ENCOUNTERING THE AMERICAN WEST:

THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY, 1750-1820

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By

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Introduction

For more than two centuries, American national identity has been tied inextricably to the idea of the West. The western dream of individual freedom and limitless expansion has shaped American cultural values and political ideologies. Literature, theater, and film have retraced the legends of the West and reinterpreted its heroes for modern audiences. Encountering the West has become a mode of examining America itself, a way of understanding the possibility and loss embodied in the national experience.

The lure of the West began with the earliest European voyages across the Atlantic, but it was not until the late eighteenth century that a distinctively American West emerged. In the great expanse of territory stretching from the Appalachians to the Mississippi, circumstance and opportunity created an arena of complex struggles that prefigured other western eras that followed. Its promise drew soldiers, adventurers, speculators, and common folk into the rich lands of the Ohio River Valley and the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. Its potential also provoked international rivalries, struggles for political power, appropriation of Native American lands, and the expansion of slavery beyond the eastern seaboard.

Encountering the American West explores the trans-Appalachian West from the beginning of European American settlement to the end of the frontier period, focusing particularly on the Ohio River Valley and Kentucky. It examines how those who came to the West encountered its possibilities and challenges and how they understood and later interpreted their encounters with other western peoples and cultures.

Items on display in this exhibition are selected from materials digitized for inclusion in a new web site, "The First American West: The Ohio River Valley, 1750-1820." A grant-funded project for the Library of Congress American Memory national digital library program, "The First American West" was developed by the University of Chicago Library in collaboration with the Filson Historical Society of Louisville, Kentucky. The web site being completed this spring is the result of cooperation between the Special Collections Research Center, Preservation Department, and Digital Library Development Center of the University of Chicago Library and the library and special collections staff of the Filson Historical Society.

The Library's richest source of original materials for this exhibition and for its contributions to the American Memory web site is the Reuben T. Durrett Collection on Kentucky and the Ohio River Valley. Additional materials in the exhibition are drawn from related print and manuscript holdings in the Special Collections Research Center and the General Collection of the Library.
Part 1: CONSTRUCTING A WESTERN PAST

Case 1
LEGENDS AND HISTORIES

When Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* first appeared in successive editions between 1784 and 1788, most of his readers in Europe and America knew little of the vast lands to the west of the Appalachians. Won by the United States in its war of independence from Britain, the first American West stretched from the Great Lakes south to Spanish Florida and from the crest of the Appalachians westward to the Mississippi River. For those eager to exploit the untapped western riches described in Jefferson's book, the history of the great territory was a blank page waiting to be written upon.

Today's western historians face a far different documentary landscape. Scholars seeking to interpret the trans-Appalachian West are faced with the challenge of untangling the complex and contradictory body of written records and testimony left in the wake of the settlement era. Equally important, they must examine the past through a powerful and distorting haze of myth, legend, and folklore that has shaped American understandings of the West since the late eighteenth century. Created while the forcible occupation of Native American lands was still underway, the earliest writings on the West sought to soften the harsh realities of western conquest and transform a brutal and often bitter struggle into an inspiring and heroic narrative.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the reconfigured biography of Daniel Boone, the Carolina hunter and explorer who made an intermittent living in the newly settled Kentucky as surveyor, land speculator, and store owner. Two of the earliest western narratives to be published, John Filson's promotional tract *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* (1784) and Daniel Bryan's epic poem *The Mountain Muse* (1813), refashioned Boone's frontier career as an epic saga of noble adventures.

Boone's legend also emerged in more sophisticated literature. When James Fenimore Cooper published *The Pioneers* (1823), the first volume of his widely read Leatherstocking Tales, he introduced Nathaniel (Natty) Bumppo as a fictional counterpart to the mythic wilderness figure of Daniel Boone. Popular books and magazines, along with literature for children, fixed a legend of Boone and his dauntless pioneer contemporaries firmly in the nineteenth-century imagination.

