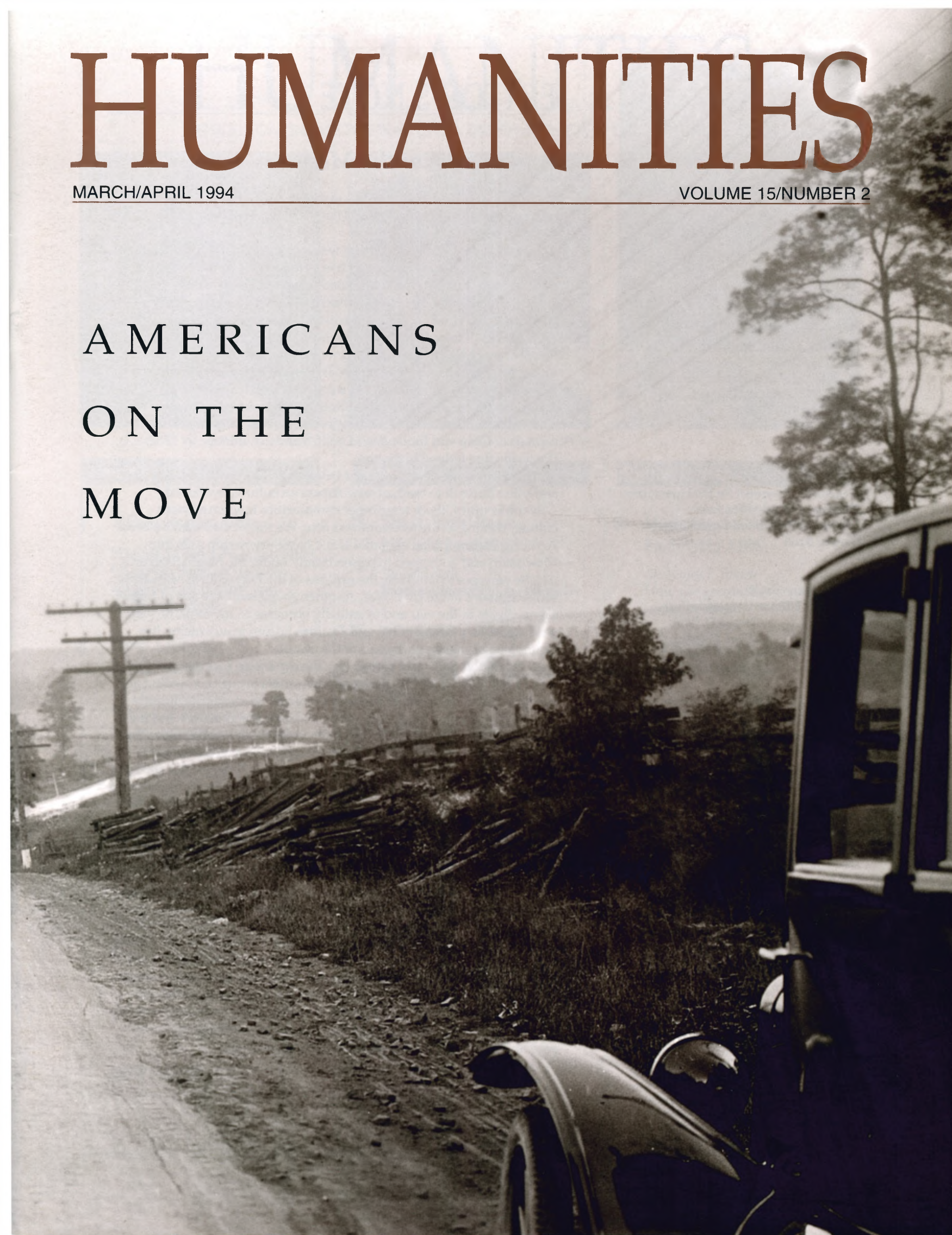


# HUMANITIES

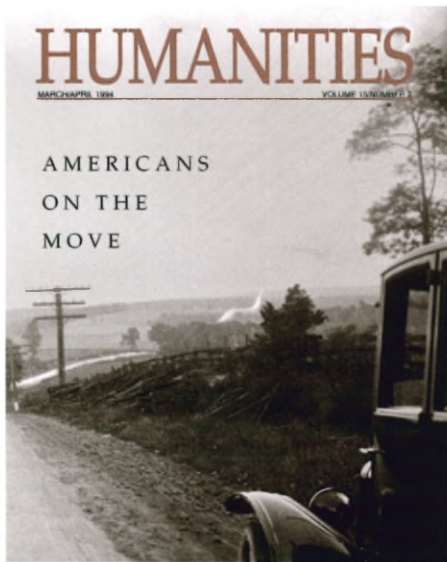
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VOLUME 15/NUMBER 2

## AMERICANS ON THE MOVE







A view of the National Road near Frostburg, Maryland; photograph by Leo J. Beachy (1874-1927). Courtesy of Maxine Beachy Broadwater Collection.

#### Humanities

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### *Americans on the Move*

There is, Mark Twain is quoted as saying, a single characteristic that sets apart the American people: "That is the national devotion to ice-water."

With all deference to Mr. Twain, we offer another. If there is a second trait Americans have in common, it is a restlessness in the psyche, a need to keep on the move, to get somewhere, to get anywhere.

Geographer Karl Raitz takes us back to that transitional moment nearly two hundred years ago in which a young government looked at the vastness of the continent and realized the trails and rivers would not be enough to carry its interests west. Whether his motive was visionary or something more crass, Thomas Jefferson's secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin, devised a sophisticated network of canals and roads. Its center was the National Road, which carried commerce from Cumberland, Maryland, through Wheeling, West Virginia, to the capitals of Ohio and Indiana, and on to Vandalia, Illinois, by 1852. It was the first federal highway.

"The roadside landscape," Raitz tells us, "is a record, albeit complex and often difficult to read, of how American culture developed."

By midcentury, there were other complexities in the American culture; coming to the forefront was race. We follow two men's stories: A young Philadelphian aboard a U.S. Coast Survey ship sails into Charleston and is slapped in prison briefly under the Negro Seamen's Act; he emerges to chronicle the exploits of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment in the Civil War. Another young man, the son of former slaves, fights in the war and eventually becomes an inventor; he joins with Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison in advancing the technological change of the end of the century.

As the nation grew and spread out, the expansion exposed deficiencies. In the older cities, the influx of newcomers brought crowding and diseases, the most feared of them tuberculosis. Medical practitioners inveighed against spitting and other unwholesome practices, but the larger concept of germ theory was slow to take hold. And it would be well into the twentieth century before drugs were developed that would offer significant help.

The faint soundings of that period can still be heard today. Tuberculosis has been replaced by the dreaded AIDS; indeed, tuberculosis itself has made a reappearance. The anguish over race continues, newly framed in multicultural terms: "What holds America together," Cornel West says, "is the sense of hope that all sectors of American society must feel, a sense of hope in relation to the Democratic project."

And meanwhile, we keep on the move. There are 230 million of us now; in five years' time, 45 percent of us had changed homes, 9.4 percent of us had moved out of state. Last year we jumped into our 144 million cars and drove 11,063 miles on average, traveling on 3.9 million miles of public roads as we went. As for the old National Road, it is a vestige of what it once was. It became U.S. 40 in the twenties, only to be eclipsed by Interstate 70 in the sixties. Its businesses languished and left. But with obscurity, Karl Raitz tells us, has come a certain historical charm and the villages along the road are having a revival, rediscovered and converted to new uses for a new generation.

—Mary Lou Beatty



# HUMANITIES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES



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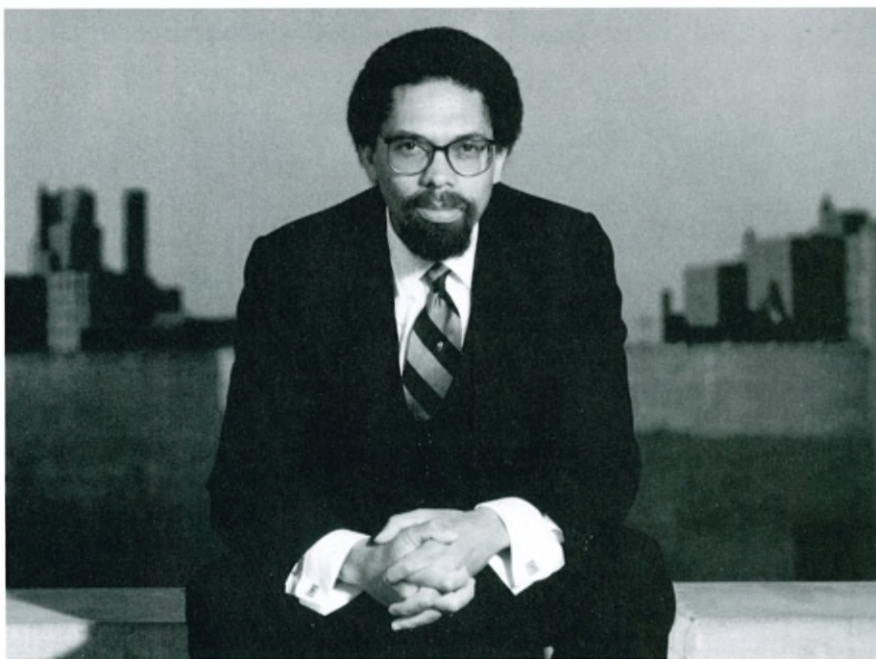
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—Photo by Berna Friedman

# A CONVERSATION WITH **CORNEL WEST**

**W**hen NEH Chairman Sheldon Hackney met recently with Cornel West, director of the Afro-American studies program at Princeton University, the talk turned to racial polarization and other concerns of a pluralistic society. West is the author of a number of books on multiculturalism, among them *Race Matters* and his most recent, *Keeping Faith*.

**SHELDON HACKNEY:** Cornel, as I watched you on the *Firing Line* program about political correctness, there were a couple of questions there that I wanted to ask your reaction to. On two separate occasions, other panelists were asked very directly whether race continued to be a serious problem in America, and each of them said no, that race used to be a difficult problem for America but really wasn't a serious problem anymore. And no one had a chance to follow up those answers very much. I was wondering what you thought of that answer that race is no longer a big problem in America.

**CORNEL WEST:** I was a bit overwhelmed when I heard William Buckley say that. I wondered whether we both were living in the same world. And what I mean by that is that when I'd look at the level of racial polarization, balkanization, the spatial segregation in living pattern, the hunger that I see in so many young people wanting to relate

across racial lines but then not knowing how to do it, being so inexperienced at it, it strikes me that race continues to be a serious problem in this country. I had mentioned on the show about that 51.1 percent of black kids under six living in poverty, and 20 percent of young people in general living in poverty. But with that concentration and that high, disproportionate number of young people living in poverty, and the causes, of course, are diverse, but it's no accident that it would be that high and we could continue to say that somehow race is not a problem.

When you look at Ellis Cose's new book on *The Rage of the Privileged Class*, and, of course, just everyday experience that myself and others could relate in terms of the way in which we have simply not effectively or fully beaten back the demon of the white supremacy in our society, I think we've certainly made some progress. No doubt about that. But this notion that it's not a major problem at all may, in and of itself, serve as a symptom of just how much progress we have yet to make.

**HACKNEY:** You mentioned two different aspects of this. One is the status of black Americans, that is, the 51 percent, the disproportionate number of blacks living in poverty, the disproportionate number of black children being raised



in poverty, gaps between whites and blacks in income and wealth, and in power. But you also mentioned the inability of blacks and whites to relate to each other across the racial barrier. Are both of those serious matters?

**WEST:** The latter I think is in many ways as dangerous as the first because what keeps a democracy going is the viable public life. When the public itself is so divided that it makes it very difficult for communication to take place—and transracial communication, I think, is at a fairly low point right now—without communication, no public life, and without vital public life, there's no viable democracy. So I think it's simply one sign of a certain crisis in American democracy. Racial relations are one side of it. But we have to recognize and acknowledge the degree to which transracial communication is difficult, if not downright rare these days—genuine conversations, and a critical exchange, not just chitchat, but genuine dialogue where you challenge one another, which means you have to feel free enough to take one another seriously. You have to have forged bonds of trust strong enough to facilitate that kind of genuine dialogue.

**HACKNEY:** Would you include other groups in this sort of muteness that affects us, not just black-white interactions?

**WEST:** Oh, sure. We've got brown and yellow and red as well. And, of course, gender. We can't talk about race without acknowledging the degree to which it affects women, given the operation of patriarchy in our society. It affects women in different ways and it affects men, so that when you talk about the dialogue between white women and black women, it does take on slightly different forms than white men and black men, given these conceptions of maleness that all men of all colors are struggling with. And the way in which the evaluation of women is articulated among black women with the white supremacist overlay and the devaluation of white women without the white supremacist overlay but still with the scars that patriarchy leaves.

**HACKNEY:** So we have some serious problems. Let's come back in a moment to the public life aspect of this, which I think is fascinating and really very important—but back to the more physical aspects of the racial situation in America.

You have been arguing that *race matters*, a wonderful phrase. It would make a good book title, I think. But conservatives—if this is right—tend to approach this as a matter of individual behavior—that is, blacks would be better off as compared to whites in America if they simply behaved in ways that would bring success. It's a matter of individual moral decision. Is that an adequate approach to the problem?

**WEST:** No. I think that it certainly contains an insight, and one always wants to emphasize individual responsibility and personal culpability and acknowledge that a certain kind of behavior, discipline, quest for excellence and elegance, a certain accenting of deferred gratification, sacrifice—all of those are very important. But I think it actually conceals a more pressing problem, which has to do with the way in which institutions and structures circumscribe individual behavior, the way they discourage that positive kind of individual behavior that conservatives call for. I think it's very important to keep in mind that we've got 18 percent of people in America in the labor force who are

working poor, which means that they are working hard, they're disciplined, they're sacrificing, and yet they still find themselves on the bottom. They exemplify the Protestant ethic at its height, much more so, probably, than many in the corporate world.

**HACKNEY:** These are the people that President Clinton refers to as playing by the rules, but still not being rewarded.

**WEST:** That's right, exactly, exactly. And so, I would want to embrace the conservative insight and go far, far beyond it and say that we've got to talk about individual behavior, but we also have to talk about just institutions, institutions that actually not only give people a chance, but also encourage people to behave in the way in which we know it's necessary if success is to be achieved.

**HACKNEY:** The traditional liberal position would agree with that critique, but say that it's really all a matter of environmental determinism—that the institutions are unjust, the structures of society are imperfect, and the marketplace is cold and cruel, and until structural change comes about, African Americans are not going to be able to correct or improve their status in American life. Is that your position as well?

**WEST:** It's part of it, but again, liberals miss out on a deeper issue, actually two deeper issues. Number one is that liberals want to talk about institutions, want to talk about the crucial role that economic conditions play, and they're absolutely right. But they rarely want to talk about the distribution of wealth and that's a much more formidable challenge, I think. One rarely sees that what we're talking about here is the top 1 percent of families who own 48 percent of the total financial wealth of the country, that a certain sense in which liberals don't want to push the issue of the role of corporate and bank elites and concentration of wealth, not just income, in the society.

But there's another issue, too, and it has to do with what I call an existential issue, and that is the role that culture, values, and sensibilities play in shaping the behavior of persons. There's almost a taboo among many, not all, but many liberals in talking about culture and values and sensibility. They tend to believe that as soon as you talk about culture and value, you're falling into conservative traps about individual behavior, and I don't think so. I think that we must get beyond both the conservative insights with the limitations of conservative ideology. We must embrace but get beyond the liberal insights as well as the limits of liberal ideology.

**HACKNEY:** Is there a third way?

**WEST:** I would hope so. I think we've got to be improvisational about this, because it's not a matter of being centrist. Oftentimes my views are cast as if they're somewhere in the middle, but I'm trying to get beyond both by embracing the insights of both, recognizing that on the one hand the issue of distribution of wealth is something that we're going to have to come to terms with in the next few years or decades. That's going to be a tremendous challenge in terms of whether, in fact, American democracy can actually deal with a public debate about distribution of wealth that must take place within democratic and constitutional limits. And on the other hand, whether



we can talk about culture and values and sensibilities without necessarily feeling as if we're part of Dan Quayle's project.

**HACKNEY:** Exactly. You're using here culture as a very powerful mediating institution or mechanism, a set of understandings and values and beliefs that guide behavior. But some people tend to look at those cultural values and understandings as fixed, as handed to, as something we inherit. Is that your notion?

**WEST:** No, not at all. It is dynamic, changing over time, and I understand culture is not simply some set of ephemeral values, but actually a link to structures like the culture industry and entertainment industry, and therefore are very much inextricably interwoven with market forces. Look, for example, at young people these days. I think we can see quite clearly that they are creatures of a market culture, much more than you and I. You and I are deeply affected by it, but we grew up, we were socialized and acculturated at a moment in which civic institutions played an important role in transmitting to us nonmarket values like love and care and concern and the community and loyalty and so forth; whereas young people find themselves in a much more atomized society and much more individualistic society, a society that evolves much more around buying and selling and promoting and advertising at every level than we did. Now, we both were affected by the market values of a capitalist society, but the degree to which market forces now permeate and saturate life is, I think, much more so than it was when we were coming along. Therefore, more and more young people find it very difficult to envision a life beyond the pervasive hedonism and narcissism and privatism of our moment.

**HACKNEY:** There is what I would call a growing critique of American individualism or raw individualism that has been running for ten or fifteen years, I guess, building steam. I'm thinking here of Robert Bellah.

**WEST:** Bellah and others in both *Habits of the Heart* and *Good Society* put forward one of the most powerful attempts to address this issue in a critical manner.

**HACKNEY:** And there are others such as Charles Taylor, the communitarians, Amitai Etzioni. Are they on the right track?

**WEST:** I think they are. I think all three are on the right track. I think they recognize that we can have healthy individuality, without a kind of rapacious individualism, and that we can have healthy community without an ugly authoritarian communitarianism. They're walking that tightrope, and I think rightly so. Of course, they have disagreements in relation to a variety of other issues, but they recognize that there has to be some balance between private-public, between individuality and community. I think that that represents the best of what democratic thought and practice is all about. I think John Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems*, published in 1927, deals with these issues better or as good as what you see in a Bellah, Taylor, or Etzioni.

**HACKNEY:** So it is a circling fact, a string of democratic thoughts.

**WEST:** Yes, we must recover notions of public mindedness and equality as found in the very rich tradition of democratic thought and practice as in John Dewey's work.

**HACKNEY:** Well, what could be the basis for a sense of community, a shared sense that spans races and ethnic groups and religious groups?

**WEST:** I think that we've got to have a fundamental sense that we're in it all together, that in the end we hang together or we hang separately. One of the ways in which one does that is promote the kind of national service activity that President Clinton is doing. It needs to be done on a much broader scale, because people haven't had the experience of working together, being part of a group involved in a project that goes far beyond one's own individual or group interest. Of course, the military traditionally has done this. But there are other ways in which we can marshal the spirit in a service-oriented way under civilian conditions rather than military conditions. We need to demonstrate the moral equivalent of war—James's phrase—in such a way that we recognize our links with one another, our bonds with one another. So that's one.

I think the second has to do with trying to seriously focus on rebuilding the public or civic infrastructure of the nation, and I think that relates to the stimulus/investment aspect of President Clinton's project. I understand President Clinton is really focusing on budget deficit and welfare reform more than national service and stimulus/investment. I think the latter two aspects are ways in which public life could be reinvigorated.

Of course, this debate over health care is also going to force us to acknowledge that, really, we're in it all together, and that's very positive. I think Hillary Clinton has done a superb job.

**HACKNEY:** Where do Americans talk about those big issues? Is there a civic space in which Americans can discuss those?

**WEST:** Very good question. I think you saw a bit of it on *Firing Line* the other night.

**HACKNEY:** Yes, I think so.

**WEST:** In fact, one of the things that I said to William Buckley after the show was that I'm deeply grateful that he has been willing to sustain an institution that facilitates public discussion on crucial public issues. I think he has to be given credit for that. Even though I disagree with the particular slant that he often gives to the issues, he allows persons to voice, to argue, to engage critically in reflection about the issues.

But there are others, town meetings on a local level, various forums. In my travels across the country, I've had forums in synagogues and churches, I've had forums in community centers, in labor unions, and I don't want to overlook those very important grassroots forums. But at a national level, your question is a good one. I don't think we have enough public spaces at a national level for a serious dialogue to take place with regard to crucial issues facing the nation.

