatto girl, leading her to write later, "I trembled as I thought of her future, belonging as she did to a wronged and outraged race" whose spirit would be fettered by "the iron hand of tyranny" if circumstances did not change. Ever alert for fugitive slaves, ferry boat captains inspected their passengers carefully. Just a fortnight after the revelry of New Year's celebrations had subsided in Covington, Kentucky, a woman dressed in a veil boarded a ferry bound for Cincinnati. The captain on duty collected her fare but her silence aroused his suspicion. When her veil was removed he discovered that she was a slave who had covered her face with flour in a bold attempt to reach freedom.<sup>2</sup>

While a handful of activist abolitionists threatened cross-river relations, racism brought together a majority of white North and South Bankers. They generally believed that blacks were unworthy of "republican citizenship." Influenced by the racial standards of the era in which they

---

<sup>2</sup> Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 123; Ann Gorman Condon, ed., *Architects of Our Fortunes: The Journal of Eliza A.W. Otis with Letters and Civil War Journal of Harrison Gray Otis* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2001), 38-39, 104-5 (in her journal, Otis quotes portions of a speech delivered in the House of Representatives by John Armor Bingham about Hinton Rowan Helper's book, *The Impending Crisis of the South*); *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 11 January 1860 (the paper reported that the woman was promptly returned to her owner).

lived, many harbored a bigotry that one historian says was “so visceral and powerful that it often required no justification” or sustaining logic. This consensus played an important role in the state and national political campaigns of 1860.<sup>3</sup>

North Bankers, like their neighbors on the South Bank, occasionally expressed their antipathy toward blacks in an aggressive manner. Papers such as the *New Albany Daily Ledger* sometimes encouraged violence against blacks by drawing attention to their presence or by blaming them for mischief, although widespread violence did not occur in New Albany until 1860. In August of that year, the town’s small black community gathered for a neighborhood picnic. At one point, a minister criticized the Democrats for permitting ignorant Irish and Germans to vote and then exhorted his audience to stand up for their rights. The following evening a mob of young white men broke up a black dance and chased the blacks through the streets. One black man fired at a German resident, leading to a gathering of two hundred men in the marketplace and subsequent threats against innocent blacks. Blaming black leaders for the violence, the *Ledger* recruited George Washington Carter, a wealthy black barber, “to write a letter distancing himself from the remarks made at the picnic.” Municipal authorities tried to avoid further altercations by warning blacks who had arrived after 1851 to leave because they were in violation of the state constitution passed that year. White citizens in nearby Jeffersonville refused to allow New Albany’s displaced blacks to settle in their town and quickly expelled those who boldly tried to do so. The *Madison Daily Evening Courier* reported on August 13 that “the movement made by the New Albanians to remove the free negroes who have been living there, has had the desired effect. Twenty-one left on Friday for the North and others

---

<sup>3</sup> Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 94.

will follow.” Such perceived “negro carelessness” toward municipal authority, as Kentuckian Charles Short noted, proved to whites that their views were justified.<sup>4</sup>

Events such as these reflected a deep-seated fear of racial amalgamation among border state whites. “The designs of Providence in the civilization of men have always been accomplished by the instrumentality of races,” Indianan George A. Ricknell declared in June. “At present our own race [predominates] . . . and our business is to keep it there.” Ricknell insisted that whites could not “keep the lead if we debase our stock by the mixture of African blood, and there is no middle ground between amalgamation and the absolute supremacy of the white blood.” As ardently race-conscious as any Southern slaveholder, he affirmed that it did not really matter “what becomes of a few negroes” as long as “our great American experiment of freedom for the white races” could be worked out. He suggested that “probably negroes from this country are destined hereafter to give the African races all the civilization of which they are capable in Africa,” thereby turning the “partial evil” of American slavery into a “universal good.” With such convictions so widely accepted, it is clear why white North Bankers declined for the most part to embrace the antislavery cause.<sup>5</sup>

In this milieu, then, Democrats and Republicans, old-line Whigs and Know-Nothings, conservatives and moderates, and slavery’s advocates and opponents prepared to wage battle for the nation’s highest office and, theoretically at least, control of the country’s future course. In the aftermath of Brown’s failed raid, the citizenry of the central Ohio River Valley discouraged

---

<sup>4</sup> Darrel E. Bigham, *On Jordan’s Banks: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 40-41; Lawrence M. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-1887* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 57-58; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 13 August 1860; Charles Wilkins Short Journal, 11 August 1860, Filson Historical Society, Louisville.

<sup>5</sup> George A. Ricknell to William H. English, 1 June 1860, William Hayden English Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. English represented Indiana’s Second Congressional District, which included New Albany.

extremism and encouraged moderation. Amid customary political partisanship, public utterances were generally restrained. On January 2, in his final address to the Ohio General Assembly before he left office, Republican governor and ambitious presidential aspirant Salmon P. Chase called for peace and harmony. Never to be mistaken as a conservative or moderate on the issue of slavery, much less one of the institution's supporters, he condemned attempts to incite servile insurrection. The people of the region, he said, "desire *Union and Concord*; not Discord and Disunion." Despite many Ohioans' opposition to the federal Fugitive Slave law, he said, it had been executed in the state and Ohioans had never resisted it "with illegal force." Chase's public position revealed an appreciation of his state's location on the river and, more specifically, his adopted home town of Cincinnati's special relationship with Kentucky and the South.<sup>6</sup>

Chase was not the only North Bank Republican who tempered political partisanship with border state realities. In February, delegates to the Republican convention in Dearborn County, Indiana, resolved that "the principle of popular sovereignty was 'as old as our government, and that the Republican party now, as ever, is ready to stand and abide by it.'" Such a position was inconsistent with national party policy, leading Republicans farther north to express "utter disgust" with the pronouncement. It was not, however an unusual position for Republicans in southern Indiana. Some Southern-born residents of the lower portion of the state, a good number of whom were old Whigs, were "naturally drawn into Republican circles," argues one historian. This helps to explain why "Southern Indiana Republicanism was often so conservative, why there was little sympathy for abolitionism, and why popular sovereignty often received Republican support." Even as it supported the national party's call for a homestead bill, the

---

<sup>6</sup> Christine Dee, ed., *Ohio's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 30-32.

*Madison Daily Evening Courier* reminded readers on both banks that “it is no part of the Republican programme to interfere with slave labor where it is.” Democrats, argued the *Ledger*, were keenly aware that their Republican opponents were “now making a desperate effort to be *conservative* and *moderate*” in an attempt to lure Know-Nothings and old Whigs into their coalition. In his inaugural address in January, Ohio’s incoming Republican governor William Dennison was unequivocal in his opposition to slavery, but tempered his remarks by acknowledging that the state’s geographical position “forever identifies her destiny with that of the great valley of the West.” He affirmed that “whatever may affect the growth or prosperity of this highly favored region, must be of interest to us”; the “material progress” and improvement of the Ohio River was a foremost consideration. His call for federal support to remove obstructions in the river was consistent with his party’s Whiggish antecedents. Prudent Republicans recognized that extreme partisan rhetoric in a national campaign could jeopardize their electoral success in critical border states such as Ohio and Indiana. Sentiment recognizing that extremism had no place in border areas resonated with Henry J. Hayden in Ohio County, Indiana, who expressed an appreciation for North Bankers’ awareness of how much was at stake in the national campaign. “In most every paper we pick up we see the following words ‘The Union, it must be preserved,’ I beg leave to change that a little,” he said. Instead, the phrase should “say OUR SOCIETY it must be preserved.” Hayden believed that for the Union to be secure, the threads that comprised that Union, such as the trans-river societal connections of the Valley, needed to remain intact.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), 26; Elmer Duane Elbert, “Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War, 1858-1861” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1967), 207-208; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 24 March 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 7 February 1860 (the emphasis is mine); *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 10 January 1860; Speech of Henry J. Hayden



While the approaching political conventions and canvass invigorated the political debate and sharpened the partisanship, the rhetoric remained remarkably civil considering the high stakes. In the spring of 1860 candidates and their surrogates juggled two necessities: getting their message out and doing so in a manner that made them appear reasonable and pragmatic. The appearance of extremism could doom a candidate. “As long as the Ohio washes the shore of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio,” declared Kentuckian J. Young Brown, “our Union [must] be preserved in its purity and in its integrity.” He urged his fellow Ohio Valley citizens to “go on as members of one common family” reflecting “the life, the hope, and the beauty and the ornament of the nation.” John B. Norman informed his readers that “New Albany is less tinctured with the abominable abolition spirit than any other place of its size in the North” and reminded Kentuckians especially that such doctrines “meet with no favor from our citizens.” Louisville’s George Prentice believed that regardless of the campaign’s outcome opposition should come from within the Union, not from outside. From Indiana, James Collins wrote to John J. Crittenden, informing Kentucky’s elder statesman that many in his area opposed those who were throwing “the country into anarchy and ruin.” The extremism fueling both parties, he lamented, left voters with only “a choice of evils.” Despite its vociferous defense of state rights and the Democratic party of James Buchanan, the *Louisville Courier* recognized the virtues of endorsing moderate James Guthrie as the commonwealth’s favorite son candidate for the White House. Guthrie’s perceived credentials as a conservative Southern man would be offset, many believed, by his national reputation gained in part through his service as Secretary of the Treasury under

---

before the Juvenile Lyceum in the vicinity of Rising Sun, Indiana, 11 January 1860, John James Hayden Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Franklin Pierce. In the view of citizens such as Unionist Thomas Speed, Guthrie was “one of Kentucky’s greatest men.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite challenges from within and without, the Democratic party of the central Ohio River Valley remained a viable organization in early 1860. After all, the party held four of the region’s seven Congressional seats. As delegates to the national convention prepared for their quadrennial meeting to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, in late April, Democratic Congressman John W. Stevenson of Covington chided the extreme sectionalists. “I regard disunion as a remedy for nothing,” he wrote, although he expressed fear that “the point may be reached [when] human [and] self preservation may require it!” Ever the Southern borderite, he blamed Northern extremists especially for the nation’s woes, insisting that “the danger to the Union consists in this bitter hatred to slavery in the free states.” He bewailed the dearth of Northern compromisers such as the late Daniel Webster, the publication of Hinton Rowan Helper’s inflammatory *Impending Crisis of the South*, and John Brown’s raid, the latter two of which he said served only to deepen Southerners’ fear. Still, he said, “I do not think that the election of [leading Republican aspirant William H.] Seward is any ground for secession.” He rejected the disunionism of one Southern colleague even as he acknowledged that “we are in a crisis!” Another stalwart Democratic moderate, Indianan Cornelius O’Brien, remained hopeful about the future: “I believe that if prudent and temperate courses prevail in the deliberations of

---

<sup>8</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 6 February 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 24 March 1860; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 6 January 1860; James Collins to John J. Crittenden, 2 February 1860, Reel 11, Vols. 21-22, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 12, 14 January 1860; Captain Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons-the Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 73.

the Charleston Convention,” he wrote in February, “we will have a good chance [in the fall election] in this State, Illinois, and perhaps other States of the Northwest.”<sup>9</sup>

On the eve of the convention, the *Louisville Courier* urged the delegates to nominate a man who it believed was capable of resisting “the forces of Abolition fanaticism and Know Nothing hypocrisy.” James Guthrie, “the sage statesman of Kentucky,” it insisted, was best equipped to unite New England antiabolitionists, Southern state rights advocates, “conservative” Kentuckians and Virginians, and “loyal” Pennsylvanians. In the newspaper’s view, the former Treasury secretary would “rise above the tumult and with a steady voice” unite “the loyal sons of the Middle States” and “the conservative men of all States and of all sections.” Moreover, “the commercial interests of all the States . . . would receive his nomination as a guarantee of national prosperity, credit, and commercial advancement.” One Louisville man agreed, suggesting that once supporters of Illinois’s Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas realized the futility of supporting him, they would undoubtedly be willing to support “any moderate southern man” like Guthrie. He reported that his conversations with such men revealed that they were “friendly disposed” toward Guthrie and he would be their second choice behind Douglas. In his view, the Kentucky lawyer possessed all the necessary qualities—integrity, a moderate conservatism, and

---

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth C. Martis, ed., *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789-1989* (New York and London: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989), 103-113; John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 27 January 1860, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati; Cornelius O’Brien to William Holman, 10 February 1860, Holman-O’Brien Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Like many observers, Stevenson believed that New York Senator William H. Seward would be the Republican nominee for president. For a good discussion of the events leading to Seward’s defeat and Lincoln’s nomination, see Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 211-56. Throughout the antebellum era, the term “disunion” was often understood to be a broad euphemism for the nation’s growing sectional estrangement. In her recent book on antebellum sectionalism, Elizabeth Varon argues that the rhetoric of “Disunion” fell into five categories: “a *prophecy* of national ruin, a *threat* of withdrawal from the federal compact, an *accusation* of treasonous plotting, a *process* of sectional alienation, and a *program* of regional independence” (her emphasis). These were “distinct but overlapping” even as the way in which they were used evolved over time. See Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 5.

an enviable public service record—to make his candidacy palatable to enough Northern delegates to secure the nomination.<sup>10</sup>

The looming political events of this election year stirred anticipation and trepidation in the Valley. One man commented that the season brought a “political kaleidoscope” that was “in constant motion,” often “too transient” and unpredictable for “excited aspirants” to fully grasp. Citizens along the border could only hope that the results would not prove too divisive. After an enjoyable evening with friends, Eliza Otis wrote that “these horriblous [sic] times are a fruitful topic for thought and conversation. The political horizon is dark and clouded, but mayhaps the storm will pass over, with a few fitful gusts, a few lightning flashes, and faint mutterings of thunder.” She hoped that “every lightning flash, every mutter of the thunder of that political storm and raging [would] be a warning, and an admonition to the lover of his home and country.”<sup>11</sup>

Democrats convened on April 23 in an environment that for Northerners was unfriendly. As one historian describes it, Charleston “was the worst possible place for the convention”; Douglas’s delegates in particular “felt like aliens in a hostile land.” With fire-eating orators filling the streets with disunionist rhetoric, many men were concerned that some of the Southern delegations would bolt the convention if Douglas, the favorite of most Northern delegates, was nominated. If Southern extremists intended to leave the hall and refuse to support the party’s nominee, then “they ought not to be allowed to take part in the deliberation of the Convention,” declared the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. “It is dishonorable [for] extreme Southern men to ask

---

<sup>10</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 19 April 1860.

<sup>11</sup> John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 13 March 1860, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati; Condon, ed., *Architects of Our Fortunes*, 25 (quotation from 5 January 1860 entry in Eliza Otis’s journal).

Northern and Western Democrats to support their candidate if he is nominated” while at the same time refusing to support “the [convention’s] decision if it is in favor of *our* preference.” James Faran, the newspaper’s editor-in-chief, believed that Douglas was the best candidate and argued that support for the party would be increased if Southern extremists departed sooner rather than later. Their exodus “would have the same effect as cutting off a diseased limb from a healthy body,” he insisted. Seeking to assuage in advance those whose partisan feathers might be ruffled by the delegates’ decision, John Norman urged “all true patriots” to “acquiesce in the wisdom of those whose duty it is to select a standard bearer for the great Democratic party, even if their own particular favorite be not chosen.” The National Democracy faced tremendous, maybe even insurmountable obstacles in nominating a candidate capable of placating its many constituencies. Nevertheless, Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin felt encouraged enough to tell a friend that “I think we have a fair chance to get a candidate and a President from K[entucky].”<sup>12</sup>

Unable to settle on a candidate in Charleston, the delegates agreed to meet in Baltimore on June 18 in an effort to overcome their divisions. Covington’s John Stevenson blamed the party’s failure in Charleston on “an overzealous [and] blind idolatry to men, rather than principle. The squabble over a platform,” he said, revealed the party’s “sectional . . . character.” He believed that such problems could have been avoided if the Democrats had adhered to the Cincinnati platform of 1856 “with a full [and] unequivocal endorsement of the principle in [Chief Justice Roger] Taney’s opinion in the case of Dred Scott.” A party leader from southern Indiana believed that Northern delegates had compromised as much as they could on the

---

<sup>12</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 214; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 24 April 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 19 April 1860; Beriah Magoffin to Thomas B. Stevenson, 9 April 1860, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

platform and still retain any hope for electoral success in the fall. “The platform adopted is as far as we can go,” William Holman told a friend, if we are to “sustain ourselves in the free states.” The congressman, whose district included communities along the North Bank, remained convinced that Douglas was the only Democrat who stood a “ghost of a chance of being elected” regardless of what the final platform said. Three days after the convention adjourned, Douglasites in Cincinnati met in support of their man. One attendee declared that he held “the highest respect for the South” but that Southerners must meet Northern Democrats halfway. If Southern extremists have their way, he warned, “the days of the Democratic party are numbered.” A Democratic editor in New Albany believed that with the possible exception of South Carolinians there was enough “conservative Union sentiment” among the citizenry “to rebuke the men who have taken upon themselves the heavy responsibility of attempting to divide and break up the Democratic party.” Some state rights advocates in Kentucky insisted that the nomination of James Guthrie would have assuaged the frustration of enough delegates to enable them to depart for home prepared to campaign for their nominee. Instead, concluded Walter Haldeman, sectionalism continued to grow. “Our Union cannot exist with a sectional party at the North contending against a sectional party at the South, and things seem to be inevitably drifting to such a division of parties,” he wrote. In a meeting on May 12, anti-Douglas men in Boone and Kenton counties declared their preference for a Kentuckian such as James Guthrie or John C. Breckinridge, and urged the delegates who stomped out of the Charleston meeting to attend the Baltimore convention in an effort to reach an accord with their Northern peers. One correspondent best summarized the feelings of many: “after a painful and protracted illness,” he

said, the Democratic party had succumbed to “gangrene of the bowels, more generally known as ROT GUT.”<sup>13</sup>

In the months leading up to the spring conventions, moderate political observers had consistently mentioned John Bell as a possible presidential candidate. Even the Republican *Cincinnati Gazette* acknowledged that Bell was “a true Statesman of the National school of HENRY CLAY, and withal a Western man, we freely say that we could ourselves support him . . . yet . . . we doubt the possibility of concentrating the Northern Opposition vote in his favor.” The sixty-four-year-old slaveholding Tennessean was in the twilight of his career. Although cold and formal in manner, he had the appropriate credentials. He was a long-time Whig who had voted against the Kansas-Nebraska Act and who was not disposed to aggressively push slaveholders’ political rights. That he was, in the words of one historian, “not a man of much stature” was probably his greatest liability.<sup>14</sup>

Bell’s nomination by the newly formed Constitutional Union party elicited considerable commentary from both sides of the Ohio River. Drawing on its principal center of support in Cincinnati, the party’s state convention in Ohio endorsed Bell’s selection even before it was made official. A significant number of Kentucky Unionists flocked to Bell’s side, many of them of the opinion that he was, as one newspaper reported, “a statesman of enlarged experience and of tried sagacity, and a patriot of . . . unflinching loyalty.” Known for his poetic flourishes, George Prentice told Louisvillians that the Bell-Everett ticket “kindles the spirit like the mellow

---

<sup>13</sup> John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 14 May 1860, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 15 May 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 6 May 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 8 May 1860; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 2, 18 May 1860; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 9 May 1860. Holman represented Indiana’s Fourth Congressional District, which included Aurora.

<sup>14</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 17 January 1860; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 417.

strain [of a] bugle.” A correspondent of Prentice’s paper gushed, “A new Revolutionary bell has sounded . . . the Union, it must be preserved!” Support for Bell came from all quarters, he said, “Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures cry out,” and he urged “American patriotism to come forward now, and assume its majestic throne to be raised over the ruins of vile parties, over the . . . dust of the platforms of political demagogues, its foundation, our Constitution, its pillars the Union and the Laws.” In New Albany, John Norman concluded that despite Bell’s mediocrity he will “no doubt . . . command a large support from the conservative portion of the [Democratic] Opposition” on both sides of the river. Michael Garber of Madison, however, eschewed flattery and criticized the Constitutional Unionists, saying that any effort to position themselves, “as standing between the great parties . . . is impudent and absurd.” He believed they were more dangerous than “the bogus Democracy,” in part because citizens knew something about Democratic policy, but such was not the case with Bell’s party. Declining to offer a concrete platform was similar to the ostrich sticking its head in the sand. As far as Garber was concerned, Constitutional Unionists were merely “hiding [their] head and leaving the entire body exposed to the kicks of the indignant voters the new party [sought] to deceive.” Surprisingly, the often astute Republican underestimated the attractiveness a statesmanlike middle-of-the-road candidate would have for many North and South Bankers.<sup>15</sup>

While Democrats struggled to reach a consensus and the Constitutional Unionists settled on their man, Republicans prepared to select their nominee for the White House. Wary of the potential divisiveness of their cause along the border, Ohio Valley Republicans occasionally

---

<sup>15</sup> Eugene H. Roseboom, *The History of the State of Ohio: The Civil War Era, 1850-1873* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944), 367-68; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 11, 17 May 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 11 May 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 14 May 1860. A noted orator, Edward Everett was a former Massachusetts governor and senator.



moderated their rhetoric. In mid-April, Indiana gubernatorial candidate Henry Lane told a crowd in Jeffersonville, Indiana, that he had been born in Kentucky and did not want to interfere with slavery, and that he had idolized Henry Clay “ever since he had entered in politics.” In reporting the use of convicts as unpaid labor outside the prison in Jeffersonville, the *Madison Daily Evening Courier* supported the residents’ opposition, calling such labor “demoralizing” and inconsistent with the basic tenets of free wage labor, a key issue for Republicans. It urged prison officials to keep their laborers behind the prison’s walls, and then drew a comparison between the local dispute and the more volatile conflict between Northern free labor and slavery. We say to “the owners of involuntary slave labor,” its editor wrote, “stay where you are, we are content” to leave you alone as long as your chattels do not infringe on our free-labor system. A Republican organ in New Albany went further, expressing regret for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. With their convention just a month away, Republicans were challenged to adhere to the party’s tenets while at the same time appealing to undecided voters.<sup>16</sup>

Republicans met boldly in Louisville and Covington to select delegates to the Chicago convention. In Louisville they gathered at the Masonic Temple, where they affirmed their support for the Union and the Constitution and denounced as enemies “those who stake the perpetuity of the Union upon the success of their own party.” They expressed opposition to the spread of slavery into the territories, while acknowledging that in the South it was “the creature of local and municipal law.” Where proslavery legislation already existed, they said, masters’ rights must be respected. Congress, they contended, did not have the authority to interfere with slavery “within the several States.” Like their fellow North Bank Republicans they called for

---

<sup>16</sup> Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 33-34; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 12 April 1860; *New Albany Tribune*, reprinted in the *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 14 April 1860.

homestead legislation, opposed the reopening of the African slave trade, and, true to their Whiggish heritage, supported federal subsidies for a transcontinental railroad in order to further strengthen the Union. Bland Ballard introduced a successful resolution that called for the colonization of freed blacks south of the Rio Grande. On April 25 another assemblage convened at the Covington city hall and selected as two of its officers South Bankers W. D. Gallagher of Oldham County and J. J. Hawes of Louisville. Early in the proceedings, a resolution was introduced that declared “the right of free thought and free speech is necessary to the maintenance of free institutions.” Aware that many slaveholders perceived such rhetoric as inflammatory, the convention prudently tabled the motion. Delegates then proceeded to avow their loyalty to the Union and the Constitution and their recognition of slavery in the states where it currently existed. “We deny to Congress all power over the institution of Slavery within the States and claim for the people of the States themselves only the right under their own constitutional and moral responsibilities to establish and regulate or abrogate the institution.” They did, however, make clear their opposition to slavery’s spread into the western territories and expressed their support for the colonization of free blacks in Central or South America. The embryonic development of Republican organizations in northern Kentucky should not be overemphasized, however, as support for the party south of the river remained minuscule. As one visitor commented, Republican conventions were “a new thing in Kentucky I fancy.” Nevertheless, the very existence of open efforts by the party to establish a toehold on slavery’s soil troubled South Bankers and would in the coming months lead to repeated attacks from Louisville’s three major newspapers. Most agreed that the Republican party would never be a national one.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 14 April 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 26, 27 April 1860; Condon, ed.,

Illinoisan Abraham Lincoln's nomination on the third ballot in Chicago brought mixed responses from the Valley. Party supporters in Ohio were generally pleased with the choice. Many friends of Cincinnati Rutherford Hayes believed that Lincoln, a lawyer in Springfield, would be elected, although Hayes had his doubts, concluding that "on the whole, I think Lincoln's chances the best, but not a moral certainty." Hayes felt that if Lincoln stumbled, Bell would stand the best chance of being elected. In Kentucky, Lincoln found little support, even though he was a native of that state. Among Southern-rights advocates he was criticized not only for his Republican principles but also for his lack of experience in the public arena and his unstatesmanlike characteristics. Among other Southerners, however, Lincoln's "memorable canvass" against Douglas in 1858 and his relatively quiet public role afterwards made him, if not acceptable, at least less abhorrent than certain other Republicans. Noted one pro-Southerner, he "is far less objectionable, on the score of antecedents, to a very large class in the party of which he is the candidate, who, while acting with it, claim to be moderate, conservative, and Constitutional men." For those who opposed Lincoln and the Republicans, the awkward small-town Illinois lawyer was "the most formidable candidate [the Republican] party could have selected." In southeastern Indiana, Republicans of various stripes supported the selection, even though Lincoln was not their first choice, because he opposed slavery's extension and black equality, believed that the federal fugitive slave statute should be enforced, and rejected abolition. For South Bank Unionist Absalom Johnson, though, John Bell's arrival in Louisville was a more important matter than whom the Republicans nominated; Lincoln's victory in

---

*Architects of Our Fortunes*, 91; quotation from 22 March 1860 entry in Eliza Otis's journal. Charles B. Price, Jr., "The Storm of Disunion Over a Border State: Three Editors of Louisville in the Years of Indecision in Kentucky, 1860-1861" (M.A. thesis, Yale University, 1941), 7, 13-14. As if to emphasize the Kentuckians' views regarding master's rights, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that after a brief fight with abolitionists in Aurora, Indianans helped to capture two fugitive slaves who had recently escaped from their masters in Hamilton, Kentucky (reprinted in *Louisville Daily Journal*, 10 May 1860).

Chicago warranted merely a terse seven-word sentence in his diary. Another South Banker who attended the convention returned to Kentucky convinced that the Republicans were not the evil incarnate as portrayed by Southerners. They are, “N” wrote, “an honest set of men” but he cautioned that they were also “wild and enthusiastic” and intended “to have everything their own way.” According to this correspondent, it was difficult to trust men who intended to govern in such a way. He urged the South to “labor honestly and patiently on the side of conservative truth and not fly into a passion” that would provoke Lincoln and his party, if victorious, to respond in kind.<sup>18</sup>

With two candidates formally in the field, the Democrats were left to salvage what they could from their Charleston disaster. Delegates converged on Baltimore in mid-June just as the city entered its humid summer season, hopeful that the Democracy could be “reconstructed” and that the gulf between the Northern and Southern delegations could be bridged. But, as historian William Freehling writes, partisan passion ruled the day: “Northern Democrats’ outrage, together with Lower South Democrats’ fury, doomed the Democracy’s Baltimore convention before brawls over the platform and the candidate could even resume.” Within days, the schism was complete. Lower South delegates nominated Kentucky’s John C. Breckinridge, the current Vice President, on a pro-slavery and Southern-rights platform, while their Northern counterparts

---

<sup>18</sup> Eugene H. Roseboom, *The History of the State of Ohio: The Civil War Era, 1850-1873* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944), 364; Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922), 557-58; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 35; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 19 May 1860; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 91; Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diary, 17 May 1860, Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 1860-1864, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 24 May 1860.

nominated Illinois's Stephen A. Douglas on a popular sovereignty platform. Ohio Valley delegates could only sit and watch as their party fractured.<sup>19</sup>

It did not take long for Valley Democrats to side with a candidate. The nomination of Douglas was marked by a huge bonfire in front of the office of the *Louisville Democrat*. John Jefferson noted that the "Little Giant" was honored with a hundred-gun salute and that the paper's office "was all dressed up for Douglas." A Jeffersonville, Indiana, correspondent announced that "the campaign is now fairly opened." In Douglas, he said, "we have a statesman tried and true, who will maintain inviolate the Constitution and the Union, and the rights it guarantees to the States and the people." One Cincinnati editor celebrated Douglas's nomination by pointing out that Breckinridge's "brilliant future" was in jeopardy because he was now associated with "the disunion bolters." A South Banker who called himself a "Henry Clay Whig" asked why the *Cincinnati Gazette* loaded its columns "with all sorts of matter against" Douglas when it claimed he could not carry a single state. "It seems to me folly," he said sarcastically, "to expend ammunition upon a dead lion." Breckinridge partisans were similarly outspoken. Absalom Johnson observed that supporters of the Vice President gathered in a meeting that "was the noisiest meeting ever held in Louisville." Jefferson County's J. R. Smith told his uncle that he was for the Kentuckian "first-Last-and all the time" even though Douglas appeared to have considerable strength in Louisville. In his view, the Douglasites were the disunionists. After having recently attended a "disgraceful" meeting on behalf of the Illinois senator, Smith wrote, "I only wish all the men of refined feelings . . . had been there to witness what I did and judge for themselves who are the scoundrels and who are the disunion party." He

---

<sup>19</sup> William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 316-19.

was satisfied that the Southern Democrats had “lost nothing . . . from what I herd sayed [sic] that night.”<sup>20</sup>

Amid the partisan enthusiasm, James Guthrie, the former dark horse for the presidential nomination, regretted the “bitterness” of the Democratic party’s split. Although unsure how Kentucky would go in the general election, he told Paul Washington that at the moment he was “favorable to Brck [Breckinridge].” Guthrie, who in October would become president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, remained open to switching his allegiance if events warranted it. He criticized the recent gathering of Breckinridge supporters as “disgraceful to the City” of Louisville because of their apparent refusal to let Douglasites speak. “I had some difficulty with the bad blood on both the Douglas and the Breckinridge ledrs [leaders],” the South Banker complained. At a public meeting in New Albany’s town square in July, E. A. Maginess, a local druggist, railed against the sectionalism that wracked the nation and his party. As he launched his reelection campaign leaving “no effort unmade,” Aurora’s Congressman William Holman decried the boost that party divisions provided the Democrats’ opponents. “It is not the number of Breckinridge men or that they will not support our local ticket,” he said, “but the dispiriting [effect] of division among our men, [and] the confidence created in our opponents that is to be apprehended.” Despite Douglas’s strength in much of southeastern Indiana, the *Vevay News* announced its support for Breckinridge, claiming that its decision “expresses the will of two-thirds of the Democratic party in old Switzerland County.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diary, 23 June, 14 July 1860, Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 1860-1864, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; John Jefferson Diary, 25 June 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Jeffersonville National Democrat*, reprinted in the *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 29 June 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 24, 29 June 1860; J. R. Smith to Uncle James, 18 July 1860, Hughes Family Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

<sup>21</sup> Maury Klein, *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1972), 12-13; James Guthrie to Paul G. Washington, 16 July 1860, James Guthrie Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Lawrence M. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers*

In Indiana, the party's rupture was epitomized by the internecine conflict between U.S. Senator Jesse Bright of Madison and the Douglasites who opposed him. "Bogus Senator Bright," as some adversaries called him, had moved to Madison from Shelbyville, Kentucky, as a child and was for years the Democratic leader in Indiana. During the 1850s, much of his income came from a farm in Gallatin County, Kentucky, and other agricultural investments on both banks of the river. The Kentucky farm was near Warsaw, where he spent considerable time, particularly as he grew older. According to his biographer, the senator at one point owned about twenty slaves, one of whom he brashly brought to Madison only to have her escape his clutches. Bright's Northern enemies denounced his slaveholding and his absenteeism. They referred to his Kentucky home as a "plantation," when in fact it was nothing more than "a rather crude farm of the frontier type." Bright himself apparently referred to the property as merely a "log cabin." Although his official residence was on the North Bank, his status as a slaveholder, his support for Southern-rights, and his alliance with the Buchanan wing of the party against Douglas made him an easy target. In 1860, the battle between the two factions continued as Douglas's supporters wrested control of the state organization from Bright. South Bankers, too, blamed Bright and others of his ilk for the party's internal woes. On July 13, Ira Root told a Douglas meeting in Newport, Kentucky, that Bright was one of several "conspirators" who, "backed up by the national purse to some extent," had "brought about dissensions" by seceding from the Charleston convention when they realized "Judge Douglas had a majority of the votes." A correspondent of John G. Davis "asked, with mock concern, 'has [the increasingly absent] Bright turned up—I hope he has not run into the river—the last I heard of him he was cros[s]ing the river at Jeffersonville.'"

---

*and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-1887* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 45; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 16 July 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 7 July 1860.

With his trans-river ties and multiple loyalties, Bright in some ways represented the complexities of the border region.<sup>22</sup>

With the nomination process over, loyal partisans redoubled their electioneering efforts in anticipation of the fall elections. For Republicans, Indiana and Ohio were among the most critical border states because Lincoln needed both to be elected and Douglas possessed significant strength in the southern counties of each. The Valley's importance to the political parties made national issues local ones. Slavery was always of critical concern to voters, particularly Kentuckians, but for many Hoosiers and Buckeyes free or inexpensive land in the west, particularly among immigrants, and internal improvements remained high on their list. But for most of the citizenry, the Union's preservation remained the paramount issue. Its fate would determine the outcome of the other matters. Correspondent "Nicholas" urged South Bankers to support the moderate John Bell, "in whom lies the salvation of this great and glorious confederacy." The *Louisville Journal*, whose endorsement of the Constitutional Union candidate made it the leading voice for moderation in the Valley, urged its readers on the Fourth of July to keep the "bond" of Union "holy . . . and honor and keep holy this National Sabbath Day always as the covenant of our love and veneration for that bond and for those who made it loved and venerated by the world everywhere." Its editor, George Prentice, decried "the sectional character of the Republican and disintegrated Democratic parties" and lauded John Bell and Edward Everett "as the only hope for pacification of discord and the preservation of the fraternal bond of National Union." In the ensuing months, whenever Prentice traveled and spoke, he wore Henry

---

<sup>22</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 3, 14 July 1860 (the Douglas newspaper grudgingly acknowledged that the ambitious Bright was "a shrewd and successful manager" of political campaigns); Wayne J. Van Der Weele, "Jesse David Bright: Master Politician from the Old Northwest" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1958), 42-43, 230-37; William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton: Including his Important Speeches* (Indianapolis-Kansas City: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1899), 65; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 88-89.



Clay's mantle. Before diverse audiences, historian James Prichard writes, the strong-willed Kentuckian criticized the nation's current crop of leaders for "betraying the sacred trust bequeathed to them" by the Union's founding generation.<sup>23</sup>

Union rallies abounded on both sides of the river as partisans sought to portray their candidate as the one best equipped to preserve the nation. Louisville's Unionist fire chief Absalom Johnson appeared overwhelmed with such engagements during a five-day period in late July, when he attended several, each one seemingly more gratifying than the last. Businessman John Jefferson noted in his diary that a Bell and Everett meeting was held at the city's courthouse on July 6, and the next evening "a vast crowd" attended a pro-Douglas gathering at the same location; the gatherings featured flags, music, cannons, and "some rowdyism," all reflecting the crowds' "great enthusiasm" for their man. A few days later Jefferson attended a Breckinridge assembly but, he complained, "on account of the disturbance made by a parcel of lawless rowdies [perhaps Douglas or Bell partisans], I could hear but little what was said." Nonetheless, "the crowd was large" and was entertained with fireworks, cannons, music, and "big *ship* bonfires." The *Louisville Journal* reported that "the uproar far surpassed everything of the kind ever before known in Louisville." At a summer rally in Covington, Breckinridge supporter Humphrey Marshall responded to a query about secession, declaring that it "would be 'political suicide, and Kentucky would be the very last state to give up the Union.'" He vowed that the Democratic party would fight for its rights within, not outside, the Union. At a picnic near Petersburg, in Boone County, Douglasites proclaimed that "any effort to divide or disorganize the Union should be denounced as the worst feature of treason." They

---

<sup>23</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 260, 267; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 3, 4 July 1860; James M. Prichard, "Champion of the Union: George D. Prentice and the Civil War in Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, Wright State University, 1988), 25-28.

acknowledged Breckinridge's contributions to the party and nation but urged him to pursue "a more patriotic course" by abandoning his quest for the presidency under the Southern Democratic banner. Recalling in his memoir the events of that summer and fall in Kentucky, Thomas Speed wrote that Kentuckians "were alive to what was the great question of the day, which was union or secession," and evinced their "union sentiment" in rally after rally.<sup>24</sup>

While remaining enthusiastically partisan, North Bankers joined in the expressions of fidelity to the Union. J. Wallace Chresly reported that despite inclement weather a diverse body of Douglas men several thousand strong gathered in Aurora, Indiana, on July 21 to proclaim their support for the Illinois senator. "Here religion and nativity were not allowed to become political tests," he said, "but all classes of men . . . were gathered together in one band of brotherhood, fighting in one common cause—the prosperity of our republican institutions." Speakers warned of "the imminent dangers" threatening the Union. In Cincinnati, Lew D. Campbell informed a Bell audience comprised of North and South Bankers that he had once flirted with Republicanism but believed now that the answer to the nation's woes could be found in the simple platform on which the Tennessean ran, "the Union and the Constitution, and the enforcement of the laws." Cassius M. Clay, a cousin of Kentucky's Great Compromiser, elicited loud cheers when he told a mostly Republican crowd gathered at Cincinnati's Fifth Street market that he was both a Kentuckian and an American and perceived no conflict at all between the two identities. For men like J. C. Belman, Isaac E. West, and William F. Perkins of the Young Men's National Republican Association, maintaining the Union's integrity meant preserving

---

<sup>24</sup> Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diary, 25-30 July 1860, Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 1860-1864, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; John Jefferson Diary, 6-16 July 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 16 July 1860; Lowell H. Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 124; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 17 July 1860; Speed, *Union Cause in Kentucky*, 16-18.

individual freedom. “We are making great efforts to rally all the friends of Freedom in this [Hamilton] county for ‘Freedoms’ candidates,” they told Indianan Henry Lane. In a crowded school house in West Madison, Jerry W. Douglas proclaimed himself an “ardent” supporter of popular sovereignty because it permitted the formation of free states in the western territories. But, he went on to say, since the Democratic party had abandoned the principle, the Republicans were the only ones who favored “free states.” And, he concluded, even if that were not the case, “the necessity of defeating Breckinridge, the candidate of the disunionists, would be reason sufficient to justify any Democrat who . . . forsakes his party for the general good, and the perpetuity of the union of the States.” Thus, as fall approached, the desire to preserve the Union created by the Founding Fathers enjoyed overwhelming support on both sides of the Ohio River.<sup>25</sup>

For North and South Bankers, agreeing on the necessity of the Union’s survival was easier than confronting the dilemma of slavery. Agitating the slavery issue exasperated those with temperate tendencies. Louisvillian Samuel S. Nicholas, one of John Crittenden’s frequent correspondents, worried that the Democrats’ persistent “agitation of the slave propaganda” would continue “until the North becomes sectionalized with the South, the accompanying result being *disunion*.” The judge lamented the “unfortunate Dred Scott decision” which abrogated the Missouri Compromise line, north of which slavery in the Louisiana Purchase had been prohibited, for it antagonized antislavery people unnecessarily. Natural barriers alone would prevent the westward expansion of slavery, he insisted: “the laws of climate & trade afford the most reliable . . . pro[hi]bition. By merely abstaining from unnecessary & unfruitful action,” he

---

<sup>25</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 26 July 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 21 July, 13 August 1860; J. C. Belman et al. to Henry S. Lane, 28 October 1860, Henry Smith Lane Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 6 August 1860.

concluded, “the peace & harmony of the nation can be restored, without the surrender of any right or power by the north or the slightest peril to any of its sectional interests or prejudices.”<sup>26</sup>

Some Valley citizens, however, ignored the advice of Nicholas and other moderates. Pro-Bell Unionists in Gallatin County wanted slavery’s safeguards extended and called for “the protection of all kinds of property in the Territories as expounded in the Dred Scott decision.” Elsewhere, Peter and Porter Devore of New Albany were arrested in Cloverport, Kentucky, for allegedly “running away slaves.” In the wake of clear calls from South Bankers asking for the protection of their property, such defiance rankled slaveholders and strained regional ties. As Jefferson County slaveholder Mildred Bullitt grumbled, “the thought of civil war is to me most horrible, but we cant live as we are, for the abolitionists are unbearable, when they come among us they do . . . meddle so much in our affairs.”<sup>27</sup>

Like Kentucky moderates, many North Bankers preferred that people leave the institution of slavery alone and avoid any discussion of it. Jonathan Payne reminded Indianans that the Compromise of 1850 had clearly addressed “the vexed question of African slavery” by codifying the “Doctrine of Nonintervention.” The doctrine, he explained, decreed that Congress lacked the authority to prohibit slavery in the territories. What’s more, the Douglas Democrat said, “the people are free and independent, and have the right to form and regulate their domestic institutions.” In both Indiana and Ohio Democrats rebuked Republicans for making slavery such a political thorn. The *New Albany Ledger* alerted its readers to the “aggressive warfare” Republicans were conducting against “the institutions of fifteen sovereign States of this

---

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, 3 April 1860, Reel 11, Vols. 21-22, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>27</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 26 July, 15 August 1860; Mildred Ann Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 23 October 1860, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville.

confederacy.” It warned that Republican victories in the fall state elections and the national canvass in November “will make these Abolition agitators still more arrogant and still more imperious in their demands.” James Faran’s *Cincinnati Enquirer* attacked Cincinnati Congressman John Gurley for attempting to introduce a resolution that would strike down the “chattelizing of humanity and the holding of persons as property.” The paper argued that “it has been generally conceded that Congress could not touch slavery in the States—that it was an institution purely local in its character, and beyond its reach; but,” it concluded, “Mr. Gurley seems to think that Congress could and ought to free every human being—negroes, convicts, and all!” Democrats pressed their point as the fall approached. Congressman George Pendleton of Ohio’s First District told voters in Hamilton County that his Republican opponent was an abolitionist whose opposition to slavery in the territories did not pass constitutional muster, an argument that resonated well with a citizenry that tended to view extremists with suspicion.<sup>28</sup>

In criticizing their Republican opponents’ stance on slavery, Democrats and Constitutional Unionists on both banks failed to recognize that the party had moderated somewhat since its founding, particularly along the Ohio River. David Potter argues that by 1860 the party “was neither as zealous nor as homogenous as the crusading band which had sprung up six years before in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act.” He points out that Lincoln “combined moderation and antislavery in the most attractive combination possible by making full concession of the constitutional right of the southern states to maintain slavery” and confined “his attack to the view that slavery was morally wrong and that it ought not to go into the territories.” Indeed, as November neared Lincoln affirmed in a letter to George Prentice that he

---

<sup>28</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 11 July, 11 August 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 26 September 1860; Thomas S. Mach, “Gentleman George” Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2007), 53.

had “conservative views and intentions,” and regretted how his stance on slavery had been misrepresented by “bad men . . . both North and South.”<sup>29</sup>

Across the Valley a considerable number of Republicans responded to their critics by emphasizing less contentious issues. Influenced by their relationship with South Bankers, Republicans in southern Indiana generally eschewed abolitionism, which made the movement of Northern Democrats to the Republican party easier. In late July the *Madison Courier* urged citizens of every political stripe “who are in favor of free homesteads [and] . . . the perpetuity of our glorious Union” to come out and support the party’s candidate for lieutenant governor, Oliver P. Morton, who was scheduled to speak at the town’s courthouse on July 30. Republicans along the river in Indiana wanted to leave slavery alone where it existed even though they were not as eager as the Democrats to compromise with the South on slavery in the territories. Thus, according to Elmer Duane Elbert, their region was seen as conservative and lacking in “the intense emotions which prevailed throughout the country.”<sup>30</sup>

In Cincinnati and other areas with a significant number of foreign-born voters, Republicans called for equal rights for all native and immigrant whites and urged the passage of a homestead law that would open up the western territories to economic opportunity and settlement. The party moved away from its nativist rhetoric of the 1850s as it courted the region’s sizable German vote. Thus, argues Andreas Dorpalen, Germans found themselves “torn between their desire to see their personal liberties and political rights safeguarded and their hope to carve free homesteads” out of the federal lands in the western territories. “While the

---

<sup>29</sup> David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 20; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 427; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 12 vols. (New York: Tandy-Thomas Company, 1905), 6: 66-67. Lincoln wrote to Prentice on 29 October 1860.