Boone's legendary persona swelled not only in America but also in Europe, where he was seen as the embodiment of the ideal natural man unmarked by the complexities and flaws of civilization. Lord Byron devoted part of the eighth canto of his masterpiece *Don Juan* to a celebration of Boone's imaginatively enlarged accomplishments.
Reproduction of
John Filson (ca. 1747-1788). *This map of Kentucke, drawn from actual observations, is inscribed with the most perfect respect, to the honorable the Congress of the United States of America; ...* Philadelphia: Engraved by Henry D. Pursell & printed by T. Rook for the author, 1784.
Rare Book Collection

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**Case 1: Legends and Histories**

1:1

Daniel Bryan (1795-1866). *The mountain muse: Comprising the adventures of Daniel Boone; and the power of virtuous and refined beauty.* Harrisonburg, Va.: Printed for the author by Davidson & Bourne, 1813.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Daniel Bryan’s 959-line Miltonic epic, based on his cousin Daniel Boone’s exploits, is appended with the names of over 2,000 subscribers who supported its writing and publication. Land speculator John Filson’s popular ghostwritten autobiography of the frontiersman, included in his *The discovery, settlement and present state of Kentucke*, had won Boone’s approval. Bryan’s elaborate poetic narrative, however, is said to have embarrassed its marginally literate protagonist who was portrayed as a great civilizer and bringer of refinement and light to a wilderness full of beasts and savages.

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1:2

John Filson (ca. 1747-1788). *The discovery, settlement and present state of Kentucke: And an essay towards the topography, and natural history of that important country: To which is added, an appendix.* ....Wilmington, Del.: Printed by James Adams, 1784.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Pennsylvania schoolmaster, surveyor, and cartographer John Filson moved to Kentucky in the fall of 1783 and started speculating heavily in undeveloped parcels of land. In order to promote immigration to the area, and thus profit from his investments, Filson drew a map and wrote a book based on interviews with settlers and his own observations. His map was the first to focus entirely on Kentucky, and both it and the book were published in America the next year, followed by editions in Europe and a translation into French. Filson also included a “first-person” account of fellow land speculator Daniel Boone (1734-1820), who appeared as a noble and self-

Encyclopaedia Britannica Collection of Books for Children

Self-educated author and publisher Samuel Griswold Goodrich began writing for children in the 1820s believing that much instructional material available to them was substandard and lacked a distinct American voice. His children’s schoolbooks represented a revolutionary departure both in the text’s content and with the inclusion of numerous illustrations of events and people discussed. In this history book for children, the author incorporated descriptions of frontier life, including a short illustrated account of Daniel Boone as a solitary hunter and lover of nature.


American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton
Collection of Lincolniana

Engraving from the original painting by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887).


Library General Collection

Indiana politician, lawyer, and antiquary William Hayden English collected documents pertaining to Old Northwest history, using many of them as the basis for his two-volume work on the territory and George Rogers Clark’s life. In forming his collection, English focused on the subjects of territorial law, slavery, politics, and early settlement. The antiquary’s personal papers and most of his historical documents passed on his death to the Indiana Historical Society, an institution he reorganized and served as president. In 1924, the University of Chicago was given a much smaller, though complementary, group of documents by English’s grandnephew and university alumnus Willoughby Walling.
Case 2

LEGENDS AND HISTORIES

Academic interpretations of the West emerged in the late nineteenth century as a generation of antiquarians and gentleman historians were building collections of original source materials and shaping the public image of Western history. Lyman C. Draper, an antiquarian, collector, and secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, devoted fifty years to amassing original manuscripts and interviews on the settlement of the trans-Appalachian West. Bound in more than 500 volumes, Draper’s notes preserve significant and frequently unique information on western settlement. Draper’s successor, Reuben Gold Thwaites, directed attention to these materials through a monumental series of historical publications.

Colonel Reuben T. Durrett, an attorney and newspaper editor in Louisville, Kentucky, followed Draper’s lead in collecting all types of books, manuscripts, maps, drawings, and paintings dealing with the history of Kentucky. Durrett, like Draper, held fixed assumptions about what was worth preserving, principally material on political and military history and Kentucky’s prominent families. The Filson Club founded by Durrett and his friends was a gentleman’s retreat for reminiscence over cider and cigars, but it also helped collect and publish texts and narratives essential to western history.

The transition from amateur antiquarian to professional historian occurred just as Theodore Roosevelt’s triumphalist saga, The Winning of the West (1889-1896) was appearing in print. At a historical conference held in conjunction with the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Professor Frederick Jackson Turner of the University of Wisconsin proclaimed that the “existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advancement of American settlement westward, explain American development.”

Strongly influential for many decades but now frequently dismissed, Turner’s thesis was among the earliest attempts to craft a new and more critical understanding of Western history. Today’s historians of the trans-Appalachian West are re-examining the development of the region from fresh perspectives. Drawing on materials collected by nineteenth-century antiquarians but moving beyond their assumptions and prejudices, these scholars are writing a new history that emphasizes the complexities of the settlement era and the powerful impact of race, class, and gender in shaping the western experience.