**HACKNEY:** Well, connecting that with your other belief about culture as a mediating institution, and one that is malleable, that is, that can be shaped.



**WEST:** That's right.

**HACKNEY:** We don't really, then, have the tools to shape a common culture.

**WEST:** Not adequate ones. I think you're absolutely right. It's a tough question because, on the one hand, we want a balance between private and public. We don't want to impose, we don't want to engage in any forms of censorship; and on the other hand, we do want to solicit public-mindedness among those cultural workers in the entertainment industry, for example, in the larger culture industry, in the printed media, with newspapers and so forth. John Dewey used to talk about America having a large number of small publics, but still having a deep suspicion of public life in the larger sense. That's part of the paradoxical character of American life.

**HACKNEY:** It really is. I was speaking the other evening to a group about what holds America together, or our need to try to examine what holds America together, and reach some agreement if possible, with the thought that the examination would be valuable even without agreement. I was arguing that the political system, the Constitution, was the public value that holds us together. It is the one arena in which everyone is, according to our ideals, supposed to come as an individual to participate and help shape common life. And an African-American man who was in the group raised his hand right away and said, "Not for blacks." I didn't get a chance to press him or to find out exactly what he meant. What do you suppose he meant?

**WEST:** American-ness and whiteness were fused to make black people feel as if citizenship was racially exclusive. We have embarked on an experiment of multiracial democracy only since the 1960s.

**HACKNEY:** So it was an expression of alienation of some sort.

**WEST:** Exactly. Of course, the history is there, too, that we have to acknowledge in terms of the evidence that would allow one to infer that the alienation has been real.

**HACKNEY:** Yes, a rational basis.

**WEST:** At the same time, I think when we cast it in a broader sense, that is to say, when we cast it not so much in the actual operation of the political system that we know has been deeply flawed in relation to a number of persons, but especially to black folks, but when we cast it at an ideal level in terms of a person believing that the democratic experiment is a good idea, is a desirable thing, I think you would in fact still be able to solicit a kind of approval even among the vast majority of black folks, because then the quest becomes, "Okay, when we look at the actual operations of a political system we view as democratic and we see its flaws, then don't we still think it's a good idea to further democratize the American democracy as it actually exists?" More than likely, one would hear a person say, "Sure." Why? Because the democratic project in its ideal sense is still the best of what it is to be part of the American experience. And that ideal itself serves as a means by which we can identify ourselves as being fellow citizens attempting to do something grander than us, attempting to realize and actualize something grander than us. That's still a source of

commonality, but it also allows us to recognize, of course, the ways in which slavery and Jim Crow and second-class citizenship and segregation—and I would add even the marginalization of women and the marginalization of gays and lesbians and the suppression of workers' movements up till the 1930s in the sense of them not gaining the right to legal collective bargaining—all of those are flaws of the actual operation of the American political system. So we get the notion that the democratic project is worthwhile. I think that certainly is one source that still does bind Americans, even in this moment of balkanizing and polarizing that I mentioned before.

**HACKNEY:** You mentioned the history of African Americans here in America, and it raises the question of how a group can arrive at an understanding of itself that will support individual autonomy and really do away with the feeling of alienation, which I take to be a position where individuals can choose who they want to be, and that is affected by one's group identity. Let's not take African Americans. Let's take white southerners. How might white southerners, given the history of slavery and lynching and segregation and discrimination and colonialization of the southern economy, arrive at an understanding of themselves that is both honest and yet will support a self-image that will allow them to function in society?

**WEST:** I think that one of the effects of the 1980s was to allow persons to feel comfortable about where they were and to in some ways wipe the guilt clean in terms of the history of white supremacy and male supremacy, vast economic inequality, and so forth. And it seems to me, when we talk about white southerners, that we've got to be able to confront the tragic facts of the past and present. We've got to be able to confront them in such a way that it's not paralyzing, but it is scrutinizing of who and what we are—in this case, white southerners. And that confrontation with the tragic fact ought to then force us to recognize that a struggle for justice is integral to what it means to be a citizen, because what holds America together is the sense of hope that all sectors of American society must feel, a sense of hope in relation to the democratic project. Once that hope is lost and the sense of helplessness and impotence sets in, then we are actually beginning to disempower ourselves as a society in terms of keeping alive the best of who and what we are as citizens of a democratic republic. And so what I would say to white southerners is a recognition of the history that doesn't paralyze, but a recognition of the history that ought to empower one to understand that the struggle for justice—racial justice, sexual justice, and so forth—is one integral element of what it means to be an American; and that one recognizes, of course, that one is never going to be perfect, but one recognizes in one's own present imperfection that there is much growth, maturity, and development that ought to take place individually and collectively.

**HACKNEY:** Cornel, that's such a nice coda that I think we ought to stop right there. It's been good talking with you.

**WEST:** I deeply appreciate having this dialogue with you. □





# Lewis Latimer

## An Illuminating Life

**F**ROM THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR until his death in 1928, Lewis Howard Latimer was at the forefront of a technological revolution that changed the way Americans lived. During his life he worked with Alexander Graham Bell, Hiram Maxim, and Thomas Edison. He was an inventor, writer, and civil rights advocate during a period of great technological and social change in the nation.

A black man, the son of former slaves, Latimer joined the Union Navy at age fifteen and fought in the Civil War. Self-educated, he rose from office boy to chief assistant to Thomas Edison. Yet his name is not well known or associated with electric lighting, even though he wrote the first book on incandescent lighting systems and led teams of installation workers in the United States, Canada, and England who put in the first electric lighting systems in public buildings.

"Latimer," says Janet Schneider, a consultant to the Queens Borough (New York) Public Library which is planning an exhibition on Latimer's life, "was at the vortex of the community of inventors at a very critical time in the history of technology."

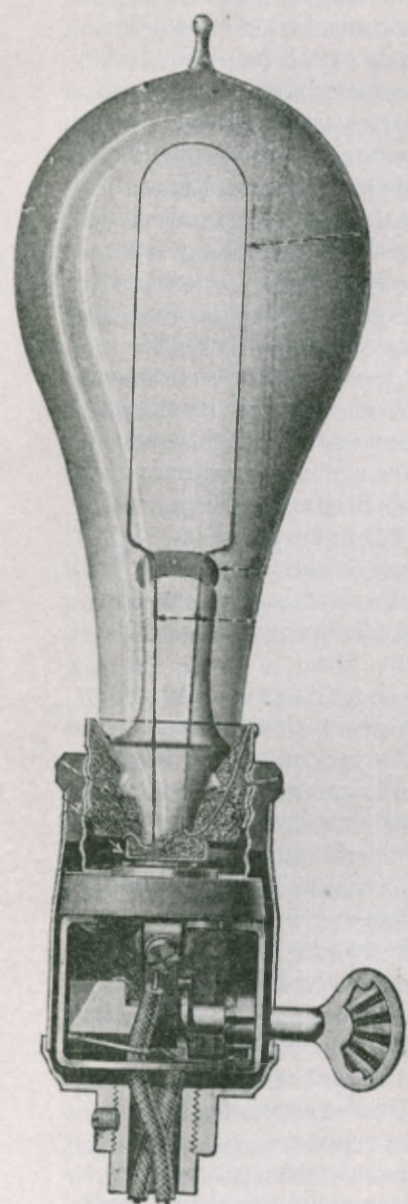
This technology was the development of the widespread introduction of electricity and lighting systems that could be used in all types of homes and businesses. The race for the development of the incandescent light bulb was going on full speed, with Latimer in the center of it working at different times for Maxim and Edison. But his life began under humbler, yet extraordinary, circumstances that shaped his view of himself and the world around him.

Latimer's life and times will be explored in an exhibition at the Queens Library's Central Library in Jamaica, New York, beginning in February 1995. Latimer was a resident of Queens for thirty years. With support from NEH, the library will present a look at Latimer, the man and the inventor, using his life as a means to explore the larger themes of the plight of African Americans in the U.S. during the period from 1840 to 1910; the social and technological environment in the United States during that period; and the nature of technological change.

Latimer's personal story provides an opportunity to examine the fugitive slave issue, the complexities of the abolitionist movement, black participation in the Civil War, and the social environment in the northeast during this historical period. It also enables a look at the nature of invention as a form of human creativity and the roles played by unheralded figures such as Latimer. And finally, the exhibition will give an opportunity to examine the ways in which the new technology affected the lives of average Americans.

BY MAGGIE RIECHERS





THE EDISON LAMP AND SOCKET.

*Donated by the author  
J. H. Latimer.*

# INCANDESCENT ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

A Practical Description of the  
Edison System.

BY  
L. H. LATIMER.

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE  
DESIGN AND OPERATION OF INCANDESCENT  
STATIONS.

By C. J. FIELD.

AND A PAPER ON  
THE MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY OF INCANDESCENT  
LAMPS.

By JOHN W. HOWELL.



NEW YORK:  
D. VAN NOSTRAND COMPANY,  
23 MURRAY AND 27 WARREN STREET.  
1890.

*This was the first book on  
Electric Lighting published  
in the United States.*

123757

—Courtesy of Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island Division

Frontispiece and title page from Lewis Latimer's book on incandescent electric lighting (1890), the first book on that subject published in the United States. The inscription is by Latimer.

"The story of Latimer and his family will unify these themes, highlight specific historical events, and present them in a new context," says Schneider, the exhibition's project director. The exhibition will contain original materials drawn from the Queens Borough Public Library's collection and other public and private collections, including Latimer's own papers handed down to his granddaughter, Dr. Winifred Latimer Norman, and containing prints, photographs, letters, books, drawings, patents, and other artifacts and archival materials.

"This is a different kind of approach to looking at history," says Schneider. "It covers the events that happened at the turn of the century including tech-

nological and social history, but looking at them from the perspective of an African American."

Latimer's story begins before his birth with his parents, George and Rebecca Latimer, and their escape from slavery in 1842. In written, undated recollections Latimer wrote in his later years, his mother "determined that she would not be the mother of a slave." She devised a plan for her and her husband's escape that brought them their freedom and a measure of notoriety. George Latimer was the son of a black slave mother and white father and was light-skinned, while Rebecca was darker skinned and unmistakably of African lineage. Latimer continues, "...she induced him to make an effort to escape as her

master and with this in view they left Norfolk, Virginia, as master and servant, and in this relation started on the steamer for Baltimore...traveled on north...and thus continued until they had reached Boston, Massachusetts."

Upon arriving in Boston, however, George was immediately recognized and imprisoned as a fugitive slave. But his and Rebecca's flight from slavery had captured the attention of the active and growing abolitionist movement in Boston.

"There was a strong free black community and abolition movement in the northeast," says Schneider. "Citizens of the north were upset that their tax dollars and constables were being used to capture slaves and return them to the south.

"There was a lot of intensity of feeling over the fugitive slave issue," she continues, "and empathy in the north. It was an idealistic time in terms of duty and morality."

George Latimer's owner refused to give up his efforts to bring him back to Virginia, and George Latimer's case became an abolitionist cause. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote about the case in his poem, "Virginia to Massachusetts." William Lloyd Garrison publicized the case in his





—Courtesy of Winifred Latimore Norman

Lewis Latimer with his wife Mary and daughter Louise at their home in Flushing, Queens.

newspaper, *The Liberator*, publishing among many items, a letter he received from Frederick Douglass concerning efforts to secure Latimer's freedom.

After spending one month in jail, George Latimer's freedom was purchased by black abolitionists for \$400. The case did not end there, however. More than 65,000 citizens of Massachusetts signed a petition which resulted in the passage of a law stating that "all judges, justices of the peace, and officers of the commonwealth, are forbidden, under heavy penalties, to aid or act in any manner in the arrest, detention, or delivery of any person claimed as a fugitive slave."

Into this family history, Lewis Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, in 1848, the youngest of four children of George and Rebecca Latimer. Life was not easy for the Latimer family.

"The family settled in the Boston area," says Schneider. "One problem was solved, gaining George's freedom. But how do former slaves become functioning members of society?"

The family moved frequently and George was often absent, possibly to avoid bringing unwanted attention to his wife, who was still considered a fugitive slave. Rebecca took jobs on ships and was also away much of the time. Lewis's and his siblings' education was erratic. In 1864, Lewis lied about his age and enlisted in the Union Navy. He served aboard the USS *Massasoit* and saw action on the James River in Virginia near the plantations where his parents had been slaves.

When the war ended, Latimer returned to Boston, landing a job as an office boy in the patent law firm of Crosby and Gould, where he became fascinated with the mechanical drawings the draftsmen prepared for the U.S. Patent Office.

"Throughout his youth Latimer had been absorbed with drawing and reading," says Schneider. "He was a gifted draftsman from an early age. He observed the draftsmen at the firm and taught himself mechanical drawing. Eventually, he was hired as a draftsman."

Latimer stayed with the firm for twelve years, working his way to chief draftsman. He believed, as did many at the time, that patenting inventions was the way to amassing a fortune. He also clearly believed in the American dream—that through education and hard work, anyone even the son of fugitive slaves, could be upwardly mobile.

It was during this time in Boston that Latimer met Alexander Graham Bell. According to Latimer's journal, he made the drawings for Bell's first patent application for the telephone. Bell originally called his invention an "Improvement in Telepathy," not even mentioning the fact that people would be able to talk directly to each other until page three of the patent documents.

This illustrates the nature of inventions at the time. The northeast was alive with inventors and the excitement of the possibilities of changing everyday life for Americans. Each invention was an improvement on what had come before. Bell looked at his telephone as one notch above the telegraph.



"At the time, the 1870s, electricity was coming to the forefront of technological development," says Schneider. "People were alerted to its potential but there were still practical problems.

"We have a tendency to want to associate an invention with one person, but that's not necessarily true," says Schneider. "Many at one time were looking for one mechanism to find the final solution, playing off each other." She compares it to today's search for a cure for AIDS or cancer.

Latimer was part of this community of inventors. He left Boston and headed, with his new bride, Mary, to Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1879. At the time Bridgeport was typical of northeast port cities.

"The northeast was kind of a Silicon Valley of its time," says Schneider. "It was filled with factories, technical people, scientific societies, and universities where ideas were being intensely pursued."

Latimer described Bridgeport this way in his journal: "It was hardly to be supposed that a city so near New York could possess so much life of its own...The place is perfectly alive with inventors and it would be next to impossible to throw a stone into any company of men gathered anywhere about in the street without hitting one."

As a result of Thomas Edison's 1879 patent for the electric lamp, inventors throughout the northeast, including Latimer, attempted to figure out how to produce a marketable incandescent light bulb to replace the arc lamp, which provided its light through a continuous spark. The challenge was to develop a bulb that was long-lasting and safe. Hundreds of patents were filed during the years 1879 to 1900, each slightly different, in the search for the final piece to complete the puzzle of incandescent lighting.

Latimer's most significant patent was filed in 1881 while he was working for Hiram Maxim at U.S. Lighting Company. It was for an improved process for manufacturing the filament in incandescent bulbs. Latimer's abilities as a draftsman came to Maxim's attention in Bridgeport. He became his head draftsman and later personal assistant during the key years when bulbs were being developed.

Many small companies were growing up at the time, marketing lighting installations—from generators to wiring to bulbs—to light up whole

factories, railroad yards, or wherever the new technology was requested. The competition was fierce in this era before utility companies were formed and each installation was powered individually.

Latimer moved with Maxim to New York City and was put in charge of a bulb production factory, and then sent to establish lighting plants in Philadelphia, Montreal, and London. It was in London where the generally uncomplaining Latimer encountered racism and classism that apparently bothered him enough that he mentioned it in his own writings at the time. He notes in his recollections his difficulty relating to his "English bosses," and that he and his assistants were "in hot water."

"The attitude of the English was such that they felt the working person owned them for giving them the opportunity to work for them," says Schneider. "Latimer saw himself as part of the world and did not expect to be discriminated against."

Latimer encountered many forms of racism including, says Schneider, having to prove himself to each person who met him that he, a black man, was deserving of the role of chief draftsman. But his own civil rights philosophy was grounded in the belief that self-improvement, individual commitment, and social activism would better all people's lives. He strongly believed that those who lived within the law could not be deprived of their rights. Upon his return to the United States in 1882, Latimer found he was no longer needed by U.S. Lighting Company and was for a time unemployed. After working for a few small electric companies, he went to work for Maxim's chief competitor, Edison, where he rose to the position of draftsman-engineer and patent investigator. Although the circumstances of his hiring are unclear, Latimer stayed with Edison-affiliated companies for the rest of his working life.

Latimer's expertise on all aspects of electrical engineering and installation proved invaluable to Edison, whose patents were frequently challenged in court. He became a patent investigator and expert witness for Edison in the patent wars that ensued between the Edison Electric Company and the Westinghouse Company (which bought Maxim's U.S. Electric Company).

In 1890 Latimer wrote the first American book on incandescent lighting, *Incandescent Electric Lighting: A Practical Description of the Edison System* (1890, D. Van Nostrand and Company), which was a technical manual and a tribute to Edison, describing only his system. In his book, Latimer describes the invention to which he devoted his career this way, "Like the light of the sun, it beautifies all things on which it shines, and is no less welcome in the palace than in the humblest home."

Throughout his life, Latimer was a participant in the struggle for civil rights. He had relationships with the leading civil rights activists of his day, including Theodore Greener, W.E.B. DuBois, Bishop Theodore Holly, and Samuel Scottron. His belief in social activism was also reflected in his active participation in other organizations, including the G.A.R., the Civil War association of Union veterans, the Unitarian Church, which had played a role in his father's celebrated case, and the Edison Pioneers, a society of electrical engineers who had been involved with Edison and the development of the light bulb prior to 1885. Latimer also worked as a volunteer teacher of mechanical drawing to poor immigrants at the Henry Street Settlement in Lower Manhattan.

Latimer was not only a scientist but also a poet and lover of the arts. He played the flute, painted, and wrote poetry. His wife played the guitar and his two daughters were formally trained in music and art.

When Latimer died in 1928 his death was marked in both the black and the scientific communities with obituaries in the *Amsterdam News* and an appraisal by William Miron Meadowcroft, a historian for the Edison Pioneers, who said, "He was of the colored race, the only one in our organization...Broadmindedness, versatility in the accomplishment of things intellectual and cultural, a linguist, a devoted husband and father, all were characteristic of him and his genial presence will be missed from our gatherings." □

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The Queens Borough Public Library received \$182,000 for an exhibition, catalogue, and school programs from Humanities Projects in Libraries and Archives of the Division of Public Programs.





# Making a Run for Freedom

When historian John Hope Franklin was in Washington last fall to receive a Charles Frankel Prize, he talked at a brown bag lunch at NEH about his latest project, a study of runaway slaves. Here is an excerpt:

I want to talk to you about what I call dissidents on the plantation, runaway slaves. I was always troubled as I read histories of the South by the way in which slaves were depicted by essayists, novelists, and, yes, even historians. They described them as impervious, indifferent to the most precious thing that this country was offering, and that was freedom. The patriots were fighting for freedom, Patrick Henry was saying "Give me liberty or give me death," Thomas Jefferson was speaking of it in the Declaration of Independence. In later years people who were slaves, if they had performed some meritorious service, they were set free. And so freedom was held up as the ideal, most cherished gift that one could have in this country.

Those blacks that were free were not allowed to associate with slaves, suggesting once more that somehow slaves would be contaminated with the virus of freedom if they so much as associated with blacks who were not slaves. And there was a whole variety of experiences and activities that people went through from day to day

which indicated how very important and how wonderful slavery was.

I never could quite understand that, especially in view of the fact that there was this tension between slavery and freedom, and it was acknowledged by all. I couldn't understand it, either, because at specific moments when white Americans felt that they could celebrate freedom and exalt it, blacks reminded them that, if it's so good, it ought to be for everybody. The blacks told the patriots in the 1770s that very thing, and all through the nineteenth century down to the Civil War, blacks, in their conventions and their utterances and in their newspapers and in their all-too-seldom revolts, they told them that freedom was for them as well as for others.

I wanted to know more about this tension, this contradiction. I wanted to test the validity, indeed the veracity, of those who claimed that slaves were happy in slavery. As I did research on *The Militant South* and *Southern Odyssey* books—not about blacks but about white people—one thing that struck me as I read the newspapers of the antebellum period was that the newspapers were crammed full of advertisements for runaway slaves. It became clear to me that this was an important manifestation of a conduct that was not commonly and universally admitted by historians and others.