<sup>30</sup> Elbert, “Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War,” 86, 157; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 27 July 1860.

Democrats seemed more likely to protect the former,” he notes, “only the Republicans appeared willing to grant the latter.” Republican rhetoric emphasizing Lincoln’s honesty and desire to reinfuse government with basic moral principles undoubtedly aided the effort. At Cheviot, Ohio, in late summer, August Becker addressed a pro-Lincoln crowd in German, eliciting cheers for both Lincoln and John A. Gurley, the district’s incumbent congressman. Party leaders recruited Friedrich Hassaurek, a German leader who had fled the turmoil of his native land and who had been selected as a delegate to the Republican national convention, to spread the Republican vision among his compatriots. George Parsons told the young immigrant, “We desire to hear from you.” Fully aware of Cincinnati’s importance to the Republican cause, the party chairman wanted Hassaurek to maximize his usefulness. “We do not wish to take you away from home service [in Cincinnati] except in such cases as we think you can do more good at other points,” he instructed. Relishing his task, Hassaurek soon after spoke before a crowd of five thousand at Cincinnati’s Findlay Market space, where, according to reports, the audience “was composed almost exclusively of the real working Germans.” Such evidence led Republican partisans to believe that changes were afoot among Douglas Democrats, “especially among the Germans”; indeed, one claimed that “a general revolution” was occurring among Douglas’s followers.<sup>31</sup>

While the true effectiveness of Republican strategy remained to be seen, it did at the very least cause some Germans to weigh their options carefully. In his memoir Cincinnati Charles Reemelin recalled that he had believed Douglas’s ambition made him “dangerous” and Bell’s nativism made him unacceptable, leaving only Lincoln and Breckinridge from which to choose.

---

<sup>31</sup> Andreas Dorpalen, “The German Element and the Issues of the Civil War,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29 (June 1942): 69-71; Maizlish, *Triumph of Sectionalism*, 238 (see also *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 13 October 1860); *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 4, 6, 15 August 1860; George M. Parsons to Friedrich Hassaurek, 4 July 1860, Friedrich Hassaurek Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus. Box 2, Folder 6 contains numerous letters asking Hassaurek to speak to Germans throughout Ohio because of his elevated standing in Cincinnati’s German community.

“The only objection I had to Lincoln,” he wrote, “was his partyism, though I admitted, he had it in a very mild form . . . . I had concluded to vote for Lincoln . . . but his utter heresy, as to Federal Law [regarding slavery in the western territories] . . . raised insuperable [sic] objections in my mind.” Despite the temptation, Reemelin could not bring himself to support Lincoln, primarily because “there was a lawful interpretation of the United States Supreme Court against his ideas.” Although the German leader conceded that none of the candidates had “all the fitness for the office,” he decided ultimately to campaign for Breckinridge, even though he was “anti-slavery in all my feelings.” With the Kentuckian in the White House, he concluded, the nation would “have peace, and gain time to effect an interstate compromise.”<sup>32</sup>

In an August address to the American people reprinted in Ohio Valley newspapers, the National Executive Committee of the Constitutional Union party expressed a view with which many people in the Valley agreed: given the candidacies of Douglas and Breckinridge, “our political condition at this time is at once unnatural and alarming.” Claiming that neither man could win enough states to be elected, in large part because of their divergent views on slavery, the Committee declared that the election of either man would “demoralize our people.” Thus, it argued, the presidential contest should be between John Bell and Abraham Lincoln. The Republican nominee was a respectable man, the Committee admitted, but his experience could not compare to the depth and breadth of Bell’s. Eyeing border areas with anticipation, the Committee appealed to the Valley’s electorate with an argument that was now implicitly understood: “The pro-slavery and anti-slavery agitation which has been so long convulsing the country is as unnecessary as it is mischievous.” The degree to which the public agreed with this

---

<sup>32</sup> Charles Reemelin, *Life of Charles Reemelin, in German: Carl Gustav Rumelin, from 1814-1892* (Cincinnati: Weier and Daiker, 1892), 155-57; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14 August 1860.



sentiment was reflected in the way the Cincinnati Young Men's Mercantile Library Association decided on its lecture series for 1860. The directors determined not to invite any orators who would resort to demagoguery or embrace fanaticism. They would most especially not open the Association's doors to "the sectional issue" of slavery. Thus, eschewing divisiveness, the lectures for that season emphasized culture. Meanwhile, the Ballardsville Baptist Church in Oldham County, Kentucky, voted not to allow political meetings in its building, undoubtedly to avoid the contentiousness frequently seen at such gatherings.<sup>33</sup>

As the cooler winds of early fall slowly pushed the summer aside, the political factions kept the pressure on their opponents. Each side predicted victory in November. Blanton Duncan insisted that his man Bell would win in Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Tennessee. John Jefferson noted in his diary on September 29 that Stephen Douglas was greeted by "an immense crowd" and that "thousands of people are flocking to the city [Louisville] to-day to hear his speech." The grocer listened to the senator's "powerful & convincing speech," which he claimed was attended by "some 15 or 20,000 persons." Incumbent Democratic Congressman William S. Holman remained confident of victory, but given the uncertainty of the times he was leaving nothing to chance, choosing to give speeches twice a day. He informed a supporter that "I am far from being free from embarrassments in this [Indiana's Fourth] District, but I now feel quite confident of success [sic] by a fair majority." He remained convinced that "Breckinridge men" would support local Democratic tickets in the area. Despite his ebullience, however, he acknowledged that with the changing political landscape, "I can scarcely expect to occupy much

---

<sup>33</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 10 August 1860; Mary W. Graham, "The Lyceum Movement and Sectional Controversy, 1860," in *Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict*, ed. J. Jeffery Auer (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), 109-10; August [?] 1860 entry, Ballardsville Baptist Church-Oldham County, Kentucky, Minutes, 1827-1883, abstract compiled by Mrs. A. H. [Edna Scott] McKechnie, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

space in the political movements of the future.” Rutherford Hayes’s report to his uncle reflected his growing optimism about the Republican cause. “We have had a pleasant, lively little election canvass [in Cincinnati],” he said. “Our meetings are prodigious; but for the American [Know-Nothing] element, we could carry this county easily; as it is, we shall do well.” In late September William Preston Johnston, a Breckinridge supporter, wrote to a friend that he spoke to a crowd that was mostly for Douglas or Bell. “The audience [was] nearly all against me,” he said, “but friendly & attentive” when he spoke. “This as well as Jeffersontown where I speak to-day are perfect dens of heresy [but] we gain everywhere by discussion. Our friends are firm.” The outcome of the fall state elections would reveal whose optimism was justified.<sup>34</sup>

Earlier in the year W. G. Harrison of Dearborn County, Indiana, had told a friend that he was quite lonesome living on the river, his loneliness eased only by the hope of a Douglas victory. “About all I live for now,” he wrote, “is to see Douglas Elected-and then [I can] slip of[f] the stage of action.” By fall, Harrison’s dream seemed to be evaporating. In October the Republicans emerged victorious in state elections in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, and with their victories came a growing acknowledgement among many observers that Abraham Lincoln would be the next President. Despite the Republicans’ success, which historian Kenneth Stampp attributes to the turnout of German voters, the Democracy retained vestiges of its traditional power in Indiana. One of only four Democrats in Indiana to be elected to the United States House of Representatives despite the Republican surge, William Holman recognized that he had

---

<sup>34</sup> Blanton Duncan to “My Dear Captain,” 16 August 1860, Blanton Duncan Letter, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; John Jefferson Diary, 29 September-1 October 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 4 September, 26 October 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 5 vols. (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922), 1: 565 (Rutherford B. Hayes wrote to S. Birchard on 7 October 1860); William Preston Johnston to William Campbell Preston Breckinridge, 28 September 1860, Breckinridge Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

been returned to his seat by “the skin of my teeth” with a majority of only about five hundred votes. “The effort to defeat me,” he noted, “was immensely greater than was ever made in the District . . . . I shall hardly be inclined to trust fortune soon again on so uncertain an element.” Holman was convinced that Breckinridge backers had not supported him to the degree he had anticipated. His new colleague James A. Cravens celebrated his victory but told a friend that “I can not reconcile my feelings to our [party’s] defeat in the State.” Republican victories in Ohio encouraged jubilation among many of the party’s supporters in Hamilton County. The *Cincinnati Gazette* trumpeted, “To those who have been in alarm about the safety of the Union, we will simply say the Union is saved. Let us rejoice in the triumph of the glorious cause in which we have been battling.” Congressman John Gurley proclaimed to a Cincinnati crowd that Lincoln’s election was now “beyond all possible doubt,” while Rutherford Hayes all but abandoned his earlier pessimism. “I hope Lincoln goes in,” he said. “All now depends on New York. The October elections settled Pennsylvania and the other doubtful States.”<sup>35</sup>

Notwithstanding the growth of Republican political muscle north of the river, Lincoln’s opponents on the South Bank remained generally optimistic. Louisvillian H. C. Wood told a friend that a recent Douglas meeting featured “the largest crowd that I ever saw.” The candidate “made the best and plainest speach [sic] that I ever heard. [A]t night there was a grand torch light prosesion [sic] in honor of him. [H]e road [sic] all over town in a four horse carrige [sic] with [the] . . . town following him.” When news of the Republicans’ state victories reached

---

<sup>35</sup> W. G. Harrison to “Old Friend” (probably John T. Wilder), 26 March 1860, John Thomas Wilder Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 231; Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 47-48; William S. Holman to Allen H. Hamilton, 20 October 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; James Cravens to William H. English, 21 October 1860, William Hayden English Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 10, 19 October 1860; Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 566. Hayes made his entry on election day, 6 November 1860.

Louisville, the *Journal* defiantly declared, “All is NOT lost! Let not the despairing thought be uttered by Union lips.” Blaming the “Breckinridge Democracy” for the debacle, the paper remained sanguine, opining that “Indiana and Pennsylvania at least may be redeemed in November.” South Bank Democrats continued to skirmish among themselves, however, with each side retaining a belief in the righteousness of its cause. James Guthrie, who had declined to support either Democratic candidate because he “did not consider either the regular nominee of the party,” informed the *Louisville Courier* that the party’s division “must result in the election of Lincoln.” Despite such a gloomy prediction from one of Kentucky’s favorite sons, Breckinridge supporters remained, as one man put it, “satisfied that we are gaining. There are still some doubtfull [sic] men who may be won over.” Bell supporters reflected guardedly on the state of the nation as the Republican wind began to blow more strongly from the North. Some tried to prepare their fellow moderates for the worst. In an open letter to Kentucky governor Beriah Magoffin, an unnamed correspondent asked the Valley’s citizenry, “What has the election of any man to the Chief Magistracy to do with the existence or non-existence of the government and of the country?” Alluding to Lincoln, he reminded people that “the election of a bad man or of a man with vicious political principles to any office is an evil. But it is an evil necessarily incident to every free and republican government.”<sup>36</sup>

Believing that the “signs of the times” prophesied a victory for their party in the national election, South Bank Republicans sought to soften the blow by reassuring their Kentucky opponents that their rights would be preserved. Lincoln and Hamlin, the party’s state Executive Committee declared, “will be sworn to support” the Constitution and “to execute all laws enacted

---

<sup>36</sup> H. C. Wood to Jack [John] Harding, 4 October 1860, John Harding Papers, 1859-1914, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 6, 11 October 1860; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 3 October 1860; William Preston Johnston to “My dear sir,” 30 September 1860, Breckinridge Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

in accordance with its provisions.” This public announcement, which was published in the *Louisville Journal* and received wide distribution five days before the election, pleaded with Kentuckians to acquiesce to the party’s presumed ascent to power, reminding them that “this reasonable request has never yet been denied to any party having the [Constitutional] control of our National Government.” Lincoln and Hamlin, the Committee insisted, “are tried and true men. They come up fully to the Jeffersonian standard. ‘They are honest, capable, and faithful to the Constitution.’ When elected, they will administer the Government for the benefit of the whole country and not for the benefit of one section at the expense of the other.”<sup>37</sup>

With the Republicans’ attempt at reassurance lingering in the minds of those who bothered to listen, the citizens of the central Ohio River Valley went to the polls on November 6, 1860, to vote in the most important presidential election the nation had ever witnessed. In an election-eve editorial, the *Louisville Courier* emphasized the election’s significance. Speaking directly to the commercial and manufacturing men of the Valley, the newspaper’s editor said, “You have a greater personal interest in the result of the election to-morrow than any other class of voters . . . . The location of Louisville at the Falls of the Ohio, its position as a border slave State city, and its railroad connections with the South and Southwest combine to justify the hopes and expectations of those among you who look forward with confidence to a future of unparalleled prosperity and rapidly coming greatness.” As the momentous day dawned in New Richmond, Ohio, a few miles east of Cincinnati, Caleb Swan Walker noted that there was already a national crisis, “but if God is honored,” he wrote, “we need not fear 1860 will be known in history as a year of portentous foreshadowings.” In Cincinnati, Rutherford Hayes

---

<sup>37</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 1 November 1860.

prepared to cast his vote, wondering as he did if South Carolina and “possibly two or three others” would carry through on their threats to secede if Lincoln was elected. The lawyer was convinced that if the “ultra South” tried to follow through on its threat, “the influence of the conservative States” would “hold [them] in the Union.” Aware of the potential for disruption on such an important day, Absalom Y. Johnson in Louisville noted that the end of the canvass came on a “fine day” in which “everything passed off quietly.” Mayor Thomas Crawford of that city, who had earlier asked that all businesses be closed during voting hours to avoid any clash of “angry passions,” was undoubtedly much relieved to see that peace prevailed.<sup>38</sup>

Within forty-eight hours of the polls’ closing, the calamity that moderate men feared was confirmed. “To all real intents and purposes Mr. Lincoln is at this moment the President elect of the United States,” declared a disheartened George Prentice. “We have prayed fervently against this event, and we have worked against it with every energy in our natures strained to the utmost . . . . We have deprecated it earnestly, and we now most sincerely deplore it,” he wrote. In Indiana, the *Madison Courier* exulted in the Republican victory: “The Democracy are annihilated . . . a most glorious political revolution is achieved. Let the country rejoice!” And yet the Valley had, over all, again endorsed moderation. Nearly 60 percent of voters in the Valley opposed the perceived extremist candidates Lincoln and Breckinridge. Only time and events would determine if the expression of such moderation at the ballot box would influence national events in the new year.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 5 November 1860; Caleb Swan Walker, manuscript autobiography, 6 November 1860, Walker Family Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 566 (Hayes recorded his thoughts on 6 November 1860); Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diary, 6 November 1860, Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 1860-1864, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>39</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 8 November 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 7 November 1860.

## Chapter Two “We approach the vortex”: November 1860 – April 1861

“There is a settled purpose on the part of a powerful faction, both in the South and in the North,” preached Samuel R. Wilson, pastor of Cincinnati’s First Presbyterian Church, “to trample down the Constitution, to break up the national Covenant, and in so doing to brave all the inevitable horrors of civil and servile war.” In no uncertain terms, Wilson told his congregation that the perils now facing the nation were caused most immediately by “the election of a President and Vice-President, both of them living in the North, and by a vote of the non-slaveholding states exclusively.” While other factors also contributed to the country’s current difficulties, the election of a sectional president, in the minister’s view, had unleashed the forces of disunion that would most probably lead to civil war.<sup>1</sup>

The national election results suggested the depth of the sectional schism. The Republican Abraham Lincoln swept the electoral votes in the free states, except for three of New Jersey’s seven that went for the Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas. In addition to his votes in New Jersey, Douglas won only Missouri. John C. Breckinridge, the Southern Democrat, carried the entire South except Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee, which the Constitutional Unionist John Bell won. Lincoln’s victory troubled many people in the central Ohio River Valley, even though one South Banker predicted that ultimately “there will be a very general acquiescence in the Election by the Bell & Douglas men, and many Breckinridge men here say Lincoln is Prest [President] & they are for the administration.” While it was too soon to know whether such optimism was warranted, the Valley’s election returns revealed that 58 percent of the voters had

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel R. Wilson, *The Causes and Remedies of Impending National Calamities: An Address by Samuel R. Wilson* (Cincinnati: J. B. Elliott, 1860), 1-7. Wilson delivered this sermon on Sunday, 18 November 1860.

opposed both “extremist” candidates, Lincoln and Breckinridge, choosing instead either Douglas or Bell. On the North Bank, the two moderates received a combined 52 percent of the vote; on the South Bank, 74 percent. Of the fifteen counties along the river, Lincoln won a plurality in only two, Hamilton County, Ohio (where Cincinnati’s German wards helped to provide the margin of victory), and Switzerland County, Indiana, and a majority in only one, Jefferson County, Indiana. On the South Bank, he did best in two of the more urbanized counties, Kenton and Campbell across the river from Cincinnati; but he received there just 8 and 12 percent of the vote respectively. Unsurprisingly, Lincoln tended to do better where the citizenry had stronger ties to antislaveryites and abolitionists. In Jefferson County, Indiana, a center of such activity, nearly 60 percent of the ballots cast went for the Republican. Douglas won a majority of the votes in the Indiana counties of Floyd and Dearborn, and a plurality in the Hoosier counties of Clark and Ohio and the Kentucky county of Campbell. Most voters in the Indiana counties had traditionally turned out for the Democratic party. Bell won pluralities in the South Bank counties of Kenton, Boone, Oldham, and Jefferson, while Breckinridge won a majority in three of the more rural Kentucky counties, Gallatin, Carroll, and Trimble, where the foreign-born population was 5 percent or less and where the proportion of slaves hovered around 14-15 percent. Bell and Breckinridge ran a close race in bucolic Oldham County, where a third of the population was enslaved. According to Frank Heck, the county voting in Kentucky particularly followed traditional Whig/Democratic patterns so closely “that one wonders how strongly Southern rights, fear of secession, or love of the Union—the issues stressed by speakers and editors—figured at all in determining how the voters acted.” What Heck overlooks, though, is the degree to which a



mindset centered on anti-extremism and maintenance of the status quo informed people's electoral decisions.<sup>2</sup>

The response to the Republicans' victory was swift as people recognized the real threat the sectional party's victory posed to the Union's perpetuity. The *Louisville Journal* spelled out the central challenge facing border state moderates: "We must not only counteract Republicanism but quell Disunionism; we must curb [Alabama's William Lowndes] Yancey and [South Carolina's Robert Barnwell] Rhett at the same time that we check Lincoln and [William H.] Seward . . . . It is not enough to guard the Constitution against infraction; we must with equal vigilance guard the Union against disruption." After seeing the poor showing of the sectional candidates Lincoln and Breckinridge in Jefferson County, Kentucky, one businessman noted with relief, "Louisville gives no encouragement to the Disunion part of the South." Despite the election of a Northern sectional candidate, Kentuckian Sallie Harding was still able to put matters into perspective. "Why will people be so blinded by one idea that they can see no good in others who differ in sentiments," she asked her son? "We all regret the election of a Sectional candidate" but even "his political foes speak well" of Lincoln. Harding believed that the President-elect "will attend to his duties (indeed Lincoln says so) as well as any one—He would not if he could molest Southern institutions if by doing so he would violate the constitution and he could not within four years if [he] would. He is but one man, although President," she said, "and our government is still a republic." Other Southern-rights advocates disagreed with Harding's assessment; Lincoln, they insisted, could indeed do grave damage. "The country is in

---

<sup>2</sup> James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 136-38; John Speed to Henry S. Lane, 8 November 1860, Henry Smith Lane Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 8 November 1860; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 27 November 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 21 December 1860; Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860—The Eighth Census*, 4 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 2: 38-45, 58-65, 112-15; Roseboom, *History of the State of Ohio*, 371; Frank H. Heck, "John C. Breckinridge in the Crisis of 1860-1861," *Journal of Southern History* 21 (August 1955): 330-31.

great danger,” warned Walter Haldeman. “Who denies this is a fool or a knave. The aggressions of the Black Republican party have alarmed the South; and the indorsement of the war upon slavery has increased that alarm to such an extent that many of the soundest . . . conservative statesmen of the country” believe that the South’s safety “demand[s] a movement . . . by any means that may be necessary.” But the editor stopped short of calling for outright secession, judging that Lincoln’s election was not at the moment “sufficient to warrant a dissolution of the Union.”<sup>3</sup>

North Bankers reacted to Lincoln’s election along party lines. Defeated Democrats were understandably despondent. The *New Albany Ledger* urged party supporters to avoid demoralization by reaching out to each other to bridge the internal divisions that had contributed mightily to the party’s defeat. A discerning William Holman agreed, believing that the cure for the party and nation’s woes was “to be found in the masses of the people & in the revival of a spirit of devotion to the Union & of fraternal feeling between the two sections of the Country, rather than in the action of Congress.” As secessionist rumblings in the South continued to grow louder, the *Ledger* regretted that the sectional candidates had not been more explicit regarding their supposed pro-Union sensibilities. “A [public] word [of reassurance] spoken by Mr. Lincoln or Mr. Breckinridge a month ago,” its editor lamented, “would have done more to preserve the Union of the States than volumes could do now.” Despite Democrats’ recent political reverses, the newspaper believed that large numbers of people in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky “are not to any considerable extent affected by the ultraism of either of the extremes . . . [and] would, in the event of the convulsion of the Republic, be drawn together by the ties of commerce,

---

<sup>3</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 8 November 1860; John Jefferson Diary, 7 November 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; Sallie A. Harding to Jack [John] Harding, 14 November 1860, John Harding Papers, 1859-1914, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 10 November 1860.

neighborhood, and general coincidence of views and interests.” Voicing the sentiments of many in the Valley, a disheartened Larz Anderson told his brother Robert, “I have been [so] saddened & sickened by the gloomy state of our public affairs [since the Republican victory], that I have not had the heart to write to you.” Robert Anderson was a career army officer stationed at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

The surprising strength of Lincoln’s electoral victory was a welcome relief for Republicans, many of whom had feared that the House of Representatives would have to determine the election’s outcome. Public celebrations marked the occasion. An ecstatic *Cincinnati Gazette* announced, “The plot for throwing the election into the House [where Lincoln’s chances were slim] has miserably failed . . . . The Democracy are annihilated, and a most glorious political revolution is achieved.” In Madison, Indiana, it was reported that celebrants spoke of secession and South Carolina “in the same spirit” as a boy “would rub a cat’s back the wrong way—for the fun, to see the little animal fuss.” One Republican was moved to write a poem evoking the Founding Fathers’ great hope for their experiment in democratic governance: “Thou, too, sail on, Oh Ship of State! / Sail on, Oh Union, strong and great!” Touting the strength of the cords that held the Union together, he continued, “We know what Master laid thy keel, / What Workman wrought thy ribs of steel . . . Fear not each sudden sound and shock, / ’Tis of the wave and not the rock . . . In spite of rock and tempest’s roar, / In spite of false lights on the shore, / Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea, / Our hearts, our hopes, our all with thee.” Upriver in Newport, Kentucky, however, Republicans’ excitement was tempered by the admonition of Covington’s Republican Association president, who urged them “to maintain

---

<sup>4</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 9, 13, 21 November 1860; William Holman to Allen Hamilton, 13 December 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Larz Anderson to Robert Anderson, 6 December 1860, Robert Anderson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington.

unshaken their political integrity, and above all, to hold in the highest regard public and political virtue,” something many believed had been lacking in the outgoing Buchanan administration. Few in number, South Bank Republicans understood that they walked a treacherous path, where they must measure carefully the effect every word and deed might have on their fellow Kentuckians.<sup>5</sup>

With the tumultuous election campaign behind them, many Americans were unsure of the nation’s next step. What role would citizens of the border area have in coming events? More specifically, what course should slaveholding Kentucky pursue? John Pendleton Kennedy, a Maryland writer and politician, set forth his thoughts: “The Border States are at this time the most authentic representatives of the conservative power of the Union,” he wrote. “Their various and equal relations to the North, the South, and the West, their social organization for the support of every interest connected with good government and permanent peace, their internal strength, and above all, their healthful [moderate] tone of opinion toward the preservation of constitutional right and resistance against wrong, point them out as the safest and best arbiters in the present difficulties.” Residents of the central Ohio River Valley believed that the Union had to survive; considerations of economy, culture, and race required it. Thus, when Kennedy insisted that the border states had both the wherewithal and obligation to “isolate those portions of the Union which are most violent and reckless in driving the country to extremes, and thus give them occasion to perceive that they are to find no support out of the circle of their own impetuous allies,” a great number of North and South Bankers concurred. Moderate men on both banks had to combine their efforts if the slide toward disunion was to be halted because, as James Noble pointed out, “*stability* is necessary and experience shows that no [regulation] by Congress can be

---

<sup>5</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 7, 10 November 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 8, 12 November 1860.

relied on to endure any length of time.” Since the border states had “the most at stake,” the Cincinnati said, it made sense that the citizens “of those states should take the initiative” in attempting to resolve the country’s current problems. John W. Stevenson agreed, suggesting that “middle state and western opposition men” might be able to keep the North on a moderate course. The outgoing congressman believed Kentucky might also play a role although he feared that “the Republicans will pursue the masterly [strategy] of a dogged silence” that would hinder any compromise effort.<sup>6</sup>

Disunion, if carried out by the lower South, would endanger the Valley’s trans-river economic web, the central bond that lay at the heart of regional cohesion and prosperity and afforded citizens a special perspective on the Union. This threat was especially apparent to the people of Louisville and vicinity. “Disunion would stifle the soul of Louisville’s prosperity and consume even the lifeless body,” warned the *Louisville Journal*. A city merchant was more explicit: “Commercially, our relations with the South are of the most intimate character, and without her trade and influence the days of the prosperity of Louisville” and the Valley “are numbered.” North Bankers pointed out that the flow of money would be constrained if the lower South states seceded, as would merchants’ willingness to accept bank notes issued from disloyal states. In Cincinnati, Southern saber-rattling began to affect business “and [is] having a most injurious effect upon all branches of industry,” complained the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. “The laboring classes are those who [will] suffer the most severely from the suspension and

---

<sup>6</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy, *The Border States: Their Power & Duty in the Present Disordered Condition of the Country*, in *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861*, ed. Jon L. Wakelyn (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 218-19; Wallace B. Turner, “The Secession Movement in Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 66 (July 1968): 261; Kennedy, “Border States,” 236-37; James F. Noble to John J. Crittenden, 3 December 1860, reel 12, vols. 23-24, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 6 December 1860, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

derangement of business” if current trends continue, it cautioned. Only a few perceived no threat. One man who had observed thousands of “burley porkers” on their way to the city’s slaughter houses remarked that the hogs “are the Union savers . . . for as long as we can supply the world with the staple they afford, there is hardly a possibility of a dissolution of this Union.” He failed to realize, however, that the loss of Southern markets in the event of secession would reduce dramatically the demand for one of the Valley’s prized commodities.<sup>7</sup>

As South Carolina’s political elite gathered in Charleston to reconsider the state’s relationship to the Union, concern over Kentucky’s role in the growing crisis grew. On December 20, South Carolina finally followed through on its decades-long threat to secede from the Union. Within seven weeks, the other six states of the lower South followed. Citizens across the nation, among them the President-elect, understood what North and South Bankers increasingly feared: the addition of Kentucky to the list of seceded states would destroy trans-river bonds of economy and community, jeopardize the rest of the border region politically, and quite possibly make the reunification of the nation impossible. All recognized that, as Wallace Turner writes, Kentucky “faced a three-horned dilemma”: economics, geography, and sentiment linked it to both sections. For the Valley’s citizenry and the incoming administration, it was imperative that the Bluegrass State remain loyal. A Louisville woman desperately told Robert Breckinridge, “I feel that everything rests upon Kentucky’s course,” and urged the minister to use his rhetorical abilities to the utmost in defense of the Union. Writing to his mother in Jefferson County, Kentucky, Thomas Bullitt likewise affirmed his native state’s importance: “Every body looks to Kentucky with deep interest. The friends of the Union, many of them,

---

<sup>7</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 23, 24 November 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 24 November 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14, 16 November 1860.

think that, if she with the other border states assumes a position, at once, firm but moderate, if she demands the call of a general convention, our troubles [will] . . . be settled.”<sup>8</sup>

Concern over Kentucky’s course was particularly strong in southern Indiana. As Kenneth Stamppp writes, “the river counties were terrified at the prospect of Kentucky secession.” Should armed conflict erupt, they would be on its front doorstep, exposing “them to recurrent rebel raids” and threatening “the destruction of lives and property.” To these communities, the Ohio River “front” would be “the most vital battle line” of any war. John B. Norman sought to allay Indianans’ fears. North and South Bankers “have ever been on good terms, and never better than now,” he declared. “Fraternal and friendly relations exist between them. Their intercourse, as a general thing, has been profitable and pleasant to both. But there is a danger that these amicable relations may be broken up.” He advised that “every effort of every good citizen on both sides of the line should now be especially directed” toward preventing such a split. People of the Valley had “no cause to quarrel,” he wrote, and we “should hold ourselves in a position where we can act, if need be, as arbiters and peacemakers between the contending factions.” Norman believed that the states’ “relative position” made Indiana and Kentucky best suited to take the lead in attempting to adjudicate the nation’s current difficulties.<sup>9</sup>

The lower South seceded in large part because its leaders believed that, given Lincoln’s election, slavery would be better protected outside the Union. Kentuckians now had to reckon with the same question. The importance of this issue in influencing the course border states such

---

<sup>8</sup> W. M. Brewer, “Lincoln and the Border States,” *Journal of Negro History* 34 (January 1949): 51; Turner, “Secession Movement in Kentucky,” 259; unknown woman to Reverend Robert Breckinridge, 18 January 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; Thomas W. Bullitt to mother, 13 January 1861, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville. See also David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 317.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth M. Stamppp, “Kentucky’s Influence Upon Indiana in the Crisis of 1861,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 39 (September 1943): 269; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 16 November 1860.

as Kentucky ultimately chose has been addressed by many scholars. Edward Ayers points out that in trying to encourage the border states to secede, lower South emissaries “emphasized the centrality of slavery” and “their great common bond to the secessionist cause.” Such arguments did not always find favor in the border states, however. Daniel Crofts argues that many border Unionists believed “secession would undermine slavery because they expected war would result from disunion.” Many feared war “posed a far more tangible threat to the slave system than did a Republican president in Washington.” In the waning days of 1860 and into 1861, many South Bankers remained confident that, as another historian puts it, “they had friends enough on the other side of the river to keep slavery secure.” Almost daily came reports that fugitive slaves had been captured in Indiana and returned to their rightful owners south of the river, and there was plenty of other evidence for Kentuckians to see that indicated that slavery could be protected and preserved without resorting to secession. Furthermore, in the view of many whites, loyalty to the Union would contain slavery within its present borders and insure that the small number of free blacks remained marginalized. A Cincinnati Republican announced that Republicans “care little about slavery, but every thing about the [public] offices. When we get the offices you will find us *very* conservative on slavery.” Salmon Chase admitted that the Constitution demanded “the extradition of escaping slaves,” making the return of fugitives a “constitutional obligation.” The *Louisville Daily Journal* pointed out repeatedly that if Kentucky remained loyal, the fugitive slave law would be enforced by North Bankers. If the commonwealth seceded, however, the North Bank would become a haven for runaway slaves.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 120. Charles B. Dew makes the same argument in *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 111; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 30. See also the *Louisville Democrat*, 8 January 1861; Trotter, *River Jordan*, 55; Dee, ed., *Ohio’s War*, 43. The writer expressed his views in a 23 November 1860 letter to the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*; John Niven, et. al., eds., *The Salmon P.*



Most South Bankers found such arguments compelling, but a minority remained unconvinced. One Jefferson County woman reported in January that because “many abolitionists prowl among the negroes & try to induce an outbreak . . . a patrol was kept up all the time through the country.” According to the woman, “a blacksmith was caught near Middletown [east of Louisville] in the very act of persuading” slaves to “fire the whole country.” Moreover, she informed her son, “there are many persons here who say there [sic] servants tell them they wont heave [have] to work for them much longer, that when Lincon takes his seat they’ll all be free.” Other proponents of slavery were equally concerned. “Fiat Justitia” informed the *Louisville Courier* that “by reason of [Northern] popular violence and nullification [of the Fugitive Slave Act], and through the agency of the Underground Railroad, Kentucky annually loses (at a moderate estimate) \$200,000 worth of slave property.” Much of that loss made its way across the Ohio River between Louisville and Cincinnati. Distrusting Republican promises to respect slaveholders’ property rights, Southern-rights advocates demanded the repeal of Northern personal liberty laws that interfered with “the full and fair operation of the Fugitive Slave Law.” The accession to power of Lincoln and his party would, as these nervous South Bankers saw it, greatly aggravate the threat to slavery’s survival.<sup>11</sup>

Secession tested the durability of central Ohio River Valley regionalism. Would the mutual economic interests of North and South Bankers be strong enough to counter the cultural and institutional bonds that tied many Kentuckians to the lower South? Trade between the Valley and the South required peace and open trade routes. If Kentucky were to follow South

---

*Chase Papers*, 5 vols. (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 1996), 3: 38-39 (Salmon P. Chase to [Ruhamah Ludlow Hunt], 30 November 1860); Turner, “Secession Movement in Kentucky,” 276.

<sup>11</sup> Mildred Bullitt and Nannie Gorilis [?] to Thomas Bullitt, 2 January 1861, Mildred Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 18 January 1861, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 1 December 1860, 10 January 1861.

Carolina's lead, North Bank communities such as Cincinnati, Madison, and New Albany, not to mention those people living in the surrounding hinterland, stood to suffer tremendous hardship. During the last decade of the antebellum era, southern Indiana especially had established strong connections with regional markets as North Bank farmers sold their surplus crops to customers on both banks and to markets in St. Louis and New Orleans. In turn, they purchased the goods they needed from the burgeoning entrepôts of Louisville and Cincinnati. Cincinnati businessmen also worried about how disunion would disrupt regional trade relations. They realized that conflict would adversely affect what one scholar describes as the "nicely balanced economic relationships of the sections." Merchants would be unable to meet consumer demand and collect on Southern debt, a situation further complicated by potential physical threats to body and liberty.<sup>12</sup>

The study of economic behavior is, in its rudimentary form, the analysis of how perception informs and drives human action. Individuals often behave in a manner that protects their interests based merely on perceived, rather than actual, threats to those interests. People's perception of events played an important role in the central Ohio River Valley in the months following Abraham Lincoln's election. Valley citizens expressed great alarm as the states in the lower South bid adieu to their brethren to the north. While they often reached different conclusions regarding how to best protect the region's pecuniary interests, most staunch Unionists, moderates, and Southern-rights advocates tacitly agreed that secession threatened the existing relationship between trading partners on the banks of the Ohio River and their partners farther south. In mid-November 1860, even before the full effects of Lincoln's election could be felt by commercial interests in the Valley, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* was forced to defend

---

<sup>12</sup> Rockenbach, "War Upon Our Border," 31; Charles R. Wilson, "Cincinnati's Reputation During the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* 2 (November 1936): 471.

itself from attacks from Republican papers in the city for claiming that trade had already been hurt. At the risk of causing a panic, the paper insisted, “it is more politic to look the fact straight in the face, and seek a remedy for it in the inculcation of more moderate sentiments North and South, than ostrich-like, to plunge our eyes and ears in the sand when pursued by the hunter, and then imagine that all is well.”<sup>13</sup>

The Valley’s economic anxiety was driven as much by fear as fact. Just three weeks after the election, Richard Curd told an acquaintance, “matters here [in Louisville] get no better—From New Orleans we hear of nothing but suspensions, forced renewals, great commercial distress & enthusiastic disunion meetings.” He added that “To us it seems that those who profess to be the warmest friends of the South, who are not engaged in rescuing her from present wrongs & guarding her from future evils, have begun their work by bringing her to utter ruin . . . . Merchants whose assets consist in debts due from the planters find their securities rapidly diminishing and many who but a month ago were rich now see hopeless bankruptcy staring them in the face.” Curd wondered, “What is to be gained by a separation seems to us in Kentucky a mystery beyond comprehension.” His frustration with the economic downturn turned to anger when he considered how the lower South appeared to be using Kentucky: “Are we to stand here between the Southern Confederacy and the North simply to catch the Southern negroes & keep back the Northern fanatics?” Curd blamed politics and the “nigger” for the state of things. “With bad currency and universal distrust, trade has been retarded,” reported George Prentice. “The occurrence is indeed unfortunate for our farmers and the producing classes, as it finds us in the midst of the pork season, at the very critical period when the producers of the soil are

---

<sup>13</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 18 November 1860.

realizing a remuneration for the year's toil, subjecting them to the necessity of receiving short returns." At a meeting of mechanics and working men at the Louisville courthouse in late December, J. Milton Moore blamed "the present condition of public affairs" on the politicians who he said "had brought the country to the verge of ruin." Rumors of how the "disunion movement" was disrupting trade did not take long to make their way into print. The *Madison Daily Evening Courier* reported that "large orders for flour and provisions sent from Charleston to Cincinnati dealers have been returned, the parties at Cincinnati refusing to fill any order without the money" being paid in Cincinnati. Yet in the very same issue, the *Courier* reported that Garrison and Company had just shipped 250 barrels of flour to Augusta, Georgia. Correspondents in Covington, Kentucky, reported that in the first month after Lincoln's election, the weekly arrivals to the cattle market had visibly declined. By the beginning of 1861, a considerable portion of the citizens undoubtedly found themselves agreeing with a poem the *New Albany Daily Ledger* had printed the day before South Carolina seceded. "Hard Times is now on every lip, / And breathed from every tongue; / The banks are cursed by one and all, / The aged and the young. / The merchant has to close his doors, / And throw his ledger by; / Such times, he vows, were never seen / By any mortal eye."<sup>14</sup>

Facing a constricting Union and the early signs of economic recession in their communities, North and South Bankers turned their wrath on the extremists they believed were responsible. Kentucky native Thomas Corwin expressed sentiments to the President-elect that reflected the views of moderates along the river. "I cannot comprehend the madness of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Curd to Cal Morgan, 29 November 1860, Hunt-Morgan Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 4 December 1860 (the paper reported that bankers were not accepting the bank notes of the Carolinas, Georgia, or Alabama "at any rate of discount"); *Louisville Daily Journal*, reprinted in *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 28 December 1860; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 17 November 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 5 December 1860; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 19 December 1860.

times. Southern men are theoretically crazy. Extreme Northern men are practical fools. The latter are really quite as mad as the former. Treason is in the air around us every where. It goes by the name of Patriotism.” An adamant William Holman agreed, insisting that “the real danger of disunion is to be found in the precipitate rashness of the Southern leaders and the arrogant and intemperate assumptions of superiority on the part of the leading Republicans of the North. Dissolution could never result from deliberate action but from the madness & folly of the moment without reference to the results.” At “one of the largest meetings ever convened” in New Albany, citizens declared that “the proper destiny of Indiana is with neither the extreme North or extreme South, and that it is the duty of her citizens to so act as to prevent her soil from becoming the theatre of bloody strife” should war erupt. Indianan Jeremiah Sullivan rebuked all extremists when he declared that he was not going to be pushed by others into making any rash decisions about the current situation. I “will not allow any man or set of men” in the North or South “to manufacture opinions for me,” he wrote. Robert L. Breck, pastor of New Albany’s First Presbyterian Church and a Kentucky native, expressed “fear [that] some harder arguments than those from reason will be necessary to bring these Republicans to their senses.” He insisted that “the most passionate desire of my heart for my native state is, that in no contingency will she unite her destiny with the Cotton States, thereby to enter under the despotism of King Cotton, which must inevitably be as galling as that of Republicanism.” On the day South Carolina seceded, John D. Jones continued to believe that “reason & reflection will do more than gunpowder” to overcome “Fireeaters & Abolitionists . . . traitorousness.” George McClellan urged both sides to not “go off half cocked.” The Ohioan believed that “most men here [in

Cincinnati] acknowledge that the South has much to ask that the North ought to & would grant— at the same time we think that in many things the South is in the wrong.”<sup>15</sup>

South Bank moderates conveyed similar views. Villagers in Ghent, Kentucky, worried that extremist threats to the “perpetuity of our Union,” if carried out, would “place us who live on the Ohio river” and our property in a “perilous condition.” They told their Southern brethren to “not act precipitately,” and their Northern neighbors to repeal all laws “which are in derogation of our National Constitution.” In early January 1861, Unionists in Covington blamed both sections for the crisis and resolutely insisted that sectional extremism would not be allowed to push Kentucky out of the Union. Residents in the hamlet of Verona in Boone County announced their desire to give treason and fanaticism “the cold shoulder.” Before the meeting adjourned, several men took to the podium to denounce “Disunion and Secession in the South; and Nullification Abolitionism in the North.” In an equally condemnatory tone, a Louisville woman bemoaned the fact that “people seem possessed with a spirit of madness and delusion. They will not listen to reason but are rushing on blindly to ruin, in the South anarchy and terror reign and in the North fanaticism and abolitionism.” Fearing conflict, she worried that “should these extremes meet a war must ensue more fierce and horrible than has taken place on earth.” Aware of his new responsibilities as president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, James

---

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Corwin to Abraham Lincoln, 18 January 1861, Clay Family Papers-Cassius Clay Papers, 1860-1901, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 18 November 1860, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 1 December 1860; Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 20 December 1860, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; Robert L. Breck to Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge, 4 February 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; John D. Jones to son (probably Frank J. Jones), 20 December 1860, Frank J. Jones Civil War Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati; Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan, Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), 3 (George McClellan to Samuel L. M. Barlow, 27 December 1860.)