Library General Collection

In 1884, antiquary Reuben Durrett organized the Filson Club of Louisville with the avowed purpose of collecting and preserving Kentucky history. He and the other nine like-minded members named the organization for land promoter and speculator John Filson, whose book, *The discovery, settlement and present state of Kentucke* was written to encourage immigration to the western frontier. On the first Monday of each month, the ten men would meet in Colonel Durrett’s library on Chestnut Street, and listen while a member presented his interpretation of some aspect of frontier history. The year 1884 also saw the printing of the club’s first monograph, *John Filson, the first historian of Kentucky*, expanded from a paper that Durrett delivered at the first meeting.

**Attack of Bryant’s Station.** Typescript, n.d. Codex 31.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

When he was unable to obtain an original document, Reuben Durrett sometimes hired copyists to duplicate journals, personal histories, manuscripts, maps, pictures, and articles for his library. Regrettably, some authors, dates, and original locations of source materials were not always noted. The events described in this anonymous typescript took place during the Revolutionary War at Bryant’s or Bryan’s Station, a stockade near Lexington, Kentucky. On August 14, 15, and 16 of 1782, a combined force of six hundred men – Native Americans, British sympathizers, and Canadian Rangers – surrounded the fort and prepared to attack. A popular recounting described the actions of twenty-six women and young girls who walked to the spring outside the enemy-encircled garrison and returned with water for its defenders. In 1897, a Filson monograph titled *Bryant’s Station*, which Durrett prepared for publication, commemorated the women’s now legendary feat.


Pictures, M
Reproduction of

University of Chicago Library Records, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

At age fifty-six, Reuben Durrett retired from practicing law and turned his attention full-time to collecting books, documents, maps, and other materials pertaining to the history of the Trans-Appalachian West. Before he died in 1913, Durrett and his family sold his collection—an estimated 20,000 books, 250 letter-files of pamphlets, 200 atlases and numerous loose maps, and over 2,500 manuscripts—to the University of Chicago for $22,500.

Bryant’s Station. Ground plan, n.d.

Pictures, Maps, Sketches, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Reuben Durrett employed illustrators to sketch ground plans of early Kentucky stockades from unnoted sources. In addition to Bryant’s Station, the collection contains a number of other station plans, including: Spring, Floyd’s, Hughes’, Linn’s, Squire Boone’s, and Corn Island block house and cabins.


Reuben T. Durrett Collection

As a young man, New Yorker Theodore Roosevelt lived for a few years in the West, and the experience forever altered the way he viewed the nation’s past and its future. At twenty-nine, he began to write the first two volumes of The winning of the West, inserting many personal anecdotes and opinions into the historically detailed work. Regrettably, the author’s assessment of the early western frontier was seriously flawed, due in part to his own support of colonialism and belief in Manifest Destiny; indeed, Roosevelt romanticized the period’s European American expansionism, proudly ennobling its “rude, fierce” settlers while demonizing its indigenous “savages.” In the preface to the first volume, he noted that his research was conducted in a number of historical collections, including that of Reuben Durrett of Louisville, to whom Roosevelt expressed his indebtedness.
Lyman C. Draper to Reuben T. Durrett. Manuscript letter signed, March 8, 1883.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

From age twenty-three, Lyman Copeland Draper (1815-1891) worked to preserve frontier history by recording the stories of aged pioneers, collecting historical materials, and building the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Reuben Durrett once said of his friend and fellow antiquary:

*Indeed, he furnished me matter from his store as I did him from mine, and I don’t believe he would have denied me anything – Knowing as he did that I would make proper use of it*

In his letter to Durrett, Draper notes that he has mailed a manuscript copy of a list of officers and soldiers who served in George Rogers Clark’s Illinois Regiment and explains the deficiencies of the original. Durrett had the transcription bound and placed in his personal library for researchers’ use. With its purchase of the Durrett Collection, the University of Chicago acquired the transcribed *List of officers and soldiers of the Illinois Regiment as made to the governor of Virginia: manuscript copy, 1833 Aug. 19* by John H. Smith, auditor of state (Durrett Codex 98) in 1913.