The most honest statement and description of what slaves were about can be found in the advertise-

ments after they had absconded. It's in these that one can find the most graphic and accurate physical descriptions. Now, if a slave runs away, a man is not going to be romantic about his appearance. He's going to tell you precisely how he looked as well as he can remember it. He will tell you what complexion he was, he will tell you what height he was, what was his weight. He will give you clues regarding his personality—"He had a hang-down look," or "He wouldn't look you in the eye," or "He was aggressive," or "He was evasive," "He was cunning," or "He was clever," "He was sly," or "He was quick to answer questions," or "He was slow to answer questions"—all of these things. One can find also a great deal about his abilities or her personal resources, their occupation, the level of literacy—amazing how many could read and write—what their duties were on the plantation, what skills they had acquired, the kinds of things they might do, the kinds of trade they might try if they were able to pass themselves off as free persons, and those who were likely to have forged free passes and were making their way across the country posing as free people.

One also found speculations on the part of the owner as to what the motives were that impelled the slave to run away. There was the fear of being sold. The owner had found, even after the slave ran away, that the slave had been stealing, and therefore that might be a motive, the fear of being punished. Perhaps even more important was the desire to find their loved ones that had been sold away. It might be a husband, it might be a wife, it might be a child—of course gentlemen did not separate families, they said. In the county records, in various parts of the country, I found stacks of bills of sale of children, six, eight, ten years old, sold away from their parents. And this was frequently a cause of slaves running away, or at least in the advertisements the planters speculated that a reason for their running away perhaps was that their children had been sold down the river or somewhere else.



One also found that they were following the examples of those blacks who were free. They were running away into free black communities. One necessarily did not run from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia. One might run from Richmond, Virginia, to Fredericksburg, Virginia, or vice versa. Or one might run from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Greensboro, North Carolina, but these were considerable free black communities. And if you ran hard enough and fast enough and you got to that community, you'd slow down and act like you had always been there, and you could be free just by your conduct, and with the cooperation of those who would surround you.

So, running away becomes an important activity, too important to the runaway himself to defend or to trust others to carry it on for him. Now, one gets into rather shaky ground here: No one admires Harriet Tubman more than I do. But for every Harriet Tubman who theoretically organized groups of slaves and conducted them to freedom, there was that single slave who didn't know anybody, didn't know anywhere to go, but knew he didn't want to be where he was, and he left. He did not follow the gourd vine, he did not know about the underground railroad, he did not even know about the North Star, but he knew that if he left Montgomery and followed the Alabama River, the direction in which his wife had gone, he might get to Mobile or even New Orleans and find her. And so, this becomes an important activity, and it's a reflection on the stability or the instability of the plantation organization.

So they ran in any and all directions. They ran from one village to another, from one county to another, and from one city to another. The substantial increase in the numbers of free blacks between, say, 1800 and 1860 can be accounted for to a large extent through their running away. And that number was increasing in the South very significantly, as indeed it was in the North. Philadelphia or New York City were not the only communities where free blacks are increasing in number. They were increasing in New Orleans and Richmond and Montgomery and Raleigh and even Fredericksburg, increasing all over.


The likelihood of their going North was rather slight. They were not familiar with the North, and the North was unknown except to a relatively small number to whom had been communicated the promises of the North by conductors of the underground railroad. Those were few in numbers. So I would argue that the likelihood of going south was at least as great as the likelihood of going north. And it was in the southern direction that slaves came to be known as habitual runaways. The state of Virginia, which was selling its slaves south more than it was selling them in any other direction, had a printed form to assure the prospective buyers that the slaves were (1) in good health, (2) in good faith and in good mind and sound mind, and (3) that they were not habitual runaways. That was printed on the form, which suggests at least some frequency with which that problem might have arisen. The state of Virginia was prepared to prove that these were good slaves who didn't run away every time they were purchased. If you went to the market to buy a slave or slaves and you woke up the next morning and you couldn't find the slave, that was \$1,500 or \$2,000 or \$2,500 which had gone down the drain. One had to guard against such dire eventualities.

Another thing I would argue is that slaves left the plantation to a large extent because of the unsatisfactory

conditions which existed there and which they themselves understood and appreciated. The physical descriptions that one finds in runaway advertisements, for example, tell us so much about the level of violence on the plantation itself: She has so many marks on her back, or he has a brand on his arm or face; he walks with a limp; her ears are cropped; she has the marks of one who has recovered from smallpox.

But if the violence was visited upon the slave, it was also visited upon the owner. One can get it in the records of the courts, and one can get it in the plantation records as well. Slaves poisoned their owners and didn't wait to see whether the owner recovered. Slaves got into fights with their owners or overseers. One of the best examples that I know is a mistress of a slave who walked up and slapped the slave for not obeying her quickly, promptly, and the slave turned around and threw her mistress on the ground and beat her to the point that she was unconscious. She was in the hospital for three weeks recovering from her wounds, and the slave, of course, ran away, but was recaptured and was put on trial. Her strongest witness, and the one that secured her acquittal, was her mistress, who on the one hand had lost face greatly as a result of being laid low by her lowly maid, and, secondly, was about to

**Thirty Dollars Reward.**



**L** EFT my plantation, in Arkansas county, near Post of Arkansas, on the 26th May (ult.), two Negro Men, viz:

**GEORGE**, a dark copper-colored man, about 30 years of age, 5 ft. 8 or 10 inches high, forehead rather low, some beard on his chin, stutters considerably and has a habit of winking his eyes when talking. He was recently purchased from Mr. Wm. E. Woodruff, at Little Rock, and has a wife at Dr. Watkins', near that city.

Also, **HARRISON**, about the same age, as the other, and belongs to Mr. W. R. Perry, of the same county.

The above slaves left in company, and it is supposed will make for Little Rock.

The above reward will be paid for arresting and securing said negroes, so that their owners may get them, or one-half the amount for either of them. Letters will reach me if addressed to Arkansas Post, Ark's.

**J. FLOYD SMITH.**

Arkansas co., June 6, 1851. 4-1f.

Advertisement in the *Arkansas Gazette*, June 6, 1851, for two runaway slaves. Ads such as this contained detailed physical descriptions of slaves.



lose the services of this maid. She assured the court that there was nothing wrong between her and her maid that she could not fix. And so she was discharged from jail in the custody of the woman who owned her.

Then there were always the vindictive slaves who just had more than they could take and were going to do something about it. At times, they visited violence on the owner or the overseer. In one instance, they decided to commit the perfect crime. They had reached the point that they could not bear the presence of the overseer, for whom slaves generally had no respect: the view was that if you were white, you ought to be higher than an overseer. For the overseer then to take so much authority in his own hands and to mistreat slaves was something that slaves could not stand. In one instance in Louisiana, slaves decided that they would get this overseer and they would do it under cover of darkness. He lived alone in a cottage, and they went to the cottage and they weren't sure how far they were going to go in the punishment, but when he woke up, they said, "We've got to go all the way," and they murdered the overseer. "There's no problem. We can cover it up." And they dressed the overseer, put him on his own horse, then took him out into the woods and let him fall from the horse, then made a lot of marks all around, knocked the bushes down and everything to show the horse had gone wild, and they went on back. The next day they went to find the overseer and finally someone discovered him, and he had been thrown from his horse. They brought the coroner out and the coroner said, "Accidental death, was thrown from his horse." There were two slaves at the plantation who said, "This is too good to be true and we don't think we should stay here." So they ran away.

The leaving of two of the slaves was one way in which the case was broken. The other was that the brother of the overseer came to his funeral. He stayed around a while and said, "My brother is a good horseman—I simply don't believe he got thrown off the horse." He spoke to the cook in the kitchen one day and he said, "You know, I know just about all there is to know about my brother's murder. If you would just answer

one or two questions for me, then this will be solved." Well, she assumed that he did know, and she began to tell him what she knew, and then he asked more questions and he was able to piece the story together. So when the slaves who had committed this crime came in at the end of the work day, they were charged with murder, and, of course, they received the ultimate punishment.

But the point that I'm suggesting is that the violence is two-way, and it shows me the extent to which there was a breakdown in what I call the labor-management relations. Maintaining discipline was the major task of every planter, and his whole operation would be made or broken, depending upon his success in this regard. But while he might remain successful in keeping his slaves working, he was not successful, we know, in keeping them happy. The very elaborate patrol system throughout the South would indicate the extent to which the slaves were suspect, the extent to which they could not be trusted. Trying to control the slaves, to discipline them, to punish them, and at times to cajole them or even to reward them, was something that tested the resources and ingenuities of the owner.

The problem of labor-management relations became so highly refined at one point that slaves developed a practice of what they called "lying out." They would go for a little trek three miles, five miles away, and simply lie out. Then they would send word back that "we will return under the following conditions. We want better food, we want better hours of work, we want better clothing, and we want to be off on Saturdays and Sundays." One plantation mistress who received this ultimatum from the slave wrote her husband, who was away at the time, and described to him the demands that they were making. This was at the height of the harvest season. He wrote back, "Promise them anything. We've got to get the crop in. Tell the women I'll bring them new dresses, tell the men I'll bring them new pants, and that we will give them better food from here on." Not every negotiation ended so happily so far as the slaves were

concerned, but this lying out was widespread in practice, even if it was uneven in results.

I think it can be said, then, that running away was one of the most common and most dramatic manifestations of displeasure on the part of slaves for their lot. They did not have much in the way of arms and ammunition; they did not have even the assurances that a few personal resources would provide—for instance, money or food, animals, and so forth, although frequently they stole these items from their owner when they ran away. But they took whatever they had, sometimes only their courage and their determination, and made their run for freedom.

Some of you know Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in which the mother ran away with a little baby. That was all too common in various parts of the South. Some of you know too of the many songs that were sung having to do with stealing away, that sort of thing, the dissatisfaction with the institution was widespread, and we to have much in the way of subtle sensitivities to understand that they were doing what they could to undermine the institution of slavery, even as they put on the face of satisfaction for the more naive of their owners, and even as they plotted to leave the institution, either by force or by stealth. But what is important for us to recognize is the fact that we need to take the romance out of the institution, and we can do so by looking at it for what it was—a gruesome, inhuman, unkind, savage type of pursuit of life. And if slaves were doing anything, they were trying to balance the books by destroying the institutions to the extent that they could and to the degree that they could. □

John Hope Franklin  
October 6, 1993

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John Hope Franklin is James B. Duke Professor of History Emeritus at Duke University and the author of several books, among them *Reconstruction after the Civil War*, and *From Slavery to Freedom: The History of Negro Americans*, first published more than forty-five years ago and now in its sixth edition. He received \$70,000 to research and write a book on runaway slaves from Interpretive Research-Collaborative Projects of the Division of Research Programs.



# “Better to Die Free



Attack on Wagner by Thomas Nast, 1867. On July 18, 1863, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment led the attack against Fort Wagner on Morris Island, South Carolina. Although the attempt failed, the regiment displayed great bravery under heavy losses.

## Than Live Slaves”

Death lays his icy hands on many a guilty head, and is the avenger of many a vile wrong—the finger of God is laid upon Charleston.”

George E. Stephens (1832-1888), an African-American sailor and cabinetmaker from Philadelphia, described the horror of southern slavery in a letter written in January 1858 to his good friend Jacob C. White, Jr., a Philadelphia black leader. In Charleston, Stephens had seen throngs of “half-clad, filthy looking men[,] women and children...both sexes and all ages from the sucking Babe to the decrepid [sic] old, all bartered and sold to the rice swamp.”

It was the mischance of falling afoul of South Carolina’s 1822 Negro Seamen’s Act that brought Stephens face-to-face with the brutal facts of slavery in December 1857.

### The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens



BY DONALD YACOVONE

—Photos from Massachusetts Historical Society

Sent ashore to obtain supplies for his vessel, the *Walker*, a U.S. Coast Survey steamer, Stephens was seized by Charleston authorities. The Negro Seamen’s Act stipulated that free Negro sailors must be jailed while their vessels docked at the state’s seaports. Failure to pay the cost of incarceration would result in public sale of the prisoner as a slave to recover those expenses. Fortunately for Stephens, his commander, Thomas B. Huger, was from a leading Charleston family and gained his release.

Stephens was an active abolitionist, but like most Northern blacks, he had never seen the “peculiar institution” first hand. “You must witness it in all its loathsomeness,” he advised White. “You must become a witness yourself.”

The Civil War offered Stephens the opportunity to become an avenger of the





Fort Wagner after the Confederate evacuation of September 6, 1863.  
The fort, which lay near the mouth of Charleston harbor, was key to the defense of Fort Sumter and Charleston.

"vile wrong" of slavery. As a sergeant in the famed Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment, organized in 1863 by Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew and commanded by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, Stephens pledged to burn Charleston with "Greek fire" and dig rebel graves "beneath its smoldering ruins." Two years later, in an event filled with irony and poetic justice, he was one of the first Union soldiers to enter the city after four years of federal blockades and costly siege operations. Stephens was part of an advance guard of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts—assigned to the Department of the South—that slipped into the city shortly after Confederate troops fled from General William T. Sherman's advancing forces in February 1865. During the federal occupation of Charleston in the spring of 1865, Stephens's regiment was temporarily stationed at the Citadel, the military institute that had trained so many Confederate officers, and drilled on its parade grounds. As a provost guard in the city center, Stephens, armed and in the uniform of a United States soldier, now oversaw the lives of the slaveowners who had imprisoned him seven years before.

Although Stephens was a prominent figure in the black civic and intellectual life of Philadelphia in the 1850s, he had been forgotten until a few years ago. Research for the Black Abolitionist Papers located at Florida State University uncovered letters written by him, usually signed with his initials, in a Civil War era newspaper. Between 1859 and 1864 Stephens served as a correspondent for the New York *Weekly Anglo-African*, the era's leading black paper. Writing first as a member of Philadelphia's black elite, then as a reporter with the Army of the Potomac, and finally as a soldier in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment, his nearly four dozen *Anglo-African* letters and essays helped shape the black response to the war and powerfully reflected the lives and aspirations of black soldiers. Moreover, Stephens's letters are the only significant body of soldiers' correspondence written by an African American for an African-American paper. Although the *Anglo* and other newspapers, both black and white, published

As one enlisted  
man in the  
Fifty-fifth  
Massachusetts  
Regiment  
(the second  
black unit raised  
in the state)  
proclaimed, the  
*Anglo-African*  
was "the most  
efficient expo-  
nent of our ideas  
and defender  
of our rights."



letters from black soldiers, Stephens's are by far the most detailed and insightful.

The *Weekly Anglo-African*, published from 1859 to 1865 by Thomas and Robert Hamilton of New York City, recorded the activities of free black communities from Boston to San Francisco. It strove to be a national publication; during the war it became the black soldiers' paper. As one enlisted man in the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Regiment (the second black unit raised in the state) proclaimed, the *Anglo-African* was "the most efficient exponent of our ideas and defender of our rights." The paper also had a devoted following among whites, such as the New England abolitionist and popular author Lydia Maria Child, who declared that "I would not do without it." Black troops eagerly read the *Anglo*, passing it from hand to hand until the copies crumbled from use.

George Stephens was the son of free Virginia blacks who had moved to Pennsylvania during the early 1830s. A cabinetmaker by trade, Stephens invested his time and energy into educational uplift. In 1854, when only twenty-two years old, he helped found the Banneker Institute, an African-American literary, lecture, and debating society that became the training ground for a new generation of Philadelphia's black leaders. Stephens served as corresponding secretary, helped organize its activities, acquired books for its library, and addressed its meetings on subjects ranging from literature, religion, women's rights, and politics, to slavery. From 1857 to 1859, Stephens worked for the U.S. Coast Survey. In 1859, through Parker T. Smith, editor of the *Anglo-African's* Philadelphia department and a Banneker Institute member, Stephens began his career as a journalist for the *Anglo*.

The outbreak of the Civil War brought a flood of black support for the Union cause, despite the federal government's commitment to preserve the institution of slavery. More than 8,500 African Americans responded to the attack on Fort Sumter by organizing independent military units and offering their services to the federal government. But their patriotism was spurned. Blacks were advised that this was a "white





Unidentified Union troops at Fort Wagner. The capture of the fort cost the North dearly: the Fifty-fourth lost 272 men of the 600 who were in the assault of July 18, 1863, and total Union casualties were 1,515 men.

man's war." Astonished and incensed, few blacks could disagree with Stephens's assessment that the Lincoln administration had proven itself to be "the fag end of a series of pro-slavery administrations."

At first, Stephens advised blacks to sit out the conflict and let the two warring "serpents sting each other to death." But the war quickly radicalized him and in 1861 he called upon Northern blacks to join with slaves in an insurrection. Stephens's call to rebellion aroused scant interest. Restless and eager to support the Union cause, he became the personal assistant to Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin C. Tilghman of the Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania Regiment, then serving in eastern Virginia. From 1861 to 1862, he used his position in Tilghman's unit to help free those slaves he encountered at the front lines.

Stephens's role in the Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania also provided him with the opportunity to give *Anglo-African* readers a trustworthy view of the conflict. His dispatches from the front, particularly of battles at Yorktown and Fredericksburg, proved so compelling that white-owned papers sometimes republished them, but without attribution. He wrote about the deplorable conditions of slaves and "contraband"—the term used for liberated slaves before the Emancipation Proclamation—and described the abuse Southern blacks endured from Confederate forces who feared their potential for mayhem and betrayal and from racist Union troops who despised all blacks and held them accountable for the war.

The constant pressure of runaway slaves entering Union lines increased Union soldiers' unwillingness to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. In January 1862, for example, Stephens reported that a white soldier from the Eleventh Massachusetts Regiment had refused orders to search for a runaway slave boy and return him to his southern master. The soldier repudiated the command, declaring that "he did not enlist in the army to hunt slaves, nor would he hunt them for anyone."

Stephens contended that whites would eventually acknowledge the valuable contribution that blacks could make to the war

effort, and that this realization would help the North gradually accept the idea of racial equality. As Stephens explained, slaves and contraband provided crucial information to Union forces concerning Confederate troop strength. The slave, Stephens observed, "is a spy in the household of the enemy."

He believed that the war to preserve the Union inevitably would become a war to end slavery. The more vicious the fighting, Stephens held, the more vengeful Northerners would become, spelling slavery's doom. Objections to the idea of black troops would then disappear.

Although barred from the army before 1863, African Americans did serve in the navy. Every naval bombardment of Confederate fortifications, Stephens asserted, displayed black power. "I know what I am saying," he confidently predicted in February 1862, "the eternal logic of facts tells me that the Negro henceforth and forever, holds the balance of power in this country."

African Americans secured the opportunity to fulfill Stephens's prophecy with announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. Its call for black enlistment brought 180,000 men into the army, nearly ten percent of all Union troops, and tipped the balance in favor of the North. When Massachusetts Governor Andrew received authorization to raise a regiment of black troops, Stephens returned to Philadelphia in early 1863 to recruit for the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts. This regiment, made famous in art, literature, and recently in film, became the first regular army unit of free African Americans raised in the North. The majority of the men were, like Stephens, literate, determined, and committed to destroying slavery and proving their worth to a skeptical nation that remained unconvinced that blacks could become soldiers.

"Better to die free than live slaves," a phrase proclaimed throughout Northern black communities, became Stephens's rallying cry. Hear "your dead fathers speak to you from their graves," he implored. For Stephens and for Northern blacks, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts acquired immense symbolism. In no small measure its success or

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failure would determine the fate of all African Americans. "We have more to gain, if victorious, or more to lose, if defeated, than any other class of men," Stephens declared, "and the sooner we awaken to their inexorable demands upon us, the better for the race, the better for our families, and the better for ourselves."

In April 1863, Stephens decided that he must set the right example and joined the regiment. His continuing correspondence to the paper gave African Americans an intimate portrait of life in the unit.

The Fifty-fourth's most famous battle, perhaps the best-known engagement involving black troops during the war, occurred on the evening of July 18, 1863, at Fort Wagner on Morris Island, South Carolina. The desolate barrier island at the mouth of Charleston harbor held the key fortification in the defense of Fort Sumter, and thus of Charleston itself. Stephens's regiment led the attack that night and suffered staggering losses. Although the men failed to carry the fort, the regiment's bravery dispelled accusations that blacks could not or would not fight and opened the way for widespread black recruitment.

Three days after the attack, Stephens penned the following account, published in his *Anglo* letter of August 8, 1863. During the assault, Stephens reached the fort's parapets but was wounded when rebel shrapnel or a minié ball shattered his rifle.