Guthrie feared that “fanaticism” would lead to the death of “the Constitution as our fathers made it,” not to mention the impact it would have on the railroad’s business.<sup>16</sup>

Geographic and economic considerations encouraged the majority of Valley citizens to view compromise as a logical answer to the problems they and the rest of the nation faced. Urged by many of his constituents, Congressman William English advised the House’s Committee of Thirty-Three to “equitably” divide the western territories “between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding sections.” Additionally, he sought assurances protecting “the rights of property in slaves.” If English had his way, jurisdictions in which fugitive slaves were “rescued” would have to indemnify the aggrieved masters. The Indiana congressman, however, lacked the stature of John J. Crittenden. Who else was better equipped to honor Henry Clay’s legacy of compromise than the Kentucky senator, a venerable statesman who, like Clay, was faced with a great national emergency at a time when the infirmities of old age made life increasingly difficult? Valley correspondents wrote to Crittenden urging him to seek compromise. Among them were Cincinnati’s James F. Noble and Louisville’s Samuel S. Nicholas, who suggested possible courses of action.<sup>17</sup>

On December 3, James F. Noble wrote a lengthy letter underscoring much of what Crittenden undoubtedly already knew about the border states’ precarious position. Whether Noble’s plea for compromise influenced the Kentuckian remains unknown, but his outpouring reveals a great deal about the mindset of Valley moderates. “To induce peace and the

---

<sup>16</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 23 November, 10 December 1860; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 80-81; Kate to Lucy Johnson, 17 January 1861, Jacob-Johnson Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; James Guthrie to Paul G. Washington, [9 December] 1860, James Guthrie Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>17</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 18 December 1860; James F. Noble to John J. Crittenden, 3 December 1860, and Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, 5 December 1860, John J. Crittenden Papers, reel 12, vols. 23-24, Library of Congress, Washington. Nicholas wrote frequently to Crittenden in 1860 and 1861 and seemed to relish his access to the senator, occasionally taking the liberty of suggesting courses of action that he thought Crittenden should pursue.

preservation of the Union new compromises and guarantees are required,” the Cincinnati wrote. “The Border states having most at stake, are most interested in the preservation of the Union. And the people of those States should take the initiative.” Noble proposed that the “conservative” men from both banks of the Ohio River, in addition to like-minded individuals from Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Iowa, should join hands in calling for a border state convention to be held in Louisville at some point in the near future. He envisioned that such a convention “would take into consideration the State of affairs and suggest measures of Compromise in the shape of amendments to the Constitution. Let this Convention give the people of the other states distinctly to understand that the Border states will unite their destinies with those states or that section which favors the amendments suggested by the Convention.” He acknowledged that such amendments would have little chance of passage, but bringing them before the people would help to shape public opinion. Such exposure would also bring pressure “to bear on the [state] Legislatures soon to assemble.” The moderate concluded by contending that the people of southwestern Ohio “would prefer uniting their destinies with K[entuck]y than remain with the Western Reserve” where extremism held sway. Indeed, he added, “the Ohio river will not be the boundary line and if civil war comes it would not be long ere the people of Northern & Southern Ohio would be engaged in deadly conflict.” At the end of his letter, Noble submitted a number of specific amendments, one or two of which found their way into the package Crittenden would soon present to Congress.<sup>18</sup>

Others citizens followed suit. J. J. Speed told the aging statesman that restoring the Missouri Compromise line via constitutional amendment “would forever silence the agitation of the Negro question respecting the territories.” Speed believed that the abolition of slavery in the

---

<sup>18</sup> James F. Noble to John J. Crittenden, 3 December 1860, reel 12, vols. 23-24, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington.



District of Columbia was “a matter of too little consequence to cause contention, except by those who are determined not to be satisfied with anything but bloodshed and civil war.” Most Northerners, he insisted, would acquiesce to the returning of fugitive slaves if the federal law did not compel them to help capture fugitives and if “some fair method” was “devised for identifying the slave, and the claim to his service.” If Crittenden could accomplish this, Speed said, he would become “the savior of our glorious confederacy.” Another correspondent, W. G. Fullerton, offered a series of ideas that he maintained “are entirely original with me so far as I know & therefore [I] hope that it may start out new ideas in your brain.” A number of his suggestions, however, were unworkable because they put the burden of concession on Northerners and misread moderate and conservative Republicans’ willingness to leave slavery alone where it already existed. Proposals such as amending the Constitution to require that a majority of the Supreme Court, the secretaries of the Treasury, War, and Navy, and the Postmaster General be of “Southern *birth & residence*” were unrealistic. And, in a suggestion that may very well have drawn a grimace from the most moderate of Republicans, Fullerton exposed his pro-Southern bias most starkly when he told Crittenden that any representative in Congress who introduced a bill that would interfere with slavery where it already existed should “be tried before the Supreme Court U.S. & if found guilty—hung.”<sup>19</sup>

Crittenden, whose eminent reputation made him the unofficial leader of the Senate’s Committee of Thirteen, introduced in mid-December a series of constitutional amendments that were designed to halt the nation’s slide toward disunion. Known as the Crittenden Compromise, they sought to prevent federal interference with slavery, restore the old Missouri Compromise line (north of which slavery was prohibited), prevent Congress from abolishing slavery on

---

<sup>19</sup> J. J. Speed to John J. Crittenden, (December 1860), reel 12, vol. 24, and W. George Fullerton to John J. Crittenden, reel 12, vols. 23-24, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington.

federal property within slave states, and forbid the emancipation of slaves in the nation's capital without "the consent of its inhabitants" and only if Maryland and Virginia abolished slavery first. Additionally, Congress was to be denied the authority to interfere with the interstate slave trade, and masters were to be compensated if Northern states prevented them from recovering fugitive slaves. Crittenden proposed that these amendments "be valid for all time," that is, that future amendments could not overturn them. In taking steps the citizens of the Ohio Valley desired, the senator was merely following Henry Clay's course. But, as David Potter points out, "in laying a neat package of compromise proposals before his committee," Crittenden "must have remembered that . . . [Clay's] omnibus bill had not worked in 1850."<sup>20</sup>

While Republican opposition would ultimately prevent these compromise measures from passing, Crittenden's efforts reflected the Valley's yearning for Union-saving conciliation. On the day after Crittenden introduced his resolutions, Ohio's First District Congressman George H. Pendleton spoke in support of conciliation, declaring that the Founding Fathers had "built the nation on a foundation of compromise." Pendleton later presented to the House of Representatives a petition with the signatures of ten thousand citizens "who requested that the government adopt the Crittenden Compromise." On December 19, a large Union meeting in Cincinnati "placed the city on record as favoring conciliation and peace," even though citizens were not quite sure how peace was to be guaranteed. The *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* responded by supporting Crittenden's plan. "It was by compromise that this Government was formed, and it is only by compromise that it can be preserved," it opined. "There must be mutual concession" if "so many States . . . expect to get along together." A second meeting involving many

---

<sup>20</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 252-53; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 530-33. See also Carroll C. Arnold, "The Senate Committee of Thirteen, December 6-31, 1860," in *Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict*, ed. J. Jeffery Auer (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), 320-21.

Democratic leaders was held at Smith and Nixon's Hall on the thirty-first. At that time, attendees voted "overwhelmingly" to give the Crittenden Compromise efforts their wholehearted support. "We must make a stand for those propositions," William Holman said. The Democrat was convinced that a "large portion" of Indianans supported Crittenden's proposals. "If there seems to be a prospect of their adoption by the free States," he insisted, "the border Slave States will pause until an arangement [sic] can be make." Holman feared, though, that if the North rejected the Kentuckian's amendments, "a Southern Confederacy will be formed embracing all of the Slave States & then I fear the reconstruction of the Government will be impossible." The congressman remained convinced that the cure for the nation's woes could be found in what the "people at home" on the border were willing to do about the crisis. Indianans had to "concede & conciliate" while continuing to "insist under all circumstances that the flag of the nation shall be sustained." The Republican *Madison Courier* acknowledged that "there is no mistaking the public sentiment of Indiana; her people are willing to concede much." Indeed, it said, "in this, a border county, the public sentiment was clearly expressed" in a resolution passed at a recent "citizens' meeting." Democratic congressman-elect James A. Cravens feared the worst but hoped for the best. "Our only hope now," he wrote, "it that the border States may agree on the Crittenden proposition and save the Center, and that finaly [sic], the extremes may come back to us. If this fails all is lost." Up and down the river, North Bankers such as those in Switzerland County, Indiana, supported Crittenden's proposals as a practical means to settle the "dissensions" that "now unhappily threaten the permanency of our beloved country."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Mach, "Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton, 54; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 20 December 1860; Wilson, "Cincinnati's Reputation During the Civil War," 472; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 18 January 1861, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 24 December 1860; James A. Cravens to William H. English, 20 January 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 16 January 1861. Kenneth Stamp argues that in both

South Bankers endorsed Crittenden's initiatives with even greater eagerness. The *Covington Journal* declared that Kentucky's senior senator was in Washington to try to heal the nation's wounds with remedies used by "the old school of therapeutics." At a large Union meeting in Louisville on January 8, citizens urged the sections to adopt "the propositions of our distinguished Senator John J. Crittenden as a fair and honorable adjustment of the difficulties which divide and distract the people of our beloved country." In reprinting editorial comments published in New Albany's *Ledger*, the *Louisville Daily Journal* pointed out the breadth of Valley support for the Crittenden Compromise. Although they had been political opponents just weeks before, editors Prentice and Norman joined hands in an effort to save the Union, proclaiming that "the PEOPLE are for the Crittenden Compromise, and it is shameful that . . . their voice is stifled by a few party managers who happen to be in high places." Every mail packet, wagon, and boxcar, they said, "should be loaded down with memorials to Congress demanding the submission of Mr. Crittenden's plan to the people of the States." Benjamin S. Adams not only endorsed the proposed amendments but predicted optimistically that they would "receive the assent of a vast majority of the people" north of the river. Indiana Republicans would be particularly receptive, he thought. A. C. Osborne wrote Crittenden with good news from Louisville: "The sentiment here is immensely, almost exclusively in favor of your compromise measures." Osborne himself hoped that they would pass, or at the very least be the basis for a compromise that would garner enough support among Washington's legislators to become law. Another correspondent declared emphatically, "Give us peace & give us C's

---

Kentucky and Indiana, a majority of people "pinned their hopes for saving the Union upon the time-tested palliative of compromise." See Stamp, "Kentucky's Influence," 263-64.

propositions & my word for it we shall make Kentucky the [center] of the reconstruction of this noble old federation system.”<sup>22</sup>

In praising Crittenden’s “forcible and eloquent remarks,” Louisville’s *Journal* voiced the concerns of pragmatic Valley citizens who recognized the precarious position in which they would find themselves if compromise failed. “Consider what would be the condition of Kentucky and Indiana if a division were to take place along the line of the Ohio river,” it warned. “The citizens of these two States have now the kindest and best feelings toward each other. Kentucky’s rights of property are duly and faithfully respected in our sister State. But,” the paper continued, “if the two States were to belong to different confederacies or general governments . . . our rights to fugitive slave property would not be respected across the river.” As a result, “extensive stampedes” of fugitive slaves “would occur at all points, and no police provisions would avail to prevent their success.” The paper went on to outline a frightening scenario in which North and South Bankers would be drawn into “a fierce border warfare, even in advance of a general and regular declaration of war.”<sup>23</sup>

Although Crittenden’s proposed amendments appealed to a great many people in the Valley, some rejected them or at least questioned their usefulness. The *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* pointed out that the proposed compromise was “odious” among Republican rank and file farther north; “Mr. Crittenden understands this now,” the paper said, and he “knows the worthlessness of his well-meant scheme.” While unrepentant Southern-rights advocates such as the *Louisville*

---

<sup>22</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 96; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 10 January 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, reprinted in *Louisville Daily Journal*, 15 January 1861; Benjamin S. Adams to John J. Crittenden, 28 December 1860, reel 12, vol. 24, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; A.C. Osborne to John J. Crittenden, 7 February 1861, reel 13, vol. 25, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 8 April 1861, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>23</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 27 December 1860.

*Courier*'s Walter Haldeman believed "disunion is inevitable," worried Unionists remained hopeful. An anxious Samuel Nicholas cautioned the senator that his compromise "was not sufficiently sugared for northern taste." To complicate matters further, he said, political factionalism in Kentucky made it difficult to reach a consensus. "There is still so much jealousy & bad feeling among our petty local parties," he explained, "that nothing like harmony or concert of action can be produced in behalf of old Kentuck[y] in this critical hour of her destiny." Nicholas wanted Kentucky's congressional delegation to issue a joint statement "telling our people to keep cool, free themselves from old party jealousies watch & wait for a time for joint action for the salvation of old Kentuck, but especially not to indulge in any angry controversy with each other upon the question between a Northern & Southern confederacy." He told Crittenden that repeal of the North's personal liberty laws in response to a "Congressional request" would be more palatable for the South than the senator's proposals. Across the river, William Holman wavered even though he believed many of his fellow Indianans supported the amendments. "As a whole I do not like them. I do not like the idea of imposing restrictions on the people either North or South of the proposed line on a question so peculiarly domestic & local as that of Slavery. But," he admitted, "I am convinced that the South *even the border States* will be satisfied with no plan less effective than that of Crittenden's." With Southern states seceding, Holman grimly warned, "we approach the vortex of Civil War steadily." Others like J. M. Gwin could understand the efficacy of compromise in the short run but questioned its permanency. Suppose Crittenden's suggestions were "engrafted into the constitution," he queried, "is it not reasonable to suppose, judging by the past, that any constitutional solution" of

the national crisis “would be only a reprieve for the time being, subject to be renewed at a future time, whenever occasion can be best served by its renewal?”<sup>24</sup>

Although encouraged by the endorsements from Valley correspondents, Crittenden was “disheartened” by the manner in which events unfolded. “I had strong hopes that the Resolutions I submitted, might be accepted,” he lamented, but now given the nation’s slide toward disunion, “that hope is almost gone!” Upset that the Republican party intended “to do nothing,” Crittenden told Nicholas that he supported his proposal for a convention of delegates from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, regarding such a meeting as the proper venue to attempt a “more comprehensive” approach. After the sectional factions failed to reconcile their differences at the Washington Peace Conference in February 1861, Joshua Bell reported that while he was at the conference he had spoken with Crittenden, who appeared “wholly cheerless.” When he asked him what he was going to do, the elder statesman said that “he had not fully determined on his course—but he thought we ought to fight for the *Union awhile longer at least.*”<sup>25</sup>

Even before the many compromise efforts were officially doomed, a number of Valley citizens considered the possibility of forming a border state confederacy. Advocates of this plan, confident of the border states’ ability to adjudicate sectional difficulties, believed that a moderate central confederacy could win the loyalty of a majority of citizens in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and southern Illinois in the North, and Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and maybe even Arkansas in the South. The hope was that once those states left the Union and formed a

---

<sup>24</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 16 January 1861; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 18 December 1860; Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, (27 December 1860), reel 12, vols. 23-24, and Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, 10 January [1861], reel 11, vols. 21-22, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; William S. Holman to Allen Hamilton, 11 January 1861, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 22 January 1861. Ohio had passed a stronger personal liberty law after the Margaret Garner case in 1856. See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 120.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Crittenden to Samuel Smith Nicholas, [?] December 1860, reel 12, vol. 24, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; diary of Thomas Walker Bullitt, [4 March 1861], Bullitt Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

border confederacy, states in the upper North and lower South would then be forced to moderate their positions and join it because going it alone would be politically and economically untenable. Thus, the Union would be reconstructed on the basis of compromise and moderation with the border states at its realigned center. Boyd argues that “ideologically, the movement for a middle confederacy” helped some Kentuckians and their North Bank supporters with Southern roots to “set themselves apart from the Lower South and predisposed them to accept” the notion of state neutrality. He contends that because of their interests and culture, a number of Kentuckians and their supporters across the river “favored an Ohio Valley confederacy” but “failing that, they downgraded their dreams to what they could more realistically control,” the fate of Kentucky.<sup>26</sup>

Three weeks after the presidential election, the *New Albany Ledger* reminded its readers that “there is a great fertile and prosperous region of country embracing Kentucky, Missouri, and a large portion of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, whose people are not to any considerable extent affected by the ultraism of either of the extremes, who would in the event of the convulsion of the Republic, be drawn together by the ties of commerce, neighborhood, and general coincidence of views and interests.” Believing in the central purpose of border state moderation—the preservation of the Union—the newspaper opined that “almost the last hope for the salvation of the country remains in the border States on both sides of the line . . . . To accomplish this end,” it insisted, “every effort should be made.” In the view of some Valley moderates, North and South Bankers could serve as the genesis of a new Union shorn of extremism. At public meetings in a number of river counties, citizens endorsed a willingness to do virtually anything to maintain the

---

<sup>26</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality & Peace,” 89. Border state discussion of a central confederacy was driven in part by the threat secession posed to the region’s economy. See Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 109.



Union's integrity. In the Georgetown Township of Floyd County, Indiana, citizens endorsed Crittenden's resolutions and then resolved that if the proposed amendments did not gain Congress's approval, they would "declare our readiness to give full support to any other adjustment of the questions that now agitate the country," provided it was "just and equitable." In Clark County, people urged the border states "to form a nucleus around which other States may rally." In a public letter to Crittenden, Nathaniel Greene Pendleton, the father of Hamilton County's First District congressman, proposed that the border states "ought to form a 'Central Confederacy'" if compromise failed. The older Pendleton believed that such a political creation, while not his first choice, would "alleviate conflict over fugitive slaves" and would "form a buffer zone" between the North and South, thereby preventing a constant state of war. North Banker James A. Cravens was even more specific, citing concerns over "the destiny of Indiana." He told a friend that "if I were called to act instant[ly] I should face abolitionism [sic] and if I could not get the State to go with me as a last resort I would divide the State & if possible Ills [Illinois] and out of the Southern portion of each I would form a new state and call it Jackson" to honor the late president. Recognizing the audacious nature of such talk, Cravens admitted that "I may perhaps be writing too freely but . . . that is about the way I feel on this desperate question" of secession and Union. The newly-elected congressman simply could not "reconcile the seperation [sic]" of the sections.<sup>27</sup>

The idea of a border confederacy garnered support on the South Bank as well. Shortly after South Carolina seceded, the verbose Nicholas wrote to Crittenden again, this time about the

---

<sup>27</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 28 November 1860, quoted in Stamp, "Kentucky's Influence," 266; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 7 December 1860, 15, 29 January 1861; Stamp, "Kentucky's Influence," 267; Mach, "Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton, 57-58; James A. Cravens to William H. English, 9 April 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

importance of offering the Valley's citizenry an alternative to the compromise measures currently under discussion. The people, he advised, needed another option "to fall back upon & not leave them as the sole alternative a choice between a Northern & Southern confederacy." That option, he wrote, "is a Mississippi valley Confederacy. The sooner the idea is started & the people . . . are indoctrinated the better." Although Nicholas at first did not mention an Ohio Valley confederation specifically, such an arrangement would have met his purposes equally well. The people should just attend to "their own peculiar interest," he added, and nature's guidance will lead them to form "a most powerful & durable confederacy in the valley." The Kentuckian believed that the free states of the Valley "will gladly give us any reasonable guaranty in a new constitution rather than be permanently separated from us." The establishment of a Valley confederacy would then lead to a rush on the part of upper Northerners to join it. In Nicholas's view, such a polity based in either the Ohio or Mississippi Valley, would enable the border region to counter "most successfully both the Disunionists & the Republicans." The failure of a "border line Confederacy scheme," he said, would dramatically "increase the tendency towards a Southern Confederacy," putting North and South Bankers at great risk. Garrett Davis reminded a friend that Kentucky had "kindred in blood" north of the Ohio River, but, he said, if disunion cannot be avoided, "a vast majority here [in northern Kentucky] desire to preserve the United States in a great central confederation, embracing Southern New York, New Jersey, Southern Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland & the whole area of country lying within the basin of the Mississippi" and Ohio River Valleys. And, although it stopped short of endorsing the creation of a border or central state confederacy, the *Louisville Journal* argued forcefully that the eleven states between the upper North and lower South "constitute the real Keystone of the

Arch of the Union.” Thus, it was “equally their duty and their interest to lead off in some intelligent effort to bring order out of the present chaos of our polities.”<sup>28</sup>

While the notion of a Union-saving border state confederacy appealed to some citizens, for a couple of reasons the idea failed to gain support among most citizens. The Republicans’ unwillingness to compromise insured that any mediating effort was stillborn. While a considerable number of borderites were naturally drawn to the idea, E. P. Humphrey told his son in Louisville that he had gone to Congress “several times and heard some rather dull speeches,” but, he sighed, “I don’t hear much about the ‘central confederacy,’” even though he remained “as strong for it as you are.” More importantly, as desirable as the idea was to some people, a border confederation simply was not practical. Discussions about it merely reflected the wishful thinking of its proponents. In correspondence that appeared in the *Louisville Courier* only after the city’s *Journal* refused to print it because of its immoderate tone, Blanton Duncan rejected moderates’ arguments in favor of a border state confederacy. “The Central Confederacy, composed of the five Border Free and five Slave States,” he maintained, “would be subject to all the objections urged against the Border Slave Confederacy, and many others besides.” The Southern-rights advocate argued that “it cannot be denied that in such a Confederacy the political power will remain in the Northern half as it does at present.” He admitted that “such a Confederacy could be formed by joint consent,” but before the time necessary to accomplish it had elapsed, “we shall be engaged in civil war.” Duncan then insisted that if Kentucky were to join such a confederacy, “the extinction of slavery within our limits . . . would not be long delayed.” Another opponent claimed that “an alliance with the contiguous Free States,” in any

---

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, [27 December 1860], reel 12, vols. 23-24, and Samuel Smith Nicholas to John J. Crittenden, 10 January [1861], reel 11, vols. 21-22, John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; Garrett Davis to John A. Trimble, 14 January 1861, John Allen Trimble Family Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 4 December 1860.

form, “embodies all the ills of Disunion without one of the benefits of Union.” Shortly after leaving Congress in the spring of 1861, the moderate John Stevenson resolutely declared, “I want neither two Union[s] or more Confederacies! I long to see but one as our fathers framed it—and as it was but four short months ago.”<sup>29</sup>

Convening a border state convention to arrest disunionism seemed to be a promising strategy initially, especially when people began to realize that a central confederation was impractical. Such an approach was consistent with the region’s temperate views. Although the tactic would ultimately fail like the other efforts to reach conciliation, the support it received from Valley denizens, particularly South Bankers, once again reflected the citizenry’s idealistic belief in their region’s ability to mend the nation’s divisions. Some skeptics such as John Jefferson recognized early on, however, that the probability of success was slim because “it seems that the Republicans are not very willing to make concessions to the South at present.” Not surprisingly, he concluded that “our Republic is in great danger.” Spurred by similar concerns, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* called several times in December for a border state convention. “We suggest to the people of the border States to hold meetings of all who are in favor of the Union . . . and appoint delegates to a convention to be held in Louisville, early in January,” it urged.<sup>30</sup>

Whether people referred to the newspaper’s proposal as a “border convention” or “Union meeting” did not really matter, as citizens from both banks, a great number of them discouraged Democrats, responded to the call. At a public meeting in Cincinnati on New Year’s eve, a large

---

<sup>29</sup> E. P. Humphrey to Alexander P. Humphrey, 19 January 1861, Pope-Humphrey Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 14, 15 January 1861; John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 8 April 1861, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>30</sup> John Jefferson diary, [?] December 1860, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; Wilson, “Cincinnati’s Reputation,” 471; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 12 December 1860.

crowd, “with long and continued cheering,” urged the free and slave border states “to intervene as mediators in this great crisis of our affairs.” Almost any reasonable method that could be used to reconcile the sections made sense to Jefferson County, Indiana, citizens who gathered together in a public meeting on December 14. They declared that Americans living on the river and beyond it “are essentially one people, united to each other by ties of interest, prosperity and blood.” With an eye toward sustaining the central Ohio River Valley’s economy, the *Madison Daily Evening Courier* called for a convention of the legislatures of Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee “to maintain the integrity of the Union and the free navigation of the [Ohio] Mississippi and Gulf of Mexico.” Across the river in Newport, “several gentlemen” who referred to themselves as “friends of State’s rights ‘in the Union’ . . . have expressed themselves anxious that action should be immediately” taken toward calling a border convention. On January 8, George Prentice announced his support for border state mediation of the growing crisis. In a stirring editorial in which he emphasized the critical role of South Bankers and their brethren in the border slave states, Prentice declared that cooperation with Southern extremists was no longer an option. “It is a dead and discarded policy,” he wrote. Rather, “there remains but one line of policy, and that is MEDIATION;—mediation between the revolting States of the South and the aggressive States of the North.” To achieve such an end, the editor called for “a Convention of the Border States.” The warily hopeful John Stevenson undoubtedly expressed what was on the minds of many in the Valley when he avowed, “my last hope is that the Border Conv[ention] will place themselves as just loyal arbitrators on some basis which shall be so satisfactory as to allow the seceding states to be brought back.” Although such a convention, like the Washington Peace Conference, never amounted to much, calls for it temporarily reinvigorated support for Crittenden’s compromise resolutions among North and South Bankers

even though national support for the Kentuckian's proposed amendments remained tepid at best.<sup>31</sup>

Amid the desperate search for a Union-preserving compromise, Valley citizens began to feel secession's adverse economic effects. Capitalists of all persuasions—wholesale businessmen, industrialists, grocers, bankers, farmers, mechanics and artisans, white and black laborers and, perhaps, even slaves—realized that Southern extremists' threats to tear apart the Union endangered the free flow of goods and services on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Long established networks would be shredded if disunion became a *fait accompli*. The reverberations of such economic disruption could then upset the sometimes-tenuous relations between North and South Bankers. While historians may never reach a consensus regarding the extent to which the Valley's economic turmoil was directly caused by secession rather than the normal ebb and flow of commerce, people nevertheless endured an economic slump after Lincoln's election, as uncertainty and fear affected the region's psyche. Many citizens wondered if the economic "tie that binds"—trade—would be sufficiently strong to resist the centrifugal tug of disunion. In responding to Burrell Thurman's report of Louisville's tougher financial times in mid-December just as South Carolina seceded, concerned businessman Walton Dwight reminded Thurman that we look "almost wholly to our Louisville & Cincinnati" business to meet our contracts. "In Times like these," he wrote, "it behoves [sic] honest men . . . to stand shoulder to shoulder until the whirlwind of [secession] that now is turning financial affairs into chaos Shall Subside."<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14 December 1860, 1 January 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 15 December 1860, 18 January 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 8 January 1861; John W. Stevenson to Thomas B. Stevenson, 31 January 1861, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>32</sup> Walton Dwight to B. H. Thurman, 20 December 1860, Burrell H. Thurman Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

Citizens of the central Ohio River Valley placed considerable faith in the ability of their commercial relationships to hold their region and the center of the nation together, even though it appeared as if such confidence was perhaps misplaced. A Kentucky woman remembered quite clearly that Louisville “may have had Southern feelings but mercantile interest[s] proved a powerful brake on the passions” that might otherwise have led the people astray. Early in 1861, W. G. and O. M. Anderson, cotton manufacturers in Louisville, wrote to their Massachusetts spinning-frame supplier about an order they had placed more than seven months earlier. In apparent desperate need of the new equipment, the Andersons told their New England associates that “Kentucky hasn’t yet seceded and will not with our consent be coaxed or driven out of the Union.” North Bankers similarly valued the centripetal effects of trade. Merchant tailor Ab Planalp placed an advertisement in Madison’s *Courier* in which he urged prospective customers to visit his shop to purchase his inexpensive clothing. Such patronage, he implied, would help to prevent disunion. “I will warrant you the UNION will stick together,” the announcement said. According to Clinton Terry, Cincinnati’s “merchant-based economy,” despite the downturn, produced sufficient profits that “a clear majority” of businessmen “had no stomach for war.” Washington McLean, for instance, had an ownership interest in the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* and owned several boiler-plate factories that conducted business in the South. The businessman was one of many whose commercial interests led him to place great emphasis on the Valley’s leadership role in maintaining peace.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> M. C. Hegewald, undated “Louisville Notes,” M. C. Hegewald Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; W. G. Anderson and O. M. Anderson to P. Whitin & Sons, 22 January 1861, Cotton Industry Letters, 1848-1861-Oldham, Hemingway, and Scott, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 11 January 1861; Terry, “Most Commercial of People,” 17-19; Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 59-60.

A number of the Valley's newspapers drove home similar points. Trans-river pecuniary interests led Madison's *Courier* to announce that "there is no difficulty or trouble between the people of the border State of Indiana and Kentucky" that could not be settled "between themselves in a day." A correspondent of Cincinnati's Republican *Gazette* reported that the river counties' shared interests led them to "claim that stream 'ours,'" as North and South Bankers "link[ed] their hands across its waters" in a show of unity. New Albany's leading Democratic organ, the *Ledger*, maintained that once the "working men" of the border began to make their views known, Northerners and Southerners would come to "understand each other." This would create "such a fraternal state of feeling as to make the North and South clasp and shake hands across the Ohio river." The paper insisted that it was the working men in places such as New Albany, men it called "the bone and sinew of our city," whose labor produced products customers everywhere desired. On the shoulders of such men, the *Ledger* opined, rested "the hopes of the Union." Again, the *Louisville Journal's* articulate editor George Prentice made it clear how the power of the Valley's trade network would strengthen Unionist sentiment. In late November 1860, Prentice explained that businessmen understood that disunion "would blast the welfare of Louisville [and environs] as suddenly as a shower of fire from Heaven, and far more utterly than any mere physical agent of destruction could ever do." Secession would devastate businessmen's markets to such a degree that they would be "prompted by the strongest possible motives to contribute everything in their power to the restoration of peace to the country and of safety to the Union." With the ink of Southern secession ordinances hardly dry, the *Journal* printed an open letter to Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin from an "enlightened and distinguished citizen" who reinforced its position. The central Ohio River Valley furnished "the planting States with bread and meat and drink—to say nothing of mules and horses," the



correspondent wrote. Whatever the political leaders of those states do, “their people must come or send to us for these things; and a trade in articles of such prime importance and . . . value must necessarily draw with it every other form of commercial intercourse,” making it difficult for disunion to triumph permanently.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the rhetoric, the Valley’s commercial intercourse suffered during the secession winter of 1860-1861. Judge Jeremiah Sullivan foresaw the danger immediately after Lincoln’s election. “I am alarmed at the present appearance of things in our country,” he told his son Algernon. “The signs are ominous . . . . In addition to our political troubles, we are on the eve . . . of a terrible financial crisis.” Sullivan reported that “the farmers in many parts of Kentucky, Ohio, & Indiana are running on the banks for the purpose of converting what paper they have into gold or silver. The Bank men look *scared*,” he wrote, “and are evidently alarmed.” According to the Madison resident, Southern businessmen were withdrawing their money from “this part of the country rapidly.” The break up of the Union led to a national “commercial crisis” that was driven by both fact and fear. North Bankers in Indiana, writes Kenneth Stamp, “complained of hard times and general business stagnation,” while Democratic newspapers warned Indianans that the secession crisis would increase “economic adversity.” Three days before Christmas, Rising Sun resident Elizabeth Craft observed, “times are hard and business of every kind very dull.” The Valley was suffering greatly, she told her son Henry; “all looks gloomy especially in this part of the countrey [sic] where people depend on the south[ern] . . . market for their produce.” She feared that Ohio “river traders will suffer great loss if they escape [the South] with their lives. Many of them have been forbidden [sic] to land their Boats at all” in

---

<sup>34</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 17 December 1860; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 4 February 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 28 December 1860, 5 January 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 23 November 1860, 14 January 1861.

Southern ports. Cincinnati businessmen reported similar experiences. Richard Miller informed James Armstrong that a business associate was confronted with the fact that the bank with whom he conducted business had failed and, as a result, it would take a year to collect his assets. Even then, he would be lucky to receive more than seventy-five cents on the dollar. Businessmen with inconsistent track records when it came to paying their debts were particularly vulnerable.

According to a credit reporter for R. G. Dun and Company, Madison foundry owners J. S. and R. E. Neal had fallen behind in their debt payments because “they have a good deal of paper on men in the South that is not now (owing to our unfortunate difficulties) of much use to them . . . . But I fear if this troubles continue they will not be able to meet their liabilities.” Still, hope endured on the North Bank. Wholesaler John Jones reported, “we have had some trials, but not enough to break us down . . . . Lots of people are infinitely [sic] worse off than [than] we.” For many entrepreneurs in the months after the November election, living on the brink of economic ruin became a test of their resilience and strength.<sup>35</sup>

That South Bankers were closer geographically to the seceded states only magnified their anxiety and fear. Southern commercial ties were particularly strong in places such as Louisville, where the recently completed Louisville and Nashville Railroad opened up a new corridor to Southern markets. The *Louisville Courier* claimed “that one-third of all the trade of Louisville . . . that has built up and sustained the material interests of the city . . . has been from” the lower South. By late November, the city’s population had begun to feel the economic effects of

---

<sup>35</sup> Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 12 November 1860, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; Kenneth M. Stamp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), 53-54; Elizabeth L. Craft to Henry Clay Craft, 22 December 1860, Daniel D. Pratt Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Richard Miller to James Smith Armstrong, 14 January 1861, James Smith Armstrong Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati; R. G. Dun and Company Collection, Indiana-Jefferson County, vol. 50, p. 56, Baker Business Historical Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; John D. Jones to Frank J. Jones, 13 March 1861, Frank J. Jones Civil War Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society.

secessionist threats. One upper class woman noted the “hard times” as “workmen & workwomen [were] being thrown out of employment, by [the] thousands.” For her and others of her class, there had been “few amusements” of late, leading her to bemoan rather selfishly that “it is thought that there will be few or no parties this winter.” For the majority of people adversely affected by the national crisis, though, the dangers were more substantive. Walter Haldeman complained about a man owing him \$8,000. “I need the money just now particularly & the way things are here [I] find it impossible to get anything out of [the] bank,” he wrote. He asked a friend for a loan to sustain him. Perspectives among members of Louisville’s prominent Bullitt family sometimes conflicted. James Bullitt insisted that “all the business men of the city seem very much depressed by the aspect of affairs in the country,” while William C. Bullitt managed to sell 27,000 bushels of corn at forty-five to fifty cents a bushel “notwithstanding the hard times.” On December 9, James Guthrie, the Louisville and Nashville line’s new president, warned of the impending “commercial disaster” and “financial problems” facing the nation if events continued along their current path. His dire warning led the Louisville city council to suspend sidewalk improvements because “the conditions of money matters is so depressed.” In the council’s view, it seemed an unfair demand to impose on property owners given the current economic environment. The situation was similar in Covington, where Eliza Nast wrote that “there is no business doing [here]. Merchants are becoming insolvent [sic]. Manufacturers are stopping, a great many people are out of employment, and if this winter had not been an uncommon mild one hundreds of people in Cincinnati . . . would have been in a starving condition.”<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 8 March 1861; Mary Hunt [?] to sister, 22 November 1860, Hunt-Morgan Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington; W. N. Haldeman to Isabel [last name unknown], 28 November 1860, Haldeman Family Papers, 1843-1985, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; James

The Valley's economic downturn hit the lower classes hardest. They were often among the first to lose their jobs when merchants and manufacturers trimmed expenses in response to shrinking profits. Great numbers of laborers, skilled artisans, mechanics, and seamstresses in the larger cities found themselves unemployed as Southern trade tightened. They responded by taking their cause into the public arena. "I am for the Union" and "I am a mechanic," a correspondent informed Cincinnati's *Enquirer*. Mechanics "have interests at stake in this reckless warfare of sectionalism . . . which threatens to ruin" the nation. "Beware! The wolf is on the walk and is getting hungry," he warned. "I write the sentiments and the feelings of thousands of LABORERS." Blaming the crisis on "scheming politicians and editors of partisan newspapers," workers in Kenton County, Kentucky, resolved that workingmen would be "the greatest sufferers" and "will have to do most of the fighting" if armed conflict erupted. In both Cincinnati and Louisville workers responded to increased hardship by trying to organize workingmen's parties that eschewed traditional party allegiances. Iron molder Frederick Oberkline urged workers to vote for men who supported their interests. The third-party effort met with little success in Cincinnati, but its counterpart across the river in Newport was more successful, winning nine of thirteen city offices in the local elections in March 1861. In Louisville, the working-class crisis led to the call for a public meeting at the city's courthouse on December 22 to aid the Committee of Citizens in identifying "the deserving needy and to render all the aid possible in relieving the present distress in our midst." Many people, including the *Journal's* editor, felt that the working "class of men who toil in the sweat of their brows"

---

B. Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 30 November 1860, and William C. Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 1 December 1860, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; James Guthrie to Paul G. Washington, 9 December 1860, James Guthrie Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Louisville City Council Records, 24 December 1860, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; Eliza Nast to Albert Nast, 24 February 1861, Nast Family Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

deserved assistance “until work can be procured.” The next day, a smaller working group was formed and tasked with seeking out “those mechanics and laborers who may be suffering and to see that they are furnished with the necessaries of life.” On December 27, “a mass meeting” of representatives from Louisville’s various trades convened at city hall to address the nation’s political and economic woes. Wearied by “this everlasting turmoil,” the workers, like their brethren in Cincinnati, rebuked “the partisan tricksters and political jugglers” who they believed were responsible for the current climate of political distrust and economic hardship.

Recognizing that secession would continue to threaten their prosperity if it was not resolved, they called on fellow Unionists to “divest yourselves of all alliances to men or party” in order that the nation might expunge sectionalism. The workers resolved that doing so would honor the memory of the “immortal Henry Clay.” Workers in Madison and New Albany, Indiana, quickly endorsed the South Bankers’ sentiment. The workingmen’s party that sprang from such public gatherings, according to John Alan Boyd, “spread quickly but had short life.” Even so, the workers’ response underscored the degree to which economy and Unionism were interconnected.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the difficult times, many merchants managed to stay afloat, if not prosper. The extant records of men such as Louisville grocer John Jefferson offer a window into mercantile life in the Valley during the months between Lincoln’s election and the attack on Fort Sumter. For years Thomas and John Jefferson’s grocery store had thrived as they enjoyed the advantages of living in a growing western city on the bank of a major commercial river. The entries in John

---

<sup>37</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 23 January 1861; Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 190-91; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 21, 24 December 1860, 7 January 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 28 December 1860 and 5 January 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 3 January 1861; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 103-4. On 18 February 1861, the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* reported that workers’ attempt at a third party was an effort “to throw off the political yoke, which they could do if they were united.”

Jefferson's diary during the winter of 1860-1861 reveal that his average monthly sales surpassed those of the previous fall, despite the constricting money supply. The grocer's comments read like an abridged regional economic report. On November 23 he wrote, "Money matters are now very tight. Banks are suspending all over the land. Another panic is almost upon us." On December 8 he noted with concern that Thomas J. Martin, a local pork dealer, had gone broke and "Others are nearly so." Three days later he commented that as the money supply continued to contract, "produce & groceries [are] now declining." Yet from Christmas forward, Jefferson enjoyed increased sales. As the various compromise efforts appeared to raise hopes, so seemingly did the money in the Kentuckian's till. On January 2, Jefferson felt encouraged. "The news from Washington is better—fine prospect of a satisfactory adjustment." The next day sales reached \$406, higher than any day in December. I am "now doing [a] large business in pork," he said. Near the end of January the grocer wrote that game, poultry, butter, and eggs "are now abundant & cheap." Two weeks later, the store's business was brisk as "bacon [was] coming in freely." As the presidential inauguration approached, sales continued to improve. On the last day of February, Jefferson sold approximately nine thousand pounds of bacon; the following day he grossed over \$1,000. Like other shrewd Valley businessmen, Jefferson benefited from the increased flow of goods heading south on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad as the rebellious states sought to stockpile provisions.<sup>38</sup>

The fall of 1860 had witnessed a month-to-month decline in the freight receipts of the new railroad. But from February 1861 forward, receipts increased, with most of the trade going south, not north. Although the railroad's monthly gross freight earnings fluctuated between

---

<sup>38</sup> Frank J. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South, 1820-1865* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 43; John Jefferson Diary, 23 November 1860-11 April 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville.

December and March, the line enjoyed an overall revenue increase of nearly \$8,000, or 35 percent, during the period. This trade made North Bankers, particularly Cincinnatians, restless. The *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* pointed out that merchandise sold throughout the Valley “can and does find its way over the railroads, into the interior of Georgia, Alabama, and Carolina.” Despite Southern disloyalty, though, the paper admitted that “the trade is valuable to both parties.” The rebel states’ imposition of a customs tax, the *Gazette* cautioned, would be felt by everyone, although it believed “the great loss and burden will fall on the Border Slave States.”<sup>39</sup>

It did not take North Bankers long to realize that increasing amounts of goods were still going south, even as the Union unraveled and many of them struggled to make ends meet. One resident of Rising Sun, Indiana, reported that some acquaintances were “now on their second trip with produce consigned to some house in the lower country.” They will continue to do so “all winter,” she said, “if they can get Boats to run.” New Albany’s *Ledger* reported the voluminous amount of freight sitting on the Louisville and Nashville’s track and dock. Corn had begun “to go forward in large quantities” to the South, while a steamboat loaded with sugar and molasses sat at the city’s wharf waiting to continue its trip to Cincinnati. Some Valley residents questioned the morality of supplying the seceded states. David Este complained that the nation was “drifting” and that “the government does nothing” about the steady flow of provisions south. Risking the loss of a hand that fed them, New Albanians formed a vigilance committee to stop shipments of goods headed south. Soon after Lincoln’s inauguration, the new Secretary of the

---

<sup>39</sup> Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 61-62; *Annual Report of the President and Directors of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company, Commencing on the First of October, 1860, and Ending on the Thirtieth of June, 1861* (Louisville: Hanna & Company, 1861), 21; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 30 March 1861.

Treasury Salmon Chase ordered that the Indiana town be reestablished as a Port of Delivery in an effort to combat the growing problem.<sup>40</sup>

On February 11 President-elect Lincoln embarked on a long, winding trip from his home in Springfield, Illinois, to the nation's capitol. Throngs of people greeted the incoming chief executive at each stop. Two of his early stops were on the North Bank, from where he could glimpse Kentucky, his native state. An "immense crowd" met the train as it arrived in the river village of Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Speaking only briefly, Lincoln chose his words carefully. "I say to you that the power entrusted to me shall be exercised as perfectly to protect the rights of your neighbors across the river as to protect yours on this side," he said. "I know no difference in the protection of Constitutional rights on either side of the river."<sup>41</sup>

From there, the inauguration train made the short journey to Cincinnati, where it was welcomed by an outpouring of support. According to reports, the windows and roofs of houses were crowded with spectators while "coal piles were covered with the expectant people." Thousands went "perfectly wild with enthusiasm" as Lincoln stepped from the train. In a speech repeatedly interrupted by applause, the President-elect extended a hand to South Bankers, telling all Kentuckians: "We mean to leave you alone and in no way to interfere with your institutions, to abide by all and every compromise of the Constitution . . . . We mean to remember that you are as good as we—that there is no difference between us—other than the difference of circumstances." Before Lincoln departed the city, Frederick Oberkleine addressed him on behalf

---

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth L. Craft to Henry Clay Craft, 22 December 1860, Daniel D. Pratt Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 8 January 1861; David Kirkpatrick Este Diaries, 22 March 1861, Cincinnati Historical Society; Salmon Chase to Samuel Ingham, 8 April 1861, Letters Sent to the Heads of Bureaus, 1861-1878, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56, National Archives, Washington.

<sup>41</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 13 February 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 13 February 1861. See also Ray C. Johnson, *History of Lawrenceburg, Indiana* (Lawrenceburg: Lawrenceburg Historical Society, 1953), 28.



of Cincinnati's German workers. In a passionate message, the German leader told Lincoln, "You earned our votes as the champion of Free Labor and Free Homesteads," so "we trust, that you . . . will uphold the Constitution and the laws against secret treachery and avowed treason."

Lincoln's visit left an indelible mark on many of his supporters. Amanda Wilson commented, "I shall never forget the crowd assembled to greet him yesterday. By far the largest I ever witnessed." As the Illinoisan departed, the ever-hopeful Cincinnati wished that "peace be restored." Attorney Rutherford Hayes lauded Lincoln's tone and approach. David Este, who was a member of the city's official welcoming committee and sat next to the President-elect during breakfast, commented that "he impressed me favorably as a man of strong common sense, honest" and resolute. "I think he will endeavor to get clear views of his duty, & then he will do it."<sup>42</sup>

Lincoln's brief visit to the Valley elicited mixed reviews from South Bankers. John Jefferson carefully tracked Lincoln's progress to Washington through daily newspaper reports. His comments hint at how Lincoln tailored each speech to the nature of his audience. At Indianapolis, Jefferson felt the Illinoisan's speech was "rather coercive," but in Cincinnati, more moderate. Lincoln's language in Columbus was "more foolish than wise," and likewise in Pittsburgh, provoking Jefferson to remark that "'Old Abe' would act more wisely if he would keep his mouth shut." After Lincoln traveled through Baltimore under cover of darkness, Jefferson could not hide his disdain. "He heard that the folks in Balt[imore] intended to assassinate him & the old coward sneaked through dressed in a military cloak & plaid garments!