...About sundown we were ordered to advance at the double quickstep, cheering as if going on some mirthful errand. The rebels withheld their fire until we reached within fifty yards of the work, when jets of flame darted forth from every corner and embrasure, and even Fort Sumter poured solid shot and shell on our heads. The 54th, undaunted by the hellish storm, pushed up to the work, down into the moat, and like demons ascended the parapet, found the interior lined with rebel soldiers who were well sheltered, and fought them one hour before we were re-enforced; and when the regiment reached us, the 3rd New Hampshire, which was presumed to be our re-enforcements, they, to a man, emptied their rifles into us. Thus we lost nearly as many men by the bullets of our presumed friends as by those of our known enemies....

On the whole, this is considered to be a brilliant feat of the 54th. It is another evidence that cannot now be denied that colored soldiers will dare go where any brave man will lead them. Col. Shaw, our noble and lamented commander, was the bravest of the brave. He did not take his thirty paces to the rear, but led the column up to the fort, and was the first man who stood up on the parapet of the fort. When he reached it he said, "Come on, men! Follow me!" and he either received a mortal wound or fell over the wall, or stumbled into the Fort and was killed....

Gen. [George C.] Strong, seeing that the rebels were in too great a force, ordered the retreat, and now comes another chapter which I would fain pass, but my duty tells me that I must advert to it. There were large quantities of whiskey to be had, and the guard placed to guard the line of retreat and to prevent straggling imbibed rather freely. Some of the men of the skedaddling white regiments were fired upon and killed, and when some of our wounded were passing to the rear they were murdered by these drunken wretches. One of our Sergeants

was shot dead by a private of this guard in the presence of an officer of our regiment who immediately shot the private dead. Dozens of our wounded were drowned. The only good approach to the fort is by the beach. The tide was low when we made the charge, and before we could secure our dead and wounded the tide came up, and such as could not crawl away were drowned.

Our total loss cannot be positively ascertained. It is placed at about 300 killed, wounded, and missing: 75 killed, 125 wounded, 100 missing. It is supposed that Sergeant R. J. Simmons of your city is among the killed. Major [Edward N.] Hallowell is badly wounded.

G.E.S.

Stephens's *Anglo* correspondence continued until the fall of 1864, ending when the regiment won the right to equal pay. Although originally promising the same pay to black and white troops, the War Department changed its policy and offered blacks only ten dollars a month—minus three for clothing—rather than the thirteen given to white troops. Stephens and the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts refused all pay—putting themselves and their families in great jeopardy—rather than accept the government's demeaning offer. The men interpreted the congressional legislation in 1864 granting equal pay as an act of justice and a recognition of their rights as citizens.

Stephens remained with the Fifty-fourth and fought at Olustee, Florida; Boykin's Mills, South Carolina; and elsewhere in the South Carolina backcountry until the end of the war. In the spring of 1865, Governor Andrew approved his commission as a lieutenant. But the War Department denied the promotion because of Stephens's race, although three other enlisted men in the Fifty-fourth—after considerable protest and hard lobbying in Washington—were granted commissions by the summer of 1865.

Stephens continued his antislavery commitment after the war. With the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau and other private relief organizations, he established two schools for former slaves in Virginia, one at Port Royal and another at Tappahannock. By 1873, Stephens had moved to Brooklyn, New York, where he operated an upholstery shop and served as commander of the William Lloyd Garrison Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), a Civil War veterans' group. At the time of his death in 1888, he was helping to organize reunions for the survivors of Massachusetts's three African-American Civil War regiments. Coming at a time of increasing racial animosity, such meetings helped remind Americans of the gallant service blacks offered during the war and their indispensable role in preserving the Union and destroying slavery.

Stephens's writings are some of the most penetrating, prescient, and eloquent African-American Civil War documents yet found. They give all Americans a deeper appreciation of the black role in that tragic conflict and help us preserve a fuller and more accurate memory of it. □

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*Donald Yacovone, an assistant editor with the Massachusetts Historical Society, received a Travel to Collections grant of \$750 from the Division of Fellowships and Seminars and \$45,000 from the Division of Research Programs to prepare an edition of the writings of George E. Stephens. Yacovone was formerly an editor of the Black Abolitionist Papers.*



# Ann Noble

## *Pioneering Humanities in the West*



— © Photo by Dan Abernathy

Ann Noble's dream is to write a Western fiction novel...for women. "All Westerns are for men, and I want to write a Western woman's novel. A real woman's Western. That's what I want to do when I grow up," Noble proclaims. "Lots of shoot-'em-ups, but *women* are going to be doing it all. You know how it's always the men in the Westerns? Forget them. We're going to do it from a woman's perspective."

Former president of the Wyoming Council for the Humanities, Noble has spent her entire life in the West. She and her husband operate the Cora Valley Angus Ranch, which has been passed down in her husband's family since his great-grandparents homesteaded it in the 1890s.

As a historian, Noble's passions lie in studying the history of women and the West. "Being a woman from the West, it was something that I was very much attuned to," she says. "It was part of my own history, and I wanted to fill in the missing pieces."

A pioneer in the field, Noble's work has drawn much attention from both the press and the public. Her study of women in the Utah war industries during World War II, which she wrote for her master's degree thesis at the University of Utah, received an outstanding response. "My goal was to interview twenty-five women and over two hundred contacted me, and it ended up being a huge study," she recalls. "I had a flood of calls and a flood of letters, not only from women who were willing to participate in my study, but from children or grandchildren of those women who also wanted to be a part of that study." No previous work had been done on the subject, which illuminated what life was like on the home front. She explains, "We had all heard plenty of war stories about the men going off overseas and what they had accomplished on

the battle front, but we hadn't heard much about what the women were doing at home."

Noble's current project is another first of its kind. She is compiling a history of the Heart Mountain Relocation Center, a World War II internment camp for Japanese Americans. Unlike her history of women in World War II industries, this project has received mixed reactions. "It's because everybody wants to talk about when people were good," Noble believes.

Opposition has come from several segments of the population, including Japanese Americans. Noble states that some of the former internees do not want to relive painful experiences by recounting their years in the camp. However, other former internees view the internment camps as an important lesson for all Americans and have supported the project.

Her involvement with the Wyoming Council for the Humanities was an outgrowth of her work as a historian. While living in Utah, she worked with the Utah Women's History Association, which received grants from the Utah Endowment for the Humanities. She notes that she learned the value of grant money in this job. After moving to Wyoming, her nomination and election to the Wyoming Council for the Humanities as a public member soon followed. Within four years, she held the positions of board member, treasurer, and president.

Noble believes that the most important function of the Wyoming Council for the Humanities is providing funding support for grassroots programs. She states that Wyoming's need to support individual groups rather than state-wide humanities programs is related to its geography. "We're a very sparsely populated state; we are not even half a million people and we are far bigger than the state of Maine," she explains. "As a result, we lack

opportunities in some ways. We don't have a large university system or a lot of libraries and museums simply because the capital is so minimal."

Noble emphasizes the value of the council's work. "I was involved with a humanities program in Big Piney, Wyoming," she recalls. "I was their historian while they were collecting histories of their cattle brands and histories of their rural culture. The town of Big Piney is probably only five, six hundred people, and when we had the opening for that lecture, over two hundred people came. And that cost only a couple hundred dollars! So humanities programs can have a profound impact on the community, because we don't have such opportunities otherwise."

In addition to serving on the state council, she has taught at Judge Memorial High School in Utah and now serves as an outreach instructor for Western Wyoming College. Her dedication to teaching history stems from her personal belief in its value. "I think we have a lot to learn from our history, and I feel as Americans we just don't know our history well enough."

Juggling the roles of state council member, historian, and teacher, Noble continues to share the work on Cora Valley Angus Ranch while raising two young daughters. "I wrote curriculum one year, and when I was out on the tractor—I worked on a tractor all day—I would come up with ideas. I would write down ideas for this curriculum on a little piece of paper and pencil I had in my pocket. It was for Utah women's history, fourth and seventh grade curriculum. I'd ride, I'd think about it all day long, I'd write little notes, and then I'd come home after working in the fields all day and type it up in my computer." □

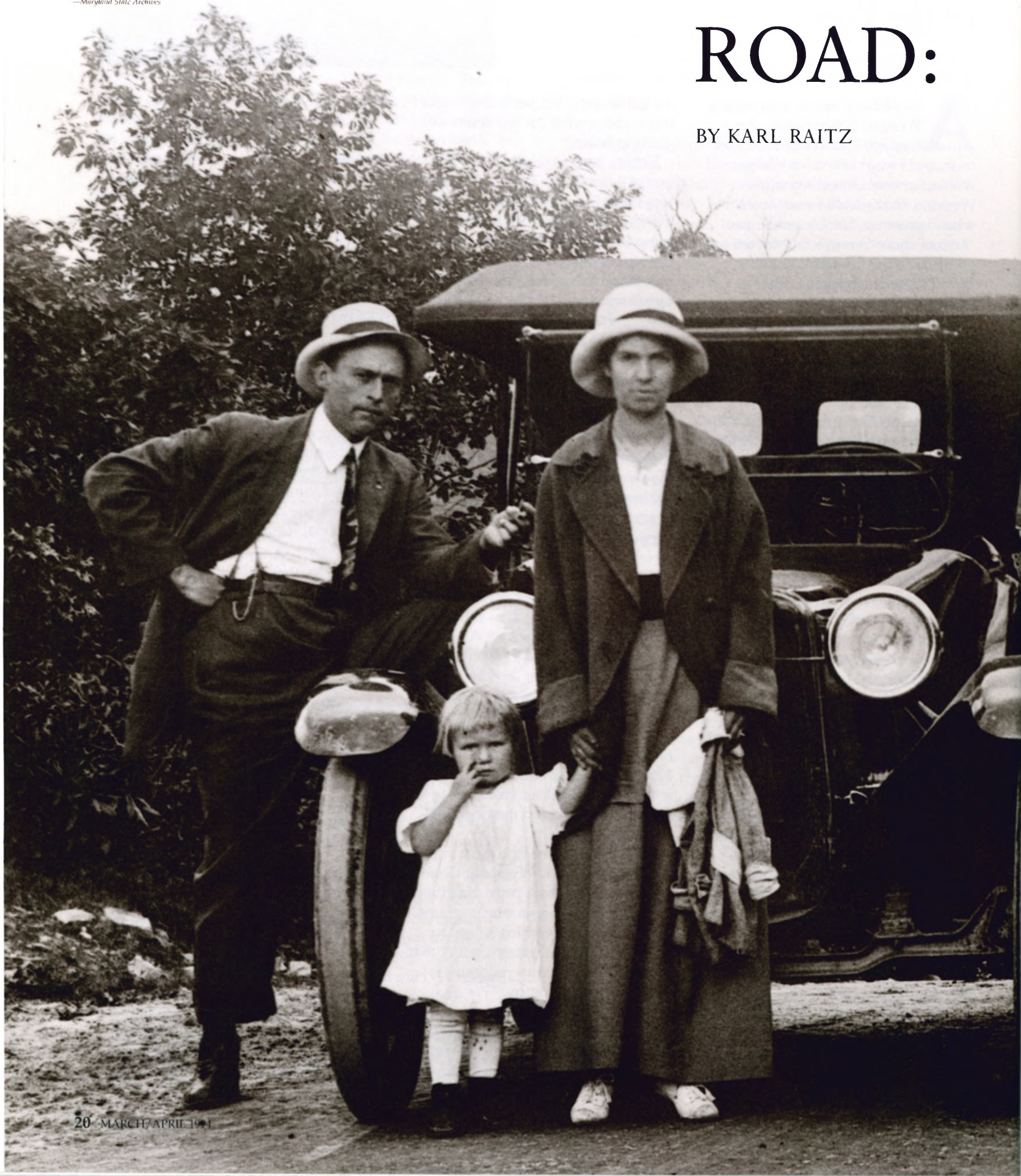
*Minna Hahn was a 1993 NEH summer fellow in the Office of Publications and Public Affairs.*



*The National Road, ca. 1920, at Negro Mountain, Garrett County, Maryland.  
Photograph by Leo J. Beachy (1874-1927).  
—Maryland State Archives*

# THE NATIONAL ROAD:

BY KARL RAITZ





# Life into Landscape

**A**merican culture is predicated on movement. Movement's common denominator—the place where it begins and ends—is the road. To know America, therefore, one must understand the development of the road, the access it provides, and the activities it stimulates. As people built roads and migrated to the areas around them, the relationships among roads, migration, and culture became a focus for historical analysis. The roadside landscape is a record, albeit complex and often difficult to read, of how American culture developed. The best place to search for the archetypal road that illustrates how life becomes landscape is an old road; not a simple track, abandoned and backwatered, but a road with purpose; a road built in the context of nation-building; a road that would become a key part of the national highway network. That road is the National Road—sometimes called the Cumberland Road.

When the Treaty of Paris brought the American Revolution to an end in September 1783, the new nation possessed vast lands extending from the Appalachians to the Mississippi. Known as the Northwest Territory, the region lay along the Ohio River's right flank. Thomas Hutchins, geographer of the United States, estimated that the North-west Territory contained some 220 million acres of government land. It could be sold to discharge the national debt. Though lightly settled, it was already reputed to be fertile country. In 1796, the French intellectual traveler Constantin Volney found farmers growing fourteen-foot-tall maize in the Scioto River valley. He concluded that the region's fertility would "be favorable to commerce and agriculture, and popular opinion has already manifested a preference for this district over Kentucky. It will, doubtless, prove hereafter the Flanders of America, and bear away the prize equally for pasture and tillage." Because early nineteenth-century roads were primitive, and rivers were the transport corridors of choice, a principal concern of eastern mercantilists and politicians was to gain access to this region drained by the "western rivers."







*Celebrating the completion in 1916 of a newly paved stretch of the National Road in Ohio. The lead car bears the sign, "Here comes Newark." Photograph by W. E. Rosengarten.*

Easterners were pleased that the potential wealth west of the Appalachians offered national fiscal solvency and personal fortune. But they were dismayed that the Northwest Territory was so remote, accessible only by way of primitive trails across central and western Pennsylvania and Maryland. Furthermore, the region's great river, the Ohio, flowed west and south, carrying regional commodities away from east coast cities to competitors in New Orleans. Arguing this point in a report to Congress in 1808, Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin articulated the need to reduce the cost of overland transportation so as to redirect commodities directly to eastern ports and to "shorten distances, facilitate commercial and personal intercourse, and unite...the most remote quarters of the United States...." Gallatin, supported by Henry Clay and Thomas Jefferson, proposed a broad program of canal and road construction of which the National Road would be a key part.

Because the National Road was the first federally planned and funded roadway, its construction and maintenance would bring into play political and economic processes that would become part of the nation's cultural milieu. It set the precedent for the federal government's involvement in planning and funding public transportation. The road provided an access route that enabled people to move beyond local-scale subsistence and participate in the larger regional or national economy and culture. Gallatin's plans illustrate how national political agendas and entrepreneurial objectives were linked to regional development through the road.

The National Road played a formative role in American life. It was a trial ground for practical application of transportation, travel technologies, and an avenue for exchanging ideas and products. A bill was passed in 1806 authorizing the road, which began in Cumberland, Maryland, and by way of Wheeling, West Virginia, and the capitals of Ohio and Indiana, ended in Vandalia, Illinois, in 1852. The route the National Road would follow was chosen for geographical expediency. It would link back to Baltimore, because Baltimore harbor was closer to the Ohio River in direct overland distance than was Philadelphia or Richmond.

Specifying that the road follow the shortest distance from Cumberland to the Ohio River, the government engaged surveyors to chart a path across the country's topographic grain and through regions whose names derive from the terrain that characterizes them: Coastal Plain, Blue Ridge, Ridge and Valley, Appalachian Front, Appalachian Plateau, and Interior Lowland. Six decades later, the railroad would use the National Road as a basis for a transcontinental route.

The road reached Wheeling, on the Ohio, in 1818. Trade accelerated as herds of cattle and swine and loads of farm produce were driven to eastern markets, and wagons returned to the interior with manufactured goods. Migrants and immigrants also increased in substantial numbers, according to observations recorded in diaries and other records.

A toll keeper in Zanesville, Ohio, recorded the following traffic on the National Road in 1832: more than 190,000 head of livestock, some 35,000 horses with riders, almost 15,000 one-horse carriages, 11,600 two-horse carriages and wagons, and about 2,300 three-horse wagons. He did not record the direction of travel nor the number of occupants in each wagon.

Many were directed by guidebooks to disembark in Baltimore, so they might follow the "less difficult road." They moved west along the National Road, bringing with them their religions, agricultural practices, and entrepreneurial talent.

Though the road's most direct seaboard connection lay at Baltimore, the surrounding countryside, especially the Maryland and Pennsylvania Piedmont, also contributed goods and migrants to the cross-cultural flow. Cultural geographers call this region the Middle Atlantic or Midland culture area.

Migrants included Scotch-Irish Protestants from Northern Ireland, German-speaking Pietists from the Upper Rhine Valley, and Quakers and others from the British Isles, each group bringing a distinctive cultural amalgam to the West.

Upon reaching the Ohio River they continued along the National Road, followed the Ohio River south to Cincinnati, or moved northwest to north-central Ohio. Scotch-Irish tended to favor Ohio's Virginia Military lands between the Scioto and Little Miami rivers, as well as the Miami Valley proper. The Pennsylvania Germans—among them Amish and Mennonites, Brethren and Moravians, and Lutherans, Catholics, and Calvinists—tended to favor the low plateau lands northwest. Quakers moved west along the road and initiated settlements along its length, at Uniontown, Pennsylvania, for example, and along the road or in adjacent counties across Indiana. The farmers of the mid-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania and Maryland Piedmont had been among the best in Europe when religious persecution drove them to accept William Penn's invitation to migrate to his colony. They planted crops in rotation, fed hay and corn to cattle and hogs, and used manure to enrich the soil. Their





system, and the landscape it created, was a radical departure from the frontier subsistence farming that they displaced.

Although some Miami Valley farmers grew Indian maize for sale to distilleries, most fed it to their livestock and so marketed their corn as beef or pork. As early as the 1830s, Miami Valley farmers led Ohio in corn production. They marketed their corn-fed hogs by either driving them south into Cincinnati, or along the road to eastern markets. By applying perfected husbandry techniques, Miami Valley farmers laid the foundation for what John Fraser Hart has termed the “second seed bed,” the source for farming practices that would prove popular across the Middle West, a region that eventually would become known as the Corn Belt.

Towns and villages along the National Road corridor reveal their Midland culture origins. Larger towns at important road and river junction points usually incorporated a rectilinear street grid patterned after Philadelphia’s. Smaller settlements often followed a simple linear plan in which all buildings faced the road. Being only one lot deep on either side of the road, the linear town was just that, a narrow, tightly packed cluster of road-oriented buildings with no cross streets or alleys. Somewhat larger settlements expanded the linear plan by incorporating regularly spaced cross streets which ran as far as the rear of the road-facing lots. The cross streets were connected by streets or lanes paralleling the main road. Drivers were expected to direct their herds along these back streets so that Main Street merchants and shoppers were not inconvenienced. Examples of linear village plans along the road are found in southwestern Pennsylvania, at Addison, and at Old Washington, Graftiot, and Etna, Ohio.

The road’s edge became a place where business people could test their entrepreneurial ideas, industrialists could employ available technologies, and residents could erect homes and farmsteads according to models thought to be practical. But some ideas and technologies would be found wanting within a few years. By the nineteenth century’s third decade, canals across New York and Ohio offered alternatives to overland travel, and before 1850, railroad construction crews began laying rails beside the National Road, heading west from Baltimore. Long-distance wagon traffic along the road declined. Clearly some wagon-era road-associated businesses and artifacts were outdated by



*The National Road through Grantsville, Maryland (Garrett County), in the pre-automobile era. Photograph by Leo J. Beachy.*

canal and railroad competition. And towns where people processed the commodities that moved along the road, or served the road’s travelers, now stagnated. Abandonment and dereliction would alter some roadside landscapes, but many structures remained in place

though their use might change—Georgian taverns became family homes, or were remodeled for business.

The internal combustion engine and Ford’s Model T would revive the National Road. But years of neglect had left the road in such poor condition that many sections were nearly impassible. Spurred by industry and the Good Roads Movement, the government instituted the Federal Aid Road Act in 1916 to provide funds for constructing a hard-surfaced cross-country national highway network.