---

<sup>42</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 13 February 1861 (see also John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Tandy-Thomas Company, 1905), 117-19); William Thomas Venner, ed., *Queen City Lady: The 1861 Journal of Amanda Wilson* (Cincinnati: Larrea Books, 1996), 28-29; Dee, ed., *Ohio's War*, 36; David K. Este to son, 5 March 1861, David Kirkpatrick Este Diaries, Cincinnati Historical Society.

What a humiliating spectacle! . . . I am afraid Lincoln is not the man for the times.” The *Louisville Journal* concluded that Lincoln’s remarks in Cincinnati were “very conciliatory.” As much as it had opposed the Republican, the paper said, it had “an intense desire” that he would, after consultation with officials in Washington, moderate his uncompromising position regarding the seceded states. Southern-rights advocates viewed things differently. Moving ever closer to becoming an outright secessionist, Blanton Duncan told a South Carolina friend that “Lincoln is the most fanatical of his party & it is idle to hope for peace.” Similarly, the Southern-rights *Louisville Courier* misconstrued some of Lincoln’s Cincinnati remarks as nothing more than a “threat of war against Kentucky.”<sup>43</sup>

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin argues that Lincoln “faced a dual challenge” in writing his inaugural address. While affirming his resolve to preserve the Union, he also had to allay Southerners’ anxieties. As North and South Bankers already knew, the task was much harder than it looked, if not impossible, given the degree to which the political climate had deteriorated. On March 4, after taking the oath of office, Lincoln addressed the nation. Each state had the right “to order and control its own domestic institutions,” the new president said. He promised to uphold and enforce the Constitution and all laws derived from it, including the federal fugitive slave law. He made clear his belief that “the Union of these States is perpetual;” despite the actions of the lower South, the Union remained “unbroken.” In fulfilling his responsibilities as the nation’s new chief executive, he promised that there would be no federal “invasion” of the South, but he made it clear that he would use his constitutional authority “to hold, occupy, and

---

<sup>43</sup> John Jefferson Diary, 9-25 February 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 14-15 February 1861; Blanton Duncan to William P. Miles, 12 February 1861, William Porcher Miles Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 16 February 1861.

possess the property, and places belonging to the government.” Blaming slavery for the nation’s current difficulties, he told the nation that secession was “the essence of anarchy,” making it wholly unacceptable to all freedom-loving people. In concluding his address, the border state president expressed sentiments shared by a majority of North and South Bankers in the Ohio River Valley. “We are not enemies, but friends,” he proclaimed. “We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”<sup>44</sup>

Lincoln’s inaugural address received mixed reviews in the Valley. North Bank Republicans generally applauded its “firm, but conservative” tone. Cincinnati’s *Gazette* asked how any Union man could find anything in it “objectionable”; its language was so straightforward that “it cannot be misunderstood by men of the most common intellect.” Madison’s Republican leader Michael Garber wrote in an editorial that Lincoln had managed to please most Republicans and moderate Democrats: “the speech is not strong enough for the ultra men of Lincoln’s party, and it is too strong for secessionists, occupying middle ground it is as near right as it was possible to make it.” Among Cincinnati’s financial and mercantile men, reports indicated the address was received with “general satisfaction.” Democrats such as Kentuckian John Jefferson admitted that the address was “conservative & constitutional and much milder than I expected.” James Guthrie was more apprehensive, telling a friend that “I greatly fear the policy of Mr. Lincoln in the attempt to collect Revenue in the Seceding States will lead to Civil War.” Not surprisingly, Southern-rights advocates considered Lincoln’s inaugural speech inflammatory. “I am opposed to the HIGHER LAW and COERCIVE doctrine set forth in the inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln,” Joseph A. Gilliss declared. Another South Banker’s critique was even sharper: “Lincoln’s declaration of war,” he wrote, “is certainly

---

<sup>44</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 324; Gore Vidal and Don E. Fehrenbacher, eds., *Selected Speeches and Writings by Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 284-93.

sufficient to satisfy every man in the South” that Southern-rights will not be protected under the new administration.<sup>45</sup>

In the wake of Lincoln’s inauguration, the highly-politicized atmosphere in Louisville led to conflicting Southern-rights and Unionist public meetings, as each faction sought to take its case to the people. Secessionist Sarah Hughes informed her father that “since A[braham] Lincoln’s ‘Inaugural,’ the excitement has been intense in Louisville . . . . I am for immediate and eternal secession and I think Kentucky will soon go.” Such views infuriated South Bank Unionists. In response to the saber-rattling of border state secessionists, James Guthrie delivered the most important public address of his career at the city’s courthouse on Saturday evening, March 16. The politician-turned-railroad-president lamented the fact that the nation had ignored George Washington’s warning about the dangers of sectionalism. Divisive political partisanship and extremism, he said, had now forced the nation to drink from the “cup of calamity.” Criticizing even his fellow Democrats, he said all parties were to blame for the current crisis, and all should accept responsibility and “repent in sack cloth what we have done and for the future determine to stand by the Union and the flag of our country.” The Kentuckian furthermore reminded Valley citizens that secession denied rivermen free navigation of the Mississippi, restricted trade, and demoralized the region. “We have enjoyed safety in the old Union,” he said, and we have “lived well and peaceably with our neighbors” on the North Bank. Guthrie admitted that Kentuckians occasionally had to rap North Bankers “on the knuckles” for taking “some of our negroes,” but Kentucky had nonetheless remained “firm to the Union.” He

---

<sup>45</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 5, 6 March 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 5 March 1861; John Jefferson Diary, 4 March 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; James Guthrie to Paul G. Washington, 6 March 1861, James Guthrie Letters, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 15 March 1861; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 12 March 1861.

repeated an oft-heard argument made by South Bank Unionists: if “we are border neighbors of different confederacies,” we will be forced to “retaliate by burning their towns” when they cross the river and take our slaves. “It is a fearful thing to contemplate this inauguration of a border war for ourselves and our posterity,” he said. Concerned for his city and his railroad, Guthrie argued that “there never was a prosperous border city” because capitalists were unwilling to invest their capital where local dangers threatened profits. Louisville’s profitable commercial intercourse with the North Bank and, through Cincinnati, the eastern ports, would be taxed if Kentucky left the Union. This, he contended, “will give the advantages to all the seaport towns of the seceding South and break us of Louisville up.” In concluding his plea for Kentucky’s continued loyalty, Guthrie said, “Our security is to stand in the Union firmly . . . . We now command both the Northern and Southern markets, and can gain nothing by any change.”<sup>46</sup>

As Guthrie’s arguments percolated through people’s minds, events in Charleston harbor quickly came to a head. During the early morning hours of April 12, Confederate batteries opened fire on Fort Sumter, under the command of Kentucky’s Major Robert Anderson. President Lincoln responded by calling on the loyal states for troops to put down the Southern “rebellion.” With war now a reality, the *Louisville Courier* announced disunion’s triumph. “The first victory has been won,” it said. Yet for most North and South Bankers, conflict was no “victory.” With the Founding Fathers’ dream now shattered, it remained to be seen whether the trans-river threads of Union were strong enough to hold the Valley together.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Sarah E. Hughes to father, 10 March 1861, Hughes Family Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 18 March 1861.

<sup>47</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 15 April 1861.

### Chapter Three

#### “No North, No South, but one [tenuous] Union”: April-June 1861

“I fear all is lost,” wrote a forlorn William G. Armstrong, Jr., just twenty-four hours after the beleaguered garrison at Fort Sumter surrendered to Confederate forces. At the same time as Armstrong’s lamentation, Valley citizens discredited the initial reports of conflict as one more unsubstantiated rumor. When confirmation of war arrived, however, many people “were unwilling to believe it,” reported the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*. Excitement, anxiety, and an “eagerness to ascertain the result” replaced feelings of “incredulity” as people digested the reports. Newspaper offices, the *Gazette* said, “were thronged as we have never seen them thronged before,” as people sought to satisfy their insatiable desire for information.<sup>1</sup>

Valley hopes for a peaceful resolution to the sectional crisis evaporated with the outbreak of hostilities. Border state citizens’ confidence in their ability to prevent war disappeared with the peace. Yet, for people such as Kentucky Unionist Jonathan Speed, resolve replaced misplaced confidence. As far as he was concerned, South Carolina’s attempt to “starve” Sumter into submission was unacceptable. The Louisville resident told Indiana’s new Senator Henry Lane that when it came to providing food for hungry soldiers, many people in the area were “ready enough to embrace the side of Uncle Same [sic] if the matter . . . assume[d] a humanitarian aspect.” The sections’ failure to reach a compromise dampened but did not break the Valley’s determination to support the enforcement of existing laws. Though trans-river relations would be stretched precariously close to the breaking point by conflicting interests in

---

<sup>1</sup> William G. Armstrong, Jr. [?] to Carrie and Will, 15 April 1861, John Armstrong Papers, Indiana Historical Society; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 15 April 1861.

the coming months, the many bonds that linked river communities to each other and to the Union would hold fast.<sup>2</sup>

Reactions to the Confederate attack varied widely because, as one scholar argues, it forced divided borderites “to decide which view [of the states’ relationship to the federal government] they held” and “which notion of sovereignty [state or federal] would predominate.” These constitutional questions, he asserts “had long endured without immediacy or consequence,” but the attack on Sumter had suddenly made the answers to them “critical” to the Ohio River Valley’s future. In answering these questions, Unionists and secessionists eschewed party labels in an effort to unite with others who shared their view of the conflict. South Bankers, particularly, watched each other warily. The attack on Sumter temporarily confused Kentucky Unionists, John Alan Boyd contends, because they “were uncertain where the public stood—or, for that matter, who in their ranks could be trusted.” The same could also be said of South Bank secessionists.<sup>3</sup>

Sumter’s surrender provoked a flurry of public pro-Union meetings on both banks of the river whose goal was to fan the flame of support for the federal government. A Kentucky visitor to Cincinnati wrote that he was in the city “when the excitement began” and was taken aback by it. “I never saw so much excitement in all my life,” he said. “The town was alive with troops. Drilling all day & night. The people are not divided in Covington, Newport & Cincinnati they are all for [the] Union.” Such sentiment was confirmed by others who reported that hundreds of citizens in the two northern Kentucky towns considered themselves part of Cincinnati because “business and social intercourse make them such.” On April 18, Louisville Unionists gathered in the city’s courthouse to proclaim their loyalty to the Union, their good will toward North

---

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Speed to Henry Lane, 12 April 1861, Henry Smith Lane Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 140; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 183-85.

Bankers, and their desire to insure that Kentucky was not drawn into a conflict whose warring sides needed its services as mediator. For many reasons, the citizens declared, Kentucky should move carefully to avoid being drawn into “an internecine war” that would disrupt North and South Bankers’ delicate relationship. Kentucky, they said, had “no reason to distrust the present kindly feelings of the people who reside on the North Bank of the Ohio river, long her friendly neighbors, and connected by a thousand ties of business and consanguinity.” In their view, if Kentucky seceded, North Bankers and the states in which they lived would turn into “political antagonists,” thereby making “a continuance of our old friendly relations” impossible. The Louisvillians condemned the Confederacy for launching an attack without consulting Kentucky and criticized President Lincoln’s call for volunteers “for the purpose of coercing the seceding States.” Unionists in Madison, Indiana, met a day after their South Bank counterparts; the tone of their meeting reflected a sense of urgency. In proclaiming their fidelity to the Union, they resolved to provide for the defense of their homes by raising a regiment of men from the surrounding vicinity. South Bankers were urged to join them. “We cordially invite our Kentucky neighbors across the river to organize and unite with us for the purpose of border defence, and for the preservation of peace.”<sup>4</sup>

Although they were in the minority, South Bank secessionists considered the fall of Sumter a call to action for those who, up to that point, had remained hesitant to aggressively pursue disunion. One secessionist announced that “come weal or woe,” she was casting her “destiny” with the Confederacy. John W. Hughes emphatically sided with the notion that state sovereignty trumped federal authority. I hope that “the war may never be ended,” he angrily

---

<sup>4</sup> Henry Haviland to Sue Scrogin, 25 April 1861, Scrogin-Haviland Collection, Kentucky Historical Society; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 19 April 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 19 April 1861. On 15 April, Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops to suppress the rebellion. Kentucky’s Governor Beriah Magoffin refused the President’s request. *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 20 April 1861.



wrote, “till the last Black Republican may be made to bit[e] the dust from the bottom of my heart I hate them.” Cincinnati’s *Enquirer* reported that on the day Sumter fell, passengers bound for Lexington on the Kentucky Central Railroad had decorated each car with a secession flag. Indeed, when war broke out, many Southern-rights leaders left Kentucky and headed south to the Confederacy. Such attrition ultimately deprived the South Bank, as well as the commonwealth, of a leadership cadre whose organizational skills and secessionist passion could have made life more troublesome for the Valley’s Unionists had they remained. In late April, five companies of Kentucky soldiers left Louisville to join Confederate forces in Virginia, followed later by significant numbers of State Guard members who assembled in camps just over the state line in Tennessee. On the same day that Lincoln called for volunteers to suppress the rebellion, the *Louisville Courier* demanded that Kentuckians choose between the North and South, and then assailed “lying demagogues” like the new president for launching a premeditated attack on Confederate sovereignty. “The war is begun,” it announced, and with it the liberties of millions of people and “the independence of seven sovereign States are put to the hazard of the sword” because of the “unhallowed aggression and . . . unholy despotism” of the federal government. Editor Haldeman announced that since Cincinnati had “gone over body and breeches to the Abolitionists” and in the process “stolen meat and munitions destined for Memphis and Arkansas,” the South Bank’s surplus of provisions should be sent to “warm friends” in the South, not “insidious, cowardly foes” in the North.<sup>5</sup>

For secessionist agitators, the second half of April amounted to little more than a “brief hurrah.” At a meeting on April 16, Louisville’s leading Southern-rights men approved a series

---

<sup>5</sup> Lucy and John W. Hughes to Lucy’s father, 18 April 1861, Hughes Family Papers, Kentucky Historical Society; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14 April 1861; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 3; Joseph R. Reinhart, *A History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U.S.: The Boys Who Feared No Noise* (Louisville: Beargrass Press, 2000), 3; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 15, 19 April 1861.

of resolutions in which blame for the war was placed squarely on the shoulders of President Lincoln and Northern extremists. They condemned federal coercion, demanded that Union troops not cross Kentucky, and called for the Bluegrass state to arm itself immediately. They portrayed the attack on Fort Sumter as an act of defense in response to manipulative politicians whose greed and corruption had started the war. And in a blatant act of defiance, they endorsed Governor Magoffin's refusal to supply the troops Lincoln had requested. Within weeks, many of those in attendance would be wearing Confederate uniforms.<sup>6</sup>

With peace but a memory, the border states' course occupied the thoughts of officials in both Washington and the Ohio Valley. Kentucky's long border on the river was a natural defensive position that could be used to great advantage by the Confederacy if the commonwealth joined it. As James McPherson points out, it was "little wonder that Lincoln was reported to have said that while he hoped to have God on his side, he must have Kentucky." Immediately following Sumter, two critical issues confronted Valley citizens: what course would Kentucky pursue and, depending on the state's decision, how would North and South Bankers sustain their special socioeconomic ties? North Bankers had the added challenge of preparing for war while continuing to extend a neighborly hand to their brethren across the river. For their part, South Bank Unionists felt obligated to reassure Indianans and Ohioans that they had nothing to fear from Kentucky. Jonathan Speed confidently reported in late April that "No man can be at all mistaken as to the drift of K[entuck]y feeling in the last few days. The secession forces are giving way." Although the Kentuckian's assessment was premature, he maintained that "the prominent movers" in Louisville "have openly repudiated [secessionist] heresy & many of the Union men do not hesitate *now* to say that our great blunder was in

---

<sup>6</sup> Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 177-78.

refusing to send troops & saying that Federal forces should not cross K[entuck]y soil.” Both Speed and Lincoln believed that if Kentuckians were given “a little cooling time” without Yankee “threats & provoking language” they would “set the old state on her feet” and remain loyal. Amid the panic sweeping the region, an unusually calm Rutherford Hayes had similar thoughts. “No doubt the accounts sent abroad as to the danger we are in from Kentucky are much exaggerated,” he wrote. The state “is in no condition to go out immediately.”<sup>7</sup>

The swiftness with which Virginia seceded after Lincoln issued his call for troops led many Unionists along the Ohio River to conclude that Kentucky had to be treated delicately. Doing otherwise, they feared, could encourage Kentuckians to follow the same path. Some Republicans believed that the best strategy for maintaining border state loyalty rested on somehow convincing states such as Kentucky to remain in the Union voluntarily. If Kentucky and Maryland remained loyal, argues David Potter, the rebellious “cotton states might be expected to feel a sense of inadequacy in their independence, and a kinship with the Unionist slave states which would draw them back to the Union.” Loyal Democrats such as General George McClellan agreed that Kentucky should be handled adroitly. From his headquarters in Cincinnati, he informed General-in-Chief Winfield Scott that Kentucky’s Union party was getting stronger daily, but that matters had to be handled carefully. With two state elections approaching, he said, Unionist prospects were good as long as “no undue elements of excitement are introduced into the canvass.” McClellan reminded Scott that “Kentuckians desire to remain in the Union without a revolution, *under all the forms of law & by their own action.*” It is important “that they should be treated with the utmost delicacy until the elections [in June and

---

<sup>7</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 284; Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, 131; Jonathan Speed to Henry Lane, 29 [April] 1861, Henry Smith Lane Papers; Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 2: 10-11.

August] are over.” Thomas M. Key reported that in a meeting between McClellan and General Simon B. Buckner, commander of the suspect Kentucky State Guard, the Ohioan “yielded to the advice of *all* the friends of the Union in Ky. in avoiding interference” with the state “pending the Congressional contest.” According to Key, McClellan believed it essential that Unionists south of the river be given time “to complete [their] organization & consolidate [their] strength.”<sup>8</sup>

Lincoln, too, recognized the fragile nature of the situation. The “recruitment or deployment of a field army in Kentucky” by the U.S. government, observes one scholar, could have easily disrupted the state’s “political balance” and driven it “into secession.” The president ordered newly-promoted Brigadier General Robert Anderson to establish his headquarters in Cincinnati, where he believed it “would serve as a rallying point and recruitment center for loyal men from south of the river.” Anderson’s command soon became the Department of Kentucky, its jurisdiction extending across the South Bank for a hundred miles. At enormous political risk, Lincoln covertly sent muskets with navy lieutenant William Nelson to assist in the organization of “the Unionist paramilitary Home Guard” as a counterweight to the secessionist Kentucky State Guard. The new president’s cautiousness when it came to interfering with Kentucky’s trade was grounded in his desire to keep the state loyal. Lincoln and influential Valley Unionists understood the subtle intricacies of river-bank diplomacy, even though the governors of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio believed that the president’s actions were woefully inadequate.<sup>9</sup>

Governors Richard Yates, Oliver Morton, and William Dennison expressed their discontent at a meeting in Indianapolis in mid-May. They jointly recommended that the

---

<sup>8</sup> Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis*, 251; Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan, Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), 30-31 (McClellan to Winfield Scott, 5 June 1861); John Niven et al., eds., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers*, 4 vols. (Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 1996), 3: 71-72.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald J. Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 12; Lowell H. Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 136-37.

Kentucky cities of Louisville, Covington, and Newport “and the Railroads leading from the same South,” be held by Northern troops. At the very least, they said, the towns should be occupied by loyal Kentucky forces. The three state executives contended that doing so “would save Kentucky to the Union.” The Lincoln administration rejected the plan at that point, however, to avoid arousing Kentuckians’ ire.<sup>10</sup>

The South Bank’s muddled response to the outbreak of war in the weeks after Sumter’s surrender only compounded citizens’ dire predicament. While North Bankers could be confident that Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio would remain loyal, Kentuckians in April and May could not be certain about their state’s fate. Competing ties to the North Bank and the South made northern Kentucky seem unreliable in the eyes of outsiders. For many citizens in the North, particularly those who lived far from the Valley, the fact that some South Bankers’ struggled to decide where their loyalty lay made cities such as Louisville seem “a hotbed of conspiracy and intrigue.” One Louisvillian told a friend that the anxious “state of affairs of the country so unsettles our community” that he was not sure to where he would move his family.<sup>11</sup>

The national turmoil surrounding Sumter’s surrender frayed nerves on both banks; many citizens feared for their personal safety. Unsubstantiated reports of all kinds heightened fears on the South Bank. John W. Stevenson informed his daughter in Washington, D.C., that she was safer there than were the people of Covington. “We are . . . deeply anxious at the dreadful scenes & . . . omens by which we are surrounded,” he wrote. On April 17, rumors reported that

---

<sup>10</sup> William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton: Including His Important Speeches* (Indianapolis-Kansas City: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1899), 140-41; public statement, 24 May 1861, Adjutant General Administration-Correspondence to the Adjutant General and Governor of Ohio, 1861-1866, Series 147, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Emmett McDowell, *City of Conflict: Louisville in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Louisville: Louisville Civil War Round Table, 1962), 38; A. A. Gordon to Mrs. [W. R.?] Grigsby, 10 May 1861, John Warren Grigsby Papers, Filson Historical Society.

the steamer *Lehigh* was headed down the Ohio loaded with four or five thousand muskets “for defense of the South.” A Louisville mob demanded that the commander of the Hope Engine House Armory relinquish the cannons under his authority. Two cannons were then positioned along the shore in such a way as to give them a clear shot at the *Lehigh* when the boat came within range. The intervention of General Simon B. Buckner calmed the crowd and the cannons were eventually returned to the armory. The *Louisville Journal* reported that on the same day as the *Lehigh* incident rumors circulated that Indiana’s Governor Oliver Morton had been ordered by Washington to take possession of all federal property in Kentucky. Such lies, the paper said, were the work of secessionists who hoped to create sufficient “raging excitement in the midst of us, to hurry Kentucky out of the Union.” South Bankers’ fear of a servile insurrection grew as well. The *Louisville Courier* exacerbated such fear when it claimed that “many steamboat clerks and boatmen are volunteering in the Abolition army of invasion of the South.” Lizzie Bruce was grateful that her father and others had purchased pistols “when they did” because at the moment “there is not another pistol to be bought” in Louisville. She told her sister that their parents were prepared if the slaves revolted. The North, she feared, “is going to try to arm our slaves.” Others remained convinced that river communities such as Louisville and Covington “would be laid in ashes in less than a week.” According to Mildred Bullitt, peoples’ anxiety led them to conclude that “there will be war among ourselves.” Every heart “from one end to the other of this devoted land,” she urged, should demand peace. Rumors kept South Bankers continuously on edge, increasing the level of excitement daily for weeks.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> John W. Stevenson to Mary Stevenson, 19 April 1861, Colston Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 176-77; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 18 April 1861; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 18, 19 April 1861; Lizzie Bruce to sister Mary, 26 April 1861, Helm Bruce Papers, Filson Historical Society; Kate to Mrs. [Susan] Grigsby, 10 May 1861, John Warren Grigsby Papers, Filson Historical Society; Mildred Bullitt to “My

Stories and unconfirmed reports also rattled North Bankers. The panic along the Indiana-Kentucky border troubled Governor Morton; his office was besieged with delegations with petitions from the river communities requesting arms and advice on military strategy. Fears of an “Ohio River front” grew as North Bankers worried about whether Kentucky would secede. Never before, argues Kenneth Stamp, had a “potent stimulant” of this kind created “such hysteria” among the people. This strong sentiment led Morton to intervene in Kentucky affairs by sending covert agents to ascertain secessionists’ plans and to assist with the recruiting and arming of Kentucky Unionists. The assertive governor informed Secretary of War Simon Cameron on April 28 that North Bankers “entertain no doubt” that Kentucky would soon secede. Indianans living on the river, he said, “are in daily fear that marauding parties from [Kentucky] will plunder and burn their towns.” Sharing their concerns, Morton told Cameron that Indiana’s location exposed it “to the immediate evils of civil war.” Federal munitions were urgently needed for defense, the only sure means to allay people’s fears. Dread of a secessionist “fifth column” intensified southeastern Indiana’s anxiety. Jeremiah Sullivan told his son that Madison had its share of suspicious men. There “are quite a number here who sympathise with the South,” he said. Unfounded allegations that river steamers such as the *Peytona* were carrying recruits for the Confederate army seemed to reinforce Sullivan’s claim. A Madison man warned Morton that the town’s citizens feared taking any chances with those whose loyalties were suspect, or with the durability of cross-river ties. “Exposed . . . to any sudden outbreak among the Tories that remain at home,” he wrote fearfully, “the old citizens . . . are . . . forming a company of about one hundred to patrol the streets at night to surpress [sic] any riot [and] to prevent or oppose any surprise from our sister state of Kentucky.” The danger of living “on the

---

Dear Children,” 11 May 1861, Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection; Mrs. M. J. Ronald to Mrs. [Susan] Grigsby, [?] May 1861, John Warren Grigsby Papers.

frontier,” he said, made them “deem it prudent to be prepared for any emergency.” In Clark County, Hoosiers fretted over reports of increased crime and lawlessness that they attributed to their close proximity to Louisville. “Our village has been almost overrun by thieves and vagrants,” a concerned James Gwin announced, “and *patrols* have been kept up as much as three nights per week to protect our property.” This fearful environment and the federal government’s inability “to render them any aid in the way of artillery,” Morton explained to John Bobbs, is why so many people on the North Bank “are making arrangements to leave the river towns.”<sup>13</sup>

Concern for their safety led some affluent families in Hamilton County to leave Cincinnati and go to their homes in the countryside, where they believed they would be safer. Although they were far removed from the fighting, many Cincinnatians, like other Valley citizens, allowed their fears to run roughshod over common sense. Rumors that enemy troops were advancing on the city led David Este to worry that things looked “threatening” because Cincinnati was “much exposed.” Like many Union supporters in southwestern Ohio, he had “no faith” in Kentucky’s government. Such stories only encouraged the “general opinion,” reported a city visitor, that if Kentucky seceded, civil war between Ohio and the Bluegrass state would ensue. The result, he said, would be that Cincinnati “would be forever ruined & it is highly probable Destroyed by fire or by some other incendiary [sic] element. That is what the citizens are feareful [sic] of.” Distrust was rampant in late April. One Cincinnatiian questioned the loyalty of everyone in the city: “Oh if we were only sure that every man was earnestly working

---

<sup>13</sup> Stamp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 70, 113-14; Oliver P. Morton to Simon Cameron, 28 April 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Civil War Miscellany, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis; Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 18 April 1861, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 20 April 1861; E. Morehouse to Oliver P. Morton, [?] April 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Civil War Miscellany; James M. Gwin to John W. Wallace, 23 May 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports, Indiana State Archives; Oliver P. Morton to Dr. John Bobbs, 8 May 1861, Oliver P. Morton Papers, Indiana Historical Society. For a discussion of Confederate dark lantern societies whose job it was to disrupt federal recruiting efforts, see Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, 154.



to support the Government,” she said, “our safety would be sure.” But, she worried, “there is reason to fear that secret arrangements are going on with the secessionists, and that many of the Democratic party would gladly surrender the city.” Suspicions were heightened by reports that the Knights of the Golden Circle had sent agents into the area “to stir up the Southern feeling” and to “do all they could in the promotion of . . . secession.” On April 17, rumors circulated in the city that at the downtown landing were several steamers loaded with contraband munitions bound for the Confederacy. Already excited by the fearful environment, a mob of citizens appeared at the wharf and demanded the cargo. With a potential riot on his hands, Cincinnati’s police chief John Dudley reported that the boxes supposedly containing the arms “were voluntarily delivered into my hands . . . for safe-keeping.”<sup>14</sup>

Following the fall of Sumter, the *Louisville Journal* proclaimed Lincoln “miserably unfit” for the “exalted position” he now occupied and then reminded readers that their loyalty belonged to the national government, not the occupant of the White House. “The Government is ours,” it proclaimed, “and we owe allegiance to it . . . we do not owe allegiance to” Lincoln. South Bank Union men sought to press their numerical advantage. Alfred Pirtle noted in his diary that “Union flag raisings are all the rage now” in Louisville. “Every morning,” he wrote, “the papers have notices of flags raised or to be raised.” Such activity led him to conclude that “the Union men are largely in the majority here now.” Others shared Pirtle’s sentiment. One man remained convinced that “Kentucky will never dishonor herself by going out of the Union,” while John M. Harlan told Crittenden that he felt the secessionists in the city “talk desperately.” Their

---

<sup>14</sup> David K. Este to daughter [Louisa Fisher?], 26 April 1861, Papers of David K. Este and Family, Cincinnati Historical Society; David Kirkpatrick Este Diaries, 1 May 1861, Cincinnati Historical Society; Henry Haviland to Sue Scrogin, 25 April 1861, Scrogin-Haviland Collection; William E. Smith and Ophia D. Smith, eds., *Colonel A.W. Gilbert: Citizen-Soldier of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, 1934), 14; *An Authentic Exposition of the “K.G.C.”-Knights of the Golden Circle or a History of Secession* (Indianapolis: C.O. Perrine, 1861), 43-45; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 18 April 1861.

premature chatter of a “cessation of hostilities,” the Unionist said, seems to indicate that they “have abandoned all hope of forcing our State” from the Union and “are aiming so to shape events as to produce the result which they desire.”<sup>15</sup>

Fears for their personal safety and worries about Kentucky’s course failed to dampen North Bankers’ enthusiasm for the Union. From New Albany to Cincinnati, patriotic fervor engulfed towns as a reinvigorated citizenry temporarily cast aside party affiliation in its rush to defend the flag. In towns large and small, people converged on public squares to express their solidarity with the national government. Unlike their South Bank neighbors, whose loyalty was a bit tepid if for the most part genuine, North Bankers’ patriotism, according to one report, “ran high.” Kentuckians watched as Indianans in Jeffersonville raised a Union flag on April 25. A “large crowd,” according to Kentuckian John Jefferson, enjoyed “speeches, singing, music,” and a host of other entertainment. The celebration was not reserved for just North Bankers, however, as Jefferson noted that his father was among the spectators. In communities such as Lawrenceburg, Aurora, and Rising Sun, Indiana, men found themselves drawn together by the special cohesiveness typical of many small towns. According to one historian, Dearborn was one of the first counties in Indiana to form military companies. Almost immediately three units were on their way to Indianapolis to augment the state’s defense. Madison was “greatly excited,” said one resident, “and, with a few exceptions, the citizens are for a vigorous prosecution” of the war. The *Vevay Reveille* announced that the prevailing sentiment among citizens was that the rebellion had to be suppressed and the national government upheld,

---

<sup>15</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 15, 16 April 1861; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 4 June 1861; Frank Gorin to John J. Crittenden, 23 May 1861, John J. Crittenden Papers, Reel 13, Vols. 25-26, Library of Congress; John Marshal Harlan to John J. Crittenden, 25 June 1861, John J. Crittenden Papers, Reel 13, Vols. 25-26, Library of Congress.

regardless of cost. There was no more middle ground, it said, and the time for fence sitting had vanished; the time for retribution had arrived.<sup>16</sup>

Cincinnatians experienced similar euphoria, forgetting the hardships that always accompany war. Rutherford Hayes recollected that Lincoln's call for troops was received with "unbounded enthusiasm" in the city. "I shall never forget the strong emotions, at the wild and joyous excitement of that Sunday evening. Staid and sober church members" were "full of the general joy and enthusiasm." The rallying of troops, the flags hanging from every house, and "the liberality, harmony, forgetfulness of party and self" were "all good. Let what evils may follow," he concluded, "I shall not soon cease to rejoice over this event." "The news seemed to relieve everybody," the *Cincinnati Times* reported. "The long agony of suspense was at last over, and the Union about to measure [sic] strength with its internal enemies." Thousands of people gathered at the Catholic Institute in mid-April to proclaim their support for the federal government. "Amid the most vociferous cheering," a prominent judge reminded the crowd that they had not gathered as partisans or politicians but as "Union men." The "mighty earthquake" that "has shaken this country to its center," he proclaimed, "has buried sectional feeling, and all private and selfish views." In resolutions passed that evening, Cincinnatians tossed aside their reservations and vowed to "aid the General Government in maintaining its authority" over all the sections. Women quickly purchased the necessary materials to make flags. Amanda Wilson announced on April 20 that she and her friends had just completed their first one, to the prayers and cheers of neighbors. A Mrs. Gilbert told her father that she was "moved to tears" by the patriotism of two "Germans" when she overheard them talking at the meat store she patronized.

---

<sup>16</sup> John Jefferson Diary, 25 April 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana, from their Earliest Settlement* (Chicago: F.E. Weakley & Company, 1885), 203-204; Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 13 April 1861, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers; *History of Switzerland County, Indiana, from their Earliest Settlement* (Chicago: Weakley, Harraman & Company, 1885), 1100.

When one uniformed “strong German laborer” left, the proprietor told her: “That man goes to the war, he leave a wife & five children, if they want meat they come to me and I give it to them.” Churches began to hold regular prayer meetings to further energize support for the war, although they remained silent about slavery and its role in bringing the country to blows.<sup>17</sup>

But, even as white North Bankers mustered their patriotism and communities for the fight ahead, they rebuffed free blacks’ offer to help. Cincinnati whites rejected the effort to organize a company of black Home Guards, even though the blacks sought only to contribute to the city’s defenses. Their racism made them uncomfortable with the idea of armed blacks shooting at whites, even if the whites were Confederate soldiers. At one point, city police confiscated the keys of the school building where the blacks had planned to meet and insisted that the American flag be removed from a black recruiting station. One officer reportedly told a black man to stay out of the conflict because it was “a white man’s war.” The *Gazette* reported that a committee of white steamboat men called on Mayor Hatch to demand that he “suppress the organization of negro military companies.” The mayor replied that he had already broken up “the organization.”<sup>18</sup>

Though the river counties rallied to the Union’s defense, their enthusiasm alone could not resolve the practical problems created by secession and war. The southerly flow of contraband provisions and munitions and the need to provide for the region’s defense loomed as two of the

---

<sup>17</sup> Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 2:16 (quotations taken from 10 May 1861 entry); *Cincinnati Times*, reprinted in *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 12 April 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 16 April 1861; Venner, ed., *Queen City Lady*, 54-56; Smith and Smith, eds., *Colonel A.W. Gilbert*, 14; Victor B. Howard, *The Evangelical War against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee* (Selinsgrove and London: Susquehanna University Press & Associated University Presses, 1996), 141-44.

<sup>18</sup> Edgar A. Toppin, “Humbly They Served: The Black Brigade in the Defense of Cincinnati,” *Journal of Negro History* 48 (April 1963): 79; Lyle Koehler, *Cincinnati’s Black Peoples: A Chronology and Bibliography, 1787-1982* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Arts Consortium, University of Cincinnati, 1986), 56; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 20 April 1861.

greatest challenges facing citizens. The Southern trade, on which a considerable portion of the Valley's economy relied, was not simply a faucet that could be turned off at will. The trans-river trade network that had for years helped bind the region now threatened to tear it apart because the nascent Confederacy was surreptitiously siphoning men and provisions away from the Valley, resources that could otherwise be used to augment the federal war effort. This situation infuriated North Bankers and increased tensions with Kentuckians. Towns north of the Ohio River considered the trade treason. Jeffersonville and New Albany for a time implemented blockades against Louisville, while Cincinnatians demanded an end to the trade until Kentucky made it clear on which side of the fence it intended to take its stand. Such animosity from north of the river increased South Bankers' hostility toward their neighbors.<sup>19</sup>

When the *Louisville Journal* proclaimed on April 19 that there was "No North, No South, but one Union," it again reminded its readers of the complexity of the political and economic relations between the sections, and just how difficult it would be for those who were intent on tearing the nation apart. Southern secession ordinances did not by themselves dissolve sectional ties, and they most certainly did not suspend regional intercourse, despite the efforts of some people to do so. Valley commercial interests, contends Kenneth Stampp, nevertheless "could not ignore the fact . . . that the war would strike a deadly blow at their Southern market" because "the South would be impoverished and its old economy destroyed." He also points out that the war, at its outset, fundamentally altered "the normal economic habits of a large section of Indiana's population." The same was also true for the people who lived in Hamilton County, Ohio, and in the river counties of northern Kentucky. Even as goods continued to flow south in the weeks following Sumter, traffic on the Ohio River temporarily decreased as some vessels

---

<sup>19</sup> McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 35.

were used for other purposes or were refitted for war. The Valley's economy struggled to transition to war as bankers continued to tighten businessmen's access to credit, which in turn further crimped commercial intercourse. An unreliable revenue stream forced entrepreneurs to make difficult decisions. The slump in river traffic, for instance, reduced revenues of the Louisville and Portland Canal Company, leading it to raise its toll to fifty cents. In Cincinnati, furniture manufacturer George Henshaw, commission merchant John S. Chenoweth, general merchandise agent John A. Skiff, sugar and molasses trader L. B. Harrison, and wholesale grocer Richard M. Bishop (the city's mayor until April 1861) were all hurt by the loss of Southern trade and the retooling of the region's economy. Henry Haviland told a friend that during his trip to Cincinnati in April he discovered that business in the city was "almost entirely suspended [with] no steam boats loading for the South at all." He reported that "the boats that usually run the Southern trade" were moored at the wharf. "Nothing can be sold there. The merchants are affraid [sic] to take hold of anything." Haviland was unable to sell his bacon and lard "at any price," although he managed to sell his wheat.<sup>20</sup>

In January 1860, when North and South Bankers had gathered to celebrate the completion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, they never anticipated that during the spring and early summer of 1861 the line would become a symbol of treason, distrust, and anger because it continued to ship freight south. Pro-Union Democrat John Jefferson bragged in his diary on April 23 that he had sold his bacon, totaling more than eight thousand pounds, and his store's

---

<sup>20</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 19 April 1861; Kenneth M. Stampp, "The Impact of the Civil War upon Hoosier Society," *Indiana Magazine of History* 38 (March 1942): 6; E. Merton Coulter, "Effects of Secession upon the Commerce of the Mississippi Valley," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 3 (December 1916): 300; Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 79-80; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 243-44; Paul B. Trescott, "The Louisville & Portland Canal Company, 1825-1874," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (March 1958): 704; Terry, "The Most Commercial of People," 32-33; Henry Haviland to Sue Scrogin, 25 April 1861, Scrogin-Haviland Collection.

flaxseed in just one day, enabling him to tally sales of more than a thousand dollars. This exceeded even his best day during the preceding Christmas and New Year's holidays. A considerable portion of the commodities undoubtedly found their way to the loading depot of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad for shipment to the Confederacy. As far away as New York, the *Tribune* noted the railroad's role in shipping goods south. North Bank resentment was inflamed even further by Cincinnati's seizure in mid-April of a steamer carrying arms to the South, an act that the *Louisville Courier* said was "unwarrantable" and would "be followed by retaliation." In their search of the vessel, authorities discovered other goods clearly marked as destined for Louisville, which seemed to confirm that city's, and by association, the railroad's, duplicity, and added to loyal citizens' suspicions.<sup>21</sup>

Growing tension along the river led Louisville's influential editor George Prentice to urge the city to send a delegation to Cincinnati to reach an understanding regarding navigation on the river. Prentice argued that "there should be perfect freedom of navigation from the source of the Ohio to the mouth of the Mississippi"; the "vital interests" of everyone required it. He pointed out that Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport had recently reached an agreement "to live side by side upon terms of amity," with each town making a commitment "to guard and protect each others interests and each other's safety whether peace should smile or war rage over the land." Louisville, New Albany, and Jeffersonville, Indiana, he said, had reached a similar understanding. Thus, it made perfect sense that Louisville, Madison, and Cincinnati, should "enter . . . into the same fraternal agreement." Madison's Republican editor Michael Garber agreed with Prentice, telling the Valley that people on both sides of the river wanted peace and

---

<sup>21</sup> John Jefferson Diary, 23 April 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 18 April 1861; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 33. A Louisville correspondent told the *Madison Courier* that his city was greatly excited by the events in Cincinnati: "There was strong talk last night about hailing all boats upward bound, and if the signal should be disregarded to sink them." See *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 19 April 1861.

would do “everything in their power to mitigate the horrors of war.” To protect the Valley’s revenue, guard against plunder, and maintain the economic status quo, he wrote, Cincinnati and Louisville had already taken collaborative measures with their neighbors across the river. “The towns and farmers on both sides ought to follow these examples.”<sup>22</sup>

When representatives from the two larger cities met in Cincinnati on April 23 to discuss the shipment of arms and other goods to Kentucky, Bellamy Storer told the Louisvillians that his city valued their friendship and would stand by their commonwealth. He made it clear, however, that North Bankers thought Governor Magoffin’s loyalty to the Union unreliable. “When we know that you have a Governor upon whom you can not depend yourselves, what can we feel?” he asked. Kentucky had been too hesitant to express its devotion to the Union, he said, causing considerable consternation north of the river. He pleaded with the Bluegrass delegation to express their “great sentiment” for the Union before real harm occurred. Louisville’s Judge Bullock responded by announcing that the South Bankers had come to Cincinnati to exchange ideas, and “to strengthen the link of brotherhood which had heretofore bound the States together.” As the two sides moved to discuss the central issue for their meeting, the city’s seizure of vessels suspected of conveying contraband, Rufus King read to the assemblage a letter that Ohio’s Republican governor William Dennison had sent recently to Cincinnati mayor George Hatch. In it, the governor, who was unable to attend the meeting, hinted at the dilemma facing loyal Valley citizens regarding southbound trade. “So long as any State remains in the Union,” he wrote, “we can not discriminate between that State and our own. In this contest we must be clearly in the right in every act,” and avoid committing an act that would endanger the ties between Ohio and Kentucky. To seize arms going to a loyal state, Dennison reasoned,

---

<sup>22</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 23 April 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 23 April 1861.



“would give a pretext for the assertion that we had inaugurated hostile conduct.” Such a feeling, he warned, “might be used to create a popular feeling in favor of secession where it otherwise would not exist.” The result would be a border war “which all good citizens must deprecate.” The South Bankers returned to Louisville “encouraged and gratified,” confident that the leaders of Cincinnati understood their concerns and that “legitimate trade” between Louisville, Madison, and Cincinnati would continue “undisturbed.”<sup>23</sup>

Displeased with the message delivered to the Louisville delegation, disgruntled Cincinnatians immediately gathered in “an indignation meeting” in which they “denounced the attempt to draw fine distinctions or to refine upon rebellion.” With a “storm of cheers,” they labeled as a traitor anyone who would sell, or attempt to sell, any contraband to a person or state that had not openly declared support for the national government. “Vigilance” told the *Cincinnati Gazette* that trade with South Bankers, particularly those in Louisville, had to be suspended because it was difficult to conduct a “thorough search” of all dry goods packages. Such cargo, he said, provided “excellent opportunities” for the “concealment of weapons.” The incensed correspondent charged that Kentucky was “now acting as commissary to the rebels”; such behavior, he insisted, could not be allowed. The South Bankers’ visit to Cincinnati was, in his view, “merely a cloak for their purchase of large quantities of provisions.” “Vigilance” believed with some justification that the daily Louisville mailboats were “crowded with casks of hardware, boots and shoes, and dry goods” destined for the Confederate army. People’s patience

---

<sup>23</sup> S. B. Nelson and J. M. Runk, *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio; Their Past and Present* (Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson and Company, 1894), 346; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 26 April 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 26 April 1861.

had been “completely exhausted by the temporizing policy of our rulers . . . . Suspend all commerce,” he demanded, “and settle the matter at the point of the bayonet.”<sup>24</sup>

The rift between Cincinnati and Louisville threatened smaller communities on the river. Fearing for their economic lives, citizens from Trimble and Carroll County, Kentucky, met with their counterparts in Madison, Indiana, on April 24 to iron out an arrangement similar to those reached by their larger neighbors. In seeking to protect their economic self-interest, the citizens pledged on their “sacred honor” to protect the rights and property of each other. They promised “to communicate at the earliest practicable moment to each other” information they had on any “conspiracies forming on either side of the Ohio river” that threatened “lawless raids” on private property. Satisfied that they had reached an understanding that protected their safety and economic livelihoods, the citizens adjourned.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the rancorous rhetoric and the embryonic effort by North Bankers to halt the Southern trade, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad enjoyed a significant surge in its commercial freight during the spring of 1861. The railroad’s location gave it unique status, argues Maury Klein. “Except for the unfinished Mobile & Ohio Railroad,” he writes, “no other major line in the country traversed both a Union state and a Confederate state.” The railroad’s main stem to Nashville and its Memphis branch “embraced both Kentucky and Tennessee. As a result the company inhabited a physical and emotional no-man’s land.” Moreover, Louisville’s role as the railroad’s northern terminus placed both the city and line in an awkward position. Entrepreneurial instinct encouraged many merchants in the city to seize the opportunity for profit by shipping goods south by rail, but doing so posed considerable professional and personal risk

---

<sup>24</sup> Nelson and Runk, *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*, 346; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 30 April 1861.

<sup>25</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 25 April 1861.

as authorities in both sections attempted to clamp down on the contraband business. Moreover, Louisville's perceived complicity in the Southern trade seemed to corroborate the views of those North Bankers who already considered the city a den of conspiratorial disunionists. In the spring of 1861, the profit motive appeared to be winning. According to one scholar, Louisville became "the great collecting center" for commerce as its railroad carried freight to Nashville "in an unending stream." The road's new loading depot at Ninth and Broadway soon hummed with activity while the rest of the city's economy remained stalled by the region's commercial constriction. One woman recalled that "the Confederates were feverishly buying supplies of all sorts . . . & rushing them south against the evil hour. Speed was necessary to the Southerners," she wrote, and "there was but one way over the L & N" railroad. In a letter published in the *Journal* on May 1, James S. Lithgow and his associates admitted to Louisville mayor John M. Delph that the city's line to the South remained open, enabling wheat from southern Kentucky and Tennessee to be delivered to Louisville. Alfred Pirtle confirmed in his diary what the vast majority of Valley citizens knew: that the railroad was "doing a tremendous business" largely because it was "the only line now open." He concluded that the Louisville line's direct route to Nashville faced fewer obstacles than did the river and ocean routes that were threatened by Lincoln's recent blockade order.<sup>26</sup>

Annual reports published by the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce and Merchant's Exchange and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad suggest that businessmen's shortsightedness, yearning to maintain trade relations, and pragmatic desire to make a profit in some cases superseded loyalty to the Union. Although the volume of many commodities

---

<sup>26</sup> Maury Klein, *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1972), 27; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 60-61; George H. Yater, *Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County* (Louisville: Heritage Corporation, 1979), 84; Hegewald, "Louisville Notes"; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 2 May 1861; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 4 June 1861.

shipped from Cincinnati to New Orleans was greatly reduced by secession and war, the quantity of key staple products sent south increased significantly between the fall of 1860 and summer of 1861. Bean shipments increased by 72 percent, corn by nearly 107 percent, and flour by 45 percent. Wholesalers of oats, pork, and bacon did even better; oat shipments swelled more than 400 percent while pork and bacon jumped in excess of 800 percent. Earnings statistics for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad between April and June were equally dramatic, and belie concerns to the contrary expressed by the railroad's Board of Directors immediately after war erupted. In April, the railroad claimed aggregate gross earnings of over \$55,000, of which \$25,863 came from freight. In May, earnings nearly doubled to \$106,725, of which \$65,892 was generated by freight. While the rate of growth slowed in June, the line grossed \$111,405, with \$68,715 coming from freight charges. Thus, the earnings generated by the railroad's Southern trade more than doubled from March to June, 1861.<sup>27</sup>

Although it was the larger volume of trade going south by river and rail that drew the indignation of Northerners generally, Ohio Valley citizens also had to contend with the problems associated with day-to-day cross-river trade, much of which continued. In his April letter to Mayor Hatch, Governor Dennison had accurately explained one of the great conundrums facing North and South Bankers. Until it officially severed its ties to the Union, Kentucky was entitled to the same rights, privileges, and protections afforded other loyal states. Nevertheless, in places such as New Albany, Jeffersonville, Madison, and Cincinnati, North Bank suspicions of South Bank motives led to local interference with traders seeking to sell their produce and wares to

---

<sup>27</sup> William Smith, *Annual Statement of the Commerce of Cincinnati, for the Commercial Year Ending August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1861* (Cincinnati: Gazette Company, 1861), 48; Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company, Board of Directors Minutes, 17 April 1861, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington; *Annual Report of the President & Directors of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company, Commencing on the First of October, 1860, and ending on the Thirtieth of June, 1861* (Louisville: Hanna and Company, 1861), 21.

families on the other side of the river. Farmers who lived across the river from the market to which they normally brought their produce never knew from one day to the next whether they would be able to get their crops to the market before they spoiled. At one point shortly after war commenced, Indiana farmers who were headed to the Louisville market to sell their goods were barred from using the wharf in New Albany. Cincinnati leaders pressured the residents of smaller river towns not to sell their produce in Louisville for fear that it would end up in enemy hands. James R. W. Smith protested that it had become quite difficult to cross the river with goods. ““You cannot carry the smallest article across the river without being watched,”” he grumbled. Although he sympathized with honest Indianans unjustly ensnared in an economic predicament, “Citizen” told the *Ledger* that since the state’s producers had no way of knowing to where their goods were ultimately headed, “the less ‘aid and comfort’” the enemy received “from the citizens of the loyal States, either directly or indirectly, the better.” We should all be held to “a high moral principle,” he said, and furnish “no aid of any kind” to those who would “destroy us as a nation.”<sup>28</sup>

Tensions between the two sides of the river remained high as the summer planting season approached. As the special target of Northern Unionists, Louisvillians endured considerable distress. John Jefferson complained that “the people of Jeffersonville, or at least, the lawless ones, are preventing all marketing &c from coming to Louisville!” Another man complained that the city’s state of affairs remained abysmal. “You have doubtless heard of the blockade of Louisville, New Albany and Jeffersonville,” he wrote to Samuel Crockett. “We are hemmed in by water certain, no boats of any consequence are permitted leave” without permission, he said angrily. The current situation even prevented “the poor folks on the Indiana side” from bringing

---

<sup>28</sup> Pamela R. Peters, *The Underground Railroad in Floyd County, Indiana* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, 2001), 10-11; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 7 May 1861.

“the fruits of their labor to our maket [sic], to get money to buy the necessaries of life.”

Indianans, he wrote, were “not allowed to bring even so much as one dozen eggs to our market, for fear they will be aiding and abetting the South, in their work of dishonoring the Union.”

Growing ever more sensitive to the region’s economic plight, the *Louisville Courier* declared that “the strong foundations on which [Louisville’s] commerce and security rests” had “been assailed” by internal and external enemies who had “taken up the war cry of Northern fanaticism. Trade has been paralyzed . . . ruin stares us in the face.” The newspaper blamed the “present stagnation of business” on disruption of the Southern “stream” that had “watered” both banks of the river. If that stream of trade is forever cutoff, it asked, what will save Louisville and the surrounding region “from utter ruin?”<sup>29</sup>

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad could not replace the Valley’s aggregate business loss caused by secession and war, despite its efforts to do so. Thus, the plight of many citizens grew worse after April 12. Villages such as La Grange, in Oldham County, Kentucky, endured significant damage to its economy as the war prevented farmers there from selling their chief cash crop, tobacco, as well as other produce, to the South. Local history chroniclers note that “it was a time of bitter poverty for everyone.” Louisville’s H. S. Buckner and Brother, dry goods dealers, were by late May “doing little or no business,” although the Dun Company reporter who was investigating the company believed that the proprietors’ honesty and “clever” nature would ultimately enable them to “come out all right.” Carl Schwartz commented that the asparagus beds in his garden had “produced satisfactorially [sic],” but prices were quite low for vegetables generally because there were too few buyers for the great “abundance” of produce. The South Banker noted that even when it came to food, “the political troubles do not allow people to buy

---

<sup>29</sup> John Jefferson Diary, 14 May 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; C. M. C. to Samuel Crockett, 12 May 1861, Bush-Beauchamp Family Papers, Filson Historical Society; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 1 May 1861.

luxuries.” Things grew so difficult for one secessionist that he contemplated altering his political views. “If there is not a change in business pretty soon,” he lamented, “I am afraid I will be compelled to back . . . reunion.” On the North Bank, Senator Jesse Bright urged a friend to delay starting any business ventures: “My advice is, let matters rest for a few days or weeks”; while in New Albany, W. C. DiParmo confided to former Congressman William English that “as things grow worse . . . no sane man thinks of embarking in [the] banking business now.” The disruption of normal commercial intercourse led DiParmo to insist that businessmen should at the moment be prohibited from borrowing. That the war made many commercial loans too risky was “the curse” of the banks’ situation right now, he said. Dun and Company reported that Cincinnati whiskey dealers Thompson Dean and Samuel J. Hale were owed approximately \$100,000, most of which was due from Southerners who had shirked their responsibilities. The company also possessed considerable interests in steamboats on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, whose loss made their financial situation somewhat more precarious. Other merchants such as wholesalers John Kennett and H. G. Geddes, a Dun reporter said, were forced to suspend their operation “on account of some Southern paper coming back on them, and their inability to make collections in Virginia where they have about \$10,000 locked up.” The depressed state of things led a prudent Rutherford Hayes to tell his uncle that “Save, save, is the motto now.” He predicted, however, that ultimately “people who furnish for the war will make money, but others will have a [difficult] time of it.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Dorothy C. Lammlein, et al., *History and Families [of] Oldham County, Kentucky: The First Century, 1824-1924* (Paducah: Turner Publishing Company, 1996), 166-67; R. G. Dun and Company Collection, Louisville, vol. 24, p. 3, Baker Business Historical Collections, entry for 28 May 1861; Carl Theodore Schwartz Journal, 16 May 1861, Filson Historical Society; C. M. C. to Samuel Crockett, 12 May 1861, Bush-Beauchamp Family Papers; Jesse Bright to William H. English, 14 April 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers; W. C. DiParmo to W. H. English, 29 May 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers; R. G. Dun and Company Collection, Cincinnati, vol. 77, p. 12, 82, Baker Business Historical Collections, entries for 20, 28 May 1861; Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 2: 10.

Workers who were accustomed to living on a financial precipice even when they had steady employment were in no position to follow Hayes's advice. The *Ledger* reported how grim things had gotten for many in New Albany since the outbreak of war. For years, the paper said, the port's boat builders and mechanics "had as much work as they could possibly do . . . and the ship yards, foundries, and shops along the river were the scene of industry and thrift." But for some time now, things had been difficult. "The levee has a blank and deserted appearance, and boats are quite infrequent visitors. Not a man has employment in our ship yards, foundries, and shops." Hundreds of workers, many of them boatmen, were unemployed, "with no hope of a resumption of business until after the war." The suddenness of the difficulties, the *Ledger* concluded, had caused "a despondency never felt before by our people."<sup>31</sup>

The difficult times encouraged some citizens to embark on a clandestine career in smuggling. For a man with a family to feed, the temptation was sometimes irresistible. One historian has described the illicit trade as "an open scandal known to all men." In the spring of 1861, the federal government lacked the resources to halt it and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad "had little interest in doing so." For a time, the steamboat *Masonic Gem* made regular trips between Madison, Indiana, and Louisville, loaded with provisions for the Confederacy. Considerable illicit trade occurred between New Albany, Jeffersonville, and Louisville as well. As the efforts to ensnare illegal traders improved, small towns up and down the South Bank of the river became the terminus points for wagon trains headed to villages south of Louisville, where goods could be loaded onto the railroad beyond the watchful eye of authorities. Ports of call for the *Masonic Gem* included some of those smaller communities. By early May, however, it was reported that the boat had "quit the trade," probably because of the growing risk of getting

---

<sup>31</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 25 May 1861.



caught. Smugglers devised an assortment of tricks to escape detection; butter, for instance, was frequently stored and shipped in barrels labeled “ale.” North Bank shippers generally denied that their freight was destined for the Confederacy; however, once a shipment arrived in Louisville, writes one historian, it “would be exchanged for a like amount in that city, and these goods would then be sent south, and the shippers with clear consciences were [then] ready to repeat the act.” Such a ruse was equivalent to the modern-day practice of laundering ill-gotten money. In other instances, mislabeled goods were shipped to towns in southern Kentucky and then smuggled overland into Tennessee. In his study of Cincinnati during the war, Clinton Terry asserts that merchants who succeeded in circumventing the law “left no record of their illegal activities, but the few who got caught indicate that a number saw smuggling as preferable to seeking out new customers in the North.” Indeed, when butter could be purchased on the North Bank for approximately ten cents a pound and then reportedly sold in Memphis for seventy-five cents, and other commodities rendered similar profits, many “entrepreneurs” believed that smuggling was worth the risk.<sup>32</sup>

Various sorts of people engaged in smuggling, but the nature of their work enabled boatmen and railroad workers to take particular advantage of any trade opportunities that came their way. Small flatboats frequently became the choice of men who wanted to get produce across the river without being detected. Rumors swirled that Confederate women were going north ostensibly as “refugees” or for their “health” in order to gather information on army movements and, according to one report, “convey contraband articles to such agents or places as

---

<sup>32</sup> R. S. Cotterill, “The Louisville and Nashville Railroad 1861-1865,” *American Historical Review* 29 (July 1924): 704; Coulter, “Effects of Secession,” 296-97; Charles Henry Ambler, *A History of Transportation in the Ohio Valley* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1931), 247; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 6 May 1861; John E. Tilford, Jr., “The Delicate Track: The Louisville and Nashville’s Role in the Civil War,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 36 (July 1962): 212; Terry, “The Most Commercial of People,” 39-42; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 11 June 1861.

shall insure their safe delivery to the secessionists.” These women allegedly used the crinoline under their dresses to hide small arms, percussion caps, and other contraband. Men seeking to smuggle small amounts of arms through Kentucky, however, had to be more careful. One Louisvillian asked Nathaniel McLean, Jr., the grandson of Supreme Court Justice John McLean, how difficult it would be to get his hands on some weapons: “Would there be any chance for a fellow to smuggle a few pistols across the river [?] What can Colts Navy size be bought for [?] Please write soon and let me know.” The would-be smuggler told McLean to burn his letter after he read it. Whatever their class, gender, or method of operation, smugglers were active enough to force the *Journal* to admit that there were citizens on both banks of the river who were “openly engaged” in illicit trade that was intended “to aid the Confederate States.” In the paper’s view, it had become clear that Louisville “freely tolerated” the illegal shipment of provisions south, thereby jeopardizing the city’s commercial relations with the North.<sup>33</sup>

Armed conflict made the stopping of the Valley’s illegal trade even more critical to the Union’s war effort. Every item that found its way into Confederate hands meant that it could not be used to sustain the Union. Had Kentucky seceded at the outset of hostilities, regional ties would have been shattered and the demarcation line between the sections made much clearer. But the state had not yet seceded and South Bankers, for the most part, were making it increasingly clear that they desired to remain loyal to the Union, even as a sometimes vocal minority claimed otherwise. Given the critical importance of the contraband problem, North Bankers refused to wait for the federal government to decide how to handle it. On April 17, the Central Committee of Cincinnati’s Home Guards met to discuss the “shipment of army

---

<sup>33</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 22 May 1861; *An Authentic Exposition of the ‘K.G.C.’*, 53; Samuel B. G. to Nathaniel C. McLean, Jr., 16 May 1861, McLean Family Collection, Ohio Historical Society; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 25 April 1861; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 127.

subsistence from this port to Southern ports.” It sought to cooperate with the city’s municipal authorities and Chamber of Commerce in an effort to prevent “the shipment of war munitions south by peaceable means.” Over the next three weeks, the Committee struggled with the dilemma Governor Dennison had pointed out earlier: how could the illegal contraband trade going through Kentucky be interdicted without alienating what was still officially a loyal state? On May 8, the Central Committee proposed a less than satisfactory policy: when shipments that appeared to be “contrary to law” were made from the city, the Committee would provide the names of the shipper, the railroad or boat being used, and the “witnesses of the act” to the United States District Attorney for prosecution. Authorities recognized, however, that the judicial system was ill-equipped to adjudicate such cases in a timely manner. Consequently, Cincinnati commissioned two steamers to patrol the Ohio River for boats carrying suspicious loads. Other citizens formed vigilance committees “without waiting for orders from the beleaguered Government,” the *Gazette* said, to stop what they considered illegal trade. Ferryboats headed to Covington and Newport were frequently searched for small arms and other contraband. Yet frustrations in Cincinnati continued to grow, the *Gazette* reported “because most of the other border towns have not co-operated with us. On the contrary they have turned our public spirit to their profit.” Despite the ineffectiveness of the Ohioans’ efforts, South Bankers grew increasingly angry about them, further increasing tensions in the Valley at a time when Kentucky’s future course remained uncertain.<sup>34</sup>

Greater control over the flow of information became a component of Cincinnati’s early interdiction efforts. Dennison notified Governor Morton that he had authorized the Western

---

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the Central Committee of the Home Guards of Cincinnati, 17 April, 2, 6, 8 May 1861, Cincinnati Historical Society; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 62-64; Coulter, “Effects of Secession,” 291; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 4 May 1861.

Union Telegraph Company “to stop all messages of a disloyal character, order[s] for arms, [and] munitions of war,” and information “concerning shipments of provisions to disloyal states” that came from the North Bank. Furthermore, he intended to “control all messages and dispatches to the Press” and urged his Indiana counterpart to do the same, which he did. Anson Stager, the telegraph company’s general superintendent, was ordered not to divulge sensitive information “to any parties” except Dennison or the commanding general in charge of the region. The telegraph company was essentially given the authority to judge which information was not appropriate for dissemination among the people.<sup>35</sup>

Indianans, led by their determined Unionist governor, also attempted to move quickly to put an end to the Southern trade. Morton recognized immediately that if interdiction was to be successful, it would require the collaboration of citizens on both sides of the river. On April 24, he informed Illinois governor Richard Yates by telegraph that John Grace of Rising Sun, Indiana, was headed down the river from Madison with a “flatboat loaded with bacon for Vicksburg.” After a brief stop in Louisville, he would go on to Cairo. Morton asked Yates to stop the Indianan before he went any further because his cargo was “for southern troops.” Much to Morton’s dismay, the *Ledger* reported on the twenty-ninth that “provisions and grain are being hurried to Kentucky [from New Albany] daily, and within the last week the amount taken over has been immense.” On this particular Monday, the paper said, “twelve drays have been running, loaded with corn and pork,” many of which had been doing so since the previous week. There were also twenty-five packet wagons “engaged in hauling cask bacon,” each making two

---

<sup>35</sup> William Dennison to Oliver P. Morton, 23 April 1861, General Dispatch 1, p. 9, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books, Digital Collections of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis University Library, Indianapolis, Indiana (original documents held by the Indiana State Archives in Indianapolis); *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 2 May 1861; William Dennison to Oliver P. Morton, 13 May 1861, Oliver P. Morton Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. See also Coulter, “Effects of Secession,” 287-88.

or three trips every day. As traders continued to siphon supplies south, the Indiana General Assembly convened in special session. State senators ordered the trade and commerce committee to find a way to prohibit the shipment of provisions to states “that have refused to furnish troops on the call of the President.” In a series of public communiqués between Morton and his Kentucky counterpart Beriah Magoffin, the Indianan explained that he considered both states as “integral parts of the nation,” therefore, they were duty-bound to obey federal orders and “to prohibit, by all means [available], the transportation . . . of arms, military stores and provisions, to any State in open rebellion and hostility” to the United States government, and to restrain citizens “from all acts giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” Morton urged Magoffin to honor the ties “that bind us together” and join Indiana in the Union’s defense. As Indiana and Ohio struggled with the mounting contraband problem, Morton, who was growing more anxious by the day, wrote to President Lincoln and asked that commercial intercourse with Kentucky be suspended immediately.<sup>36</sup>

Within days of the attack on Sumter, Lincoln had declared a blockade of Confederate ports. Its purpose was to prevent the importation of foreign goods that the rebels so desperately needed to wage war. The reasoning on which this sea blockade was based could also be used to justify interference with southbound trade on the nation’s interior waterways such as the Ohio River. The administration was for the moment committed to handling Kentucky delicately because of its importance to the Union war effort, a policy that appeared to be paying political dividends. But the southerly flow of contraband was intolerable. Clearly, stronger, more proactive measures were needed. On May 2, Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, citing the

---

<sup>36</sup> Oliver P. Morton to Richard Yates, 23 April 1861, General Dispatch 1, p. 8, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 29 April 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 29 April, 3 May 1861; Coulter, “Effects of Secession,” 288.

repeated efforts of certain individuals to furnish material aid to the Confederacy, issued additional orders to customs officials “on the Northern and North-western Waters of the United States.” He instructed collectors and surveyors to carefully examine all vessels “whose ultimate destination you have satisfactory reason to believe is under the control of . . . insurrectionary parties.” Ship manifests were to be meticulously compared to the actual cargo, and if munitions or other goods clearly intended to aid the enemy’s war effort were discovered, they were to be confiscated. Flatboats and other small vessels without manifests were to be subjected to similar scrutiny. Chase extended his orders to railroads “and other vehicles arriving at or leaving” customs ports in recognition of the additional threat they posed. In issuing his circular, he acknowledged the difficult task facing his department. He reminded officials that citizens who were engaged in furnishing the “insurgents arms, munitions of war, provisions or other supplies” were giving the enemy “aid and comfort” and were therefore guilty of treason, a crime for which they must be punished. Officials were cautioned, however, to “be careful not to interrupt . . . by unwarranted or protracted detentions and examinations, the regular and lawful commerce of your port.” Chase’s orders granted individual collectors considerable discretion in implementing procedures; they also provided opportunities for those who were so inclined to turn a blind eye to what was going on around them. These land and river trade restrictions decreed by Chase were less stringent than those governing the Confederate seaports because he understood the difficulties inherent to the Ohio Valley’s predicament. To improve the government’s chances of success, he assigned special agents to deal with what one historian refers to as “the thorny issue of what could be shipped to whom and under what conditions.”<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 10 May 1861; Salmon P. Chase to customs surveyors and collectors, 2 May 1861, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Relating to Restricted Commercial Intercourse, 1861-1887, BE

Despite Chase's restraint, the *Louisville Courier* (whose editor, Walter N. Haldeman, had managed to retain for the time being at least his position as Louisville's customs surveyor) launched a fierce assault on federal trade policy, declaring that "Abraham Lincoln, the bastard President of the United States, and his slavery-hating Cabinet, have issued an edict forbidding the shipment of provisions or supplies—of provisions, grain, agricultural implements, and all that our Southern customers really need." The paper denounced what it considered the practical ramifications of Chase's orders. "The Ohio River is closed to our business men. Not one thing made or sold here [in Louisville] is to be permitted to pass" across the river "to the only customers we have!" According to the *Courier*, the new federal rules legalized what "unauthorized mobs" on the North Bank had been doing for some time: interfering with normal trade. Unable to trade with either North Bankers or Southerners, the paper warned, South Bankers will suffer and the distress "will extend far into the country." Pork packers, "provision men," and millers, "deprived of a market for the millions of pounds of stuff on their hands, cannot, of course, pay their indebtedness to the farmers and growers and country dealers, and they in turn cannot meet their engagements with their merchants, mechanics, and laborers." Ultimately, it concluded, "all must suffer from this embargo laid on our business." The angry Haldeman followed this tirade with a letter to Chase that reiterated it.<sup>38</sup>

In his response, Chase chastised Haldeman for failing to fulfill his responsibilities as Louisville's surveyor of customs. "I have delayed replying to your letter . . . in the daily expectation that you would be relieved from embarrassment in the execution of it by the appointment of your successor," he wrote. The secretary informed the Kentuckian that he had

---

Series, Microcopy No. 513, Roll 1, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Terry, "The Most Commercial of People," 50-51.

<sup>38</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 7, 9, 10, 11 May 1861.

received “constant complaints” that large amounts of provisions “of various descriptions” continued to be sent to the Confederate “insurgents.” This situation, he said, “gives rise to the prohibition . . . of shipments of various kinds of merchandise to Louisville,” which in turn “causes complaints from Louisville merchants, who fail to receive supplies they have ordered.” Chase informed Haldeman that just that day he had received such a complaint from a “Drug House” in the city. The cabinet official acknowledged that some people would be hurt by the government’s restrictions; however, he chided Haldeman, telling him that “the best course for all . . . is that of cheerful obedience to the laws.” Chase believed that success would follow if “the officers of the revenue” would help “in preventing the most mischievous breaches of law.” He then ordered the recalcitrant Haldeman to take the necessary steps to interdict contraband, with the help of James Guthrie, president of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, who would, in Chase’s estimation, cooperate with the customs official. Haldeman’s obedience to these orders, Chase insisted, would “prevent the stoppage of shipments to the city and State, and the consequent alarm and excitement; and it will leave the *bona fide* commerce of the cities of the border with the interior of the State entirely uninterrupted.” In his rebuke of the would-be secessionist, Chase placed significant blame for Louisville’s economic predicament squarely on Haldeman’s shoulders.<sup>39</sup>

The sheer volume of correspondence sent to Washington from the central Ohio Valley helped to convince the Lincoln administration that it needed to assume a more proactive role in suppressing the contraband trade. With the President’s blessing, Chase sought to create the infrastructure necessary to improve the government’s interdiction efforts. In so doing, he spent

---

<sup>39</sup> Salmon P. Chase to Walter N. Haldeman, 25 May 1861, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Relating to Restricted Commercial Intercourse, 1861-1887, BE Series, Microcopy No. 513, Roll 1.



considerable time responding to requests for guidance that came from his men in the field, requests that illustrated the difficulty of sorting out legitimate from illegitimate trade. On Chase's shoulders fell the ultimate responsibility for mediating disputes and determining whether the confiscation of a particular shipment of goods would do more harm than good. On May 15, he authorized Cincinnati's customs surveyor Enoch Carson to "allow goods and provisions comprising the necessaries of life" to pass through Cincinnati "for the use of the workmen in the Cannel Coal Mines of Western Virginia." Coal coming from the mines was "to go forward or land, without interruption." Western Virginia's strong Unionist sentiment justified Chase's intervention on the miners' behalf. The secretary approved of Jacob Anthony's decision in New Albany to detain the shipment to New Orleans of forty-five street cars, but he told him that he could make an exception and allow the cars to "go forward" because they "cannot be used for any purpose prejudicial to the Government." In June Chase ordered Anthony to release flour and pistols seized from Louisville's Munn and Company because the firm was known to be loyal. The company was permitted to keep those items as long as it provided "assurances that they are intended only for citizens loyal to the Government."<sup>40</sup>

In late May, William Mellon, one of Chase's special agents in Cincinnati, suggested that in some circumstances Southern trade would bring more benefit than injury. Chase agreed, but reminded Mellon that the rebels still were "hostile communities" engaged in actual war against the United States; therefore, the rules of war applied and property shipped to rebellious states could be seized. "I see no way in which safe intercourse can be established between citizens of the loyal states and those under insurrectionary control," he wrote. "The question is not one of revenue nor one of rights . . . but a question of supplies to enemies." Thus, policy "is controlled

---

<sup>40</sup> Salmon P. Chase to Enoch T. Carson, 15 May 1861, and Salmon P. Chase to Jacob Anthony, 17 May, 17 June 1861, *ibid.*

by considerations belonging to a state of war.” Chase argued that “the best thing to be done . . . is to establish the power of the government in cooperation with the people of Kentucky . . . and to let commerce follow the flag.” He believed that such an approach would allow Kentucky to be opened to trade sooner rather than later. A short while later he acknowledged that the government’s efforts to stop the illegal trade had adversely affected “the usual channels of trade” and inconvenienced and even injured many Unionists. “I am deeply sensible of this,” he confessed, “and it is my desire so to administer this Department” in a way that mitigates this fact. But, he reminded Mellon, the “supremacy of the laws” was the top priority. Customs officials were in the difficult position of having to fulfill their duty without disrupting loyal peoples’ lives any more than necessary. Though his personal behavior was governed by a peculiar rigidity, Chase at times demonstrated considerable flexibility in dealing with the Ohio Valley. Perhaps heeding the example set by Lincoln, he forbade indicted goods that were bound “directly or indirectly for places under insurrectionary control” from going forward but permitted the shippers to redirect their goods to a loyal location if they desired. However, Chase was adamant that when “sufficient proof” existed “that property was actually assigned for parties in insurrection, it [the contraband] should not only be detained, but proceeded against for forfeiture.” He confided to Mellon that he believed the removal of Haldeman and the appointment of a new surveyor in Louisville would make enforcement easier, and expressed confidence that in the future the federal government’s orders will “be faithfully carried into effect at that port.”<sup>41</sup>

In a general order promulgated on June 12, Chase reiterated the views he had recently expressed to Mellon. Treasury personnel were ordered “to exercise the utmost vigilance in

---

<sup>41</sup> Salmon P. Chase to William P. Mellon, 29 May, 8 June 1861, *ibid.*

arresting and detaining all merchandise of whatever character, the ultimate destination of which you have satisfactory reason to believe is for insurgents against the United States, or for places under their control.” The burden of proving that the goods were not destined for enemy hands lay with the shippers. Shipments thus interdicted could be returned to the owners provided they disposed of them according to the law. With South Bankers’ dilemma particularly in mind, Chase told his field subordinates that any portion of a state that was under federal authority “will be considered as exempt from any interruption of commerce or intercourse, beyond such as may be necessary in order to prevent supplies [from] going to insurgents or to places under their control.” This technically freed much of the Valley’s commerce from federal interference but local officials had great latitude in determining the proper course of action in individual cases. In response to a typical complaint, lodged by J. H. McMahan of New Albany, Chase wrote “I have received your letter . . . complaining of the action of the Surveyor at New Albany, Ind., in preventing merchants of that port from shipping Butter, Flour, Bacon, Lard, &c, to Louisville, Ky. I enclose herewith a Circular issued on the 12<sup>th</sup> [of June], by which you will perceive that the Surveyor’s action is in accordance with instructions,—much being left to his discretion.” Local port authorities were in the best position to assess whether the owners of a particular cargo were loyal, and whether the freight itself met the criteria for confiscation. Knowing this, Chase frequently refused to overturn local decisions.<sup>42</sup>

The list of potentially contraband items was long. Giving aid and comfort to the enemy was broadly defined and sometimes selectively enforced, which increased frustrations on both banks of the river. In addition to most kinds of munitions, food staples such as meat, vegetables, and flour were taboo. The volume of commercial intercourse in the Valley made the Treasury

---

<sup>42</sup> Salmon P. Chase to all customs officials, 12 June 1861, and Salmon P. Chase to J. H. McMahan, 22 June 1861, *ibid.*

officials' job even more difficult. Businessmen in New Albany were told that with the exception of the Kentucky portion of an order, recently printed railroad tickets for Southern lines were contraband. A loyal Louisville firm was denied permission to ship agricultural implements and a hundred barrels of coal oil because they were destined for parties in the South. Pig lead shipped from St. Louis remained in the hands of New Albany authorities because the shipment's final destination was Louisville. Even humanitarian items such as medicine were included on the list of forbidden supplies. Through the late spring and early summer, however, Chase remained open to citizens' suggestions about how the government's policy could be modified to reduce economic harm in the Valley, as long as the recommendations remained consistent with the need for "general security" and the restoration of federal authority.<sup>43</sup>

The Treasury Department's early interdiction efforts further impaired an already weakened Valley economy. Historian Clinton Terry argues that federal trade regulation "played an important role in the panic that devastated Cincinnati in 1861." Chase understood this, yet he believed the administration's policies were necessary because they reduced "the ability of the rebelling states to wage a war of independence." While the border remained as porous as a storm drain, citizens in ports such as Louisville emphasized only the bad news. In the wake of commercial interference from Indiana and Ohio and Chase's announcement of stricter federal guidelines, Louisvillian Theodore Bell grumbled about being "subjected to an arbitrary rule in the way of discriminating between good contraband & such as are not contraband . . . . If the US establish[es] non intercourse with Tenn[essee] by our Rail road," he warned, "then we are totally cut off from intercourse with the only regimes [with] whom we can have trade." He complained

---

<sup>43</sup> Salmon P. Chase to Norman, Morrison and Mathews, 21 May 1861, Salmon P. Chase to Munn and Company, 25 May, 6 June 1861, Salmon P. Chase to Water and Fose, 27 June 1861, and Salmon P. Chase to Thomas Jenkins and Company, 29 May 1861, *ibid.*

that Cincinnati now “monopolized” the lower Northwest’s trade as well as that of most of northern Kentucky. “Cut off from the Ohio river & the Nashville RR,” Bell wrote, “the commerce of Louisville is prostrated its merchants & property [almost] ruined . . . [T]his the most loyal of the SW cities will be the only one which is sacrificed completely by the rule of absolute non intercourse, it if be applied to us.” In his view, Louisville had to be granted allowances if it was to survive. We have struggled “determindly” against those who would in theory “save & protect us,” all the while remaining “true in our councils.” Yet, he lamented, “we are treated as rebels.”<sup>44</sup>

Other South Bankers were equally distressed. Alfred Pirtle noted that Louisville’s “provision dealers” were agitated because port officials in New Albany refused to let ham and other foodstuffs enter the city. John Jefferson stopped buying bacon because the price fell as soon as word leaked out that the federal government had ordered a “blockade” of the river and railroads. The grocer feared he would be unable to sell the meat and was unwilling to risk such loss. One secessionist foresaw the utter desolation of his city: “We are hemmed in” and “Cant ship anything by River nor Rail South . . . . Louisville will have the appearance of a ‘Banquet Hall deserted’ this Summer, as there will be nothing at all doing, and some predict that we will have a crop of grass in the Streets. There is a good many leaving the City.” As the economic noose slowly tightened, even the most casual trade was affected. “I would send you down some Duraneums [sic] in pots,” a man told Anna Crockett, “if I thought the authorities of Indiana would not board the boat, and cause a collision” with Kentucky. He decided against the effort “unless you [can] furnish guarantees that there will be no interference on the part of Indiana.”

---

<sup>44</sup> Terry, “‘The Most Commercial of People,’” 48-49; Theodore S. Bell to Joseph Holt, 5 May 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress.

Thomas Wilson told former secretary of war Joseph Holt that federal interdiction efforts were hurting civilians and businesses alike. He expressed particular concern for the families. “Surely *our* government does not mean to wage a war against our women & children & our sick. We ask nothing, but that we may be supplied with material to sustain a laboratory working for sick people.” He begged Holt to ask the administration if South Bankers “may be allowed to bring out such things as we need for the uses named!” Acutely aware of Louisville’s dire economic condition, George Prentice intervened on behalf of his fellow citizens and urged Chase to postpone the shutting down of the Louisville railroad. While acknowledging the line was still carrying provisions, he doubted “that much if any of it goes to feed the Southern troops.”<sup>45</sup>

Lincoln’s friend and confidant Joshua Speed told the president in early June that he thought the administration’s efforts against the contraband trade appeared to be working. Steamboat traffic had greatly diminished, he reported, “consequently nothing can go out in that way.” Speed said that he had been advised by officers of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad that “they intend to submit their bills of lading without hesitation or objection to the collector of the port” and would “decline transporting to any point in any of the seceded states any articles which he may decide to be contraband of war.” Notwithstanding the hard times that faced many South Bankers, the Kentuckian believed the Union cause was gaining in the state. He urged Lincoln for the time being to “let well enough alone.”<sup>46</sup>

War forced the Ohio Valley to confront a disturbing fact: the region was woefully unprepared to defend itself from external attack. Within days of Sumter, George McClellan

---

<sup>45</sup> Alfred Pirtle Journal, 6 May 1861; John Jefferson Diary, 8 May 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; W. M. F. to Anna M. Crockett, 8 May 1861, Bush-Beauchamp Family Papers; C. M. C. to Anna M. Crockett, 8 May 1861, Bush-Beauchamp Family Papers; Thomas E. Wilson to Joseph Holt, 18 May 1861, Joseph Holt Papers; George D. Prentice to Salmon P. Chase, 31 May 1861, George D. Prentice Letters, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

<sup>46</sup> Joshua F. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, 2 June 1861, Robert Anderson Papers, Library of Congress.

advised Governor Dennison that “it is clear that Cinc[innati] is the most important strategical point in the valley of the Oh[io], both from its position & the resources it will furnish to the party holding it.” He believed that the manner in which the Home Guards were being organized was “ill-advised”; the units would “prove to be inefficient” because “they have no common head.” The *Cincinnati Gazette* agreed: “what we need at once in this city, is a military officer in command, with absolute authority to do anything that the most desperate emergency of war may demand.” It urged the city’s Home Guard to “shed all the encumbrances of committees, and get as soon as possible into military shape.” In Madison, citizens gathered to “adopt such measures as might be necessary . . . for self-defence, and the protection of our homes.” The current situation, they said, required that arms be procured immediately from either the state or federal government. Recognizing the safety that could be found in joining their resources, the Madisonians determined to confer with “our fellow citizens in the neighboring towns and country, to get them to unite with us” in coordinating defense measures. Louisville’s city council appropriated an initial sum of \$50,000 for the town’s defense and endorsed the mayor’s purchase of all the gun powder that was available in the city’s markets. The *Journal* announced that there was “something very cheering” about the collaborative efforts initiated by the citizenry of Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington “to form a Guard for their mutual protection.” The newspaper insisted that given the dangerous times, such efforts demonstrated that “daily intercourse, domestic ties, and business relations must weld together the border States on both sides of the line.” It urged New Albany, Jeffersonville, and Louisville to reach “a similar treaty of amity and mutual defence.”<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Sears, ed., *Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, 6-7 (McClellan to William Dennison, 18 April 1861); *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 23 April 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 20 April 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 18, 22 April 1861.

The river communities' interdependence failed to dispel completely the distrust that many citizens felt for their neighbors across the river, making local defense an even more pressing matter. The formation of new militia units and the reorganization of those already in existence, however, was hindered significantly by a dearth of funds and equipment, a problem exacerbated by the federal government's inability to provide substantive material relief. Indiana's Oliver Morton aggressively sought to fortify his state's southern frontier in response to pleas for help from the river counties. In authorizing the formation of the Indiana Legion, the governor created an organization that was confined largely to the southern counties, with an eye toward providing a bulwark against incursions from the south side of the river. Deeply anxious over the safety of his fellow Indianans, Morton was well-suited to the responsibility of helping to provide for their defense. When the federal government failed to fulfill his demand for fifty cannons, twenty thousand arms, and equipment to outfit one thousand cavalymen, he sought to cover the shortfall with private contracts. He sent emissaries across the North and to Washington, D.C., in search of what he needed. "I want you to visit the manufacturers of arms in New York and New England," he told R. N. Hudson. "Find out what arms are on hand and the lowest prices." Despite his best efforts, Indiana's river-bank defense remained weak. The problems persisted into the summer. Madison's John Hendricks offered one reason why so many young men had failed to enlist in the Indiana Legion: "the question of uniforms and its cost is preventing many of our citizens [who had to cover the cost of their own uniform] . . . from joining the military organizations." Hendricks thought the problem could be solved if recruits were assured that "they would be *able* . . . to procure" the necessary equipment. Reports from



others on the river appeared to confirm Hendricks's assessment. According to another man, the lack of arms had created a "deep anxiety" among North Bank citizens.<sup>48</sup>

Another factor further hindered Indiana's recruitment efforts along the river. For some men the protection of hearth and home came first. Captain Henry Baker said that men in Jefferson County "don't want to leave the area to serve because they live on the border." They were family men who "do not think it right that being here in a border county, they should lay themselves liable to be called to any portion of the state" on the whim of military leaders who might not fully appreciate the dangers their families faced. Jefferson County men believed that if Kentucky seceded, "we will have enough to attend to here at home." Thus, they desired "to be independent in our organization." These men were willing to fight but they wanted to be supplied with state arms without any strings attached.<sup>49</sup>

Defensive preparations in Cincinnati faced similar difficulties. General George McClellan, whom Governor Dennison had recently appointed commander of the Ohio Volunteer Militia, reported to Lieutenant General Winfield Scott that the troops in the city lacked organization and discipline. Moreover, arms and ammunition were scarce. To make matters worse, Morton had been pressing him "for troops & heavy guns along his frontier." His own supply problems made it difficult for him to satisfy the Indianan's needs. Nonetheless, McClellan felt it was important to outline his plan to build defensive positions on "the line of the Ohio." He planned to gather as much information as he could about the South Bank of the river

---

<sup>48</sup> John D. Barnhart, "The Impact of the Civil War on Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 57 (September 1961): 193; Stampp, "Kentucky's Influence," 269-70; Oliver P. Morton to R. N. Hudson, 22 April 1861, General Dispatch 1, p. 6, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books; John A. Hendricks to Oliver P. Morton, 18 June 1861, and John S. G. Woodfill to Oliver P. Morton, 14 May 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, Reports, Indiana State Archives.

<sup>49</sup> Henry F. Baker to Oliver P. Morton, 24 June 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, Reports.

without occupying it, particularly because the shortage of trained manpower and equipment had rendered the whole of southwestern Ohio “powerless.” Citizens appealed to the governor for immediate protection. On April 16, Cincinnati merchants demanded that the governor strengthen the city’s position “before the State of Kentucky becomes an ally of the rebels.” They urged him to make the Queen City the “point of rendezvous” for gathering troops, suggesting that the show of numbers would temporarily forestall any planned Kentucky attack. Residents remained terrified that Cincinnati’s location across the river from the hills of Covington and Newport rendered it vulnerable to attack if Kentucky seceded. One man expressed sentiments that were shared by a great number of Cincinnatians: “I feel afraid that Kentucky will secede, and then we must cross the river and throw up breastworks on the hills [above] to save the Queen of the West.” He demanded that officials in Columbus send troops immediately. A member of the Home Guard Central Committee, J. M. Trowbridge, urged the governor to collaborate with Indiana in a military demonstration that would make Kentucky aware that the North Bank was prepared to protect itself. Trowbridge argued that an offensive posture could be achieved without crossing the river. Such a strategy, he said, was necessary because a “defensive struggle” would be “fatal” to the city. From the perspective of its residents, Cincinnati, the keystone of Ohio’s defensive perimeter, was under-prepared and over-exposed.<sup>50</sup>

As was the case throughout the Valley, local militia units sprang up all around Hamilton County. A special meeting of the Cincinnati Literary Club on April 17 led to thirty-three “educated and professional gentlemen” joining the Burnet Rifles. So many of the club’s

---

<sup>50</sup> Sears, ed., *Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, 19 (McClellan to William Dennison, 13 May 1861), 7-9, 12-13 (McClellan to Winfield Scott, 23, 27 April 1861); John A. Goins et al. to William Dennison, 16 April 1861, N. Ball to William Dennison, 16 April 1861, and J. M. Trowbridge to William Dennison, 23 April 1861, William Dennison Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

members joined that for a time the organization was unable to hold meetings. Rutherford B. Hayes, who attended the meeting, outlined in his diary the city's plans for defending itself if the Kentuckians decided to leave the Union. Without addressing the logistical problems that faced the city's defensive scheme, Hayes told his uncle that "the point of interest [for military planners] here now is . . . Kentucky." He was not sure the slave state would sever its ties to the Union, but if it did, he noted, Ohio regiments were ready to cross the river. They would cut off telegraphic communications south from Covington and Newport, sever railroad communications, fortify all the hills, and seize all the boats on the river. Hayes indicated that plans were in place to prevent enemy raids on local banks. Although North Bankers were preparing for the worst, the Ohioan remained hopeful that Kentucky's "helpless [military] condition will possibly [sic] hold them" back.<sup>51</sup>

Hayes's perception of Cincinnati's level of preparedness presented a rosier picture than the one offered by some others. The men who flocked to the flag's defense by the thousands were quickly bivouacked in camps surrounding the larger North Bank cities of Cincinnati and New Albany. In early May, Channing Richards suggested that the hasty construction of one of the camps, Camp Harrison, had created "considerable dissatisfaction about both the shelter and the rations." Provisions, he wrote, "have been deficient and many have suffered from hunger . . . . The Government was sadly unprepared for war, so we must have patience." However, he added, these conditions only made the new soldiers more "anxious to go" fight the enemy. A German volunteer stationed at Camp Harrison complained in mid-May that "we neither have any weapons nor uniforms yet." By the end of the month, matters had improved but little.