The National Road became a key element in that network and, when concrete-surfaced, became known in some locales as “the hard road.” In 1926, the year that nationwide automobile registrations exceeded twenty million for the first time, the American Association of State Highway Officials adopted uniform route number designations for the nation’s roads, and the National Road became U.S. 40. Although federal road construction standards would shape the road itself, the landscape that grew up beside it was vernacular; built atop and among relict artifacts from the earlier wagon road era. This new automobile-oriented landscape was, just as the wagon landscape had been, the product of local people, individuals guided by nothing more formal than what their imaginations or nearby examples might suggest.

The new concrete road, now with curves straightened and grades flattened, and hump-backed stone bridges bypassed in favor of trussed iron and steel structures, inspired travelers to brave longer distances. The traffic, in turn, prompted local people to offer accommodations and other travelers’ services. In towns where businesses had clustered along Main Street or around the courthouse square for a century or more, entrepreneurs now erected new businesses at the edge of town. This location had the advantage of providing traveling motorists their first assurance that they could purchase fuel, food, and lodging while avoiding the congestion of the town’s center. Financial success demonstrated the wisdom of roadside business locations and the roadside rapidly became an accretion of small restaurants, service stations, and tourist camps, or what



town planners called "ribbon development." In 1934, *Fortune* magazine editors termed this new highway business strip the "Great American Roadside," which was "the most hugely extensive market the human race has ever set up to tease and tempt and take money from the human race."

As travelers avoided the central city, Main Street began to lose business, and in an attempt at revival, towns tried to turn themselves into road-sides. Businesses long ensconced downtown began moving to "shopping plazas" on the developing roadside ribbon, careful to assure that their parking lots had sufficient spaces for customers. Main Street had grown to serve local people who walked or traveled by carriage and wagon. When these folk bought cars, Main Street was doomed, and though the venerable Georgian, Italianate, and Victorian building facades remained, the businesses within would often fail, turn over to something else, usually to fail again. By 1949, one-seventh of United States business lived off the highway and all United States business sold to that seventh.

All along the road, stimulated by auto-borne customers and truck-borne commodities, a new vernacular roadside landscape emerged, based upon a thousand unstudied images of what people thought it should look like. This landscape began to change when franchise chains brought their centrally designed structures and planned site development to the roadside, especially after World War II. Oil companies purveyed gasoline from look-alike service stations. They were soon joined by Howard Johnson's restaurants and motels, and then a tide of others. The rise of the service station was symbolic, argued Charles Mertz in a 1925 *Harpers* essay, of the "conquest of America by Americans." Service stations were the prime facilitators of movement. By 1932, the nation patronized over 250,000 such stations. U.S. 40 was lined with them.

The highway strip evolved into a new kind of linear town, attached to an old National Road settlement, yet a very different place. Transient consumers and locals who offered goods or services frequented the strip; both groups usually lived elsewhere. Spatially it was oddly two-dimensional; like dots irregularly spaced on a line, the strip had length and width but its single-storied structures produced no urban



In 1926 the National Road became Route 40. The modern roadside strip still includes nineteenth-century buildings, such as the ca. 1840 Rush House, originally a stage house, in Farmington, Pennsylvania.

skyline. Nor was it historically stable. The U.S. 40 roadside, as with many other American highways, was a place of experiment and trial for notions of how to conduct a business, and failure was endemic. One founded business made way for another experiment as cinder block service stations became used car lots, and then garden supply stores.

Constantly evolving highway construction and automotive technologies, along with national political priorities, contributed to the roadside's instability. During the 1930s and 1940s, construction crews widened long sections of U.S. 40 to four lanes and built bypasses around small towns. Interstate 70 bypassed the entire route in the 1960s and many U.S. 40 businesses found themselves without access to freeway interchanges. Roadside businesses failed by the hundreds, among them a large proportion of the motels from Ohio west through Illinois. But, as in an earlier cycle, failed businesses were not torn down to bare earth but converted into business offices, nursing or retirement homes, or apartments.

Whether they work in Baltimore or Washington, Columbus or Springfield, Indianapolis, or Terre Haute, commuters are rediscovering old National Road villages bypassed by newer highways, and coveting them for their historical and commercial value. They convert dowdy Main Street buildings that once housed drug stores, barber shops, or banks, into boutique businesses, especially antique shops. New Market, Maryland, just east of Frederick, is now a mecca of antique shops. With interiors restored and facades painted, buildings emerge in still another guise, Main Street reincarnated as specialty shops. In small towns like Greenup, Illinois, or Centerville, Indian, or Cambridge, Ohio, the conversion to antique shops and tour bus restaurants mimics that of New Market, and profits may surpass those of any business that had occupied those buildings.

The theme of conversion and re-creation along the National Road and U.S. 40 corridor continues into the 1990s. Because of changing modes of transportation and technology, the roadside is a dynamic place. More than a link between otherwise disparate and distant places, the road is the route of cultural diffusion and a symbol of national identity. □

The National Endowment for the Humanities has funded an interdisciplinary group of historical geographers, historians, and landscape architects who will define, document, and illustrate how the National Road landscape has become a record of American life. The project's overall purpose is to produce two companion volumes to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press. Volume one, *The National Road: Theater of American Life*, to appear in 1995, is a collection of topical chapters that traces the political, cultural, and technological history of the road's construction and use, and how these processes mirror larger national trends. A second volume, *A Guide to the National Road: Landscaping and Meaning*, is a series of vignettes that will guide traveler or reader along each road segment and explain how the contemporary roadside landscape accumulates evidence of past events.

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# Americans in Motion:

## *Virginia, the South, Mobility, and the American Dream*

BY NELSON D. LANKFORD

### NOVA BRITANNIA. OFFERING MOST

Excellent fruites by Planting in  
VIRGINIA.

Exciting all such as be well affected  
to further the same.



LONDON

Printed for SAMUEL MACHAM, and are to be sold at  
his Shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the  
Signe of the Bul-head.

1609.

*Robert Johnson, a London alderman and official of the Virginia Company, wrote this promotional pamphlet pleading for colonists and describing "the earthly Paradise" of Virginia. In truth, of the 490 colonists who were living there after John Smith's departure in 1609, only sixty remained alive six months later.*

*Right: The Jolly Flatboatmen; engraved by Thomas Doney after George Bingham, 1847. Flatboats played a vital role in enabling Virginians to move westward.*



—Anon Carter Museum

**T**he Oregon Trail. Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Conestoga wagons crossing the Great Plains. Dust Bowl refugees on the road to California. For Americans of all backgrounds, a stream of potent images evokes the theme of mobility that peopled a nation of immigrants and has kept them on the move even since they arrived.

Though its role is often slighted in this familiar tale, the South as much as any other region is a part of the central American story—the movement of people to and within the United States. The area exerted a pivotal influence in the settlement of the successive Wests. It embodies today's mobility with the rise of the Sunbelt. Perhaps more than any other southern state, Virginia has highlighted these themes—from the original patterns of settlement in seventeenth-century Tidewater, to the trek across the Blue Ridge Mountains and down the Shenandoah Valley, to the unrelenting attraction of people into the sprawl of metropolitan



Washington, D.C., today. To examine what humanities scholars are saying on these subjects—and to try to tie them all together—the Virginia Historical Society will convene a symposium in March, entitled “Americans in Motion: Virginia, the South, Mobility, and the American Dream.” The conference will embrace the notion of mobility as a continuum from settlement to frontier to megalopolis. It will bring together historians, geographers, urban planners, city officials, and the public to consider the realities of our mobile society today in light of our equally mobile past. The symposium will coincide with the society’s related museum exhibition, also funded by NEH, “‘Away, I’m Bound Away’: Virginia and the Westward Movement.” This exhibit illuminates mobility with the evocative power of artifacts carried by migrating Virginians, rich and poor alike, to their new homes, wherever they might be.

In recent years historians and anthropologists have come to view early settlement in the Chesapeake region as a clash of mobile cultures, with indigenous Algonquians and European newcomers squinting at one another through ethnocentric eyes. The familiar blending of cultural traditions that we celebrate in the early twentieth century had its roots long before in the mixing that began between the Indian nations and those who dispossessed them.

Even before the Revolution, thirst for land drew Virginians into what historians call the backcountry, a hardscrabble region on the fringes of settled society. Beyond the Blue Ridge,

cut off from the maturing plantation communities of Tidewater, residents of the backcountry lived in a fluid ethnic mix unlike that in coastal settlements. In particular, large numbers of Scotch-Irish and Germans brought their own cultural traditions and folkways to the region.

Backcountry studies are among the most innovative right now in humanities scholarship. Settlement patterns, land use, kinship ties, and transmission of cultural influences are among the topics researchers are puzzling over in their exploration of the backcountry. For some writers, like David Hackett Fischer, author of *Albion’s Seed*, the persistence of cultural tradition is the main determinant of regional American society. Others, like Jack Greene in his *Pursuits of Happiness*, advocate a developmental model to explain the growth of communities. In each scenario, however, it is large groups of people—on the move, creating new societies, and carrying with them a dream of personal betterment—that are the focus of attention and are the agents of change.

By the early nineteenth century, the flow of Virginians west became a torrent. Seeing eastern land worn out by tobacco cultivation and filled with a belief that opportunity lay in the new territories beyond the mountains, young Virginians left in alarming numbers. Their elders despaired. The state became “one wide waste of desolation,” in the words of one who remained. In all, a million people left by the mid-nineteenth century. Though many migrants’ dreams were

dashed, that disappointment did not stop others from following.

When George Washington defeated the British at Yorktown, Virginia had been the largest, most populous, most influential state. Seventy-five years later it was reduced to a middling role. The change was dramatic. In 1850, more than 388,000 native-born Virginians lived in other states and territories, compared to 949,000 who remained. The sense of decay and decline that pervaded Virginia and the rest of the South Atlantic states by then was the flip side to the American dream of hopeful, expectant migration to greener fields in the West.

Social historians are beginning to take a new look at the wrenching experience that successive moves meant for these early mobile Americans. Joan Cashin’s study of women on the frontier, for example, has shown how they coped and reacted differently than men did to the uprooting of families. Other scholars are debating the nature of cultural transfer and persistence as Americans of different ethnic origins took their varied heritages to new locations.

Ironically, through its decline rather than its earlier leadership in the nation, Virginia was most able to influence the new communities of the West. Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Missouri were among the states where Virginians settled most heavily and where Virginia ways were most strongly imprinted. Both the decline and the influence can be seen dramatically in the political leadership of the West, where some 230 Virginians—their talents lost

*On the Road by Thomas P. Otter; 1860. As the nineteenth century progressed, Virginians moved as far west as Texas, Oregon, and California, and to the Rocky Mountains.*





to their native state—became members of Congress from other states. The architecture, law, land settlement patterns, as well as cultural values of these mobile Virginians are among the influences that scholars are studying.

Virginians of African descent participated in the movement of populations in ways altogether different. Their transportation through the horrors of the Middle Passage to a land not of opportunity but of enslavement set them apart at the outset. As slavery became more entrenched and state law increasingly discouraged individual emancipation, free black Virginians began to leave their native state for opportunity elsewhere.

Even so, the increase in free black Virginians troubled their white neighbors, most of whom did not think the races could exist together in harmony. As a result, an attempt to colonize free black southerners in West Africa led to the largest emigration ever to leave America when thousands of free blacks from Virginia and other states founded the republic of Liberia.

Most Afro-Virginians, however, had no choice in the patterns of their mobility. They, in contrast to the hundreds of thousands of whites and the thousands of free blacks who moved from Virginia for economic opportunity elsewhere, left involuntarily. Between 1830 and the Civil War, more than 300,000 Virginians of African descent were literally sold down the river to labor in the newly opened lands of the Deep South.

In the South as in the rest of the nation, the movement of people from

farm to city accelerated even before the frontier disappeared. Sometimes it was the burgeoning cities of the New South that benefited, sometimes cities in other states far away. The migration of southern blacks and Appalachian whites to northern and midwestern cities is the most striking example. The depopulation of rural America became a constant of twentieth-century demography. In the early decades rail lines charted the flows from specific regions of the South to specific northern cities, for example, from the Mississippi Delta up to Chicago. In recent decades interstate highways have superseded the railroads in this internal redistribution of Americans.

Since the mid-twentieth century the most potent demographic trend has been from city to suburb. After decades of this unchecked flow, the decline of central cities and congestion in suburbia have become commonplace American laments. As communities grapple with the resulting problems, the next wave has recently emerged. It even has a name, too, given by the title of Joel Garreau's influential book, *Edge City*. These communities combine dense concentrations of office, shopping, and residential property on the periphery of older traditional urban centers. Edge cities are springing up across the country, but the Sunbelt states of the South and Southwest contain the largest concentration of them. They are exemplified by such fast-growing communities as Tyson's Corner in northern Virginia in the vibrant metropolitan Washington area.

Virginia and the South offer leading examples of the demographic flows that are profoundly changing America at the end of the century. The return of African Americans from northern cities to the South that they or their parents or grandparents had left earlier in this century is one of the more fascinating eddies within the larger currents swelling the Sunbelt. The influx of Latinos and Asians, too, has become as much a part of the contemporary Virginia urban scene as in the rest of the nation.

"Americans in Motion" will assess the latest trends in humanities scholarship concerning these patterns and attempt to illuminate present-day concerns of older urban centers, suburbs, and edge cities alike by an examination of mobility in our collective past. "If there is any constant in American history, it is that we are a nation of movers," says Charles F. Bryan, Jr., the director of the Virginia Historical Society. He hopes his institution's focus in both the exhibition and the symposium will demonstrate how mobility is still as much a way of life today as it was in the days of the successive frontiers that have shaped American history. □

*Dr. Lankford is assistant director for publications and education at the Virginia Historical Society.*

*The Virginia Historical Society received \$106,801 to support a symposium and publication on settlement and mobility from Public Humanities Projects of the Division of Public Programs.*



—Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art



**EVERY THREE MINUTES SOME ONE  
IS DYING FROM CONSUMPTION  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

**10,000 PEOPLE DIED FROM IT  
IN NEW YORK CITY LAST YEAR**

# **INTERNATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS EXHIBITION**

**Held Under The Auspices of the Committee on the Prevention  
of Tuberculosis of the Charity Organization Society**

**AT THE  
MUSEUM OF  
NATURAL  
HISTORY**

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**AGAINST THE  
GREAT WHITE PLAGUE**



**ADMISSION FREE**

— Journal of Outdoor Life, January 1909



# MASTERING THE MICROBE:

## From TB to AIDS

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BY NANCY J. TOMES

**AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY ONE IN TEN PEOPLE DIED OF TUBERCULOSIS; ALMOST ONE IN FIVE CHILDREN LIVING IN URBAN AREAS DIED OF AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE BEFORE THE AGE OF FIVE. OUR MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF HOW GERMS CAUSE DISEASE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM DATE FROM THIS ERA, WHEN INFECTIOUS DISEASES WERE THE LEADING CAUSE OF ILLNESS AND DEATH IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS OF THE WEST. UNTIL THE LATE 1930s AND 1940s, NO EFFECTIVE DRUGS TO COMBAT THESE DISEASES EXISTED, SO PREVENTION REMAINED THE MOST RELIABLE MEANS TO CURB THEIR SPREAD.**

A new scientific theory that purported to explain how infectious diseases originated and spread caused tremendous excitement in the late 1800s. Although the idea of a *contagium vivum* dates back to Graeco-Roman times, the modern formulation of the germ theory dates from the second half of the nineteenth century, when more accurate microscopes and laboratory methods allowed scientists to isolate the microscopic agents of disease and to demonstrate convincingly their power to cause sickness in previously healthy animals.

Although sometimes perceived as a radical departure from traditional modes of explaining disease, the germ theory built upon an older conception of "filth disease" that had become widely accepted by the 1840s and 1850s. Studying the patterns of disease outbreaks in crowded cities, public health authorities of the day became convinced that the growing number of fevers was caused by air and water contaminated with "filth," that is, decaying plant and animal matter, including human excrement.

Early advocates of the germ theory did not dispute the general lines of the sanitarians' filth theory; rather they identified the disease agents as living microorganisms. The germ theory helped to explain why diseases seemed to crop up in different places without direct contact between one sick person and another; microbes might lie dormant in spore form, travel great distances in wind or water, and spring to life far away with fresh infective power.

While endorsing sanitarian concerns, the new bacteriological-influenced generation identified additional ways that germs from infected people entered the air and water supply, and were passed on, invisibly and undetected, to the healthy. Experimenters found disease-causing bacteria to be lurking in common house dust, on flies' feet, and even the hems of ladies' dresses. Many seemingly harmless objects—combs, cups, books, clothing, paper money—could serve as the intermediary for the germs' movement. In short, microbes were everywhere, continually exchanged in everyday social and commercial transactions.

At the same time, advocates of the germ theory were quick to acknowledge that what they termed the individual's "resisting power," or what today we call immunity, played a vital role in preserving health. They frequently invoked a metaphor drawn from the New Testament parable about the "seed and soil": Some germs fell on stony soil and quickly

THIS POSTER ADVERTISED THE 1908 EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY IN NEW YORK CITY, WHICH ATTRACTED MORE THAN 750,000 VISITORS.



perished, while others found rich soil and multiplied quickly and fatally. Exposed to identical levels of bacteria, someone in robust health might escape unharmed, while someone in a weakened condition, due to malnutrition, overwork, or indulgence in drink, would succumb to disease.

The reformulation of "safe" and "unsafe" behaviors in light of the germ theory was most obvious in the

of additional clinical and experimental work would be necessary before the ubiquity of tubercular infection was widely acknowledged.

Beginning in the early 1890s, groups formed across the country to alert the public to the dangers of the "great white plague." Enough local and state societies had formed by 1904 to warrant formation of a national group to coordinate and assist their activities: the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, soon shortened to the National Tuberculosis Association (now the American Lung Association). In the decades from 1900 to 1920, the antituberculosis movement became one of the largest and most successful initiatives in an era remarkable for its reform fervor.

Antituberculosis activists took aim at a number of habits common to Americans of all classes. At the top of their "don't" list was spitting. What countless etiquette writers had failed to do, the antituberculosis movement finally accomplished: They convinced lawmakers to make spitting a crime because sputum carried the tubercle bacillus. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, some thirty American cities passed laws prohibiting the practice and setting fines of up to \$500 for infractions.

Placards and circulars announcing that "SPITTING IS DANGEROUS, INDECENT, AND AGAINST THE LAW" appeared in streets, trolleys and railway cars, and public buildings across the country.

Another practice that aroused intense concern was the use of the common drinking cup. Americans had traditionally drunk their fill from public wells, troughs, and springs using wooden dippers or tin cups placed there for everyone's use. Concerned that the tubercle bacillus could be transferred on the rims of drinking vessels, antituberculosis crusaders pushed schools and public buildings to provide sanitary water fountains,

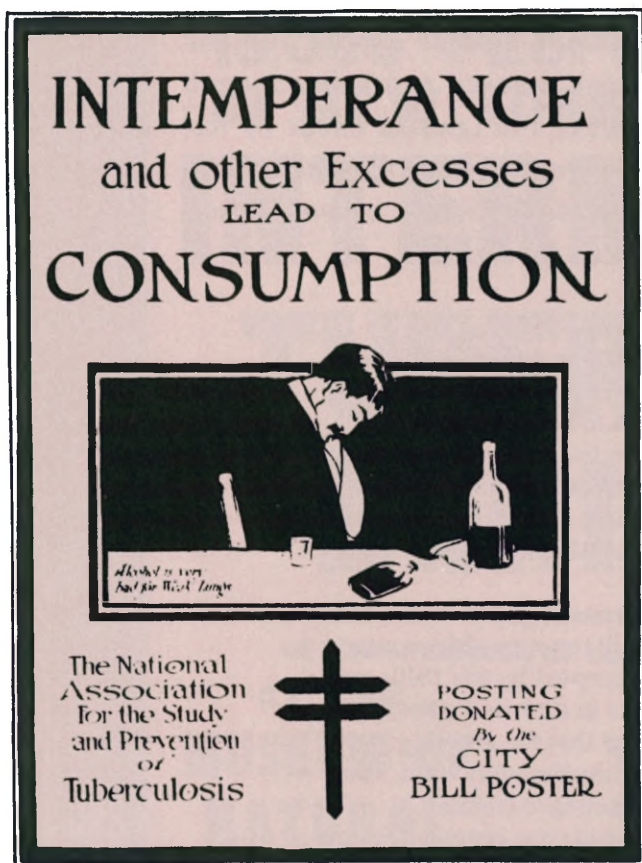
equipped either with individual paper cups or bubbling mechanisms. Under the same influence, many turn-of-the-century Christian congregations packed away their silver communion services and replaced them with "sanitary communion sets," with individual glasses that could be sterilized after every use.