---

<sup>51</sup> S. B. Nelson and J. M. Runk, *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio; Their Past and Present* (Cincinnati: S.B. Nelson and Company, 1894), 346; Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*, 2: 11-12.

Nevertheless, all was not bleak. A commander at Camp Dennison reported to McClellan that the men were “in good spirits” with “very few sick.”<sup>52</sup>

Facing many of the same financial and organizational woes as their Northern counterparts, South Bankers also had to contend with the widening schism between the Unionists and secessionists. The *Louisville Courier* further inflamed tensions when it called for a public meeting of all those who were opposed to Lincoln’s war policies and who were “resolved to stand by their Southern brethren to the end.” Pro-Confederate broadsides urged citizens to rise up, arm themselves, and quench “the hostile fires” with enemy blood. “Scatter the Northmen from stream to shore,” declared a Louisville broadside. Unionists countered by organizing Home Guard units that provided a platform from which they could espouse their beliefs. Many others crossed the river to enlist in units being organized on the North Bank. Like secessionists, Unionists believed that an enemy conspiracy was afoot. In this milieu, a recruiting battle of sorts developed between the predominantly-secessionist Kentucky State Guard and the Home Guard.<sup>53</sup>

The cause of South Bank Unionists was bolstered by Lincoln’s decision to surreptitiously supply the most reliable pro-Union men with small arms. With Lincoln’s permission and the assistance of the president’s friend Joshua F. Speed, Navy Lieutenant William “Bull” Nelson quietly met with Unionist leaders in early May to determine the best way to get weapons into the hands of Kentucky’s loyal citizens. The first shipment of five thousand “Lincoln Guns” arrived in Cincinnati on May 4, a part of which were conveyed to Jeffersonville, Indiana. From there twelve hundred rifles were funneled to the Louisville Home Guard. Others were distributed in

---

<sup>52</sup> Channing Richards Diary, 6 May 1861, Cincinnati Historical Society; Christoph[er] Schetter to parents, 15 May 1861, Christopher Schetter Papers, Ohio Historical Society; J. N. Bates to George McClellan, 28 May 1861, and J. D. Cox to George McClellan, 5 May 1861, General Records of the US Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393, Part I, Entry no. 883, National Archives.

<sup>53</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 16 April 1861; Kentuckians Broadside, 1861, Filson Historical Society; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 385-87; Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky*, 142.

the surrounding area. Garrett Davis, a Unionist involved in the “Lincoln Gun” scheme, told General McClellan that loyal South Bankers were determined to hold their ground. According to the general, Davis insisted that “we will remain in the Union by voting if we can, by fighting if we must, & if we cannot hold our own we will call on the General Govt to aid us.” The Kentuckian worried that Unionists “were in danger of being overpowered by a better armed minority.”<sup>54</sup>

South Bankers’ defensive preparations were hampered considerably by Kentucky’s pseudo-neutrality. On May 20, Governor Magoffin issued a formal neutrality proclamation in a bold attempt to stem Kentucky’s drift into the Union column. Claiming that he had received “numerous applications” from people urging him to publicly declare Kentucky’s neutrality, Magoffin announced that it was “the determined purpose” of Kentuckians “to maintain . . . the fixed position of self-defence.” He pledged that the commonwealth would not act aggressively toward any other state. Other states were forbidden from quartering their troops on Kentucky soil. Kentucky, he said, would stand “aloof from an unnatural, horrid, and lamentable strife . . . to preserve peace and amity between the neighboring bordering States of both shores of the Ohio river, and protect Kentucky, generally from the ravages of a deplorable war.” He told officials in both Washington and Richmond that “I solemnly forbid any movement upon the soil of Kentucky or the occupation of any port, post, or place whatever within the lawful boundary and jurisdiction of this State, by any of the forces” of either section.<sup>55</sup>

Magoffin’s proclamation had little practical effect on the long-term trajectory of events. Lincoln continued for the time being to handle Kentucky judiciously. Meanwhile, secessionists

---

<sup>54</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 390-91; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 38-40; Sears, ed., *Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, 20 (McClellan to Winfield Scott, 17 May 1861). Quotation is McClellan’s rendition of what Davis said.

<sup>55</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 21 May 1861.

and Unionists on the South Bank remained locked in a struggle for the support of the citizenry, a battle in which Unionists slowly gained the upper hand. On May 24, their cause was helped by the Kentucky legislature's creation of a five-member Military Board, a majority of whom were Unionists. The Board was authorized to borrow just over one million dollars to purchase arms for Kentucky's defense. The munitions were to be distributed equally between the State Guard and various Home Guards for the purpose of protecting citizens "from unlawful invasion." The legislation emboldened South Bank Unionists. According to John Alan Boyd, the Board accomplished what Unionists desired. Magoffin's influence was "gradually limited" and funding was cut to the Kentucky State Guard, thereby weakening its strong presence in Louisville and the South Bank more generally. The Board supervised the redistribution of weapons from the State Guard to the Home Guard and administered the outfitting of new Union Home Guard militia. The transition "occurred peacefully . . . behind closed doors" with little protest from the public. The legislature's actions reduced the State Guard's access to valuable resources and undoubtedly hastened the departure of its pro-Confederate commander, General Simon B. Buckner, and many among its rank and file.<sup>56</sup>

Kentucky's decision to pursue a policy of "neutrality" in the spring of 1861 was both a ploy by the state's pro-Confederate governor and his supporters to hinder the organization of pro-Union elements and a moderate, pragmatic response to what was a very difficult strategic and political dilemma. In essence, it provided the additional time both sides desperately needed to rally supporters. Boyd argues that the initial support for Magoffin's decision "was a logical result of the cultural, political and military dilemmas in which Kentuckians found themselves."

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 24 May 1861; Speed, *Union Cause in Kentucky*, 34; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 351; Reinhart, *History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U.S.*, 2.

Neutrality, he contends, “gave Kentuckians a stay of execution, maneuver room in which to keep life in the status quo. Neutral advocacy allowed Kentuckians to maintain honor, preserve state hegemony, avoid internal and external conflict [especially with North Bankers], and remained the last best hope for negotiating a possible end to a short war.” It frustrated some North Bankers, angered others, and encouraged still more to maintain an even-tempered response to the violent swirl of sectional hostility engulfing the nation. At the same time, as Thomas Speed wrote later, when the respect for neutrality hindered the effective organization of Unionist elements in Kentucky, military camps named after moderates such as Joseph Holt and Henry Clay were established on the North Bank to provide loyal Kentuckians with places to enlist. Thus, in a peculiar way, a policy that was largely designed to keep Kentuckians out of the war actually helped to bring thousands of Valley citizens together under one flag.<sup>57</sup>

Neutrality at one point may have served a practical purpose for both Unionists and secessionists; however, trans-river interdependence undermined it. Both Indiana and Ohio rejected Magoffin’s attempt, as one scholar puts it, to “form a block of neutral states.” South Bankers, suggests Coulter, were “sobered by the fear of an invasion from the states north of the Ohio along a frontier of 700 miles.” In declaring Kentucky’s neutrality, Magoffin sought to formalize a policy that a considerable number of South Bankers had incorporated into their outlook since before Sumter. A month before Magoffin’s proclamation, Covington’s R. M. Robinson told Crittenden that “we are all Union men about here, except a few. And we are willing to consent to the Neutrality” policy. But he warned the statesman that if it meant putting \$500,000 into the governor’s hands “to fight against the Union, I tell you, such a thing will never peaceably be submitted to” by South Bankers. “We submit to the Neutrality in good faith and

---

<sup>57</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” ii; Speed, *Union Cause in Kentucky*, 143-50.

will act it out.” However, if such a policy was merely a ruse to drag Kentucky into civil war, “then let the consequences be on their heads where it will [be] sure to fall.” Louisville’s Garnett Duncan informed a friend that “the people here I think are resting on a firm purpose of maintaining a neutrality in the present war.” Duncan was nonetheless convinced that city residents were “apprehensive” that neutrality might mean leaving the state’s troops “to the discretion of our Governor.” He insisted that “the lack of confidence in our Executive is I think the grand difficulty in the way of taking any [decided] stand. But for that, I think Louisville would be disposed, to [support] armed neutrality.”<sup>58</sup>

As June approached, it had become clear that Kentucky’s neutrality policy was dying a slow death, its ineffectiveness highlighted by the departure of men to military camps north and south of the river. South Bank sentiment was moving decidedly in favor of the Union. Unionists there believed with mounting conviction that Magoffin had ignored the sentiments of Kentuckians and the state legislature. According to one Kentuckian, the neutrality policy was “one of aggressive hostility.” Theodore Bell told Joseph Holt that he “was delighted with your [recent public] stab at that monstrosity—neutrality. Rest assured that the great heart of the people . . . has no fellowship with the doctrine.” The *Louisville Journal* concurred. Union men “constitute an overwhelming majority of the population,” it said. They are determined “to maintain the honor and integrity and loyalty of Kentucky in the face of all the terrors that can be arrayed against them.” South Bankers voted overwhelmingly to send pro-Union delegates to the Border Slave State Convention that was held in Frankfort on May 27, a gathering at which only Kentucky and Missouri were officially represented. As voters went to the polls to select

---

<sup>58</sup> Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky*, 133; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 41-45; R. M. Robinson to John J. Crittenden, 20 April 1861, John J. Crittenden Papers, Reel 13, Vols. 25-26, Library of Congress; Garnett Duncan to Robert J. Breckinridge, 14 May 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, Library of Congress.



delegates to the convention, Alfred Pirtle observed their lack of enthusiasm: “The secession ticket having been withdrawn there was little excitement.” On June 21, the *Journal* reported that South Bankers had returned Unionist Congressman Robert Mallory to Washington to represent Kentucky’s seventh district in the upcoming special session of Congress. These events, notes one historian, “marked the beginning of the end of neutrality in Kentucky.” As South Bankers made their voices heard, the *Madison Courier* trumpeted that “The Union sentiment is evidently growing in Kentucky.”<sup>59</sup>

The end of June marked the conclusion of a difficult three months for the central Ohio River Valley. During that time, Fort Sumter fell to the Confederates, half of the upper South states seceded, and tensions between North and South Bankers grew. Citizens struggled to reconcile regional cooperation and sectional estrangement. In so doing, they discovered that the unifying qualities inherent in economic interdependence had limits, and that trans-river relationships could be severed by intemperate behavior. The early months of the war demonstrated that the region’s dominant geographical feature—the Ohio River—could be used to bind the region or tear it apart. What became clearer to the people of the Valley, however, was that, despite their differences, it was in their best interest to resist the temptation of extremism.

Ensnared at his Cincinnati headquarters, General Robert Anderson thanked the citizens of Lexington, Kentucky, for inviting him to attend their Fourth of July celebration. He regretted that he would be unable to attend, however, because of a planned trip to the mountains in an effort to regain his health. Anderson realized that the events of the preceding months had irrevocably changed the Valley and the nation. “We have been so spoiled by prosperity,” he

---

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Holt to Joshua F. Speed, 31 May 1861, and Theodore S. Bell to Joseph Holt, 9 June 1861, Joseph Holt Papers; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 17, 18, 21 June 1861; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 81-82; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 4 May 1861; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 295; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 21 June 1861.

wrote on June 23, “that we had forgotten our God and our Country,—it is time for us to get back into the paths our Fathers so nobly trod, when they achieved the Independence we appear to be madly attempting to destroy.” Anderson recognized what the rest of the Valley understood, that the nation had just embarked on a long journey for its survival. As the first summer of civil war approached, the future of an intact central Ohio River Valley remained to be determined.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Robert Anderson to “Gentlemen,” 23 June 1861, Robert Anderson Letters, Filson Historical Society.

## **Chapter Four**

### **“Those patriotic men of the river”: July-December 1861**

“The spell of peace is broken. The temple of war is unsealed,” W. J. Flagg told a festive July 4 crowd in Mount Pleasant, Ohio. Despite the spreading conflagration of war, Valley citizens had gathered together to mark the anniversary of American independence. The occasion provided them with just the opportunity they needed to reinvigorate their fidelity to each other and the Union. Flagg reminded his audience that their “personal freedom remains” and that the need to defend the Union left “no option for us.” The Union must be saved, he said; “the greatest calamity to befall us would be peaceable separation.” He explained how the disloyal South had “plundered” the Valley of millions of dollars’ worth of dry goods and other provisions, aided by “all the small dealers” who trafficked in “stolen goods.” He lamented the loss of rights that the Valley’s early settlers had taken for granted, rights that included unhindered access to the nation’s interior waterways. “Who will clear out [these] obstructions,” he asked? White men settled the Valley so that they “might labor in security and repose in peace,” desires shared jointly by North and South Bankers. “Those on the other slope of the valley [are] our neighbors, friends and kindred,” he proclaimed. In emphasizing the ascendancy of national rights over state rights, Flagg also urged citizens to stay true to their region, a region bound together by the Ohio River. Visitors traveling on the river, he said, cannot “discern where one stone has been laid or one shovelful of earth cast up to raise a barrier against violence, nor any single erection a molehill high, evincing jealousy or distrust of neighbor toward neighbor.” He called for the citizenry to proceed deliberately in the coming months. “May the river join, but not divide us, drawing us together like a silver thread, interlacing borders of velvet . . . . We

will insist on the condition of peace, though all the world . . . [goes] to war.” When necessary, however, “we will defend our peace with war, and maintain our concord with arms.”<sup>1</sup>

Fourth of July celebrations offered Valley citizens an opportunity to extend their hands across the river to share in the commemoration of the Union’s birth. Invitations from one side of the river urged people across the water to join their festivities. Ohioan John Carlisle and his colleagues had already agreed to participate in Cincinnati’s celebration when they received an invitation from Lexington to participate in festivities there. In regretfully declining, they told the Kentuckians that “a true fraternal feeling [pervades] the breasts of the citizens of Cincinnati for all the good and sincere Union people of Kentucky.” It was the North Bankers’ fervent wish that peace be restored and that Kentucky and Ohio might together “form the chief and bright stars of the Union.” The holiday provided the perfect occasion for Samuel Hildreth to announce that the steamer *Major Anderson* had just been christened to honor both the national flag and the Kentuckian who had defended it at Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson. Hildreth told Anderson’s brother Larz that the soldier’s name “seemed to be singularly appropriate for a steamer built to ply between the Border States of the North and the South,” thereby binding the shores together. As New Albany prepared for its annual festival, the *Ledger* reported that the city’s organizers desired “a real old-fashioned turn out and celebration.” All were invited, said the paper, including “our neighbors across the river.” Indianans expected “to see a great many” Kentuckians “with us to-morrow” at the picnic planned for the fair grounds. Caught between a loyal North and disloyal South, South Bankers’ commemorated the nation’s birth with a greater degree of sobriety. Many attended the North Bank celebrations, even as the *Louisville Journal*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oration by W. J. Flagg, Fourth of July, 1861, at Mount Pleasant, Hamilton County, Ohio* (Cincinnati: Enquirer Steam Printing Establishment, 1861), 4-13.

urged people to “forgo the loud mirth” that accompanied such activity and “devote the time to solemn reflections upon our tremendous responsibilities to our ancestors and to our posterity.” Though faced with tremendous obstacles, the paper said, “we will uphold the banner of our Union to the last moment of our earthly lives.” Jefferson County resident John Williams, a self-described former secessionist, heeded the *Journal*’s advice. He honored the day by informing the Valley’s citizenry that “I am now for the Union” because “minorities should submit to majorities.”<sup>2</sup>

While great numbers of people in the Valley celebrated the anniversary of American independence, Walter Haldeman’s *Courier* used the occasion to again urge secessionists to defend their rights. The paper, which found itself increasingly isolated by surging Unionist sentiment, reminded its readers that “the men of the Revolution did not take up arms against the British Constitution, but in defense of their rights under that Constitution,” and pointed out parallels between the Confederate states’ withdrawal from the Union and the colonies’ rejection of British rule. “We are now in the midst of a Revolution more grand in its proportions, and not less vital to the cause of human liberty, than that of 1776,” it said. A desire for freedom and self-government animated the secessionists and the North’s disregard of Southern-rights “made a dissolution of the Union the only alternative.”<sup>3</sup>

Two other events of significance to the Valley marked the holiday. In Washington, a special session of Congress convened at the president’s call to deal with the pressing issues of war. In his message to the legislators, Lincoln outlined the hostile actions taken by the secessionists and the threat they posed to the Union’s survival. He explained that his call to arms

---

<sup>2</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 3, 5 July 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 3 July 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 4, 5 July 1861.

<sup>3</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 4 July 1861.

was necessary “to resist [the] force employed” to destroy the national government. He pointed out that in their response to the crisis, the border states “were not uniform in their action.” Although he avoided mentioning Kentucky by name, Lincoln noted that in the “so-called . . . middle States, there are those who favor a policy which they call armed neutrality—that is, an arming of those States to prevent the Union forces passing one way or the disunion the other over their soil.” This, he said, is simply “disunion completed.” He charted the steps he had already taken as commander-in-chief: the calling out of the state militias, the blockade of Confederate seaports, and the selective suspension of the writ of habeas corpus to maintain the “the public safety.” He asked Congress to authorize the arming of no less than 400,000 men and the appropriation of \$400,000,000. This, he said, would “give the legal means for making this contest a short and decisive one.”<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, in Nashville, Tennessee, Governor Isham Harris ordered state troops to seize all Louisville and Nashville Railroad property south of the Kentucky line. Harris suspected that the road’s president, James Guthrie, was accumulating rolling stock in Louisville. Tennessee officials offered to release one passenger train in Nashville “for every one sent from Louisville”; if that arrangement was unacceptable, they would simply keep all the trains they had just seized, but leave others unmolested. Guthrie rejected both proposals. Two of Louisville’s newspapers, the *Courier* and *Journal*, squared off over the issue. Both regretted Tennessee’s decision, but the *Courier* blamed “King Lincoln” for forcing the Tennesseans to take such a drastic measure to secure their northern border. It insisted that the authorities in Nashville had “not interfered with the road or its equipments” in Kentucky, “whose neutrality she respects, as King Lincoln has not done.” The *Journal* told South Bankers that its competitor was attempting

---

<sup>4</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 8 July 1861.

to rationalize the seizure, just “as everybody knew it would.” Tennessee’s behavior, it said, was another example of how the Confederates could inflict any “gross . . . flagrant . . . [or] insolent” outrage on Kentucky and not draw a complaint from South Bank secessionists. It warned that “leading Tennessee secessionists are now here” in Louisville. They, in collaboration with local secessionists, “are looking to the railroad for the inauguration of the earnestly desired strife.” South Bankers, it declared, must remain vigilant.<sup>5</sup>

As July began, Valley Unionists remained guardedly optimistic about Kentucky’s course. It was becoming clear that secession’s high tide was receding slowly from the banks of the Ohio River. John Jefferson noted in his diary that when a local secessionist “raised a Secession flag [on the] 4<sup>th</sup> of July” South Bank Unionists swiftly punished him; “his *home* [was] much injured & his life threatened. The flag was torn down & burnt.” Pro-Union officials criss-crossed the region to make their case for Kentucky’s continued loyalty. On the thirteenth, Joseph Holt delivered an “eloquent and powerful” address in Louisville that citizens “loudly applauded.” Alfred Pirtle said that Holt “took ultra grounds against the South and was decidedly opposed to [Kentucky] neutrality. He wants Kentucky to come out in favor of the government and furnish her quota of men.” Indianans concurred; the *Ledger* reported that the speech received a “splendid ovation” and characterized it as “a most powerful invocation for the Union against the traitors and conspirators who are attempting to destroy it.” Pirtle noted how Union sentiment was taking hold south of the river: “Bro[ther] John today has come out as a Union man, feeling that every Kentuckian should be ready to repel the Confederate force” that he believes “will soon be sent into our State to rush her out of the Union at the point of a Bayonet.” Such new-found enthusiasm for the Union encouraged Pirtle, who noted that John “has had a more decided

---

<sup>5</sup> Tilford, “Delicate Track,” 212-13; Klein, *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad*, 28-29; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 5 July 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 6 July 1861.

tendency to the South than I have ever had.” William Nelson, on his return to Cincinnati after a trip to Lexington to meet with Kentucky Unionists, among them South Bankers Garrett Davis, James Speed, and Jeremiah F. Boyle, informed Treasury Secretary Chase that “you can count on Kentucky, she is true as steel.” South Bankers and like-minded men in the Kentucky interior, he said, had determined that after the state election on August 5, “the time [will have] arrived for Kentucky to take her active share in support of the Governm’t [and] . . . that no secession or disunion talk should be tolerated.” Nelson recommended that steps be taken to protect the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Speed and Boyle, he said, planned to go to Washington to confer with Chase and Lincoln on these matters. North Bankers watched with great interest as Kentucky’s Union men battled for political supremacy. Many believed that the next few weeks could determine the immediate fate of the Valley. The editor of Madison’s *Courier* knew only too well that South Bank Unionists occupied “a perilous position,” calling them “the advance guard of Southern Union sentiment.” He thought, however, that it was “more than probable” that a “collision” would eventually occur “between the Union men and the disunionists in Kentucky.”<sup>6</sup>

Valley optimism engendered by Unionist gains south of the river experienced a setback when the Confederates routed federal forces at Manassas, Virginia, on July 21. The defeat dashed hope for a quick war and threatened the relative calm that in recent weeks had descended over much of the Valley. “A deep gloom” came over “the hearts of . . . loyal citizens,” reported one North Bank paper. The federal defeat was “a crushing blow” and raised concerns in southern Indiana that the backs of Kentucky secessionists would be stiffened as a result. Others

---

<sup>6</sup> John Jefferson Diary, 6 July 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 15 July 1861; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 13 July 1861; Kirk C. Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union’s Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 6; Niven, et al., eds., *Chase Papers*, 80-81 (William Nelson to Salmon P. Chase, 23 July 1861); *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 10 July 1861.



called it “a severe shock,” one that required Northerners “to make adequate preparations” to face an enemy comprised of men “who have no superiors in the art of war.” A renewed sense of urgency appeared as citizens recovered from their initial shock. Charles H. Haskins of the Louisville, New Albany, and Chicago Railroad told Indiana’s adjutant general that “this infernal defeat at [Manassas] has maddened the people [on the river] and they wish to know *whether*, if companies are raised, *they will be received*.” Indianans were frustrated by the difficulty in arming and provisioning new units, even as they renewed their commitment to the cause. North Bankers upriver expressed similar concerns. Obed Wilson returned to his Cincinnati home “almost heart broken” to tell his wife the bad news. Eliza Cist of College Hill, Ohio, thought that the prospects for “a speedy termination of the war” were “not very favorable just now”; people “can’t bear to think or talk of” the disaster at Manassas. Other North Bankers reacted with anger, not despair. Symmes Browne was “almost as much disgusted at the want of ‘Generalship’ on our side as at the cowardly barbarous mode of warfare carried on by the traitors.” In the wake of the Northern defeat and with the Queen City’s nerves a bit frayed, Covington Unionists Joseph Andrews and George Mason joined other militia officers in telling Cincinnatians that, with nearly a thousand men under arms, “the two cities [were] comparatively secure from” threats from the Kentucky side of the river. Such reports did little to improve the mood of a disheartened Maria Holyoke, who lamented that once started, the war had to continue. “[I]f things had been left entirely to Gen. Scott,” she believed, “all this bloodshed might have been avoided.” She blamed the “*traitorous* Greelys [sic]” and other war hawks for sounding “the cry of ‘forward to Richmond’” when “defeat was the result.”<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 23, 29 July 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 23 July 1861; Charles H. Haskins to Lazarus Noble, [July 1861], Miscellaneous Correspondence, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany, Indiana State Archives; Venner, ed., *Queen City Lady*, 92 (21 July 1861 entry); Eliza Cist to

The Manassas debacle revealed that significant divisions still plagued the South Bank, despite the growing number of citizens who expressed Union sentiment. Louisville mayor John M. Delph feared that the Confederate victory might lead to “pro-secession unrest.” A militia company was activated in the city to forestall violence, but that did not prevent John W. Tompkins from being killed when he marched around “hurrahing for Jeff Davis.” John Jefferson grumbled that “the Secessionists here are very jubilant over their late victory.” According to one historian, rebel sympathizers paraded through the streets of the city while the Unionists “were too stunned, too bewildered by the disaster to protest.” One woman wrote that the river communities were forced to endure “heart-breaking times” because loyal citizens were “surrounded . . . by secessionists.” The latter, she claimed, had committed various acts of resistance, such as throwing the American flag on the ground and wiping their feet on it. On July 24, the *Louisville Journal* ran an editorial rallying Valley Unionists. Despite the setback in Virginia, it said, “the troops of the United States . . . are as brave” as Confederate men. It insisted that the defeat had “created a stronger and more inexorable spirit of resolve than that which has hitherto existed.” The *Louisville Democrat* agreed, declaring that secessionists would ultimately fail in their endeavor because they continue to “keep up their consistency in absurdity.” Their rejection of trade and cultural links with the North demonstrated that theirs was “a revolution built on falsehoods and imposture.”<sup>8</sup>

---

Henry M. Cist, 23 July 1861, Cist Family Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society; Symmes Browne to Fannie Bassett, 29 July 1861, Symmes Evans Browne Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 24 July 1861; Maria Holyoke to mother and sister, 18 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville. Horace Greeley was the editor and publisher of the *New York Tribune*.

<sup>8</sup> Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 404; John Jefferson Diary, 23 July 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 1860-1864, 21 July 1861, Filson Historical Society; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 41-42; Maria Holyoke to mother and sister, 18 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 24 July 1861; *Louisville Democrat*, reprinted in *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 26 July 1861.

Kentucky's neutrality continued to pose problems for a region that remained uncertain of the state's ultimate course. For that reason, Valley Unionists and Washington officials still moved cautiously. As Confederate and Union recruiters enticed Kentucky men to enlist, Lincoln reminded Simon B. Buckner, who would resign as his state's inspector general on July 20, that it was his job as a Kentucky militiaman to "suppress [the] insurrection existing within the United States." The President wanted his orders to be carried out carefully in the border area. "I wish to do this with the least possible disturbance or annoyance to well-disposed people anywhere. So far I have not sent an armed force [across the river] into Kentucky, nor have I any present purpose to do so," and he judiciously avoided saying anything "which shall hereafter embarrass me in the performance of what may seem to be my duty." Lincoln, who to this point had demonstrated tremendous forbearance toward Kentucky, told Governor Magoffin that anything that he had done in the state was done after "the urgent solicitation of many Kentuckians." He believed that the federal government's support of Kentucky Unionists was "the wish of a majority of all the Union-loving people" in the state. The President wisely recognized that the time was coming when Kentucky would no longer be able to straddle the fence.<sup>9</sup>

In a mid-July speech, Joseph Holt told a crowd of enthusiastic South Bankers that Kentucky neutrality implied "indifference . . . to the issues of this contest" being waged over the Union's future. Kentuckians were not indifferent, he said. Indeed, they, like their northern neighbors, had much at stake. He told his audience bluntly that "there is not and there cannot be any neutral ground for a loyal people between their own government and those who . . . are menacing its destruction . . . . [Y]our inaction is not neutrality though you may delude yourselves with the belief that it is so . . . . Your inaction is a virtual endorsement of the rebellion." On

---

<sup>9</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 2 August 1861; Nicolay and Hay, eds., *Complete Works*, 6: 325-26, 349-50 (Lincoln to Simon B. Buckner, 10 July 1861, and Lincoln to Beriah Magoffin, 24 August 1861).

August 5, South Bankers heeded Holt's admonition and joined thousands of other Kentucky voters in rejecting the commonwealth's neutrality policy by electing a staunchly Unionist legislature. In Louisville, where secessionists still had a marked presence, Unionist James Speed defeated three other opponents for a seat in the state senate. He outpolled Jeff Brown, the Southern-rights candidate who was endorsed by the *Louisville Courier*, by a margin of seven to one. Upriver in Kenton, Campbell, and Oldham counties, voters elected Unionist candidates, although the counties of Gallatin and Trimble continued to resist the trend by supporting Southern-rights men. Nonetheless, by predominantly endorsing pro-Union candidates, South Bankers repudiated a political policy that had merely served to give both sides more time to organize their supporters. The outcome encouraged North Bankers, leading the *Enquirer* to conclude that Kentucky had "come out of the contest with brighter laurels than ever." When the new legislature convened, Newport Unionists reminded its members of the August verdict. In "our judgment," they said, "'armed neutrality' is just 'armed nonsense.'"<sup>10</sup>

As the start of the September legislative session approached, the ever-observant Maria Holyoke feared that South Bank secessionists would "do all in their power not to let the members of the legislature take their seats. You know the Union men are greatly in the majority," she wrote, "and of course mean to keep our state in the Union." She thought that there would probably "be some fighting," but believed that the current situation was "not a dreadful state of affairs." Like many others on the border, she was prepared to endure even though "these are times when it will not do to have a faint heart." The *New Albany Ledger* agreed, citing concerns that when the Kentucky legislature convened in four days, South Bank secession leaders would

---

<sup>10</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 15 July 1861; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 6 August 1861; G. Glenn Clift, *Biographical Directory of the Kentucky General Assembly*, 7 vols. (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1969), 1: 299, 305-306; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 6 August 1861, 4 September 1861.

join other Kentuckians and attempt “to overawe that body with the State Guard and other armed secessionists.” The paper feared that the peace “which has thus far prevailed along the Ohio river border” was “about to be rudely broken.”<sup>11</sup>

The results of the August election, as damaging as they were to secessionists’ hopes, did not immediately quell discussion of Kentucky neutrality. The ongoing debate over the policy illustrated the difficulty South Bankers had reconciling their largely moderate views with the very real dangers presented by the war. It also reflected a growing recognition on their part that remaining “neutral” or aloof from the conflagration around them was both impractical and unrealistic. Nevertheless, neutrality continued to have its supporters. One Newport man reported that his visit to Manassas after the battle had left him “more than ever in favor of Kentucky keeping up her neutrality.” Unionist Alfred Pirtle’s views wavered a bit; he confided to his diary that “I find myself growing ‘lukewarm’ in the cause [of Unionism], but I can not find any good to come to Kentucky, if at the present juncture she joins the South.” Like many moderate South Bankers, he admitted that “I have always been in favor of her [Kentucky] neutrality and am more so now than ever before.”<sup>12</sup>

Citizens continued to measure the merits of different courses of action. Desperate Southern-rights leaders, guided by the former vice president John C. Breckinridge and the *Courier*’s Walter Haldeman, now downplayed the idea of secession in favor of peace. They encouraged citizens to coalesce around a new Peace Party and urged them to attend “peace” picnics. The *Courier* charged that “the so-called Union party” was trying to use “violence and intimidation to overawe the people and thereby prevent them from giving utterance to their

---

<sup>11</sup> Maria Holyoke to sister, 28 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 29 August 1861.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Pirtle Journal, 21, 30 August 1861.

sentiments for peace.” Peace Party supporters rallied in Campbell County and denounced Lincoln’s coercive measures. “We deny the authority of the President of the United States to march an armed force into the State of Kentucky.” They urged their state legislators “to vote against any levy of men or money for the prosecution of the war.” Such rhetoric led John Jefferson to note that there was “great talk now about secession plots” around the region. Another South Banker observed that “the secessionists held last night what they called a peace-meeting, but it did not amount to much.” She expressed dismay that disunionists were “still doing all in their power to force this State into the ‘Southern Confederacy’ but,” she added, “the Union men are determined” to achieve a different outcome. According to one historian, the secessionists’ “eleventh-hour attempt at [political] reinvention was clumsy.” South Bank Unionists saw through the disingenuousness and denounced the change in tactics, calling it “a secessionist sham” designed to weaken the state and prepare it for a Confederate invasion.<sup>13</sup>

North Bankers remained skeptical of Kentucky’s loyalty and watched with considerable interest as that state’s unconditional Unionists, moderates, and unrepentant secessionists struggled to determine the state’s course. Their uneasiness was aggravated by rumors that the Knights of the Golden Circle were active along the river promoting secession and fomenting general disillusionment among the population. Republicans identified Cincinnati as one area supposedly harboring such activity. One Cincinnati informed Holt that he had witnessed open Confederate recruiting in northern Kentucky, and that the Knights intended to “snare in as many as they could seduce.” Although such charges were never fully substantiated and were denied by the Democratic press, the perception that they were true inflamed what was, in the view of many

---

<sup>13</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 19 August 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 4 September 1861; John Jefferson Diary, 29 August 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; William S. Hays, “Let Us Have Peace,” music sheet (Louisville: Tripp and Cragg, 1861); Maria Holyoke to mother and sister, 18 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers; Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace,” 417-20.

citizens, an already disrupted and somewhat tenuous relationship with South Bankers. The *New Albany Ledger* reported that the Union men of northern Kentucky feared further trouble “from the uneasy, discontented secessionists.” The paper warned that when the secessionists believed the time was right, they would, with aid from Tennesseans, institute “a reign of terror over the Union loving people” of northern Kentucky. “We hope these fears may not be realized,” it opined, “but it is quite certain” that South Bankers face “more apprehensions . . . than at any time since April.” Madison’s *Courier* recognized that the secessionists’ had changed tactics because neutrality was losing its efficacy. “The Crittenden compromisers of last winter won’t follow Crittenden,” it announced. “They talk of peace, Crittenden talks of war; they talk of . . . rebellion and treason, he talks of punishing traitors.” The Republican paper counseled that “the key-note of the abettors of treason now is peace,” but “*when . . . men clamor for peace, they clamor for a divided Union.*”<sup>14</sup>

Even as the number of South Bank secessionists diminished, North Bankers such as Thomas Harris worried that Kentucky’s abandonment of neutrality meant that it intended to secede. “I am no alarmist,” the Madison resident told Indiana Adjutant General Lazarus Noble, “but from opportunities [I have] lately had in trips along the Kentucky [river] Counties opposite here, I was astonished at the sweeping change in the sentiments and talk of the people—Secessionism seems to have gained the ascendancy, and the Union men are very silent and despondent.” Harris believed that “the character of the larger portion of the inhabitants of the counties on the Ohio River in this section” may lead to “trouble . . . if an outbreak occurs in any other part of the State.” He did not make clear where on the southern bank he came into contact

---

<sup>14</sup> Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: Viking Press, 1942), 70-71; W. Nelson to Joseph Holt, 1 August 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 13 July 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 7 August 1861.

with Kentuckians, but it is probable that he had spoken with people living in the rural counties directly across the river from Madison. The counties of Gallatin, Carroll, and Trimble had gone for Breckinridge in 1860 and still harbored a greater proportion of disloyal citizens. Unionists, on the other hand, dominated the more heavily populated areas despite the noise made by secessionists.<sup>15</sup>

With Kentucky's future course not fully determined yet, slaveholders confronted the early warning signs of slavery's demise. War provided border state slaves with an opportunity to loosen or even cast off their chains as the apparatus of control was weakened or swept away. Enslaved South Bankers slowly discovered freedom's close proximity as slaveholders' authority was compromised by growing Northern influence. In Louisville, for instance, flogging virtually ceased because it was easy for slaves to flee. Darrel Bigham notes that "slaves who thought the Ohio was a thousand miles away and ten miles wide soon learned otherwise." Some observers claimed that at certain points on the river, "more fugitives crossed over to Indiana . . . in 1861 than in the previous sixty years." Black men were encouraged to flee across the river largely by the existence of army camps, where, Bigham argues, "protection and jobs" could be found. Masters told lies about the Yankees to keep their slaves from talking to them, but the slaves were rarely fooled. Men such as Elijah Marrs, who could read and was often sent to retrieve his master's mail, kept other slaves informed by reading the newspapers to which his master subscribed. Although Marrs's experience was highly unusual because most slaves were not literate, it illustrates how they took advantage of opportunities when confronted with them. When Northern troops arrived on Kentucky soil in September, their presence, while welcomed by most people, antagonized slaveholders. South Bank masters feared that the views of men

---

<sup>15</sup> Thomas H. Harris to Lazarus Noble, 13 August 1861, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany, Indiana State Archives.



such as Lieutenant Colonel John Beatty of the Third Ohio Infantry would endanger slavery. While passing through Louisville, Beatty observed a sign marking where slaves were bought and sold. Such experiences awakened him and soldiers like him to slavery's horrors. In Louisville, writes historian Robert McDowell, slavery became "a subject about which men could neither think nor talk with any objectivity in 1861."<sup>16</sup>

By late August, South Bank Unionists had joined hands with their North Bank counterparts, overcome considerable opposition from secessionists, and managed to exert a degree of control over events in northern Kentucky. But their accomplishments were suddenly endangered by the actions of General John C. Fremont, commander of the Department of the West, in Missouri. On August 30, Fremont, a native Southerner and the Republican party's standard-bearer in 1856, declared martial law and ordered the liberation of slaves owned by disloyal citizens. His decree was based on legislation recently passed by Congress, but it went beyond the legislation and lacked Lincoln's sanction. Fearing repercussions in the border states, particularly the Ohio Valley, the President told him that "the confiscation of property, and the liberating of slaves of traitorous [sic] owners, will alarm our Southern Union friends, and turn them against us—perhaps ruin our rather fair prospect for Kentucky." When Fremont refused to revoke his proclamation, Lincoln ordered him to do so. Despite the President's intervention and the fact that Fremont had no authority over Kentucky, the general's action sent South Bank Unionists into a panic.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Victor B. Howard, "The Civil War in Kentucky: The Slave Claims His Freedom," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (Autumn 1982): 248-49; Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks*, 64-66; Howard, "Civil War in Kentucky: The Slave Claims His Freedom," 245; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 55-56; John Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier; or Memoirs of a Volunteer* (Cincinnati: Wiltach, Baldwin & Company, 1879), 84.

<sup>17</sup> Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, 161-62; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 6 September 1861; Mario M. Cuomo and Harold Holzer, eds., *Lincoln on Democracy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 226-27.

Union men had long feared the effect that external events like Fremont's bold action might have on their effort to keep Kentucky loyal. Their reaction to Fremont's proclamation was therefore unsurprising. As Absalom Johnson observed, Union papers condemned it. Another Louisville resident, Alfred Pirtle, denounced Fremont's behavior as "despotism, the most fearful on the globe," and claimed that the war had finally shown its "horrid form in every neighborhood" and that "the iron rod of the military rule[d] with remorseless sway." He feared for his state's future: "Oh, God! Keep Kentucky safe from such awful scenes, as we hear from Missouri!" Others agreed: the "proclamation at St. Louis is too severe and is generally denounced by Union men," said one. Lincoln's old friend and confidante Joshua Speed told the president and Chase that Fremont had overstepped his authority and jeopardized Unionists' position in the Valley. He urged Lincoln not to allow Fremont's irresponsibility to drive Kentuckians into the arms of the Confederacy, and reminded Chase that "all over Ky & in every possible way we have denied that this was to be a war on slavery." Speed agreed that slaves "in the service of the enemy" should be forfeited but he begged the Secretary to help make sure that military commanders would not "turn them loose upon us." Garrett Davis told Chase that "the proclamation fell amongst us with pretty much the effect of a bomb shell," because it made it appear as if the war was becoming "a war against slavery." Secessionists, he pointed out, have said all along that it was, and Fremont's action gave their claims credence. For the first time since the war began, Davis acknowledged, he was despondent. And, as if Lincoln needed any additional corroboration that Fremont's proclamation risked Kentucky, General Robert Anderson told him that Fremont's miscalculation was "producing [the] most disastrous [sic] results" south of the river. "It is the opinion of many of our wisest and soundest men that, if not immediately

disavowed and annulled Ky will be lost to the Union.” He had heard already of one military company disbanding as a result.<sup>18</sup>

The fallout from Fremont’s proclamation lingered for some time and briefly threatened to drive a wedge between North and South Bankers. Walter Haldeman’s *Courier*, whose anti-Union rhetoric was increasingly drawing the ire of loyal Kentuckians and federal officials alike, condemned Fremont and warned Kentuckians against endorsing him: “If this proclamation is carried into effect, a very serious responsibility and destiny must come upon all who . . . defend it, or advocate the further prosecution of the war.” Pointing at men such as George Prentice and Michael Garber, Haldeman argued that any editor that defended Fremont’s actions deserved “to have his sheet burnt by the common hangman, and himself exiled from the presence of his race, unfit to enter the tent of the Arab or the wigwam of the Kickapoo.” Would South Bankers, he asked rhetorically, “give money or pay taxes to carry on such a war?” The summer-long assault on the federal government by the pro-secession *Courier* finally elicited a stronger reaction from North Bankers. No fewer than two thousand citizens from rural Ohio and Switzerland counties gathered in early September to address, among other matters, the treasonous rhetoric coming from the South Bank. “While we recognize the liberty and freedom of the press as inviolable,” they announced, “we are unalterably opposed to the *license* of that portion of the public press which opposes the National Government in its efforts to suppress the existing rebellion.” When Lincoln finally overruled Fremont publicly, the *Louisville Journal* proclaimed that the President’s action “will sorely vex the secessionists. It annihilates a large portion of their most

---

<sup>18</sup> Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 31 August 1861; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 1 September 1861; John Jefferson Diary, 2 September 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; Niven, et al., eds., *Salmon P. Chase Papers*, 3:92-95 (Joshua Speed to Chase, 2 September 1861, and Garrett Davis to Chase, 3 September 1861); McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 352-53; Robert Anderson to Abraham Lincoln, 13 September 1861, Robert Anderson Letters, Filson Historical Society.

available capital . . . . They will hardly know what to do” now that they “can no longer hope to make the people believe that the purpose of the U. S. Government is to set free the slaves of the South.” Others like E. T. Bainbridge worried that Fremont’s edict could bring forth the wrong response from South Bankers. It would be bad for the Valley if the political pendulum swung too far either way. “Fremontism whispers caution [to Kentuckians] lest [the extremists] go too far which will be more dangerous than not going far enough,” he said.<sup>19</sup>

Although most North Bank Democrats were pleased that the President had modified Fremont’s order, a handful of the administration’s Republican backers worried that the disagreement between the President and his Missouri general could divide their party and impair the effort to restore the Union. The *Madison Courier* measured its words carefully and merely acknowledged that Fremont’s proclamation was “a step in the right direction.” It implied that the general’s order was an understandable reaction to a federal policy that it believed was “entirely too courteous to the rebels.” A correspondent who recognized the Valley’s changing mood said that Fremont’s decree indicated “the position and progress demanded by the times.” For a growing number of citizens north of the river, he said, “the mild and good tempered measures characteristic of the past can no longer be tolerated. The power of public sentiment now demands that rebel traitors should die, and that the slaves of all such traitors should be proclaimed free.” A harsher policy, he said, “should be inaugurated at once.”<sup>20</sup>

Other Republicans were hesitant to support an emancipation policy that was both irrevocable and potentially devastating to the Valley’s social fabric. Cincinnati’s William Dickson feared that Lincoln’s public overruling of Fremont meant that there were now two

---

<sup>19</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 4 September 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 5, 16 September 1861; E. T. Bainbridge to Joseph Holt, 17 September 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>20</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 17 September 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 2, 4 September 1861.

parties—those who supported the President and those who backed the general. Such a situation would be “injurious to the country,” not to mention the party’s long-term electoral prospects. Dickson noted, too, that north of the river the peoples’ mood was changing. “There is growing sentiment . . . to make war upon slavery & to that it will come, unless we should be immediately successful” on the battlefield. The public’s view of Fremont was divided, partly because the war was going poorly for the North. David Este likewise believed that emancipation was a measure of desperation. If the war went well, “the North would not think of Emancipation as a means of putting down the Rebellion.” He was convinced that “two or three decisive victories” would demonstrate that freeing the slaves was unnecessary. “Emancipation—will it come to this?” he wondered.<sup>21</sup>

Kentucky’s neutrality ended on September 3 when Confederate forces commanded by General Leonidas Polk occupied the strategically important town of Columbus in the western portion of the state. Union troops under General Ulysses S. Grant responded by crossing the Ohio River and seizing Paducah and Smithland on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Both commanders ignored Magoffin’s desire to allow the commonwealth to remain uninvolved, which he had recently reiterated in a message to the legislature: “we are not responsible for the war, and ought not to be invoked by either section to involve [our] people or the State in the struggle.” The pro-Union body quickly passed a resolution demanding that the Confederate forces leave the state. When Magoffin vetoed it, the legislators promptly repassed it without his approval. The Confederate invasion partially assuaged any hard feelings between the Ohio River’s two banks and galvanized the region. George Prentice, theretofore a moderate who sought to maintain

---

<sup>21</sup> William Martin Dickson to Friedrich Hassaurek, 27 September 1861, Friedrich Hassaurek Papers, Ohio Historical Society; David K. Este Diary, 19 October 1861, Papers of David K. Este and Family, Cincinnati Historical Society.

tranquility in the Valley, now expressed sentiments that could have come from a North Bank Republican. Kentuckians, he wrote, now had a duty to repulse the invaders. “There can be no further parleying with this treason . . . . The time has come for action, the soil of Kentucky must be purged of the armed enemies who have come to inaugurate such a condition here in the midst of our peace and prosperity . . . . The lion is roused from his lair and terrible will be his awakening.” Neutrality has died, another South Banker informed Joseph Holt. It happened “so suddenly that a coroner would be justified in issuing a writ of inquiry to ascertain whether it was a case of suicide.” He wished that Holt “could have seen the uprising” in Louisville “last Tuesday night when the Home Guards were called upon” to defend their homeland. The men were “joyous in the presence of duty, but there was neither swagger, bluster nor bragging in any part of it.”<sup>22</sup>

With foreign troops on Kentucky soil, angry South Bank Unionists rushed to protect their families and property and dealt unsympathetically with secessionists. Louisville’s city council moved to purge suspected secessionists from the city government’s payroll. In October, the council dismissed ten men “as persons suspected of disloyalty . . . and therefore inept to hold office.” In this instance, those charged were guilty until proven innocent. General Robert Anderson announced from his new headquarters in Louisville that he had assumed command of the region and intended to enforce the laws. Both he and his second-in-command, Brigadier General William T. Sherman, feared that South Bank communities would soon be attacked by Confederate general Simon B. Buckner, whose force was camped near Bowling Green. Buckner’s disloyalty infuriated Unionists who had previously respected his service to the state.

---

<sup>22</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 295-96; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 6, 10 September 1861; W. M. Brewer, “Lincoln and the Border States,” *Journal of Negro History* 34 (January 1949): 54; unknown correspondent to Joseph Holt, 19 September 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress.

“The people here are generally very much enraged against Buckner,” Mildred Bullitt wrote. One acquaintance told her that there were “a thousand men in Louisville” who were ready to kill him. According to Bullitt’s friend, the general “is the worst man living, or that eve[r] did live, ‘not excepting Judas Iscariot.’” He volunteered to fight until Buckner and his army were removed from the state. A relative of Bullitt claimed she would “give a thousand dollars a head for General B’s & three other officers under him.” She reportedly offered another thousand “to the man who will bring them to her.” Loyal South Bankers fumed as secessionists abandoned their families and employers for their cause. “When *fools* turn traitors,” J. L. Taylor said, “they seem to forget they have any duties to perform, except to carry out their treason.” One of Holt’s correspondents commented on the abrupt change in South Bank public opinion: moderation, to some degree, appeared to have vanished. “Startling incidents are occurring so continually in our midst,” he wrote, “that we know not where the whirlpool of continually shifting public opinion may drive us.” A La Grange correspondent told the *Louisville Journal* that Unionists there would do all they could to prevent Kentucky from being “forced out by secessionists, traitors, and disorganizers.” Since the secessionists had failed, he said, they have changed their colors and “are now State-Rights men, peace men, and even claim to be better Union men than we of the Union party.”<sup>23</sup>

By early fall it had become clear that time was running out for secessionist Walter Haldeman and his newspaper, the *Louisville Daily Courier*. After being removed as Louisville’s surveyor of customs in June, Haldeman had continued his assault on the Lincoln administration.

---

<sup>23</sup> Louisville City Council Records, 14 October 1861, Filson Historical Society; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 49-51; Mildred Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 7 October 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society; J.[?] L. Taylor to Nathaniel C. McLean, Jr., 10 September 1861, McLean Family Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; E. T. Bainbridge to Joseph Holt, 14 September 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 4 September 1861.

His criticism was confined by few bounds and was often laced with ill-founded personal attacks. When federal troops crossed the Ohio in response to Confederate aggression, the *Courier* condemned Grant. “The attempt to force Kentucky to pour out her blood and treasure in behalf of the usurpations and despotism of Abraham Lincoln is being made,” it said. The newspaper’s charge that federal officials were being abetted by “recreant Kentuckians” who were “false to themselves and to freedom”—men who were “faithless to their obligations . . . and to their solemn and public pledges to the people”—did not sit well with most South Bankers. A North Bank rival reminded Valley readers that with freedom of the press came the responsibility to speak judiciously. As Haldeman’s paper continued to spout its bitter rhetoric, the Indiana organ declared that “the suppression of certain newspapers by the military arm of the Government is one of the stern necessities of the war.” On the evening of September 18, federal marshals shut the paper down, arresting in the process former governor Charles S. Morehead and a Haldeman associate named Reuben T. Durrett. Fearing arrest, Haldeman fled Louisville and resumed publishing in Confederate-occupied Bowling Green, where, according to Theodore Bell, he planned to wait until General Buckner’s rebel force “liberated” the river port. When that happened, Bell said, Haldeman would return to the city and “publish the *Courier* to suit himself.” Protected by Confederate soldiers, the *Courier* persevered in its effort to influence Kentucky public opinion. A rival paper, Prentice’s *Journal*, professed to feel “sincere and deep pain” at its competitor’s demise, but added that under the circumstances authorities had “a stern duty” to protect the Union’s interests. Cincinnati’s *Gazette* offered a sharper observation: “This open ally of the rebels has . . . been suppressed . . . . It is now beginning to be demonstrated [by loyal South Bankers] that treason cannot flourish openly in Kentucky.”<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> *Louisville Daily Courier*, 9 September 1861, 14 October 1861; *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 3



Confederate occupation of Kentucky territory brought North Bankers one step closer to their brethren across the river as citizens on the two banks experienced common fears, fears that centered on defending their homes and protecting their way of life from outside interference. “If we drive treason from our institutions . . . and our fire sides,” the *Madison Courier* told the Valley, we will not have to listen to treasonous chatter and will, at the same time, have “done by ourselves . . . one half the work which we are now calling on [the] Government to do for us.” Lamenting the dissolution of peace, the *New Albany Ledger* urged the Valley’s citizenry to set aside earlier prejudices and unite behind the Union’s cause in a show of unity shorn of “unpalatable and unwelcome advice.” Citing a debt that Indiana owed Kentucky for protecting early Hoosier settlers, the *Ledger* said that “the time has come” for Indianans to return the favor and come to the aid of Kentuckians who had kept secession away from the border. Indeed, such solicitous rhetoric from Indiana’s portion of the North Bank was a natural expression of a trans-river bond that, according to Kenneth Stampf, “never abated.” Morton’s deep concern for the well-being of Indiana’s southern border encouraged a “self-assumed guardianship over Kentucky” that for years drew praise from South Bankers. He told Indianans that it “was ‘base ingratitude and criminal folly’” to ignore Kentucky in its time of need.<sup>25</sup>

Two days before the Kentucky invasion, William Haines Lytle’s sister Lily had told him that many Cincinnatians feared an attack. We “are beginning to prepare to meet the rebels in good earnest [but] I do not feel at all frightened for I feel so sure that God will protect the *right*.” She clearly had a sense of the city’s mood, for when Polk’s forces crossed into Kentucky, the

---

September 1861; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 19, 20 September 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 20 September 1861; Theodore S. Bell to Joseph Holt, 24 September 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Library of Congress; Walter N. Haldeman to Felix K. Zollicoffer, 19 October 1861, Haldeman Family Papers, 1843-1985, Filson Historical Society.  
<sup>25</sup> *Madison Daily Evening Courier*, 6 September 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 6, 10 September 1861; Stampf, “Kentucky’s Influence,” 275-76; Etcheson, *Emerging Midwest*, 128.

citizens, like other North Bankers, opted determinedly for regional solidarity. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* abruptly abandoned its anti-coercion position to side with the Union's staunchest defenders. "The insane act of the Secessionists," it declared, has "compelled" Kentuckians to defend their state and the national government. Moreover, North Bankers were determined "to stand by them until the supremacy of law is completely vindicated . . . [W]e will stand by them, though rivers of blood should flow and countless millions of treasure be required." Caught up in the patriotic fervor, the newspaper concluded that "there can be but one result to the strife in Kentucky, and that will be the driving of every armed [disloyal] man from the State." The *Gazette* praised the Democratic masses for supporting the Union and, most recently, Kentucky in its hour of need. Such patriotism, it said, demonstrated "that they were always sound at heart." The paper urged Kentucky to "take her stand"; if it needed assistance, "Ohio and Indiana would respond promptly." Many citizens of southwestern Ohio, it seemed, were actually invigorated by the Confederates' move north. While practical concerns for Cincinnati's safety had increased (the *Enquirer* had issued a warning four days before the invasion), William Dickson noted that enthusiasm for the war had "not abated" and that recent events had reduced the "division of sentiment" that had existed earlier in the summer." Now, Dickson said, "the people are looking to the military to attend to their business & do not interfere" with its mission. The excitement of war seemed to galvanize elderly David Este: "We have but one course to pursue," he wrote in his diary. "Get ready instantly, watch [the enemy] closely, and destroy him before he makes the deadly leap. We must put down this rebellion or we shall sink into the gulf that swallowed up Greece & Rome, and free institutions will perish." Valley citizens, he believed, possessed an "incomparably great" responsibility to do their part in quelling the insurgency.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Lytle to William Haines Lytle, 1 September 1861, Lytle Family Papers, Cincinnati Historical  
186

In mid-September, Eliza Cist asked her soldier-brother Henry for a small token of his affection: “If you could only capture one of their [rebel] flags to hang below the Stars and Stripes, that would tell the whole story. I don’t think you could bring home any thing from the whole land of Dixie, more acceptable to me.” The request came from one who was safely ensconced in the comfort of her home outside Cincinnati. Meanwhile, far more serious matters confronted Valley citizens. With foreign troops on Kentucky soil, the Valley’s defense assumed greater urgency. Local commanders continued to struggle with organizing and arming their raw volunteers, problems with which they had been dealing since the attack on Fort Sumter. Although there were differences of opinion on tactics, officials generally concurred that the region must bolster its local defenses and, now that Kentucky had sided with the Union, make the South Bank one of the mustering points for forces that would ultimately move south. Some men such as James Noble, however, called for a more aggressive approach, arguing that defending Cincinnati from Covington’s hills was misguided. “Cincinnati & Ohio have got to be defended at Cumberland Gap,” he told Governor Dennison, “Indiana will take care of Louisville & South.” Instead of building fortifications so close to the city, Noble argued, resources should be used to purchase arms and equipment for the men stationed in Cincinnati. Regardless of the plan pursued, trans-river collaboration would be necessary.<sup>27</sup>

Indianans and Ohioans acknowledged that it was in their best interests to insure the South Bank’s security. Nevertheless, a parochial attitude characterized some North Bankers, particularly Hoosiers who still held an insular view of their role in the spreading conflict.

---

Society; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 31 August 1861, 28 September 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 11, 12 September 1861; William Martin Dickson to Friedrich Hassaurek, 27 September 1861, Friedrich Hassaurek Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; David K. Este Diary, 30 September 1861, Papers of David K. Este and Family, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>27</sup> Eliza Cist to Henry M. Cist, 12 September 1861, Cist Family Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society; James F. Noble to William Dennison, 19, 30 September 1861, Adjutant General Administration–Correspondence to the Adjutant General and Governor of Ohio, 1861-1866, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

Colonel William Tuley reported to Morton that New Albany was “infested with strangers,” forcing the Legion to keep “a close guard” over munitions. That fact, he said, and concern for hearth and home, made some men reluctant to join a unit for fear they would be forced to leave home; they were, however, ready and willing to defend Indiana’s border. George W. Hazzard of the 37th Indiana Volunteers, stationed at Camp Dearborn in Lawrenceburg, informed the governor that some companies would probably not be filled “within a reasonable period” because men were holding out for the best offer, i.e., waiting to see which unit would get the best of what little equipment was available and have the best chance of serving on the North Bank. A Vevay man criticized a home guard unit in Switzerland County whose members had “declared again and again that they would not leave the corporation [i.e., town] limits, not even in case of invasion by rebel bands,” even though they had arms “issued to them by the State.” While local commanders generally doubted that a Confederate attack on the Valley was imminent, they were concerned about any movement in their direction and the potential danger it posed to river communities. “I do not apprehend an attack from any force from the other side [South Bank],” said one Madisonian, “but some of our citizens are alarmed in consequence of the movements of the Rebels” in Trimble and Carroll counties. He felt confident, though, that Hoosiers would receive ample warning “of any movements in this direction and I think we can protect the town with the force we have.” Hoosier parochialism in military matters was not altogether unreasonable given the Indiana Legion’s stated mission. Morton had ordered the militia units to defend the border “from depredations threatened by the Rebels and to resist their crossing the Ohio river into Indiana.” While thousands of Indianans would eventually cross into Kentucky, Morton’s primary concern was the river towns’ defense.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> William W. Tuley to Oliver P. Morton, 21 September 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-188

Despite the hesitancy of some Hoosiers to jump with both feet into the fray, the great majority of North Bankers moved with a clear sense of purpose and joined hands with South Bankers to defend the region. By September 1861, Kentucky's defense had become as important as the North Bank's. Cincinnati's *Enquirer* reminded readers that Valley citizens "must always belong to one nation" and that North Bankers were Kentucky's "friends in fraternal feeling." The paper urged its Southern neighbors to hold on until the "large number of troops in Ohio and Indiana" could get properly armed. At that point, they would come to Kentucky's defense. The *Gazette* said that the commonwealth's precarious position required "prompt backing" from its northern neighbors. Aid from the North Bank would come immediately when Kentuckians requested it. The *Ledger* pointed out that the actions of Kentucky Unionists had kept the war away from the Ohio Valley. Thus, Hoosiers and Buckeyes would "be guilty of a grave offense if they did not rush to the defense of Kentucky against her invaders." The *Indianapolis Daily Journal* reported that arms had been shipped to Jeffersonville and distributed "to companies of Home Guards on either side of the river." It claimed that Governor Morton had "acted very efficiently in extending all the aid at his command to the loyal men of Kentucky." Though Morton had always felt it was his duty to aid the South Bank whenever possible, his September actions were done at Washington's behest after President Lincoln had received a request for help from Louisville Unionists J. J. Boyle and John J. Speed. Weeks later Morton told Lincoln that

---

Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis; George W. Hazzard to Oliver P. Morton, 19 September 1861, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis; M. Long Duplan to Lazarus Noble, 18 December 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports; Sam B. Sering [?] to Oliver P. Morton, 25 September 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports; Oliver P. Morton to Alfred B. Collins Company, 5-20 September 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports.

Indiana's geographical position made it keenly interested in Kentucky affairs, adding that in the river counties particularly, the people were "in a state of feverish anxiety."<sup>29</sup>

Gerald Prokopowicz contends that many soldiers in the Department of the Cumberland (renamed the Department of the Ohio in the fall of 1861) were particularly tied to their own regiments and companies. Headquartered in Louisville, the army at this point was an "abstraction," with most men having enlisted during the spring and summer before the Army of the Ohio had been officially created. He argues that soldiers' devotion to their units "contrasted with their relative indifference toward other regiments and toward the army as a whole." Yet, a sense of regional unity existed among North and South Bankers, many of whom comprised the army's rank and file. It was *their* families, homes, and livelihoods that the rebel army in southern Kentucky threatened, thus, it was only natural that they desired to assist each other.<sup>30</sup>

Shortly after Polk's invasion, James Noble expressed concern that so many Ohioans were leaving to serve in the regiments of other border states, thereby making it easier for states such as Indiana to reach its quota while simultaneously depleting Ohio's manpower reserve. In a letter to Governor Dennison, Noble spelled out what he thought was the best way to provide for his state's and, more immediately, Cincinnati's, defense. "I think one half the force raised in Ohio should be for use in Ky . . . . In fact situated as Ohio & Indiana are, I don't think they should be called on to assist in taking care of" any other state "when their own border is threatened."

Loyal South Bankers crossed the river in great numbers to join Kentucky regiments that had

---

<sup>29</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 29 September 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 19 September 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 10 September 1861; *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, reprinted in *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 20 September 1861; Winfield Scott to Oliver P. Morton, 3 September 1861, and J. J. Boyle and John J. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, 2 September 1861 (copy), General Dispatch no. 1, pp. 186-87, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books, Digital Collections of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis University Library, Indianapolis (original documents held by the Indiana State Archives); Oliver P. Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 7 October 1861, Private Dispatch no. 1, pp. 103-105, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books.

<sup>30</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 17.

been mustered into service during the summer, or new ones that were being formed and trained at several North Bank camps. At a flag ceremony at Camp Joseph Holt, one prominent Louisvillian told the crowd that “it becomes us Kentuckians to remember that we are on the soil of Indiana, and that she has always kept her sister-like friendship to us, and to offer our kind trust that we in all time to come . . . will call each one of her people *our fellow citizen*.” Another man reported that the commonwealth was well represented on the Northern shore. “Kentucky manhood,” he wrote, was in full display with “its world-wide reputation . . . fully sustained [and] enhanced” by the many loyal men encamped across the river. As Cincinnatians commenced throwing up entrenchments on the Kentucky shore, the *Louisville Journal* singled out Madison’s Donald Cameron as the embodiment of trans-river fidelity. The fifty-five-year-old school teacher and veteran of the Mexican–American War, on hearing reports that Louisville “was about to be attacked by the rebels,” dismissed his students, grabbed his musket, and boarded the next packet bound for the city. Even though the rumors proved false, the paper praised the former soldier for setting an example “worthy of imitation by those in Kentucky who profess attachment for the Union.”<sup>31</sup>

The fear of a common enemy now occupying southern Kentucky trumped the localism embraced by some citizens and encouraged North Bankers to augment South Bank resources. Sherman told Morton on September 6 that General Anderson wanted “as many volunteers called along the Ohio river as possible.” Anderson emphasized his needs days later when he urged the governor to send as many troops as he could because “I think the cloud is so threatening that it may be wise for me not to wait any longer [to take the field]. I hope that you will give our dear

---

<sup>31</sup> James F. Noble to William Dennison, 12 September 1861, Adjutant General Administration–Correspondence to the Adjutant General and Governor of Ohio, 1861-1866, Ohio Historical Society; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 28 August 1861, 6, 21 September 1861; Venner, ed., *Queen City Lady*, 115-16 (27 September 1861 entry); Dee, ed., *Ohio’s War*, 61.

native state all the aid you can.” North Bank assistance “would place the state of Kentucky and our Union under great obligations” to Morton and his fellow Indianans “if you would come down to our assistance . . . . If you come, bring all the camp equipage and ammunition you can get.” The hero of Sumter, as many people viewed Anderson, told one man shortly before Sherman replaced him as commander on October 8 that even though Ohio and Indiana were sending troops “to beat back Zollicoffer,” Kentucky had to “help herself.” Tension on the South Bank remained high even as soldiers arrived from across the river. On the evening of September 18, John Jefferson joined other Louisvillians on the Ohio’s southern shore to watch troops under the command of General Lovell Rousseau disembark. They came, he indicated, to support the city’s Home Guards, who had been called out because of reports that “the Tennesseans were coming up the Nashville RR.” South Bank native and current New Albany resident Daniel Griffin told his wife that as he marched through Louisville reminiscing about his childhood in the city, “multitudes of men, women and children, many of them old schoolmates” joined in cheering “for the Hoosier boys and the Stars and Stripes.” With rumors of a Confederate movement northward swirling about, Valley men, according to W. P. Butler, vowed “to die in defence of the city and to kill [the traitor] Gen. Buckner before their departure from this terrestrial sphere.”<sup>32</sup>

A shortage of money and equipment continued to hinder the Valley’s mobilization, a problem that plagued many states during the early months of the war. Things appeared to be

---

<sup>32</sup> William T. Sherman to Oliver P. Morton, 6 September 1861, General Dispatch no. 2, p. 6, Governor Oliver Morton Telegraph Books; Robert Anderson to Oliver P. Morton, 15 September 1861, Anderson to Lt. Col. Oliver, 19 September 1861, Anderson to Mess. K. Appunow [?], 3 October 1861, General Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393, Part I, Entry no. 866, National Archives; Reinhart, *History of the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U.S.*, 7; John Jefferson Diary, 18 September 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; Daniel F. Griffin to Mollie Griffin, 26 September 1861, Daniel F. Griffin Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Will [?] P. Butler to Noble Butler, 25 September 1861, Noble Chase Butler Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.



particularly troublesome in Indiana's river counties, perhaps because of the attention paid to them by the state's hawkish chief executive. John Barber complained that the Madison Zouaves had already become "demoralized and disorganized." James Fouts asked friends for a loan of thirty to forty dollars until his pay arrived. The *Ledger* reported that militia commanders "want men" and urged able-bodied males to fill up the ranks "immediately." In yet another letter to Indianapolis, William Tuley reminded Morton of the Legion's dearth of equipment. "I wish to impress upon you the necessity of supplying . . . muskets or rifles with accoutrements," he wrote. "Three companies have been drilling for three months without arms and they have become discouraged and I can not make them effective without" outfitting them properly. Tuley remained confident, however, in his men's ability to protect southeastern Indiana. "Give us the guns, and my word for it no rebel will dare to cross the Ohio without feeling the . . . effects of bull and buck shot." Others complained that even their best arms were "utterly valueless" and that deploying their units with such deficient weaponry "would result probably in our defeat."<sup>33</sup>

Morton peppered Washington with requests for small arms and "heavy guns," the latter to be used to defend key ports on the Ohio River. Lincoln responded that the federal government was "doing the very best we can. You do not receive arms from us as fast as you need them . . . because we have not near enough to meet all the pressing demands." Undoubtedly growing tired of the frustrated Morton's persistence, the beleaguered President admonished the Indianan: "As to Kentucky, you do not estimate that State as more important than I do, but I am compelled to watch all points." At this moment, he said, "I am, if not in range, at least in hearing of cannon-

---

<sup>33</sup> John Barber to Lazarus Noble, 5 September 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports; James E. Fouts to "dear Friends," 5 September 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 2 September 1861; William W. Tuley to Oliver P. Morton, 10 September 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports; N. Ryan and John L. Wilson to Oliver P. Morton, 18 October 1861, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany.

shot from an army of enemies more than 100,000 strong.” Lincoln made it clear that he was not going to risk the nation’s capital just to send additional men and arms to fortify Louisville when “there is not a single hostile soldier within forty miles, nor any force known to be moving upon it from any distance.” Thus, for the time being at least, the Valley’s logistical problems would continue.<sup>34</sup>

The influx of soldiers to the banks of the Ohio River strained the Valley’s infrastructure and disrupted civilian society in significant ways. Cincinnati’s size and proximity to western Virginia made it a logical place to establish military hospitals. John D. Jones explained to Secretary of War Simon Cameron in mid-October that the “unexpected arrival from Western Va. of over 200 sick & wounded soldiers to our city . . . and the want of accommodation & attentions for such a contingency” was causing problems. During the ensuing weeks, city residents took action. On November 27, citizens gathered at the home of physician W. H. Mussey and, as they later reported, “steps were then taken to complete a working organization and system” that could obtain a suitable working place and mobilize the civilian population of southern Ohio and Indiana and northern Kentucky to aid the army. A Central Ladies’ Soldiers Aid Society was organized within days and in mid-December five thousand copies of a circular were distributed “notifying people of the army’s needs.” Women on both banks were urged to form “Soldiers’ Relief Circles” in smaller towns where no association affiliated with the United States Sanitary Commission existed. Volunteers at the Commission’s Cincinnati branch toiled tirelessly throughout the war to feed, clothe, and care for the Union’s fighting men. President Lincoln

---

<sup>34</sup> Nicolay and Hay, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 7: 1-3.

recognized the enormous good that came from such efforts: “The Sanitary Commission is doing a work of great humanity, and of direct practical value to the nation, in this time of its trial.”<sup>35</sup>

As Valley commanders worked to harness their men’s patriotic enthusiasm and mold them into unified, effective fighting units, they also had to monitor those who saw in the confusion opportunities to flout the law. The diversity of the soldiers’ backgrounds created challenges for officers. William Sanderson noted that many of the units around New Albany were comprised of men who came from the countryside. Some commanders, he said, had difficulty keeping their men “under proper restraint in the cities,” with a few having caused trouble. On October 1, Anderson issued General Order 2, in which he addressed the problem. He was unhappy to hear that some soldiers were “disgracing their Regts and reflecting discredit upon the service and their Commander, by committing depredations upon the property of Citizens in their neighborhood.” He reminded his men that “our troops are here [in Kentucky as] friends and protectors to all peaceable Citizens in the vicinity of our Camps,” and warned that he would “make an example” of anybody who committed “outrages.” Despite official efforts to rein in recalcitrant men, the problem continued sporadically. Newport citizens urged authorities to deal with the growing incidence of “rowdiness” in the area, after the October arrest of two soldiers charged with repeated disturbances. It was reported that the men “and their class have been a terror to the city too long.” A Vevay, Indiana, man reported in December that some Home Guard units in Switzerland County had ventured across the river to Warsaw, Kentucky, where “they could not find any enemy,” so they robbed “those they were sent to assist.” He felt

---

<sup>35</sup> John D. Jones to Simon Cameron, 17 October 1861, Jones Family Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society; R. W. Burnet, *Report of the Operations of the Cincinnati Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission to March 1, 1862* (Columbus: unknown publisher, 1862), 1-13; unknown author, *For the Immediate Relief of our Sick and Wounded Soldiers-U.S. Sanitary Commission, Cincinnati Depot* (Cincinnati: unknown publisher, 1861), 1-7.

he had to report such alleged abuse in order to “defend the worthy [citizens] from the attacks of the *unworthy*.”<sup>36</sup>

When Yankee troops arrived on Kentucky soil after the Confederate incursion, their presence introduced a disruptive dynamic into slaveholders’ world. South Bankers’ propinquity to Indiana and Ohio had always posed problems for slaveholders; the soldiers’ arrival only made matters worse as they came into contact with slaves. Sherman had no sooner assumed command in Louisville than two Kentuckians complained to him that “some negro slaves [had] taken refuge” in local camps and had been “sheltered” by the soldiers. The general reminded his subordinates that federal laws as well as Kentucky’s “are binding on us” and “compel us to surrender a Runaway [sic] Negro, on application of [the] Negro’s owner or agent.” Sherman told one colonel that it would be better if he kept “the negroes out of your camp altogether” unless he had “brought them along with the Regiment.” Mildred Bullitt reported that her family was determined to rent out their Jefferson County, Kentucky, estate because of the growing problems with their slaves. They were “discouraged by the difficulty in managing [sic] them to get any work done,” she wrote. Thomas Bullitt understood his parents’ predicament: “I appreciate fully the reasons that urge you to make the change alluded to in your letter . . . the growing difficulties in the management of [slaves] on the borders of Kentucky are weighty reasons for the change which you propose.” As some North Bank moderates such as Jeremiah Sullivan slowly came to the realization that “the time has come for [slavery’s] removal,” the South Bank’s slaveholding class began to suspect that their cherished institution might not

---

<sup>36</sup> William L. Sanderson to Lazarus Noble, 7 July 1861, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany; General Orders No. 2, Department of the Cumberland, 1 October 1861, General Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393, Part I, Entry no. 888, National Archives; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 19 October 1861; M. Long Duplan to Lazarus Noble, 18 December 1861, Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion, Muster Rolls, Correspondence, and Reports.

survive the war. By late November, even Kentucky's proslavery governor had begun to have doubts about the institution's future: "Is slavery an element of strength as I have held it or of weakness as the abolitionists maintain?"<sup>37</sup>

The warmer months of summer and early fall offered mixed blessings for a Valley hit hard by the commercial contraction brought on by the war. The coming of harvest time enabled merchants to replenish their shelves with fresh produce and such delectables as molasses. Cincinnati's Chamber of Commerce and Merchant's Exchange noted that secession had enabled grocers to purchase Louisiana's sugar and molasses "at prices far below what they could have done otherwise." Alcohol distillers had a similar experience. Those who transported such provisions to and from larger markets refilled their coffers with cash. One Jeffersonville, Indiana, man employed by the Jeffersonville Railroad endured what he called "a perfect rush of business" as he worked night and day to handle the "immense business" that the line enjoyed. The hot weather enabled vegetables and fruits to thrive, supplying the citizenry with an abundance of fresh food for those who could afford it. John Jefferson noted that peach prices had dropped thirty to forty cents a bushel over the summer. Many professional men did quite well despite the hard times. "I have never done so well as this summer . . . My prospects in this respect are all that I could desire," one Cincinnati lawyer told a friend. Another woman, however, noted some gloomy aspects of the region's economy in those months: "everything

---

<sup>37</sup> William T. Sherman to Colonel Turchin, 15 October 1861, General Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393, Part I, Entry no. 866, National Archives; Mildred Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt, 22 October 1861, and Thomas W. Bullitt to Father, [23-25] November 1861, Bullitt Family Papers—Oxmoor Collection, Filson Historical Society; Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 9 December 1861, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers, Indiana Historical Society; Beriah Magoffin to Thomas B. Stevenson, 28 November 1861, Thomas B. Stevenson Letters, Cincinnati Historical Society. On rumors of slave uprisings in Kentucky in 1861, see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 47.

seems to be [plentiful], provisions are cheaper than ever, but money is scarce. Beggars are seen in large numbers, because so many people are out of employment.”<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, the prosperity enjoyed by part of the Valley’s citizenry was not shared by the many unemployed mechanics, artisans, and laborers who suffered because of a tight money supply that constrained business expansion and forced employers to reduce their workforce or close operations altogether. At the end of August, members of Cincinnati’s business community reported that “bankruptcy has blighted our commerce, and the future looks so dark that none can contemplate it without a shudder.” An array of commercial enterprises were “condensed and contracted” and “retrenchment was the order of the day” everywhere. The repudiation of Southern debts produced “great commotion,” particularly among pork processors, who were hurt by the loss of their Southern customers. Thomas Chenoweth claimed that “trade in Cincinnati is dead” and proposed relocating his operation to St. Louis “if times ever get settled.” By the end of the year in Cincinnati alone, says one historian, 30,000 men and women “roamed the streets looking for work.” Widespread unemployment affected landlords: “I cannot collect even the reduced rents,” reported Richard Miller, “and if I undertake to enforce payments by suit I should soon have no tenants.” Smaller communities downriver from the Queen City confronted similar problems. One cause of the economic problems, according to Frank Klement, was that the paper currency of many midwestern banks was underwritten by Southern bonds. Secession made it impossible to collect on such bonds and triggered an economic recession that tightened access to

---

<sup>38</sup> William Smith, *Annual Statement of the Commerce of Cincinnati for the Commercial Year Ending August 31, 1861* (Cincinnati: Gazette Company, 1861), 8-10, 14-47; Fayette S. Van Alstine to unknown correspondent, [August] 1861, Fayette S. Van Alstine Papers, Filson Historical Society; John Jefferson Diary, 4, 5 September 1861, John F. Jefferson Papers; William Martin Dickson to Friedrich Hassaurek, 27 September 1861, Friedrich Hassaurek Papers; Maria Holyoke to mother and sister, 18 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers, Filson Historical Society.

money. Once hard times engulfed the commercial class, few citizens were left unaffected, and the Valley's proximity to enemy troops only compounded problems.<sup>39</sup>

South Bankers fared little better. Although some, such as those engaged in the tobacco industry, appeared to prosper, a great many others had to tighten their belts to survive. With "so many who are entirely out of business," said one citizen, "economy is the order of the day now with everybody." Louisville's mayor and general council took steps on October 5 to relieve some of the financial strain on its citizens. "Whereas the crisis in public affairs has greatly depressed [citizen's] financial condition . . . and money has become scarce and the facilities for obtaining it greatly diminished," they said, the gas and water companies should "reduce the rates of these essential articles so as to conform to the exigency of the times." Less than two weeks later, the city council asked the board of directors of the Louisville Water Company "to reduce the wages and salaries" of its employees "to conform with the depressed financial condition" of the city. Frank Pragoff described the economic problems facing citizens: "Louisville is played out," he said. "Here to fore her buisness [sic] has been all with [the] South" but "owing to the present unhappy difficulties, all trade is at a stand still, because she has no other market to dispose of her merchandize [sic]." Times, he said, were "very hard" and money scarce, property had "depreciated to less than one half its value 12 months ago," rents had been "reduced accordingly," houses had been "vacated by the dozens," and the streets looked "every day in the week like Sunday." Women who had been previously well-off took on tasks formerly done by servants or slaves. Lucy Hughes reported that she had given up her cook and that she and her

---

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Annual Statement of the Commerce of Cincinnati*, 2-7; Alfred Pirtle Journal, 13 July 1861; Ross, *Workers on the Edge*, 194; Richard Miller to James Smith Armstrong, 24 October 1861, James Smith Armstrong Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society; Jeremiah Sullivan to Algernon Sullivan, 19 December 1861, Jeremiah Sullivan Papers, Indiana Historical Society; Frank L. Klement, "Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War," *Catholic Historical Review* 80 (1994): 38.

girls were now milking the cows and doing the housework while a servant did “the kitchen work.”<sup>40</sup>

Life may have been hard for many North and South Bankers but trans-river activity continued as citizens busied themselves with personal and commercial transactions. Obed Wilson, a sales agent for a Cincinnati textbook publisher, took his wife Amanda with him on a trip downriver in November. After finishing his business in New Albany, the Wilsons spent time walking the streets of Louisville, where they were “surprised to see so many elegant residences and fine buildings.” Such excursions, whether for business or pleasure, required greater planning as the war progressed. Increasingly citizens needed permission from a provost marshal or other official to go back and forth across the river. If one’s proposed trip was approved, a pass documenting the approval had to be carried. But, although the war caused tremendous economic upheaval in the Valley, Darrel Bigham argues that at the same time, particularly as federal armies moved south, it eventually created an economic boom in key river communities such as Cincinnati and Louisville because river trade “increased with the use of river transports for moving Union troops.” Urban centers became military depots, enabling such intercourse as the coal trade to flourish because factory and riverboat demand increased during the war.<sup>41</sup>

The federal government’s effort to shut down contraband trade continued into the summer and fall of 1861. On July 13, Congress approved legislation prohibiting all trade with the South “except that licensed by the President and regulated by the Treasury Department.” But

---

<sup>40</sup> Frank Pragoff to sister, 26 October 1861, Frank Pragoff Letter, Filson Historical Society, Louisville; Maria Holyoke to sister, 28 August 1861, Holyoke Family Papers, Filson Historical Society; Council Minutes, 5, 14 October 1861, Louisville City Council Records, Filson Historical Society; Lucy Hughes to father, 20 November 1861, Hughes Family Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

<sup>41</sup> Venner, ed., *Queen City Lady*, 13-15, 128-29 (quotation from 5 November 1861 entry); Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 93; Darrel E. Bigham, “River of Opportunity: Economic Consequences of the Ohio,” in *Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience*, ed. Robert L. Reid (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 155-56.



this attempt to legislate the problem out of existence had little success in the central Ohio River Valley, where (despite the *Louisville Courier*'s complaints to the contrary) smugglers often managed to thwart officials' efforts to stop them. Secretary Chase acknowledged the persistence of the problem in a mid-July letter to Lovell Rousseau. The Kentuckian had written to Chase complaining about "the smuggling of provisions from the north side of the Ohio river into Kentucky" by Southern agents "who have contracts to fill for parties in insurrection against the United States." The Secretary expressed his vexation, told Rousseau that "measures have been instituted which will, I hope, effectually prevent any further proceedings of this nature," and instructed him to report any information he had about such treasonous activities to "the nearest Surveyor, who will use the [enforcement] means now at his command, to arrest the parties engaged, and to seize the goods."<sup>42</sup>

Officials faced an uphill battle against citizens determined to circumvent the law and trade with the enemy, a battle that continued throughout the war. Reports of illegal trade were frequent throughout the last six months of 1861. By July, the *Louisville Journal* had had enough of businessmen who flagrantly disregarded orders to cease and desist. "Some of our merchant friends seem not to understand the consequence of shipping munitions of war or even general merchandise to the insurgent States," it said. "It would be well for every one to know and remember that he who ships *munitions of war*—which includes fire-arms, provisions, and similar articles—is liable not only to have his property seized and confiscated, but to be himself hanged for treason." Increasingly, the matter was one on which men from both parties agreed—

---

<sup>42</sup> Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (March 1963): 635; *Louisville Daily Courier*, 18 July 1861; E. Merton Coulter, "Commercial Intercourse with the Confederacy in the Mississippi Valley, 1861-1865," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 5 (March 1919): 380; Salmon P. Chase to Lovell H. Rousseau, 11 July 1861, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Relating to Restricted Commercial Intercourse, 1861-1887, BE Series, Microcopy No. 513, Roll no. 1, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56, National Archives.

smuggling had to stop. The Republican *Cincinnati Gazette* argued that North Bankers who engaged in illegal trade were playing “into the hands of Secessionists” merely “for the sake of a little gain.” New Albany’s *Ledger*, formerly a Douglas organ, concurred with equal clarity: “We hold in utter detestation, the man who would, under any pretext, furnish the public enemy with arms with which to shoot down his own neighbors and fellow-citizens.” The paper pointed an accusatory finger at Indiana Senator Jesse D. Bright, a Breckinridge Democrat, who admittedly furnished a letter of introduction to Thomas B. Lincoln so the latter could pursue an arms transaction with the Confederacy. It wondered why a senator from a loyal state would defend his actions, as Bright did, by rightly attacking abolitionists without also condemning “the armed traitors now endeavoring to strike down the Union of our fathers.” Despite criticism, the senator from Madison was defiant. “If I remain . . . a Senator,” he told a friend in July, “I shall act on my judgment promptly, regardless of all consequences political or personal to myself. I think I know my duty and . . . will prove I dare do it.”<sup>43</sup>

Federal interdiction efforts continued on both sides of the river under Chase’s watchful eye. It was a delicate matter, for the Secretary sought to implement a pragmatic but humane policy that balanced the need to cut rebel supply lines to the North with the legitimate needs of Valley citizens who had businesses to operate and families to feed. “I shall endeavor to look with careful regard to the interest of all concerned,” he told one agent. In July, Congress officially gave him the authority to regulate the Southern trade and approved all that he had done to that point. Chase frequently appointed as field agents men with whom he had a personal relationship—William Yeatman was a friend, while Flamen Ball, the district attorney for Ohio’s

---

<sup>43</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 6 July 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 2 July 1861; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 6, 12 September 1861; Jesse Bright to William H. English, 7 July 1861, William Hayden English Family Papers.

Southern District, had been Chase's law partner in Cincinnati. Across the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, Chase created boards of trade and tasked them with freight inspection, the issuing of permits, and the enforcement of statutes and regulations. These boards, according to historian Clinton Terry, were modeled on "well-established Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce in the larger cities" of Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis, and would be effective, it was assumed, because "the local businessmen knew what was customary, and could quickly recognize attempts to circumvent regulations."<sup>44</sup>

During the second half of 1861, Chase continued to weigh carefully the particular circumstances regarding the shipment of certain goods in high demand among loyal citizens. He told Cincinnati surveyor Enoch T. Carson on July 22 that he approved of his decision to allow "shipments to Louisville more freely than heretofore. Whiskey, Coffee, and Bacon may be forwarded, as you suggest. I see no objections to allowing the two former articles to go forward without any restrictions at all, at least for the present." He allowed books and stationery consigned to a Louisville bookseller to pass through Cincinnati and told Stephen Schooley that his bacon order bound for Louisville would be permitted to pass. He allowed the shipment of "contraband swords" only with the understanding that "reliable security be given for the safe custody or return of the arms." In other instances, however, he rejected appeals for exceptions. He upheld Charles Cotton's decision to prevent J. C. White from shipping "a lot of paper through Louisville without a permit," concluding that the businessman had not made his case sufficiently to warrant an exception; and he rejected another man's somewhat ambiguous request to ship "Terra Cotta Work" even though he was "bound by contract . . . to deliver it." What mattered

---

<sup>44</sup> Salmon P. Chase to Enoch T. Carson, 22 July 1861, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Relating to Restricted Commercial Intercourse, 1861-1887, BE Series, Microcopy No. 513, Roll no. 1, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56, National Archives; Terry, "Most Commercial of People," 58-59.

most were who made the request, the nature of the request, and the degree to which the petitioner could be relied on to safeguard the Union's interests.<sup>45</sup>

By August, Congress had passed legislation designed to halt the contraband trade. The newly-empowered Chase proceeded accordingly. On August 16, he issued a department-wide circular ordering all people employed in the United States civil service to take an oath of allegiance to the nation and the Constitution as the legislation required. Those who refused, he said, "shall be immediately dismissed and discharged from such service or employment." On the same day, Lincoln proclaimed that the Confederate states were "in a state of insurrection" against the federal government and that all commercial intercourse with the Confederates "is unlawful" and would remain so until the rebellion was "suppressed." The president ordered that "all goods and chattels, wares and merchandise, coming from any" rebellious state "will be forfeited to the United States." Businessmen were required to purchase permits if they wanted to continue trading on the river and on the railroads along the border, a potentially lucrative opportunity for customs collectors who, in Louisville for instance, usually collected a fee of twenty cents per permit. Chase reminded his field agents that he alone had the authority to grant trade exceptions.<sup>46</sup>

The Valley's distinctive geographical and commercial situation made officials' task all that much harder; loyal and disloyal citizens were sometimes difficult to distinguish. The trade in arms was a clear violation of the law, but it was not as easy to determine the status of other items, particularly when shipments originated on the South Bank. Chase grew concerned when

---

<sup>45</sup> Salmon P. Chase to Enoch T. Carson, 22 July 1861, 3 August 1861, to Stephen Schooley, 16 August 1861, to Charles Cotton, 24 August 1861, and to P. Bannon, 28 August 1861, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Relating to Restricted Commercial Intercourse, 1861-1887, BE Series, Microcopy No. 513, Roll no. 1, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56, National Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Department circular, 16 August 1861, Department circular, 22 August 1861, Salmon P. Chase to Charles B. Cotton, 16 September 1861, Department circular, 3 September 1861, *ibid.*

he discovered that acids were being shipped from Louisville to Bowling Green, Kentucky. Such shipments should not be allowed, he told William Gallagher, because they were undoubtedly being used “for telegraphing purposes.” He worried also that provisions were being allowed to go to Bowling Green that would end up in Tennessee. The “Louisville problem” persisted into the fall of 1861. “I appreciate the difficulties” confronting customs officers “acting in a loyal city,” Chase said, particularly when its “commercial interests connect it so directly with the insurrectionary States.” But, he continued, “the interests of the city, or even of a State, must not be allowed to prevail even in the slightest degree against the interests of the country at large.” He insisted that “the Surveyor [in such places] cannot keep too watchful a guard, nor exercise too strict a discrimination, over the shipment of articles which may render aid and comfort to the rebels.”<sup>47</sup>

Citizens augmented federal interdiction efforts by taking it upon themselves to intercept contraband. This posed two questions for officials: how should such assistance be used and, more importantly, how could loyal citizens’ rights be safeguarded, and abuse and corruption avoided? Committees of safety and vigilance were established on both banks in an attempt to stem the black-market trade, but in the view of some people, such extralegal organizations were problematical. Louisville’s Garnett Duncan believed that if they were “under the control of conservative men they ought to be encouraged,” however, if “reckless or imprudent men” led them, they ought to be identified as quickly as possible in order “to keep [contraband] from falling into unsafe hands.” His “greatest apprehensions” were that committees “with self expressed powers” would degenerate “into bandits.” Businessmen who played by the rules and followed Treasury Department guidelines were suspicious of any trade that seemed amiss.