The fear of tubercular infection prompted reconsideration of formerly innocuous social niceties, such as handshakes and kisses. A 1910 article entitled "Little Dangers to Be Avoided in the Daily Fight Against Tuberculosis" advised, "If we know that a friend has tuberculosis, we shall be wise if we avoid shaking hands with him, and we shall be extremely careful whom we kiss or whom we allow our children to kiss" (emphasis in original). Since scientific research suggested that the TB infection was often established in childhood, indiscriminate kissing and sharing of utensils among adults and babies was deemed particularly hazardous.

The old observation that the disease ran in families was recast in bacteriological terms to implicate poor housekeeping in its spread. American housewives were urged to do away with wall-to-wall carpets, plush upholstery, ornate furniture, and heavy drapery on the grounds that they were perfect lodgments for bacteria. The fear of tuberculosis contributed to the turn-of-the-century vogue for the so-called "arts and crafts style" in interior decorating. The new preference for using area rugs on bare wooden floors, plain furniture, and light, washable fabrics embodied hygienic as well as aesthetic principles.

Meal preparation required a new knowledge of bacteriological principles: Food had to be stored at cold temperatures to retard bacterial growth, and cooked thoroughly and at high heat to destroy any microbes. Manufacturers stressed the germicidal properties of cleaning products and provided "sanitary packaging" for food.

Washing the hands and face with a germicidal soap ensured that dangerous bacilli would be removed from the skin. Other personal health habits contributed to the all-important task of maintaining the individual's "resisting power." Getting adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, abstaining from alcohol, avoiding overwork or anxiety, and most importantly,



— Journal of Outdoor Life, January 1910

case of consumption, or tuberculosis. Unlike cholera or typhoid, for example, which were widely believed to be contagious prior to identification of their microbial agents, consumption had been considered a constitutional or hereditary ailment. Undoubtedly the most surprising revelation of the new bacteriology was the German physician Robert Koch's announcement in 1882 that he had isolated the bacillus that caused tuberculosis. More than any other disease, the germ theory of tuberculosis required a major reorientation of medical and popular thinking, and met with the strongest resistance. A decade or more



living as much as possible in the outdoor air, were powerful aids in the war against tuberculosis. A vogue for outdoor living arose in this period: Families opened windows wide, used Adirondack lawn furniture, pursued outdoor sports, and built sleeping porches as a means to strengthen health. For poorer Americans, particularly children, who were trapped in unhealthy city tenements, reformers raised funds for summer camps and open-air schools.

Millions of pamphlets, postcards, posters, and other health-promotional literature were distributed between 1895 and 1915. With the advent of anti-TB films in the 1910s, the tuberculosis crusade acquired yet another powerful publicity form. In conjunction with the TB societies, a whole range of Progressive Era organizations—women's clubs, settlement houses, Y's, scouting groups, well-baby clinics, and immigrant aid societies—also took up the educational campaign against infectious diseases. Perhaps the single most important educational institution was the public school system. Through classroom hygiene education and individual "inspections" by school nurses and physicians, young Americans learned the lessons of fighting infection through careful personal hygiene.

Recognizing that workers, particularly in the garment trades, print shops, and cigar manufacturing, had extremely high rates of the disease, labor unions formed committees to investigate the problem and invited TB workers to give educational programs for their members. Likewise, the staggeringly high rates of tuberculosis among African Americans led to separate black antituberculosis societies in the segregated South, which worked with black colleges and churches to spread the prevention message.

By the 1920s and 1930s, it would have been difficult to find an American, particularly under the age of twenty-one, who had not been exposed to the germ theory of disease and indoctrinated in the preventive rituals designed to ward off microbes. Exposure did not necessarily ensure compliance, of course, and by the 1910s, a new generation of public health authorities openly began to question the value of measures such as disinfection, suggesting that segregating those with advanced cases of tuberculosis was a more efficient use

of public resources than conducting expensive educational campaigns.

But proponents of popular health education had a powerful weapon to justify their labors: Beginning in the late 1800s, the death rates from infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, began to drop. Most likely, improved nutrition, water purification, mass vaccination programs, and changes in personal hygiene all made a significant contribution. But at the time, many public health workers took the evidence of declining rates to be proof that the educational campaigns were working. Similar strategies would be repeated as other medical scourges—polio and the 1918 influenza epidemic—appeared.

In retrospect, much of the rhetoric used by the health crusaders of the early twentieth century does seem overblown. Anti-TB workers were apt to exaggerate the dangers of casual infection and the scientific certainty of the measures they advocated. Yet much of the precautionary health behavior popularized in the Progressive Era still has validity today. A disease such as AIDS, however, which has a radically different pattern of transmission from tuberculosis or typhoid, was initially, and understandably, confusing. Many Americans responded to the AIDS threat with protective measures formulated to defend against a much older generation of microbial enemies.

The problem of assimilating information about a new disease with its own distinctive pattern of transmission has been complicated by the resurgence of the very same infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, once thought conquered by the earlier public health campaigns. In December 1993, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that TB infection in the United States had risen 20 percent since 1985. Many cases involve a new drug-resistant form of the disease. Faced with the prospect of a new generation of "superbugs"

resistant to antibiotics, the kinds of preventive behaviors that reformers once invested with such power to protect against disease have suddenly acquired renewed importance.

If, indeed, we are entering a new era of concern about the so-called superbugs, the relevance of Americans' past campaigns against infectious disease will become even more apparent. For the slate is never wiped clean:



—Journal of Outdoor Life, January 1910

Information about old diseases is employed to respond to new ones, underlining the importance of appreciating the historical dimension of modern health beliefs. In learning anew to master the microbe, each generation must begin with the legacy of the past. □

Nancy J. Tomes, associate professor of history at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, received \$129,000 from the Humanities, Science, and Technology program of the Division of Research to research a book on the impact on the American public of the germ theory of disease.



# "Typhoid Mary"



## and the Public's Health

BY JUDITH WALZER LEAVITT

Most Americans have heard of "Typhoid Mary." The epithet connotes a polluted woman, someone who carries and gives disease to others, someone to be shunned, dreaded, and ridiculed. As often depicted, Typhoid Mary is barely human, "a fiend dropping human skulls into a skillet."

The real woman behind the demonized representation was Mary Mallon, an Irish immigrant who worked as a cook in the homes of New York City's elite at the turn of the twentieth century. One day in 1907 her employment came to an abrupt end when public health officials—with no warning or warrant—knocked at her door and dragged her, kicking and screaming, into a city ambulance. Literally sitting on top of Mary Mallon to restrain her, Dr. S. Josephine Baker wrote that the trip to the hospital was "like being in a cage with an angry lion." The officials took Mallon briefly to the Willard Parker Hospital and then deposited her in what would become her permanent isolation home, a one-room bungalow on North Brother Island in the East River on the grounds of Riverside Hospital.

Health officials detained and quarantined Mary Mallon because they had epidemiological and later laboratory evidence to prove that she, although symptomless and healthy herself, harbored pathogenic bacteria in her body and transmitted typhoid fever to the people for whom she cooked. When she was first incarcerated, twenty-two cases could be traced to her, among whom was a young girl who died from the disease. Mary Mallon was the first person in North America who had been traced and identified as a healthy carrier of typhoid fever.

Mary Mallon claimed never to understand the basis on which she, a healthy woman in mid-career, could be incarcerated. As she put it to a reporter, "I never had typhoid in my life, and have always been healthy. Why should I be

banished like a leper and compelled to live in solitary confinement with only a dog for a companion?"

While the reasoning behind her isolation may have eluded Mary Mallon, to Hermann Biggs, medical officer of the New York City Department of Health, Mary Mallon epitomized the necessity of infringing on individual rights in order to protect the public's health. If she were allowed to continue to cook for unsuspecting New Yorkers, public health officials argued, she would continue to transmit the disease. Isolating her on an island seemed the logical response to contain her danger.

Another reason for Mallon's isolation was that she defied—indeed, denied—the authority of science and of government. She never admitted to having been sick, and she refused to believe she was responsible for anyone else's sickness or death. She insisted she was persecuted and being held a prisoner against her will. She rejected social and medical arguments and saw her case as unjust denial of liberty. She was extremely uncooperative. Instead of interpreting her behavior as perhaps natural in a person who was seized and held indefinitely against her will, health officials labeled Mary Mallon a deviant. They described her as unkempt and disordered, hot tempered, and unfeminine. These social characterizations, however irrelevant to her public health danger, became part of distancing her, creating an image of a distinct "other."

After two years alone in her cottage, Mary Mallon brought suit for release from her quarantine. Represented by legal counsel, she filed a writ of habeas corpus, and her situation became a topic of public discussion.

By the beginning of the twentieth century most Americans agreed that government could act to prevent disease even when that meant the occasional infringement on the liberty of those who might stand in the way of disease prevention. Most such infringements—for example,



compulsory smallpox vaccination which had been sanctioned in the 1905 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*—were viewed as the cost of health for the majority. Many Americans supported identification and isolation of those deemed dangerous to the public's health, because most of the people affected were already on the margins of society. Immigrants and the poor were overrepresented among those who became the objects of public health actions.

In court, Mallon's lawyer argued that Mallon had never been sick with typhoid and could not be the "menace to society" that the health department claimed. The judge, while voicing some sympathy, sided with the health department, and sent Mary Mallon back to her island retreat.

After another year of isolation, a new health commissioner decided that Mary Mallon had been locked up long enough, and he released her on the promise that she would not cook again. Ultimately she reneged on this agreement, and in 1915 the health authorities found her cooking at the Sloan Maternity Hospital, the site of twenty-five new cases of typhoid fever. This time they sent her back to her isolation cottage for the rest of her life. On November 11, 1938, Mary Mallon died, having been a "special guest of the City of New York" for more than twenty-six years.

At the time of Mallon's death, almost four hundred other New Yorkers had been identified as healthy carriers of typhoid fever. None other than Mary Mallon had been forcibly isolated. The health department had learned a lot from Mallon about the intermittent nature of typhoid infectivity and about how to control the spread of the disease. As Dr. S. Josephine Baker put it, "she has been of great service to humanity." Mallon represented the worst-case scenario, preparing health officers to cope with other healthy carriers and providing them with an argument to use to increase their authority. Her life and liberty became expendable to a greater good.

Our collective worries about our present health dilemmas—how do we protect people from unnecessary exposure to HIV infection or drug-resistant tuberculosis at the same time as we protect individuals from overzealous interference in their lives—make the Mary Mallon story relevant and compelling today. What do we think, as a nation and as individuals, about taking away the liberty of someone who is sick or someone who carries sickness to others? Do we value health more than we do liberty or do we value liberty above health? It is difficult for most Americans today to envision themselves as the object of this predicament, as the ones whose liberty may be threatened in the effort to protect the health of the community. We have become, as were Mary Mallon's contemporaries, masters of "othering" the sick or the contagious, by labeling them as separate and stigmatizing them. In remembering Typhoid Mary and her fate, we may conceive a different narrative for today's public health dilemma, one which would esteem both the individual sufferer and the public's welfare. □

*Judith Walzer Leavitt is professor of the history of medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical School. Leavitt received an Interpretive Research grant of \$156,000 from the Division of Research Programs to research a book on Typhoid Mary.*

## Grants on Health and Public Policy

Medical research and health care have posed ethical questions, provoked debate, and changed human behavior for centuries. The following samples of NEH projects examine these issues.

- The Saranac Lake Free Library in Saranac Lake, New York, received \$50,000 to script a documentary film on the American response to tuberculosis from 1850 to the present.

- Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg offered community forums and produced videotapes on ethics in modern medicine and technology with a grant of \$160,503.

- An exhibition on the history of the mass production of penicillin during World War II was supported by a \$35,000 grant to the Brooklyn Historical Society in Brooklyn, New York.

- Sidney A. Halpern of the University of Illinois at Chicago received \$4,750 to study ethical disputes surrounding the 1935 polio vaccine controversy.

- A \$4,000 grant to Susan O. Long of John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, supported research on bioethics and medical decisions in a cultural context.

- The New York Public Library received \$35,579 for an exhibition and lectures on the history of sanitation and public health in New York City from 1850 to the present.

- Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California, held a conference and a series of community forums on ethics and health care for the aged with a grant of \$171,290.

- CUNY Research Foundation/Bernard Baruch College in Brooklyn, New York, received \$141,167 to support a history of mental health and social services for African-American and Hispanic youth in New York City from 1940 to 1976.

- David L. Gollaher of San Diego State University, California, researched Dorothea Lynde Dix and the origins of the American asylum with a grant of \$30,000.

- The University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington received \$47,979 to write a history of the Farm Security Administration's rural health programs for low-income farmers during the New Deal era.

- Dolores A. Peters of Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, received \$4,000 to research French social medicine in the thirties.

- Angela T. Thompson of East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, studied the transformation of public health in Guanajuato, Mexico, 1750-1860, with a \$750 travel grant.

- Research on infectious disease and social change in nineteenth-century Philippines by Ken De Bevoise of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, was supported by a grant of \$3,750. □



# *"A Sound Mind in*



Akrobatische Sektion des Turnvereins Milwaukee, 1866 (*Gymnastic team from the Milwaukee Turnverein*). —Photos courtesy of IUPUI University Libraries

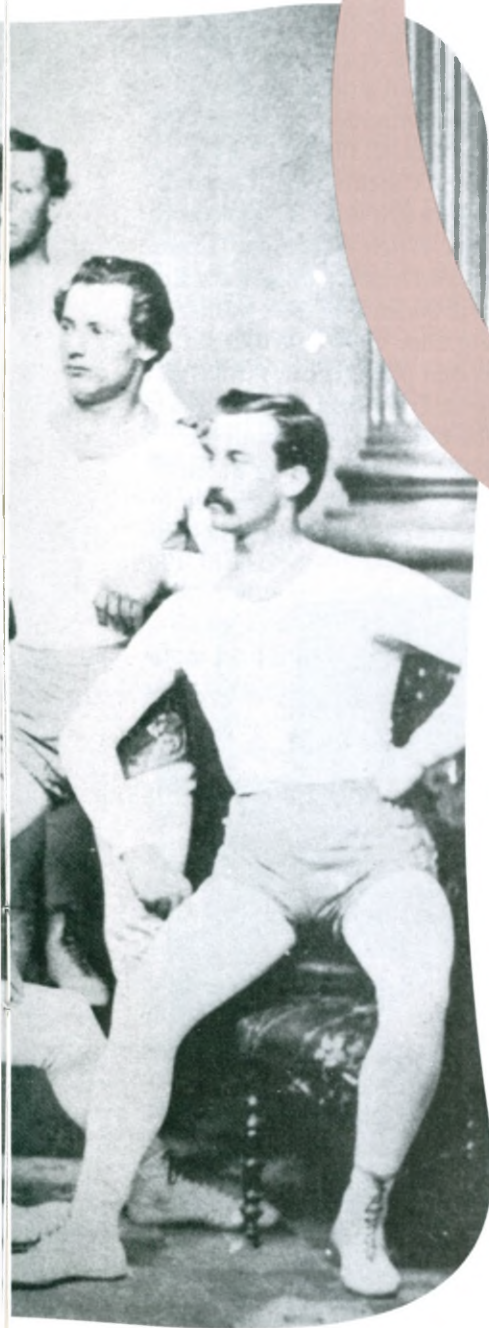


# A Sound Body”

By Eric L. Pumroy  
and Katja Rampelmann

## Turner Societies in the United States

Only a remnant of the old German gymnastic societies, or Turnvereins, still survives in the United States, but in their heyday from the late nineteenth century until World War I, members of Turner societies played prominent roles in the civic, business, and cultural affairs of nearly every major American city, and their magnificent Turner halls served as community centers for a large and prosperous German immigrant population. The story of the Turners in America is largely unknown, partly because the movement declined during the twentieth century, but also because German ethnicity in the United States was suppressed by two world wars in which Germany was the enemy.





The Turner movement was founded in Germany in 1811 by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn as a training program for young men, to make them physically and mentally fit in preparation for the liberation and reformation of the German states. His idea, summed up in the motto "mens sana in corpore sano" (a sound mind in a sound body), was to restore the spirit of his countrymen following their defeat by Napoleon by developing their physical and moral power through the practice of gymnastics. In German these gymnastic exercises are called *turnen* and the person performing them is known as a *Turner*. German Turners were much more than gymnasts, though. Turner organizations were banned throughout Germany in the 1820s because of their radical political activities, but they reemerged in time to play a prominent role in the democratic revolutions of 1848. After the tumult was bloodily suppressed by German authorities, many Turners were among the political refugees who came to the United States and quickly formed new Turner societies. The first Turner societies (or *Turnvereine*) were formed in Louisville and Cincinnati in 1848. Within three years there were twenty-two societies, primarily in cities in the East and Midwest; a national organization, *Die Vereinigten Turnvereine*

*Amerikas* (the United Turnvereine of America); a national newspaper, the *Turnzeitung*; and national competitions and conventions.

The first Turners in America were an interesting group. Among the founders of the Cincinnati Turnverein was Friedrich Hecker, one of the principal military leaders of the revolutionary movement in Germany and later a general in the Union Army. The New York Turnverein included among its early leaders Franz Sigel, minister of war in the republican government of Baden during the 1848 revolution, and also later a Civil War general. Turnvereins in smaller towns may have had less prominent revolutionaries, but revolutionaries they were nonetheless. The German immigrants who formed the Davenport, Iowa, Socialistischer Turnverein in 1852, for example, consisted of Turners who had participated in the uprising against Danish rule in Schleswig-Holstein a few years earlier.

With this radical background, it is not surprising that Turner societies quickly found themselves in the middle of American controversies over immigration and slavery. Turners were a particular target for nativist attacks during the 1850s, undoubtedly because of their distinctive white uniforms, their conspicuous and militaristic mass drill exercises, and their truculent opposition to both nativism

and slavery. In the mid-1850s Turners were at the center of riots in Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio; Louisville and Covington, Kentucky; and Hoboken, New Jersey. In each case the well-trained and well-armed Turners managed to hold their own against large mobs, although not without casualties. In the process they gained a reputation among German immigrants as both a source of protection and a source of trouble.

It was the Civil War, though, that won the Turners a position of prominence in the German community. Turners had been active in the anti-slavery movement since the early 1850s, and the 1855 national convention of Turner societies made opposition to slavery one of the organization's leading political principles. For some Turners, opposition to slavery was more than a debating issue. Turner guards provided protection for abolitionist Wendell Phillips during his speeches in Cincinnati and Boston, and Turners fought with the Free Soilers in Kansas. When war came, Turner societies moved quickly to support the Union cause. Because of their military-like training, they were able to form companies that played critical roles in preserving St. Louis and other border cities for the Union. Throughout the country, Turners were among the first to volunteer for military service. More than two-thirds of Turners in America



Girls' gymnastic class from the Indianapolis Southside Turners, early 1920s.



*Turnvereins in smaller towns may have had less prominent revolutionaries,  
but revolutionaries they were nonetheless.*

served in the Union Army, compiling a distinguished record of military service. Regiments such as the the 20th New York and the 9th Ohio, made up principally of Turners, suffered heavy casualties during the war but earned their members a reputation for discipline and courage.

The activities of the Turners after the Civil War were less dramatic but in the long run were far more influential. The existing Turnvereins recovered quickly after the war, and new ones sprang up to meet the needs of the growing number of German immigrants. The military reputation of the Turners undoubtedly helped to recruit new members, but so did their standing in most cities as the organization for educated, professional-class German immigrants. In the years after the war most Turnvereins abandoned their political militancy and evolved into athletic, social, and cultural organizations. The programs of these societies and the individual activities of the members played an important role in the cultural and intellectual life of their cities, particularly in the eastern and midwestern cities where German immigrants settled in large numbers.