---

<sup>47</sup> Niven, et al., eds., *Salmon P. Chase Papers*, 3:100-101 (Chase to William D. Gallagher, 8 October 1861).

Representatives of W. P. Squibb and Company in Aurora, Indiana, informed Governor Morton that Madison packets had been bringing pork to the town from Cincinnati for quite some time. The meat was then being left “on the wharfboat where it remains a day or two,” at which point, “the Louisville Boats take it below.” The Squibb representatives insisted that “there is something wrong about it” because the provisions were not “shipped direct[ly] to [their] destination. Some of it is directed to citizens of this place” but the freight “is never hauled up town. We do not wish to act without authority but [we] are determined that Provisions [sic] shall not be carried through our Place to Secessiondom.” Across the river, Louisville home guard units were sometimes sent out to intercept wagons carrying contraband goods. And, in a significant case involving John A. Skiff, the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce tried to police its own membership.<sup>48</sup>

In early summer, eighteen members of the Chamber accused Skiff of “unmercantile conduct,” claiming that he furnished “*the enemies of our Government with provisions contrary to law.*” As the case made its way through the federal court system, the Chamber postponed its deliberations. On October 21, the organization finally addressed the matter and formal charges were introduced. Skiff was accused of smuggling, deception, and fraud. He had allegedly shipped goods “in disguise and in packages represented and made to appear to contain articles entirely different from what they did contain.” He did so in order “to smuggle . . . illegal and forbidden goods as to avoid the penalty attending such acts.” Chamber members met again on the thirtieth, but Skiff had failed to respond to their summons, having instead written a letter requesting a postponement until his court case had been adjudicated. The hearing went forward

---

<sup>48</sup> Garnett Duncan to C. I. Field, 29 July 1861, Clay Family Papers-Brutus Clay Series Correspondence, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington; W. P. Squibb and Company to Oliver P. Morton, 1 August 1861, Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany; Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries, 24 August 1861.

anyway, with witnesses claiming that barrels of “ale” under Skiff’s name had been found to be full of butter, a commodity for which the defendant had apparently tried unsuccessfully to get a shipping permit. The organization’s general membership then summarily expelled Skiff from the Chamber. This, says Clinton Terry, was how Cincinnati’s mercantile community demonstrated its loyalty to the Union.<sup>49</sup>

By the end of 1861, the central Ohio River Valley had reaffirmed its fidelity to the Union. Yet discontent lurked just underneath the surface. While they were but a small minority of the population, some North and South Bankers had begun to grow restless. An early biographer of Governor Morton writes that by the end of the year in southern Indiana, sympathy for the rebels had begun “to show itself, stealthily at first, in complaints and criticisms of those in power.” Some critics charged that military appointments were not being fairly divided between the political parties. New Albany’s *Ledger* worried that perhaps conservative men had been deceived into supporting the war, and now that they had such support, congressional Republicans were going to move forward with their emancipation plans. Cincinnati William M. Dickson suggested that some Northerners were already growing weary of the war and claimed that “the President is universally an admitted failure, has no will, no courage, no execution [and] . . . his spirit necessarily infuses itself downward through all departments.” But Dickson perceived a potential cure for the nation’s ills, one that would have confirmed the worst fears of many Valley citizens had they read the letter in which he expressed his views. America, he said, will have to go through all this and more “until we are willing to give up slavery, then all will be right.” One fellow Ohioan agreed with Dickson’s diagnosis if not his prescription, telling his diary that the administration was “losing ground” and that “ignorance, weakness, demoralization & political

---

<sup>49</sup> *Minutes of the Board of Officers of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce*, 15 July 1861, 21, 30 October 1861, Cincinnati Historical Society; Terry, “Most Commercial of People,” 69-70.

ambition & corruption” were “the order of the day” and were hurting the Northern war effort. Meanwhile, South Bankers were growing tired of the presence of unseasoned troops who, according to one historian, “still regarded war as a game and felt when they crossed the Ohio River . . . that they were entering an enemy town.” General lawlessness and soldiers’ carousing, particularly in urban centers like Louisville, disrupted civic events and increasingly exasperated the local population.<sup>50</sup>

On Christmas Day of 1861, the *Louisville Journal* opined on the current state of affairs. It entreated citizens to remember “the poor soldiers in the tented field” who would soon confront “the deadly shafts of war” while their loved ones sat “in the dear circle of [their] homes.” Although Valley citizens had yet to face enemy bullets, they had nonetheless endured considerable upheaval. The region had sided with the Union even as its economy was hit hard by the disruption of the Southern trade. The summer witnessed the disintegration of Kentucky neutrality, Fremont’s unsettling proclamation, and the rebel invasion of the Bluegrass State. As citizens joined hands for their common defense, some South Bank slaveholders began to sense that their peculiar institution was on less than solid ground. Underneath the pro-Union unity lay the seeds of partisan discontent. Southern-rights advocates remained, although in greatly diminished numbers, while Democrats chaffed at Lincoln’s perceived incompetence. Nevertheless, citizens had reason to believe that the trans-river relationships that had held the region together during the secession crisis and early months of the war would endure.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, 171; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 5 December 1861; William Martin Dickson to Friedrich Hassaurek, 27 September 1861, Friedrich Hassaurek Papers, Ohio Historical Society; David K. Este Diary, 8 November 1861, Papers of David K. Este and Family, Cincinnati Historical Society; McDowell, *City of Conflict*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> *Louisville Daily Journal*, 25 December 1861.



## Conclusion

### “The cool, health giving wind from the North”: Beyond 1861

“The morning dawned dark and gloomy and the Southern breeze predicted rain,” South Banker Alfred Pirtle wrote in his journal on New Year’s Day, 1862. “As the day changed the wind veered round towards the North and rapidly became colder, until at midnight, the sky was perfectly clear and the stars shone with that peculiar brilliance so often noticed on a winter’s night.” Like countless other Americans, he looked with hope toward the future, a future that would see the Union preserved. “So may this year change from the gloom that oerspreads its dawn caused by the breezes from the South, bearing on their breaths War and Horror, to the cool, health giving wind from the North that sweeping away those clouds shows the stars that are destined to illumine the World.”<sup>1</sup>

The events of 1860 and 1861 altered the central Ohio River Valley’s role in the American commonweal. At the beginning of 1860, the region was near the center of an ever-expanding America whose economic, cultural, and political zeniths had yet to be reached. The Ohio River remained a central component of the region’s economy despite the growing importance of railroads. Businessmen on both sides of the river still looked to New Orleans and the Mississippi River Valley for commercial opportunities, even as the volume of east-bound trade increased. By the end of 1861, however, an economic recession caused predominantly by the loss of Southern trade had engulfed significant portions of the Ohio Valley. Political and military tensions further disturbed people’s lives. But though the wartime traumas tested the Valley’s regional bonds, notions of economy, race, and nation held the center together.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Pirtle Journal, 1 January 1862.

<sup>2</sup> Bigham, “River of Opportunity,” 156.

Sectional conflict failed to sever cross-river relationships. Federal efforts to slow the contraband trade hindered but did not halt trans-bank intercourse. Indiana farmers continued to bring much of their produce to Louisville's market, citizens in Covington and Newport crossed the river daily to go to work in Cincinnati, and families on both banks visited acquaintances and kin on the other side. Historian Andrew Cayton correctly argues that the Ohio River "provided a central, stable foundation around which many people . . . organized . . . themselves in space and time." The river informed peoples' perspectives, most notably as the official demarcation line between slaveholders and freeholders. At the same time, various human relationships simultaneously tied river communities together and placed them in competition with each other. Kentuckians were, as John Alan Boyd points out, "culturally and economically part of the Ohio River Valley system, a region which was in many ways, different" from much of the South. Their commercial ties to the Valley meant that anything that disrupted the region's trade system "spelled economic ruin" for both the South Bank and Kentucky at large. The several forces tugging at citizens' interests made relations between North and South Bankers tenuous at times, particularly after the presidential campaign that resulted in Lincoln's election in November of 1860.<sup>3</sup>

Underneath the citizenry's many expressions of political partisanship lay an understanding that the Valley could ill-afford to be drawn into a conflict that would necessarily be fought on the sectional frontier. When geography and military reality doomed Kentucky's flirtation with neutrality, the vast majority of South Bankers chose to remain with the Union. As J. A. Jacobs wrote later, Kentuckians remained loyal because "practicability [was] the measure of the day." Historian George C. Wright offers a more precise explanation: "purse strings"

---

<sup>3</sup> Cayton, "Going Over the River," 7; Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace," 453-54.

helped keep the South Bank loyal. Such was the case in Louisville, he says, where pro-Confederacy businessmen “spoke favorably of the southern nation” until they learned “that their city would serve as a military headquarters for the Union Army.” He argues that their views changed when they realized that “they would be called upon to supply the army with accommodations, food, liquor, and entertainment.” Important economic ties did indeed hold the river communities together, even as those same communities chafed at the inherent competition such bonds created, but financial considerations alone were not the sole thread tying North and South Bankers together. White Indianans, Ohioans, and Kentuckians believed their long-standing and mutually-nurtured relationship was also built on kinship and racial ties, and that that relationship would be best preserved by remaining loyal to the federal government. Fidelity to the Union, then, offered the best chance to maintain the status quo.<sup>4</sup>

The events of early 1862 continued to test the durability of the Ohio Valley’s nationalism as federal efforts to interdict contraband significantly inconvenienced businessmen. By mid-January, Chase had settled on a policy requiring Treasury Department agents to focus on confiscating illegal goods rather than prosecuting individuals who violated federal trade regulations. The change in emphasis was intended to improve the efficiency of the government’s interdiction apparatus and included a system that rewarded informants with a portion of any confiscated goods seized as a result of the information they provided. According to Clinton Terry, inspectors and surveyors “could not claim goods as part of their official duties, but the courts could allow such claims filed in a private capacity.” These interdiction measures led the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce to consult the city’s port collector to clarify the degree to

---

<sup>4</sup> J. A. Jacobs, *The Past Course and Present Duty of Kentucky* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, 1864), 426; George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 16.

which authorities would interfere with members' shipments to other ports on the North Bank, especially those "above Louisville." Although Valley businessmen were forced to deal with such nuisances, they learned to manipulate the system to their benefit as the border between the sections remained porous throughout the war.<sup>5</sup>

That North and South Bankers remained united by more than shared geography after the divisive events of 1861 was due to their generally moderate response to secession. Upper North and lower South extremism threatened the tradition of compromise that as far back as the Constitutional Convention in 1787 had blunted the effect of extremist rhetoric. Though the memory of Henry Clay and his nationalist vision cast a long shadow over the region, there was an extremist minority who wanted its views to carry the day. In his study of the Shenandoah Valley, Edward Ayers points out that "proximity to the border did not mute passion and conviction." He is correct, of course; however, the special history and circumstances that made the central Ohio River Valley unique were unlike those in Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania, two counties separated by roughly two hundred miles of hills and farmland. The people in those counties developed an intense mutual hatred after the war began despite their antebellum sympathies for one other, while North and South Bankers' closer proximity and shared history preserved amity in spite of the vitriolic rhetoric of secessionists.<sup>6</sup>

For some time, North Bankers worried that South Bankers might support secession. Fourteen months after the attack on Fort Sumter, General Lovell H. Rousseau addressed a Unionist banquet in Louisville in which he spoke about how difficult it had been to raise a Union regiment in the city in mid-1861. "You can never fully comprehend the magnitude of the trials

---

<sup>5</sup> Terry, "The Most Commercial of People," 58 Chase explained the policy in a letter to Charles B. Cotton, surveyor of Louisville, on 20 January 1862); *Minutes of the Board of Officers of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce*, 20 February 1862; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 620-25.

<sup>6</sup> Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 417.

through which I passed,” he began. “Old friends whom I had known well for many years passed me in the public streets of my own city, without recognition, because they had turned traitors and I had remained loyal to the Government of our fathers.” He and thousands of other South Bankers felt for a time as if they were “in a strange town.” Yet Rousseau and his fellow Unionists did their duty, he said, “and never faltered for a moment.” While the animus Rousseau described came in part from the minority who supported the Confederacy, other South Bankers no doubt shunned him because he represented a threat to their earnest desire to maintain a moderate stance and insulate themselves from the disruption of war. For Valley Unionists generally, a temperate response to secession was another fruit harvested from the same fertile soil that nourished Americans on both sides of the Ohio River.<sup>7</sup>

Historians rightly contend that the arrival of Union soldiers on Southern plantations disrupted masters’ hold on their chattels and further stirred slaves’ desire for freedom. Indeed, the mere rumor of an advancing Yankee army sometimes encouraged slaves to take matters into their own hands. The problem of runaways had always vexed masters, especially those living in states adjacent to free territory. South Bank slaveholders lived uncomfortably with the knowledge that their property was hardly more than a stone’s throw from freedom. Inflammatory antebellum literature such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* certainly did not help matters. Yet even after war erupted, most South Bankers did not panic, for they realized that North Bankers were largely disinclined to disturb slavery provided the bondsmen stayed in Kentucky.

---

<sup>7</sup> Robert J. Breckinridge [?], *The Secession Conspiracy in Kentucky* (Danville: Danville Review, 1862), 373.

The Valley's abolitionists were few and their voices, while growing ever louder, were still being drowned out by the voices of the many who wanted to leave well enough alone.<sup>8</sup>

As early as 1861, however, the Valley's white citizens sensed that the sectional hostilities would stir up the slavery question. In November of that year, Cincinnati David Este noted the dilemma in his diary. "One great difficulty [brought on by the war] is how to act in regard to slavery" in the loyal border states and in those that seceded. Weeks later he broached the subject again: "What is to be done with slavery? Let it alone, except when it comes in the way [of preserving the Union]. Then let it not impede the march a moment, it must not obstruct the path. Beyond that, let it have the constitutional guarantee." Este seemed to lean toward emancipation but his comments revealed a reasoned and temperate view of the subject. He was willing to "wait in patience." His were the words of a white man who had lived near slavery all his life, had tolerated it, and recognized the difficulty of abruptly abolishing so fundamental an institution. Kentuckians rejected secession in the belief that their slave property would be better protected in the Union than out of it. South Banker Jeff Brown remained hopeful that North Bankers would continue to see that it was in their best interest to leave slavery alone, thereby vindicating Kentuckians' confidence in them. As he told a friend in Cincinnati, "We, in Ky, could hardly think that Ohio [and Indiana], would be in favor of turning loose 4,000,000 . . . negro slaves, to burn, destroy, & murder, the innocent women, children, our mothers, sisters, wives and babes, of the same blood, race, lineage, and language of yourselves."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 352-58; Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, 60-62; Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 294-95.

<sup>9</sup> David K. Este Diary, 22 November 1861, 7 January 1862; Jeff Brown to Alexander Long, 16 October 1862, Alexander Long Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Brown's racism and fear of amalgamation mirrored the views of a considerable portion of the Valley's white population. Such attitudes brought North and South Bankers together when other matters may have otherwise pushed them apart. During the war's early months, whites were seemingly united not only by the concerns Brown expressed but also by their practical apprehensions about what society would do if millions of black men and women were freed from bondage without a strategy for dealing with them when they migrated north, as many of them surely would. Already by 1862 black fugitives had begun crossing the river in small numbers. Darrel Bigham observes that two years later, with Yankee armies deep in Dixie's interior, the migration had become a "torrent" as blacks searched "for what they assumed would be a better life." As the congressional elections of 1862 approached, this issue became a partisan weapon with which Democrats attacked their Republican opponents. They warned Ohioans about the dangers that would come with the northerly migration of free blacks. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* told readers that the only way laborers could prevent blacks from supplanting them in the workforce was to support Democratic candidates who would fight for their rights as free white Americans. According to one historian, the Indiana Democracy "used every radical utterance and every [Republican] measure touching upon slavery as evidence that the war for the Union was being transformed into an abolition crusade." Even before President Lincoln made public his plans for emancipation, the implication was clear: Republicans, some believed, were expanding the war's goals far beyond what moderate-thinking Valley citizens had supported in 1861.<sup>10</sup>

From these early rumblings of partisan discontent emerged an unsettling anti-war movement that reflected the shortsightedness and political impatience typical of democratic

---

<sup>10</sup> Bigham, *On Jordan's Banks*, 79, 84; Roseboom, *History of the State of Ohio*, 398; Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 106; Stamp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 145.

republics. The “unity of purpose” that had characterized the Valley’s sentiment in the months before and after Sumter, appeared to be unraveling in 1862, as Democrats criticized the Republicans’ handling of the war and set their sights on unseating pro-administration incumbents. The patriotic fervor that had allowed voters to ignore party lines and had engulfed thousands of souls in the wake of Confederate aggression was, as one prominent historian writes, “a mere interlude.” Although the vast majority of Valley citizens continued to support the federal war effort, dissenters along the river and in portions of the lower Midwest, many of whom had Southern roots, grew increasingly opposed to the conflict. Their hostility would grow to a point that, by 1864, it appeared as though Lincoln would not be reelected. Copperheads, as the Peace Democrats came to be known, remained a thorn in Republicans’ side for much of the war; however, they too failed to sever the bonds between North and South Bankers. Most in the Valley believed that to abandon the effort to preserve the Union was an ill-advised and intemperate course given all that they had endured. Indeed, in February 1862, one New Albany soldier told his wife that as his regiment departed the city, a crowd of men and women on the levee “rent the very air with acclamations of good will. . . . It was a cheering, heart-felt, friendly good-bye” that sent this particular group of citizen-soldiers off to war.<sup>11</sup>

Yet even as most Valley residents stayed true to each other and the nation, one of their own became a very public casualty of the war because of his failure to do likewise. Indiana senator and Madison resident Jesse Bright had earlier been accused of disloyalty for writing a letter of introduction for a friend who wanted to show Confederate President Jefferson Davis an improvement in firearms. The senator’s own life had traversed the Ohio River like a bridge: he

---

<sup>11</sup> Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, 99; Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-3; Aden G. Cavins, *War Letters of Aden G. Cavins* (Evansville: Rosenthal-Kuebler Printing, [?]), 3. Cavins wrote to his wife on 17 February 1862.



owned property on both river banks, had at one time possessed slaves, and as a public official had defended slavery. Critics accused him of being an absentee senator who spent more time in Kentucky than in Indiana where his constituents lived. A Democrat who had engaged in a bitter feud with rivals within his own party, Bright was forced, on the floor of the United States Senate, to face the consequences of his actions.<sup>12</sup>

On December 16, 1861, Minnesota Senator Morton S. Wilkinson introduced a resolution calling for Bright's expulsion from Congress. The Indianan's supporters rallied to his side, claiming that Bright's actions "might have been indiscreet" but they were "certainly not traitorous." His critics, most of whom were Republicans, took turns vilifying him for acting in a manner they deemed treasonous. Fellow Indianan Henry S. Lane stood before senators on January 21, not to judge his colleague's "motives," he said, but to judge "his actions." In a speech punctuated with interruptions from the gallery, he urged the body to judge Bright's case on the evidence and not on conjecture or innuendo. Lane pointed out that Bright had written the letter after the lower South had seceded from the Union. Given its topic of arms, he said, one could easily conclude "that disloyalty must have entered into the mind of my colleague." Lane distinguished between "disloyalty," which he said was a "sentiment of the heart," and "treason," which involved "overt acts" that levied war against the United States and gave "aid and comfort to the public enemy." Sadly but firmly, Lane concluded that Bright's letter to Davis contained "all the essential elements of treason." As a result, he said "I am compelled by an all-controlling sense of public danger and public duty" to vote for expulsion. On February 5, 1862, the Senate endorsed Lane's conclusions and voted overwhelmingly to expel Bright. The North Banker's ignominious departure from Washington reinforced the belief of Valley residents that their own

---

<sup>12</sup> Weber, *Copperheads*, 26.

fidelity to the Union was a prudent and practical decision, one that largely saved their region from the bloody fate that eventually befell much of northern Virginia.<sup>13</sup>

The secession of South Carolina and the other slave states that followed its lead was a political act, one that ultimately required a political *and* military response. The war brought with it enormous logistical challenges, and it took the central Ohio River Valley time to overcome them. Though circumstances spared it from most of the war's physical destruction, the Valley nonetheless endured hardship. By early 1862, some Northerners and their border state allies were growing weary of waiting for the federal war machine to vigorously engage the enemy. Having abandoned much of the hesitancy that they had previously exhibited, Valley citizens urged the Union's field commanders, most especially General George McClellan, to prosecute the war to the greatest extent possible. "This war has reached a point where kid gloves, pleasant words, and gilded promises are of no further use," Ohio congressman and Hamilton County resident John A. Gurley told the House of Representatives. "The exigencies of the hour demand hard words, and still harder blows." The kid gloves and pleasant words to which Gurley referred had been replaced, at least for the time being, with tough rhetoric befitting Lincoln's goal: the preservation of the Union.<sup>14</sup>

In 1861, a popular song among Valley citizens was a tune written by South Banker William S. Hays, "The Union Forever For Me." Its message, that the Union must survive, resonated with most who heard it. The sentiments of brotherhood and shared interests that were toasted in January 1860 by regional leaders celebrating the opening of the Louisville and

---

<sup>13</sup> Charles B. Murphy, "The Political Career of Jesse D. Bright," *Indiana Historical Society Publications* 10 (1931): 138-45; Henry S. Lane, *Speech of Hon. H. S. Lane, of Indiana, on the Resolution to Expel Hon. Jesse D. Bright* (city unknown: L. Towers and Company, 1862), 2, 4, 8. Lane delivered his address on 21 January 1862.

<sup>14</sup> John A. Gurley, *Speech of Hon. J. A. Gurley, of Ohio, Delivered in the House of Representatives* (Washington: McGill and Witherow, 1862), 2-6. Gurley delivered his address on 29 January 1862.

Nashville Railroad withstood the tumult of the next two years. The Valley's fidelity to the Union greatly aided the Lincoln administration's effort to win the war. Henry Clay, had he lived to see it, would have been deeply gratified.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> William Shakespeare Hays Diary and Scrapbook, ca. 1861, 18, 22, 23, February 1861, Filson Historical Society.

## **Bibliography**

## Manuscript Collections:

### Cincinnati Historical Society

Alexander Long Papers  
Bullock Family Papers  
Channing Richards Diary  
Cist Family Papers  
Colston Papers  
David K. Este and Family Papers  
David Kirkpatrick Este Diaries  
Frank J. Jones Civil War Letters  
James Smith Armstrong Papers  
Jones Family Papers  
Lytle Family Papers  
Minutes of the Board of Officers of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce  
Minutes of the Central Committee of the Home Guards of Cincinnati  
Nast Family Papers  
Thomas B. Stevenson Letters

### Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky

Absalom Yarbrough Johnson Diaries  
Alfred Pirtle Journal  
Blanton Duncan Letter  
Brown-Ewell Family Papers  
Bullitt Family Papers-Oxmoor Collection  
Bush-Beauchamp Family Papers  
Carl Theodore Schwartz Journal  
Charles Wilkins Short Journal  
Fayette S. Van Alstine Papers  
Frank Pragoff Letter  
George Dennison Prentice Papers  
Haldeman Family Papers  
Helm Bruce Papers  
Holyoke Family Papers  
Jacob-Johnson Family Papers  
James A. Smith Letters  
James Guthrie Papers  
John F. Jefferson Papers  
John Harding Papers  
John Warren Grigsby Papers  
Kentuckians Broadside  
Louisville City Council Records  
M. C. Hegewald Papers  
Pope-Humphrey Family Papers  
Robert Anderson Letters  
William Shakespeare Hays Diary and Scrapbook

Harvard Business School, Baker Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
 R. G. Dun and Company Collection

Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis  
 Henry Smith Lane Papers  
 Holman-O'Brien Papers  
 Jeremiah Sullivan Papers  
 John Armstrong Papers  
 John James Hayden Papers  
 Noble Chase Butler Papers  
 Oliver P. Morton Papers  
 William Hayden English Family Papers  
 William H. Prather Collection

Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis  
 Indiana Adjutant General Records-Civil War Miscellany  
 Records of the Indiana Adjutant General-Indiana Legion

Indiana State Library, Indianapolis  
 Daniel D. Pratt Papers  
 Daniel F. Griffin Papers  
 Hamilton Family Papers  
 Oliver P. Morton Papers  
 John Thomas Wilder Collection

Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort  
 Ballardsville Baptist Church-Oldham County, Kentucky Minutes  
 Cotton Industry Letters (Oldham, Hemingway, and Scott)  
 Hughes Family Papers  
 Scrogin-Haviland Collection

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.  
 Breckinridge Family Papers  
 John Jordan Crittenden Papers  
 Joseph Holt Papers  
 Robert Anderson Papers

National Archives, Washington, D.C.  
 General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 56  
 General Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393

Ohio Historical Society, Columbus  
 Adjutant General Administration [Ohio]-Correspondence Relating to Civil War and  
 Other Events  
 Adjutant General Administration-Correspondence to the Adjutant General and Governor  
 of Ohio  
 Adjutant General Administration [Ohio]-Military Correspondence from the Adjutant  
 General  
 Christopher Schetter Papers  
 Friedrich Hassaurek Papers  
 John Allen Trimble Family Papers  
 McLean Family Collection

Symmes Evans Browne Papers  
Walker Family Papers  
William Dennison Papers  
Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
Bullitt Family Papers  
James Guthrie Letters  
William Porcher Miles Papers  
University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington  
Clay Family Papers-Brutus Clay Series Correspondence  
Clay Family Papers-Cassius Clay Papers  
Hunt-Morgan Family Papers  
University of Louisville, University Archives and Records Center  
Louisville and Nashville Railroad Records

**Newspapers:**

*Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* (Ohio)  
*Cincinnati Daily Gazette* (Ohio)  
*Louisville Daily Courier* (Kentucky)  
*Louisville Daily Journal* (Kentucky)  
*Madison Daily Evening Courier* (Indiana)  
*New Albany Daily Ledger* (Indiana)

**Published Primary Sources:**

*An Authentic Exposition of the "K.G.C."-Knights of the Golden Circle or a History of Secession.* Indianapolis: C.O. Perrine, 1861.  
Beatty, John. *The Citizen-Soldier; or, Memoirs of a Volunteer.* Cincinnati: Wilstach, Baldwin & Company, 1879.  
Breckinridge, Robert J. [?] *The Secession Conspiracy in Kentucky.* Danville: Danville Review, 1862.  
Burnet, R. W. *Report of the Operations of the Cincinnati Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission to March 1, 1862.* Columbus: unknown publisher, 1862.  
Burns, Harrison. *Personal Recollections of Harrison Burns as Written in 1907.* Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975.  
Carter, Ruth C., ed. *For Honor, Glory and Union: The Mexican and Civil War Letters of Brigadier General William Haines Lytle.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999.  
Cavins, Aden G. *War Letters of Aden G. Cavins.* Evansville: Rosenthal-Kuebler, no copyright year.  
Condon, Ann Gorman, ed. *Architects of Our Fortunes: The Journal of Eliza A. W. Otis with Letters and Civil War Journal of Harrison Gray Otis.* San Marino: Huntington Library, 2001.  
Cuomo, Mario M. and Harold Holzer, eds. *Lincoln on Democracy.* New York: Harper Collins, 1990.

- Excursion Made by the Executive and Legislatures of the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, to the State of Ohio, January 1860.* Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Company, 1860.
- Flagg, William Joseph. *Oration of W. J. Flagg, Fourth of July, 1861, at Mount Pleasant, Hamilton County, Ohio.* Cincinnati: Enquirer Steam Printing, 1861.
- For the Immediate Relief of our Sick and Wounded Soldiers-U.S. Sanitary Commission, Cincinnati Depot.* Cincinnati: unknown publisher, 1861.
- Hays, William S. *The Union Forever, For Me!* Music Sheet. Louisville: Tripp and Cragg, 1861.
- Hays, William S. *Let Us Have Peace.* Music Sheet. Louisville: Tripp and Cragg, 1861.
- Jacobs, J. A. *The Past Course and Present Duty of Kentucky.* Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, 1864.
- Kennedy, John Pendleton. "The Border States: Their Power and Duty in the Present Disordered Condition of the Country." in Wakelyn, ed. *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Nicolay, John G. and John Hay. *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln.* New York: Tandy-Thomas Company, 1905.
- Niven, John, et al., ed. *The Salmon P. Chase Papers.* 4 vols. Kent and London: Kent State University Press, 1996.
- Reemelin, Charles. *Life of Charles Reemelin, in German: Carl Gustav Rumelin, from 1814-1892.* Cincinnati: Weier and Daiker, 1892.
- Reinhart, Joseph R., ed. and trans. *Two Germans in the Civil War: The Diary of John Daeuble and the Letters of Gottfried Rentschler, Sixth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004.
- Sears, Stephen W., ed. *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan, Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865.* New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989.
- Smith, William. *Annual Statement of the Commerce of Cincinnati for the Commercial Year Ending August 31, 1861.* Cincinnati: Gazette Company, 1861.
- Smith, William E. and Ophia D. Smith, eds. *Colonel A. W. Gilbert: Citizen-Soldier of Cincinnati.* Cincinnati: Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, 1934.
- Speed, Thomas. *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865.* New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons-The Knickerbocker Press, 1907.
- Venner, William Thomas, ed. *Queen City Lady: The 1861 Journal of Amanda Wilson.* Cincinnati: Larrea Books, 1996.
- Williams, Charles Richard, ed. *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes.* Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society-F. J. Heer Printing, 1922.
- Wilson, Samuel R. *The Causes and Remedies of Impending National Calamities.* Cincinnati: J. B. Elliott, 1860.

### **Secondary Sources:**

- Aaron, Daniel. *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West, 1819-1838.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992.
- Ambler, Charles Henry. *A History of Transportation in the Ohio Valley.* Glendale: Arthur H. Clark, 1931.



- Arnold, Carroll C. "The Senate Committee of Thirteen, December 6-31, 1860." in Auer, ed. *Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict*. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968.
- Ayers, Edward L. *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863*. New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2003.
- Banta, R. E. *The Ohio*. New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, 1949.
- Barnhart, John D. "The Impact of the Civil War on Indiana." *Indiana Magazine of History* 57 (September 1961): 183-224.
- Barnhart, John D. "The Migration of Kentuckians Across the Ohio River." *Filson Club History Quarterly* 25 (1951): 24-32.
- Bigham, Darrel E. *On Jordan's Banks: Emancipation and its Aftermath in the Ohio River Valley*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006.
- Bigham, Darrel E. *Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998.
- Bigham, Darrel E. "River of Opportunity: Economic Consequences of the Ohio." in Reid, ed. *Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Brewer, W. M. "Lincoln and the Border States." *Journal of Negro History* 34 (January 1949): 46-72.
- Burton, Orville Vernon. *The Age of Lincoln*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.
- Byrne, Frank J. *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South, 1820-1865*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006.
- Cayton, Andrew R. L. "'Going Over the River'-On the Making and Unmaking of Borders." *The Filson* 6 (Winter 2006): 4-7.
- Cayton, Andrew R. L. and Peter S. Onuf. *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Clark, John G. *The Grain Trade in the Old Northwest*. Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1966.
- Clift, G. Glenn. *Biographical Directory of the Kentucky General Assembly*. 7 vols. Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1969.
- Coleman, J. Winston, Jr. *Slavery Times in Kentucky*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940.
- Cotterill, R. S. "The Louisville and Nashville Railroad 1861-1865." *American Historical Review* 29 (July 1924): 700-15.
- Coulter, E. Merton. *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926.
- Coulter, E. Merton. "Commercial Intercourse with the Confederacy in the Mississippi Valley, 1861-1865." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 5 (March 1919): 377-95.
- Coulter, E. Merton. "Effects of Secession upon the Commerce of the Mississippi Valley." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 3 (December 1916): 275-300.
- Crofts, Daniel. *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Dee, Christine, ed. *Ohio's War: The Civil War in Documents*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.

- Dew, Charles. B. *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- Dorpalen, Andreas. "The German Element and the Issues of the Civil War." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29 (June 1942): 55-76.
- Etcheson, Nicole. "'As My Father's Child Has': The Political Culture of the Ohio Valley in the Nineteenth Century." *Ohio Valley History* 1 (Winter 2001): 27-36.
- Etcheson, Nicole. *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Fish, Carl Russell. "The Decision of the Ohio Valley." *Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1910*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912.
- Ford, Henry A. and Kate Ford. *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties*. Cleveland: L. A. Williams and Company, 1882.
- Foulke, William Dudley. *Life of Oliver P. Morton: Including his Important Speeches*. Indianapolis and Kansas City: Bowen-Merrill, 1899.
- Freehling, William W. *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Freehling, William W. *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Gordon, Lesley J. and John C. Inscoe, eds., *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Graham, Mary W. "The Lyceum Movement and Sectional Controversy, 1860." in Auer, ed. *Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict*. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968.
- Gray, Wood. *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads*. New York: Viking Press, 1942.
- Griffler, Keith P. *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- Grimsted, David. *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Gruenwald, Kim M. *River of Enterprise: The Commercial Origins of Regional Identity in the Ohio Valley, 1790-1850*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Gruenwald, Kim M. "Space and Place on the Early American Frontier: The Ohio Valley as a Region, 1790-1850." *Ohio Valley History* 4 (Fall 2004): 31-48.
- Hagedorn, Ann. *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad*. New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2002.
- Harrison, Lowell H. *Lincoln of Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.
- Harrison, Lowell H. *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978.
- Harrold, Stanley. *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Havighurst, Walter. *River to the West: Three Centuries of the Ohio*. New York: G. P. Putnam, 1970.

- Heck, Frank H. "John C. Breckinridge in the Crisis of 1860-1861." *Journal of Southern History* 21 (August 1955): 316-46.
- Herr, Kincaid. *The Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1850-1963*. Louisville: Public Relations Department, Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company, 1964.
- History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana, From Their Earliest Settlement*. Chicago: F. E. Weakley and Company, 1885.
- History of Switzerland County, Indiana, From Their Earliest Settlement*. Chicago: Weakley, Harraman and Company, 1885.
- Howard, Victor B. *Black Liberation in Kentucky: Emancipation and Freedom, 1862-1884*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983.
- Howard, Victor B. "The Civil War in Kentucky: The Slave Claims His Freedom." *Journal of Negro History* 67 (Autumn 1982): 245-56.
- Howard, Victor B. *The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee*. Selinsgrove and London: Susquehanna University Press and Associated University Presses, 1996.
- Hubbart, Henry Clyde. "'Pro-Southern' Influences in the Free West, 1840-1865." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20 (June 1933): 45-62.
- Hudson, J. Blaine. *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland*. Jefferson and London: McFarland and Company, 2002.
- Hudson, J. Blaine. "Crossing the 'Dark Line': Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in Louisville and North-Central Kentucky." *Filson History Quarterly* 75 (Winter 2001): 33-83.
- Jenkins, Kirk C. *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union's Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003.
- Johnson, Ludwell H. "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (March 1963): 635-52.
- Johnson, Ray C. *History of Lawrenceburg, Indiana*. Lawrenceburg: Lawrenceburg Historical Society, 1953.
- Klein, Maury. *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1972.
- Klement, Frank L. *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.
- Klement, Frank L. *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970.
- Klement, Frank L. "Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War." *Catholic Historical Review* 80 (1994): 36-57.
- Koehler, Lyle. *Cincinnati's Black Peoples: A Chronology and Bibliography, 1787-1982*. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Arts Consortium, University of Cincinnati, 1986.
- Kohlmier, A. H. "Commerce and Union Sentiment in the Old Northwest in 1860." *Illinois State Historical Society Publication* 30 (May 1923): 154-61.
- Kreipke, Martha. "The Falls of the Ohio and the Development of the Ohio River Trade, 1810-1860." *Filson Club History Quarterly* 54 (1980): 196-217.
- Lammlein, Dorothy C., et al. *History and Families [of] Oldham County, Kentucky: The First Century, 1824-1924*. Paducah: Turner Publishing, 1996.

- Link, William A. *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Lipin, Lawrence M. *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-1887*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Lippincott, Isaac. *A History of Manufactures in the Ohio Valley to the Year 1860*. New York: Arno Press, 1973.
- Mach, Thomas S. "Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity In Nineteenth-Century America. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2007.
- Mahoney, Timothy R. *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820-1870*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Maizlish, Stephen E. *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983.
- McDowell, Robert Emmett. *City of Conflict: Louisville in the Civil War, 1861-1865*. Louisville: Louisville Civil War Round Table, 1962.
- McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- McPherson, James M. *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001.
- Middleton, Stephen. "The Fugitive Slave Crisis in Cincinnati, 1850-1860: Resistance, Enforcement, and Black Refugees." *Journal of Negro History* 72 (Winter-Spring 1987): 20-32.
- Middleton, Stephen. *The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History*. Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1933.
- Muller, Edward K. "Selective Urban Growth in the Middle Ohio Valley, 1800-1860." *Geographical Review* 66 (April 1976): 178-99.
- Murphy, Charles B. "The Political Career of Jesse D. Bright." *Indiana Historical Society Publications* 10 (1931): 99-145.
- Murrell, Amy. "Union Father, Rebel Son: Families and the Question of Civil War Loyalty." in Cashin, ed. *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Nation, Richard F. *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Nelson, S. B. and J. M. Runk. *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio; Their Past and Present*. Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson and Company, 1894.
- Parr, Elizabeth L. "Kentucky's Overland Trade with the Antebellum South." *Filson Club History Quarterly* 2 (January 1928): 71-81.
- Peters, Pamela R. *The Underground Railroad in Floyd County, Indiana*. Jefferson and London: McFarland and Company, 2001.
- Potter, David M. *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- Potter, David M. *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942.
- Prokopowicz, Gerald J. *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

- Quisenberry, A. C. "Kentucky's Neutrality in 1861." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 15 (January 1917): 9-21.
- Reinhart, Joseph R. *A History of the Sixth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry U. S.: The Boys Who Feared No Noise*. Louisville: Beargrass Press, 2000.
- Robertson, James R. "Kentucky's Contribution to Indiana." *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Ohio Valley Historical Society Association* (1917): 82-97.
- Robertson, James R. "Sectionalism in Kentucky from 1855 to 1865." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 4 (June 1917): 49-63.
- Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London and New York: Verso, 1991.
- Roseboom, Eugene H. *The History of the State of Ohio: The Civil War Era, 1850-1873*. Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944.
- Ross, Steven J. *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Runyon, Randolph Paul. *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996.
- Smith, Edward Conrad. *The Borderland in the Civil War*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1927.
- Smith, Krista. "Slaveholders vs. Slaveholders: Divided Kentuckians in the Secession Crisis." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 97 (Autumn 1999): 375-401.
- Stampp, Kenneth M. *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949.
- Stampp, Kenneth M. "Kentucky's Influence Upon Indiana in the Crisis of 1861." *Indiana Magazine of History* 39 (September 1943): 263-76.
- Stampp, Kenneth M. "The Impact of the Civil War Upon Hoosier Society." *Indiana Magazine of History* 38 (March 1942): 1-16.
- Tallant, Harold D. *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003.
- Taylor, Amy Murrell. *The Divided Family in Civil War America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Taylor, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Thornbrough, Emma Lou. *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965.
- Tilford, John E., Jr. "The Delicate Track: The Louisville and Nashville's Role in the Civil War." *Filson Club History Quarterly* 36 (July 1962): 209-21.
- Toppin, Edgar A. "Humbly They Served: The Black Brigade in the Defense of Cincinnati." *Journal of Negro History* 48 (April 1963): 75-97.
- Towers, Frank. *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004.
- Trescott, Paul B. "The Louisville and Portland Canal Company, 1825-1874." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (March 1958): 686-708.
- Trotter, Joe William, Jr. *River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

- Turner, Wallace B. "The Secession Movement in Kentucky." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 66 (July 1968): 259-78.
- Varon, Elizabeth R. *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Wade, Richard C. *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- Weber, Jennifer L. *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Wheeler, Kenneth W., ed. *For the Union: Ohio Leaders in the Civil War*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968.
- Wilson, Charles R. "Cincinnati a Southern Outpost in 1860-1861?" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 24 (March 1938): 473-82.
- Wilson, Charles R. "Cincinnati's Reputation During the Civil War." *Journal of Southern History* 2 (November 1936): 468-79.
- Wright, George C. *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1985.
- Yater, George H. *Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County*. Louisville: Heritage Corporation, 1979.

#### **Theses and Dissertations:**

- Boyd, John Alan. "Neutrality and Peace: Kentucky and the Secession Crisis of 1861." Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1999.
- Elbert, Elmer Duane. "Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War, 1858-1861." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1967.
- Price, Charles B., Jr. "The Storm of Disunion Over a Border State: Three Editors of Louisville in the Years of Indecision in Kentucky, 1860-1861." Master's thesis, Yale University, 1941.
- Prichard, James M. "Champion of the Union: George D. Prentice and the Civil War in Kentucky." Master's thesis, Wright State University, 1988.
- Rockenbach, Stephen I. "'War Upon Our Border': War and Society in Two Ohio Valley Communities." Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2005.
- Sawrey, Robert. "Cincinnati and the Civil War: A Study in Support of War for Reunion." Master's thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1971.
- Terry, Clinton W. "'The Most Commercial of People': Cincinnati, the Civil War, and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism, 1861-1865." Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2002.
- Van Der Weele, Wayne J. "Jesse David Bright: Master Politician from the Old Northwest." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1958.
- Wagner, Thomas E. "Cincinnati and Southwestern Ohio: An Abolitionist Training Ground." Master's thesis, Miami University, 1967.
- Wilson, Charles Ray. "The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer and Civil War Politics: A Study in 'Copperhead' Opinion." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1934.
- Winston, Noma Dix. "George D. Prentice and Secession in Kentucky." Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1930.

## **Vita**

Timothy Max Jenness was born and raised in Barre, Vermont. The son of teachers, he developed an interest in history, politics, and geography at a young age. He did his undergraduate work at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, where he earned honors in history and political science. After serving honorably in the United States Air Force as a Korean Linguist, he earned a Master of Science degree in International Relations at Troy State University. He began his career in higher education in college admissions and academic advising before returning to graduate school to earn a Master of Arts degree in history at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. He completed his Doctor of Philosophy degree in history at the University of Tennessee Knoxville in May, 2011.