By the end of the century there were more than three hundred Turner societies with more than 40,000 members throughout the United States. Most societies sponsored an array of cultural activities, including libraries, theatrical groups, singing societies, German schools for children, lecture series and, of course, gymnastics programs. In addition to activities sponsored by the societies, members of the Turners often played leadership roles in musical, educational, and other German cultural organizations, reflecting the higher educational and professional status enjoyed by many Turners. In Indianapolis, for example, members of the Frenzel family, founders of one of the city's major banks, were prominent both in the Turnvereins and the Maennerchor, the largest German singing society in the city. The most notable connection, though, was between Turners and Freethinkers, an antireligious movement popular among

German liberals. Through their meetings and lectures, the Freethinkers advocated rationalism, science, and history as the proper guides for living, and harshly criticized established religions for promoting superstition and bigotry. In both Indianapolis and Milwaukee, there was considerable overlap in the leadership of both the Turners and Freethinkers in the late nineteenth century. The owners and editors of the Freidenker (Freethinker) Press in Milwaukee, Carl Doerflinger and C. H. Boppe, were active at the national level in the American Turners. The press handled most American Turners' publishing from the mid-1880s until World War I. In Indianapolis, nearly all of the leaders of the Socialer Turnverein at the turn of the century had been members of the Indianapolis Freidenker Verein, and the Turner hall hosted a Freethinker Sunday school for children that lasted into the 1910s.

The Turners' cultural influence was also due in part to the physical facilities that they built or acquired for their gymnastics activities, but which became community centers for the local Germans. In Chicago, for example, the Aurora Turner Hall was the largest public facility in the German neighborhoods of the northwest side. As a result, it was constantly in use for neighborhood meetings, political rallies, plays, concerts, balls, and banquets sponsored by numerous German organizations in the city. In the 1870s it hosted performances of Alexander Wurster's popular German theater, and in the 1880s, political rallies of the anarchist International Working People's Association. The home of the Indianapolis Socialer Turnverein, now on the National Register of Historic Places, was constructed in the 1890s with the express purpose of serving as a German community center. The building, known as "Das Deutsche Haus," included not only the Turners' gymnasium, but also a restaurant, theater, ballroom, and meeting rooms used by numerous other German-American organizations, such as the German-English School Society, the

Musikverein, the German-American Veterans Society, the German Ladies Aid Society, and Der Deutsche Klub.

The cultural field in which the Turners may have had their greatest influence on the non-German community was physical education and sports. At their 1880 national convention, the Turners adopted a resolution calling for the introduction of physical education programs in public schools. During the following years Turners played leading roles on the local and state levels to accomplish this goal. In the 1890s, Ohio became the first state to make physical education compulsory in the public schools when the legislature passed a bill written by Anton Liebold, a Turner instructor, and introduced by legislator John Molter, a member of the Sandusky Turnverein. Similarly, Indianapolis introduced physical education in the public schools that same decade when Turners Clemens Vonnegut and John P. Frenzel served on the city's school board. In many cities, including Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis, the schools' first physical education instructors had been trained by the Turners or were working as instructors in local Turner societies. Many of these people were graduates of the Turners' normal college, which had been established in 1866 to train gymnastics instructors for Turnvereins, but which later also served as one of the major sources of physical education teachers for the public schools.

The mellowing of the Turners' political fervor after the Civil War did not mean that they abandoned an interest in politics. The national conventions throughout the late nineteenth century continued to debate and take stands on major issues confronting American society, and Turners took strong stands on the need for both political and social reform, particularly to improve working conditions for the growing number of industrial laborers in the nation's cities. While resolutions passed at the national level may have had little effect on American politics, Turners at the local level were frequently in a position to influence



*By the end of the century there were more than three hundred Turner societies with more than 40,000 members throughout the United States*

events. For instance, the New York Turnverein included among its leaders Sigismund Kaufmann, the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor in 1870, and Franz Sigel, who held a number of important positions in the city. Turners in other cities routinely served on school boards and city councils.

Turners also played a prominent role in issues that were of particular concern to the German community. The domestic issues that aroused their greatest concerns were Prohibition and Sabbath-Day laws, both of which threatened traditional German ways of life. The brightest spot of the week for German immigrants was Sunday, a day they wanted to spend at taverns, Turner halls, and other clubs, where they could sing, talk to friends, drink beer, and enjoy athletic and cultural activities. In the mid-nineteenth century, many cities prohibited most social and cultural activities on Sundays, and the movement to outlaw the sale of alcohol altogether was gaining support. The national Turner convention in 1855 made opposition to Prohibition one of its fundamental principles. Throughout the following half-century Turners worked with other German-American organizations to fight laws that restricted German

social life. In foreign affairs, Turners supported their homeland and other peoples of Germanic origin, most notably the Boers of South Africa. In 1902 the executive board raised funds for the relief of the Boers, and corresponded with Clara Barton of the American Red Cross about the failure of the Red Cross to participate in such relief efforts.

World War I provoked a crisis for the Turners, as it did for most German-American organizations. In many cities charges of disloyalty and strong anti-German sentiment prompted many organizations to abandon the use of the German language and adopt English names. In Indianapolis, for example, the Sozialer Turnverein changed the name of its home from Das Deutsche Haus to The Athenaeum, and the Unabhängigen (Independent) Turnverein became the Hoosier Athletic Club. In towns with smaller German communities, Turner societies simply disbanded to escape anti-German attacks. Once America had entered the war with Germany, Turners strongly supported the United States, but in the years before and after the war Turners worked to maintain American neutrality and to offer relief to German civilians. In early 1915 the executive board issued a circular calling for the United

States to maintain a strict observance of its neutrality, and asking Turners to contribute to a fund that would support relief efforts in Germany. These actions were not strong enough for some Turners: Later that year the Portland, Oregon, Turnverein called for the Turners to lead German Americans in a march on Washington, demanding that the United States stay out of the war. Following the war, the American Turners quickly reestablished ties with Germany. From 1919 to 1921 they raised more than \$18,000 for German relief, in addition to whatever relief activities were undertaken by individual societies. The Women's Auxiliary of the Athenaeum Turners, for example, helped to support orphanages and children's hospitals in Germany in the early 1920s.

The Turner movement still survives in the United States, with about eighty societies and 14,000 members. Nonetheless, its size and influence is much diminished as the result of both the anti-German pressures earlier in the century and, more permanently, by the declining need for German ethnic organizations as the German-American community was absorbed into American society. Even the Turners' athletic programs have been supplanted by those at YMCAs and private health clubs, while many of the grand old Turner halls have been razed. Nevertheless, the cultural movement promoted by the Turnvereins has left its mark on their adopted country, most notably in public playgrounds and physical education programs in schools. □



*Students from the Normal College of the American Gymnastic Union (the Turner college), performing mass drill exercises on Monument Circle, Indianapolis, in 1918.*

*Eric L. Pumroy is head of the Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. Katja Rampelmann is archivist for the American Turners Historical Records Survey Project.*

*To support a project to locate records of the American Turner societies, IUPUI awarded \$118,525 from the Division of Preservation and Access.*



**B**etween the two world wars an intense health care debate took place in the United States. One of the most outspoken participants in the discussion was Hugh Cabot (1872-1945), a leading advocate of reform of the medical profession.

Cabot was a urologic surgeon who in 1919 left a faculty post at Harvard to become professor and head of surgery, and a few years later, medical dean, at the University of Michigan. From 1930 to 1938, he was a consultant and teacher at the Mayo Clinic.

The branch of the Boston Cabots to which Cabot belonged was noted for pursuing social causes as well as professional careers. In the nineteenth century, his family supported abolition, equal pay for women in the workforce, improved public education, and the admission of women to Harvard Medical School; in the twentieth century, the eight-hour day for steel workers, sex education and birth control, the establishment of medical social service, medical ethics and business ethics, and innovations in medical education that are still in use in 1994. Hugh Cabot's major lifelong cause was making good health care accessible and affordable for all Americans—with "good" defined to include prevention along with diagnosis and treatment.

"My background is shockingly conservative," Cabot wrote in 1940, "but I have a weakness for the underdog. I was brought up and lived for some forty years in the atmosphere of the New England Town Meeting." His conviction that every thoughtful, informed opinion has a right to be heard in a democracy made him a formidable opponent when the American Medical Association attempted to dictate how physicians could offer health care to the American people. After the AMA closed the pages of its journal to opposing views and misrepresented the experiences of physicians and patients in countries having national health services, Cabot turned to other outlets, where his frank opinions found a ready welcome.

Cabot's professional credentials were as striking as his drive to be heard. Before he seriously locked horns with Morris Fishbein, who held power within the AMA altogether disproportionate to his position as editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Cabot had served as a member of the AMA House of

# MEDICAL MAVERICK

During the 1930s a doctor named Hugh Cabot crusaded for universal health care

BY PATRICIA SPAIN WARD

## Cost of Medical Care Too High, Dr. Cabot Says at A. M. A. Trial



**Dr. Cabot Defends Group Medicine**

Prominent Boston physician testified today that it is difficult for the average person to pay for adequate medical care.

Hugh Cabot was the government's lead witness during litigation charging that the American Medical Association had illegally conspired in restraint of trade in obstructing prepaid group practice.



**Surgeon Hugh Cabot, of the Mayo Clinic, attacked organized medicine for allowing medieval standards of practice.**

Cabot testified at the National Health Conference, convened by the Roosevelt administration in July 1938 to unveil its plan for expanded federal involvement in health care.





On July 27, 1939, after the American Medical Association appeared to have won exemption from antitrust prosecution, this cartoon appeared in the Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*.

Delegates, as a leader in the restructuring that made the AMA a more effective scientific body, and as head of the AMA Section on Urology. He had also been president of the American Urological Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges and a member of the Commission on Medical Education.

Although Cabot's best-known efforts concerning the economic and social aspects of medicine are *The Doctor's Bill* (1935) and *The Patient's Dilemma: The Quest for Medical Security in America* (1940), his reform ideas covered a wide range of health-related matters, often reflecting profound empathy with the patient's perspective. Soon after graduating from Harvard Medical School in 1898 he joined Extensor Communis, a group of fiery young Boston physicians dedicated to such causes as rigorously enforced clean milk legislation and municipal funding of hospital schools for children with tuberculosis. In 1910, when Mayor John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald closed Boston's only hospital school, Cabot

authorized a sympathetic journalist to "go out after him and be not satisfied until you get him bald-headed."

At the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1910 Cabot established a genitourinary department, said to be the first such facility in New England. He also served the medically indigent at the Boston Dispensary, where evening hours enabled working people to find low-cost treatment for various urological afflictions, including what were then called venereal diseases—notably syphilis and gonorrhea. In *Collier's* in 1913 Cabot advocated sex education for women as well as men. To reduce the cost of health care, he urged the sale of drugs under generic rather than trade names and the expanded use of nurses, their education sharply upgraded, in the care of patients. When the outbreak of World War I in Europe inflated the price of the German-made drug Salvarsan by a factor of ten, threatening to destroy low-cost treatment programs for syphilis victims, Cabot lobbied Congress to abrogate the German patents and

clear the way for manufacture in the United States.

Like his physician-brother, Richard Clarke Cabot, who was once disciplined by the Massachusetts Medical Society for calling public attention to the failings of the profession, Hugh did not hesitate to publish the fact that fee splitting was "universally condemned but widely practiced" and that, although "a prison offense in some states," it had "grown like the bay tree" in the years after World War I. He made frequent and widely publicized demands that medical organizations police their membership more stringently against unnecessary surgery and incompetent practitioners.

Until 1916, when he left Boston to spend three years at the head of a crack Harvard surgical unit that he organized to serve with the British Expeditionary Force in France, Cabot supported his wife and four children by a flourishing private practice. In addition, he accepted as natural obligations the teaching of medical students and house staff and the care of sick and injured patients unable to pay for treatment—tasks that consumed half his work time. Like other physicians faced with this "conflict of interest," he resorted to a sliding fee scale, charging his affluent patients enough to reimburse himself for some of the hours that he devoted to uncompensated service. He detested being forced by this economic dilemma into playing "income tax collector," and he frankly characterized fat fees collected from wealthy patients under this system as taxes—just as real as any collected by government, but more odious because their purpose of underwriting care for the poor was usually hidden.

Although his combined full-time positions as professor, department head, and dean at Michigan paid far less than he had earned in his Boston practice, they provided an acceptable level of financial security while removing considerations of payment between himself and his patients. This gave him freedom to practice medicine with what he called "undivided allegiance."

At the Mayo Clinic after 1930, as at Ann Arbor, he enjoyed working in a group of salaried physicians who were assisted by first-rate laboratory and hospital services in bringing their specialties to bear on questions of diagnosis and treatment. His experience



during these two decades persuaded him that two steps were essential to any restructuring of health care delivery that would improve its quality while reducing its cost: First, most physicians should work in well-balanced groups, sharing the costly technology that had provided medicine with so many advances; second, fee-for-service must give way to salaries funded either through prepayment or taxation.

From his study of national health systems operating elsewhere in the Western world, Cabot concluded that the best ones had been built on foundations already in place. The United States had many of these: tax-supported health care for military personnel and for the tuberculosis patients cared for by the Public Health Service; Farm Security Administration programs that paid for health care for some 600,000 rural Americans and prepaid groups that sprang up all over the nation during the Depression; voluntary health insurance plans offered by medical societies hoping to fend off the specter of compulsory health insurance. Even from largely negative experiences with Workman's Compensation there were lessons to be learned: that administrators must be chosen with great care and in consultation with the medical profession; and that using commercial insurance carriers only served to introduce "the element of profit." "I cannot bring myself to believe that the care of the health of the community is a proper subject for private profit," Cabot wrote. "No examination of the history of insurance carriers, whether under these [Workman's Compensation] acts or others, can fail to show that the profit motive is working here to the disadvantage of the beneficiary."

Although he believed that once the public demanded it, compulsory health insurance could result in good care as he defined the term, Cabot also believed that the profession must first be reorganized to effect economies and that a single federal agency must be created to establish and maintain standards of care and to disperse funds to the states according to their need. But he believed that the United States would be wise to experiment first with various forms of prepayment, and that organized medicine should encourage and assist such efforts, rather than obstructing them

by expelling participating physicians from society membership and revoking their hospital privileges.

Cabot found several ways to respond to AMA harassment of prepaid groups. In *The Doctor's Bill* he advocated a system of federal medical licensure to replace the disparities of state licensure with a uniform set of standards, such as that enforced by the National Board of Medical Examiners. Licensed physicians would then be permitted, under an open hospital policy, to join the staff of any hospital in the nation.

Eleanor Roosevelt and journalist Esther Everett Lape were responsible for the second route that Cabot took toward medical reform. Lape asked 2,200 American physicians whether their direct experience confirmed the belief that Americans were receiving proper health care. Her anonymous correspondents filled 1,500 pages (*American Medicine: Expert Testimony Out of Court*, two volumes, 1937) with evidence that medical practice must change to accommodate new preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic capabilities, and that some form of government funding was needed for education, research, and health care.

Lape selected a small group of progressive physicians (the Committee of Physicians for the Improvement of Medical Care) to prepare a statement of medicine's needs as they saw them. Through her friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, Lape arranged for this group to present their ideas to President Roosevelt over luncheon at the White House. Elated to find that the AMA did not speak for the entire profession, Franklin Roosevelt urged the committee to seek support for their statement.

The board of trustees of the AMA, secretly informed that Lape's group had visited the White House, agreed to meet with committee representatives. Morris Fishbein, however, met their demand for a more

open editorial policy at *JAMA* with the statement that he could not be expected to destroy the value of the *Journal* "for the notion of every nitwit that comes along." Cabot, who acted as committee spokesman during the meeting, replied coldly that he had hoped the discussion might remain on a higher level. The AMA trustees demanded that the committee clear its future plans with the AMA before acting. The committee refused. By November 1937, when the committee released their "Principles and Proposals" to headlines in all the major newspapers, they had gathered 430 signatures from many of the nation's most prominent physicians and surgeons, who previously had no forum for dissent from AMA policies.

In 1938 Cabot presented Assistant Attorney General Thurman Arnold with the story of organized medicine's harassment of low-cost prepaid groups, particularly the Group Health Association, located in the District of Columbia and therefore subject to antitrust law. Under Arnold's direction, the Justice Department undertook the case, using Cabot as a witness

Oh, Most Upright Judge!



The *Baltimore Sun* of July 27, 1939, criticized Thurman Arnold's attempt to apply antitrust law to the professions.



before the grand jury that indicted the AMA and several other medical societies on charges of conspiracy in restraint of trade. Cabot was again the government's lead witness in the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia as the case made its way toward the Supreme Court, which upheld a guilty verdict in 1943.

Inspired by Scotland's "Highlands and Islands Medical Service," Cabot proposed a system to make better use of young physicians' energies while also providing them with clinical experience and answering the problem of physician distribution. In Cabot's plan of state or regional health systems, young M.D.'s would work on salary in remote, underserved areas of the United States. For advice and consultation they would be connected by telephone (Cabot foresaw the use of television for this purpose too) with older, experienced physicians whom Cabot envisioned as working in groups at the hospital center of each state or regional health system. As these younger doctors gained experience, Cabot's plan called for them to be pulled in to staff the central group, replacing their retired or deceased seniors and being replaced in turn at their outposts by newly graduated physicians.

Of all the AMA positions that he opposed, the one that galled Cabot the most—next to the harassment of pre-paid groups—was the organization's insistence into the late thirties that 85 percent of illness could be adequately cared for by the average family doctor, armed only with what he could carry in his "little black bag." Cabot's book, *The Doctor's Bill*, with its discussion of the general practitioner's plight amid mushrooming medical knowledge and specialization, did not denigrate general practice. To the contrary, Cabot believed that every medical group should have at its center a highly trained and skilled generalist (family practitioner) to develop personal relations with the patient, a well-rounded clinician who could keep specialists from taking too narrow a view of the patient's problem. He also told wonderful stories of diagnostic, therapeutic, or prognostic coups by family doctors who had known their patient's relatives for generations back—and thus had clues to constitutional peculiarities that modern technology could not detect. But Cabot recognized that

this special brand of knowledge was a vanishing commodity in an increasingly mobile society, and he believed that every modern practitioner bent on giving high quality care must employ the newest tools relevant to medicine.

One final AMA shibboleth that Cabot attacked in *The Doctor's Bill* was that the "free choice of physician" would be endangered by any system other than private fee-for-service. "The doctrine of freedom of choice," Cabot wrote, "seems to me quite lacking in an economic basis unless and until the medical profession is prepared to classify its members quite accurately and in such a way as to make the possibility of selection by prospective patients an intellectual process and not largely guesswork."

Early in World War II the published results of physical examinations for military service belied AMA assurances that Americans were "the healthiest people on earth." To the contrary, fully half of all the early draftees had to be rejected because of health problems, most of them the result of years of medical or dental neglect. In the *Survey Graphic* for March 1942, Cabot urged that rejectees with remediable defects—poor teeth, vision, or hearing, or neglected venereal diseases—be inducted anyway and immediately treated at government expense at existing training centers equipped with excellent dentists, doctors, laboratories, and hospitals.

Cabot also drew what he called "the lesson of the rejectees" from the draft data: "The only valid conclusion...is that our present methods have failed to produce fit people." Most of the remediable defects found in the draftees, he noted, "spring from inability to pay the bills which are often beyond the people's means." He laid some of the blame for this on organized medicine's determination to "retain the shibboleths of free choice, individual competition between physicians, and fee for service methods based on 'what the traffic will bear'" and some on the fact that American physicians emphasized curative medicine to the neglect of prevention and health maintenance, including good nutrition.

Cabot believed that to achieve "positive health" the nation needed more, not fewer, doctors, as well as more well-trained public health nurses,

products of a four-year curriculum leading to a Bachelor of Medicine degree. (Such a nurse, he added, would be "really a practitioner of medicine in a limited field, although this fact is as yet unrecognized by our Medical Practice Acts.")

Cabot was blunt about the cost of such a comprehensive health system. "It is useless to blink at the fact that large funds will be necessary in order to put medical care upon a really comprehensive basis." He proposed that employed persons contribute through payroll deductions, as they did for Social Security. Although collection would be more complex for the self-employed, such as farmers and fishermen and small employers who chiefly used their own family members, the federal government must also gather contributions from them and from the affluent who needed no help in paying for health care "but who should nonetheless contribute to the common weal." Cabot again invoked a federal supervisory authority to distribute funds and maintain standards of care, allocating larger proportions to the less prosperous states and communities, but always paying out funds only to physicians organized in groups whose methods and outcomes met federal guidelines.

When Cabot died suddenly in August 1945, he was a medical director of Health Service, Incorporated, a prepayment group that provided "complete medical attention" for only \$48 per year per family to Boston families having annual incomes of less than \$3,500. He did not live to see an integrated tax supported system of salaried physicians working in groups to provide first-rate health care to all Americans, but he did publish indictments of the prevailing system, indictments that earned him the title, "Martin Luther of American Medicine." Many of the reforms he proposed have been enacted over the past half century. Others are under discussion in the current health care debate. □

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Patricia Spain Ward is the author of the recently published *Simon Baruch: Rebel in the Ranks of Medicine, 1840-1921*.

Ward received a Humanities, Science, and Technology grant for \$87,000 from the Division of Research Programs to research and write a biography of Hugh Cabot.



# Calendar

MARCH ♦ APRIL

BY AMY LIFSON

"Frank Lloyd Wright: Architect," which continues at the Museum of Modern Art in New York through May 10, contains 350 drawings, scale models, full-scale reconstructions, architectural fragments, and photographs of Wright's work, such as this one pictured of the Avery Coonley House in Riverside, Illinois.



—© 1993 Museum of Modern Art



The American cowboy and all its aura is descended from the earlier Mexican vaquero. "El Rancho in South Texas, Continuity and Change Since 1750" opens in April at the John E. Conner Museum in Kingsville, Texas, examining the influences of the Spanish and Mexican traditions on what became the Texan ranch.

—Mary Ann Bruni



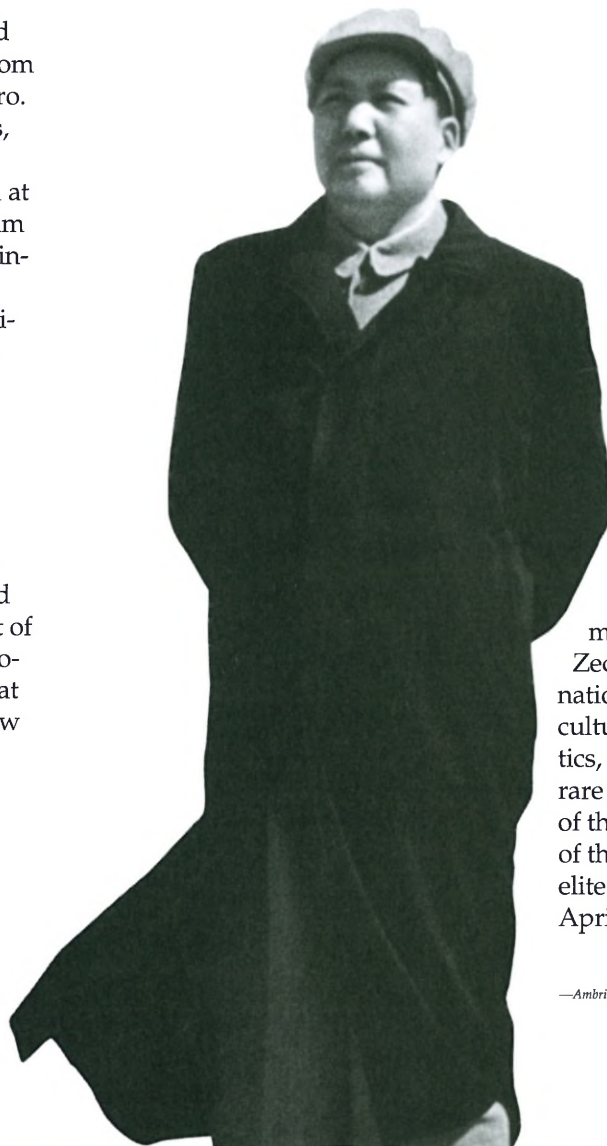
This photo of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, erected in 1948, is part of "The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History" showing at the Jewish Museum in New York City from March 13 through July 31.

—Jewish Museum

♦ "Creating History: The Valentine Family and the Valentine Museum" opens April 28 at the Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia. The exhibition presents the development of the American middle class in the nineteenth century by following the lived history of three generations of the Valentine family.

♦ "Cultural Identity in a Multicultural State: Muscovy 1359-1584" is the subject of a conference to be held at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, March 10 through 12.

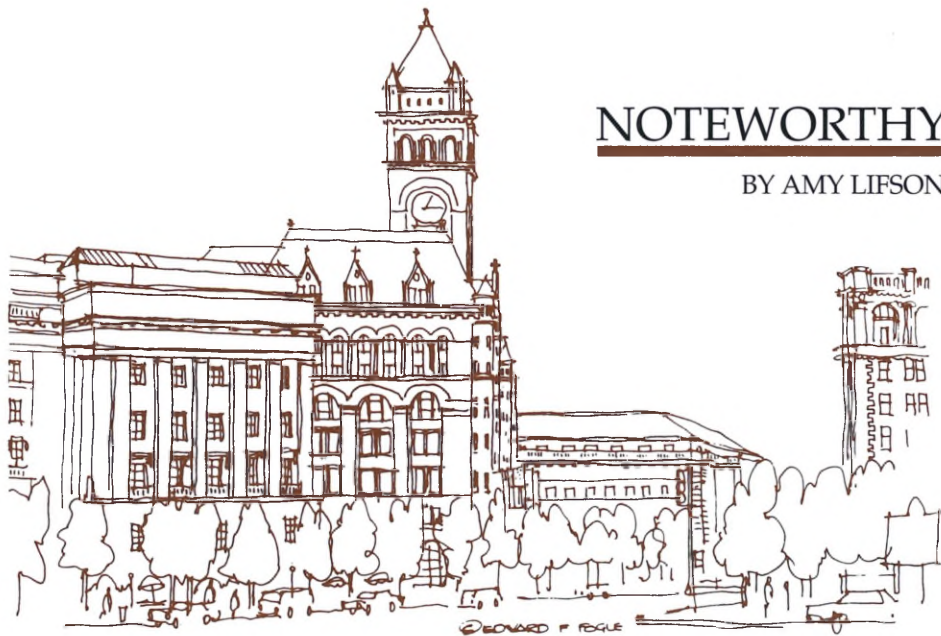
♦ "European Nationalisms Revisited: An Interdisciplinary, Cross-Cultural Approach to Conceptual Classification" will be discussed at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 25 through 27.



*The Mao Years* documents Mao Zedong's domination of Chinese culture and politics, and includes rare film footage of the private lives of the communist elite. The film airs April 13 on PBS.

—Ambrica Productions





## NOTEWORTHY

BY AMY LIFSON

### Fraternal Rites

"Getting the third degree" used to mean performing the three degrees or rites needed to reach the Blue Lodge in the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. These degrees based on the biblical story of Hiram Abif—the master builder of Solomon's Temple—consisted of long, complicated rituals in which the candidate was asked to memorize, and produce objects, according to the myth.



—Courtesy of University of Minnesota

*Exotic scenery from a 1901 rite of Solomon's first temple, Scottish Rite Temple, Duluth, Minnesota.*

To add to the pageantry, degrees of most fraternal organizations in America between 1885 and 1920 were staged and performed with scenery and costumes that rivaled the opera houses of the time.

"Theater of the Fraternity: Staging the Sacred Space" is an exhibition being organized by the University of Minnesota Art Museum. The show examines the influence and use of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theatrical techniques in staging fraternal rites.

"The degrees or rites were really morality plays," says Lance Brockman, professor of Theater Arts at the

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. "Fraternal organizations took off after the Civil War and had a decidedly military influence. They were basically drill centered until the turn of the century when theater took over," says Brockman.

"The Scottish Rite started to dramatize their degrees using new lighting effects and full theatrical presentation," Brockman contends it was this theatrical hook that made the Scottish Rite the premiere fraternal organization in the twentieth century, surpassing in numbers the Independent Order of Red Men, the Knights of Pythias, and even the Tribe of Ben Hur, based on the popular novel by Lew Wallace.

Brockman says that the dramatization of Scottish Rite was a southern and western phenomenon before it came to the East. "The people in the West had money, leisure, and the incentive to show that their towns had culturally come of age. The fraternal rituals were the first civic drama produced for many young American towns. It was a sure sign of progress."

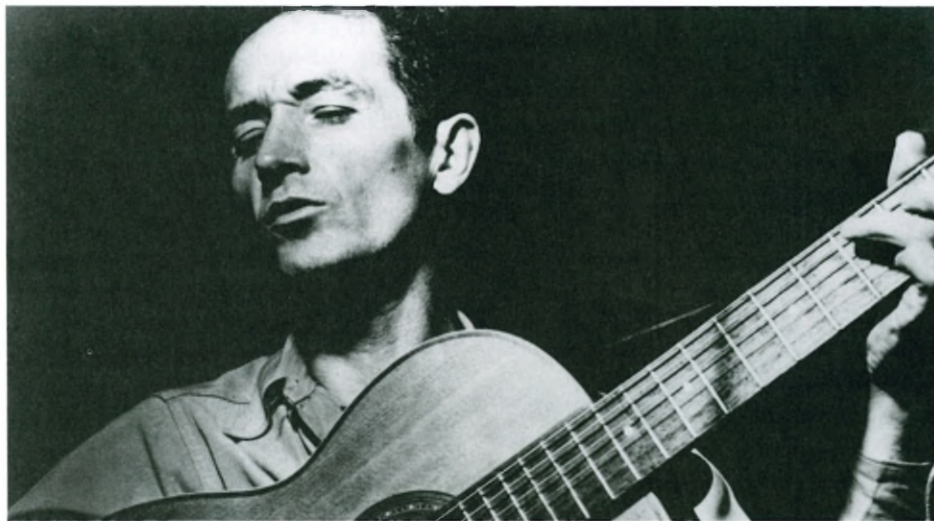
### American Legend

Woody Guthrie wrote four different versions of the song "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You," ranging in subject from the Dust Bowl to World War II. He wrote the first one on April 1, 1940, and described the circumstances that inspired it: "This actually happened in Pampa, Gray County, Texas, April 14, 1935. I was there. The storm was black as tar and as big as an ocean. It looked like we was done for. Thousands of us packed up and left out. This song is on a victor (sic) record, too, I think. Anybody got four bits?"

This never before published narrative, along with a listing and related manuscripts and master recordings, will be included in a biblio-discography of all the songs recorded or written by Guthrie.

Project director Guy Logsdon says that Guthrie wrote more than one thousand songs between 1935 and 1953. "The importance of Woody is that no creative artist used as much energy and talent to produce commentary on the events of the thirties, forties, and even fifties," says Logsdon. "His songs are illustrations of those times."

Logsdon expects the multivolume index to be used to locate sheet music, specific recordings, manuscripts, lyrics, and even poetry by Guthrie. "I hope people will recognize that Woody was a poet," says Logsdon. "Some have compared him to Walt Whitman, and in a sense Woody was a continuation of that American poet tradition, but he used the simple language of folk culture. He wasn't trying to impress anyone." □



*Woody Guthrie, ca. 1940.*

—Courtesy of Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings



# HUMANITIES GUIDE

FOR THOSE WHO ARE THINKING OF APPLYING FOR AN NEH GRANT

The NEH Challenge Grants Program assists the nation's academic institutions and cultural organizations in securing greater levels of long-term support for and improvements in their programs, activities, and resources in the humanities. Unlike other areas of subject matter in the humanities, challenge grants may be used in a variety of ways that will strengthen the humanities over the long run and contribute to the financial stability of the grantee institution. The program also obliges applicants and grantees to invest in serious, long-range planning for the future of those institutions and for the fundamental development of the humanities. So the "challenge" is not only to raise three or four dollars to match each dollar in the federal grant, but also to plan for future growth in the humanities. The ability to attain or to sustain a high level of quality in the institution's work in the humanities must be demonstrated in the application. In addition, the matching requirement challenges institutions to increase its sources of support and, in turn, challenges potential donors to recognize and support the role of the humanities institutions in the educational or cultural life of their communities.

Direct expenditure of grant funds covers a wide range, from the construction and renovation of buildings to the purchase of equipment and acquisitions to enhance collections. Grant funds may also be invested in endowments restricted to supporting various needs in the humanities such as staffing, fellowships, public programs, lectureships, travel costs, and acquisitions. The range covers and exceeds that of all other Endowment funding categories, with the critical distinction that challenge grants funds, both federal and non-federal, must always be used to support long-term needs.

Institutions are limited to two awards. In the case of a first challenge grant, three non-federal dollars must be raised for each federal dollar offered, and for institutions seeking a second award, four non-federal dollars

## Challenge Grants

BY EDYTHE MANZA

are required to match each dollar of the NEH offer. In recent years the federal portions of challenge grants have ranged from \$25,000 to \$1 million.

The Challenge Grants Program is administered through three divisions within NEH: Education Programs, Research Programs, and Public Programs. Applications which focus primarily on precollegiate and undergraduate education in the humanities are reviewed in the Division of Education Programs. Applications which focus primarily on the exploration of humanities issues through programs for the general public are reviewed in the Division of Public Programs. Applications from institutions and organizations whose missions support advanced research and scholarship in the humanities are reviewed through the Division of Research Programs. With the exception of elementary and secondary schools, any U.S. nonprofit institution or organization may apply for a challenge grant.

Examples of new awards made in the Challenge Grants Program during fiscal year 1993 include Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., in Mystic, Connecticut, which received an offer of \$500,000, which, together with \$2 million in matching funds, will be used to create chairs similar to those in a university, insuring a varied and broad interpretation of the relationship between maritime activities and American social, economic, and political history through the museum's exhibitions, education programs, and

publications. The award will enable the museum to endow two positions for research associates, who would be scholars in American history; establish postgraduate fellowships; provide funds for visiting scholars; and establish an endowment for the development of exhibitions and programs in the humanities.

The University of California, Irvine, received an award of \$500,000 to ensure the future maintenance of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG). Begun more than twenty years ago and one of the first computer databases developed for scholarly research, the TLG contains all known Greek literary texts from the period of Homer. The development of the TLG was supported previously with grants from the Division of Research Programs. The challenge grant will enable the university to establish an endowment, the income from which will support two part-time staff who will maintain the integrity of the data, add new editions of texts, and perform occasional upgrades of the technology.

The American Indian College Fund in New York received an award of \$750,000, which will be matched with \$2,250,000. These funds will be used to create an endowment to support Native American studies programs on the campuses of tribal colleges in the United States. Endowment income will support faculty development activities, including sabbaticals, exchanges, and research in Native American studies.

The application deadline for Challenge Grants is May 1. Applicants are encouraged to submit draft applications to the appropriate division before the May 1 deadline. For further information or advice, and to request application forms and guidelines, write or call:

Division of Education Programs, Room 302, 202/606-8380; Division of Public Programs, Room 426, 202/606-8358; Division of Research Programs, Room 318, 202/606-8358. These divisions are located at: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20506. □



# DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES

## DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS *James C. Herbert, Director • 606-8373*

Area code for all telephone numbers is 202.	Deadline	Projects beginning
Higher Education in the Humanities • <i>Lyn White/Marie Tyler-McGraw 606-8380</i> .....	April 1, 1994	October 1994
Institutes for College and University Faculty • <i>Barbara A. Ashbrook 606-8380</i> .....	April 1, 1994	Summer 1995
Science and Humanities Education • <i>Deb Coon 606-8380</i> .....	March 15, 1994	October 1994
Teacher Preparation • <i>Susan Greenstein 606-8380</i> .....	April 1, 1994	October 1994
Two-Year Colleges • <i>Judith Jeffrey Howard 606-8380</i> .....	April 1, 1994	October 1994
Challenge Grants • <i>Fred Winter 606-8380</i> .....	May 1, 1994	December 1994
Elementary and Secondary Education in the Humanities • <i>F. Bruce Robinson 606-8377</i> .....	March 15, 1994	December 1994
Teacher-Scholar Program • <i>Annette Palmer 606-8377</i> .....	May 1, 1994	September 1995
Special Opportunity in Foreign Language Education .....	March 15, 1994	October 1994
Higher Education • <i>Thomas Adams 606-8380</i>		
Elementary and Secondary Education • <i>F. Bruce Robinson 606-8377</i>		

## DIVISION OF FELLOWSHIPS AND SEMINARS *Marjorie A. Berlincourt, Director • 606-8458*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Fellowships for University Teachers • <i>Maben D. Herring 606-8466</i> .....	May 1, 1994	January 1, 1995
Fellowships for College Teachers and Independent Scholars • <i>Joseph B. Neville 606-8466</i> .....	May 1, 1994	January 1, 1995
Summer Stipends • <i>Thomas O'Brien 606-8466</i> .....	October 1, 1994	May 1, 1995
Faculty Graduate Study Program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities • <i>Maben D. Herring 606-8466</i> .....	March 15, 1994	September 1, 1995
Younger Scholars • <i>Leon Bramson 606-8463</i> .....	November 1, 1994	May 1, 1995
Dissertation Grants • <i>Kathleen Mitchell 606-8463</i> .....	November 15, 1994	September 1, 1995
Study Grants for College Teachers • <i>Clayton Lewis 606-8463</i> .....	August 15, 1994	May 1, 1995
Summer Seminars for College Teachers • <i>Joel Schwartz 606-8463</i>		
Participants .....	March 1, 1994	Summer 1994
Directors .....	March 1, 1994	Summer 1995
Summer Seminars for School Teachers • <i>Michael Hall 606-8463</i>		
Participants .....	March 1, 1994	Summer 1994
Directors .....	April 1, 1994	Summer 1995

## DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS *George F. Farr, Jr., Director • 606-8570*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Library and Archival Preservation Projects • <i>Vanessa Piala/Charles Kolb 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1994	January 1995
Library and Archival Preservation/Access Projects • <i>Karen Jefferson/Barbara Paulson 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1994	January 1995
National Heritage Preservation Program • <i>Richard Rose/Laura Word 606-8570</i> .....	November 1, 1994	July 1995
U. S. Newspaper Program • <i>Jeffrey Field 606-8570</i> .....	June 1, 1994	January 1995

To receive guidelines for any NEH program, contact the Office of Publications and Public Affairs at 202/606-8438. Guidelines are available at least two months in advance of application deadlines.

Telecommunications device for the deaf: 202/606-8282.



# DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES ♦ DEADLINES

## DIVISION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS *Marsha Semmel, Acting Director • 606-8267*

Area code for all telephone numbers is 202.	Deadline	Projects beginning
Humanities Projects in Media • <i>James Dougherty 606-8278</i> .....	September 16, 1994	April 1, 1995
Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations • <i>Suzi Jones 606-8284</i> .....	June 3, 1994	January 1, 1995
Public Humanities Projects • <i>Wilsonia Cherry 606-8271</i> .....	September 16, 1994	April 1, 1995
Humanities Projects in Libraries • <i>Thomas Phelps 606-8271</i>		
Planning .....	May 6, 1994	October 1, 1995
Implementation .....	September 16, 1994	April 1, 1995
Challenge Grants • <i>Abbie Cutter 606-8361</i> .....	May 1, 1994	December 1994

## DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS *Guinevere L. Griest, Director • 606-8200*

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Scholarly Publications • <i>Margot Backas 606-8207</i>		
Editions • <i>Douglas Arnold 606-8207</i> .....	June 1, 1994	April 1, 1995
Translations • <i>Helen Agüera 606-8207</i> .....	June 1, 1994	April 1, 1995
Subventions • <i>Kathryn C. Hansen 606-8207</i> .....	March 15, 1994	October 1, 1994
Reference Materials • <i>Jane Rosenberg 606-8358</i>		
Tools • <i>Martha B. Chomiak 606-8358</i> .....	September 15, 1994	July 1, 1995
Guides • <i>Michael Poliakoff 606-8358</i> .....	September 15, 1994	July 1, 1995
Challenge Grants • <i>Bonnie Gould 606-8358</i> .....	May 1, 1994	December 1994
Interpretive Research • <i>George Lucas 606-8210</i>		
Collaborative Projects • <i>Donald C. Mell 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1994	July 1, 1995
Archaeology Projects • <i>Bonnie Magness-Gardiner 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1994	April 1, 1995
Humanities, Science, and Technology • <i>Daniel Jones 606-8210</i> .....	October 15, 1994	July 1, 1995
Conferences • <i>David Coder 606-8210</i> .....	October 1, 1994	April 1, 1995
Centers and International Research Organizations • <i>Christine Kalke 606-8210</i>		
Centers for Advanced Study .....	October 1, 1994	July 1, 1995
International Research Organizations .....	October 1, 1994	July 1, 1995

## DIVISION OF STATE PROGRAMS *Carole Watson, Director • 606-8254*

Each state humanities council establishes its own grant guidelines and application deadlines. Addresses and telephone numbers of these state programs may be obtained from the division.

## CHALLENGE GRANTS PROGRAM

	Deadline	Projects beginning
Applications are submitted through the Divisions of Education, Research, and Public Programs	May 1, 1994	December 1994



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