Gift of the American Historical Association

Frederick Jackson Turner delivered, “*The significance of the frontier in American history*” at the World’s Columbian Exposition before a meeting of the American Historical Association. In arguably the most celebrated paper in American historiography, Turner declared that a period in American history had closed in 1890 with the disappearance of a continuous frontier line and until the passing, that area of land had molded American character and institutions.
CASE 3-4

NATURE’S WEST

Early descriptions of the trans-Appalachian West conveyed the astonishing richness of the natural landscape and the life it supported. Much of the area, particularly the mountain slopes and uplands, was heavily wooded. Oaks, walnuts, hickories, maples, and elms were present in abundance, as were tulip trees, Kentucky coffee trees, honey locusts, persimmons, and sumacs. The great size of many trees fascinated explorers and travelers. George Washington, on a trip to the Ohio River valley, noted a huge sycamore tree at the mouth of the Kanawha River that was forty-five feet in circumference. Some ancient western trees had hollows in their trunks capacious enough to hold a man on horseback.

The variety of western wildlife was equally spectacular. Rivers held schools of carp, catfish, perch, and sturgeon. Flocks of tens of thousands of passenger pigeons darkened the sky overhead. Bison roamed in great herds, and bears, wolves, and wildcats flourished in the woods and ravines. Hunters had no difficulty stalking these and other native game including turkeys, geese, elk, deer, and squirrels. After a hunting trip to the West in 1750, Dr. Thomas Walker reported, “We killed in the journey 13 buffaloes, 8 elks, 53 bears, 20 deers, 4 wild geese, and about 150 wild turkeys, besides small game. We might have killed 3 times as much meat if we had wanted it.”

Among the earliest travelers to the West were professional and amateur scientists interested in collecting and cataloging specimens of plants and animals and monitoring patterns of weather and climate. Alone or in small parties, they entered the western territory with the tools of their trade — microscopes, telescopes, crucibles, thermometers, quadrants, maps, and journals, along with materials for writing, sketching, and painting.

Ornithologist Alexander Wilson and his contemporary John James Audubon focused on collecting, describing, and depicting the rich variety of western bird life, including species not seen on the eastern seaboard. Some observers like Thomas Jefferson and Jonathan Williams were absorbed by the dramatic natural landscape and the atmospheric and environmental conditions it produced. Other students of the West were scientists like Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, professor of botany and natural science at Transylvania University, who recorded animal life of all types and devoted particular attention to newly discovered varieties of fish observed in western waters.

John Crerar Collection of Rare Books in the History of Science and Medicine

As a child in France and later on his father’s Pennsylvania farm, John James Audubon hunted in the woods for birds to use as subjects of his drawings. This practice continued when in 1807 he and business partner Ferdinand Rozier moved to Louisville to open a dry goods store. Audubon, his wife Lucy Bakewell (1788-1874), and Rozier later relocated downriver to Henderson, Kentucky, and it was during this period that he shot, mounted, and painted this pair of Great Horned Owls. They appear among the 435 life-size bird portraits of The birds of America published first in England between 1827 and 1838.

John James Audubon (1785-1851). Ornithological biography, or an account of the habits of the birds of the United States of America; accompanied by descriptions of the objects represented in the work entitled The birds of America, .... Vol. 1. Edinburgh: Adam Black, 1831.

John Crerar Collection of Rare Books in the History of Science and Medicine

Because of the prohibitive cost, very little descriptive text was included with Audubon’s bird portraits in the initial publication of The birds of America. To rectify the omission, Audubon later collaborated with Scottish naturalist William MacGillivray (1796-1852) and wrote detailed biographies of his birds, publishing them in a five-volume companion set. Moreover, among the ornithological descriptions, Audubon interwove vivid sketches of American life of the time, depictions of games played, earthquakes, fish caught in the river Ohio, and hunts for raccoon.

John Crerar Collection of Rare Books in the History of Science and Medicine

Scottish-born Alexander Wilson’s nine-volume work, published in Philadelphia between 1808 and 1814, included 26 new bird species among the 268 portrayed. The texts accompanying his bird portraits show Wilson to be an amazingly adept observer of nature, though he lacked a formal scientific education. Following his first volume’s publication the ornithologist undertook a successful tour securing 250 subscribers whose money went to support the next volume’s printing. On a second excursion he happened to meet John James Audubon in Louisville, and the men, Wilson noted in his journal, went shooting. Audubon, however, focused on another aspect of the meeting, and wrote rather boastfully some years later, that, “[I] did not subscribe to [Wilson’s] work, for even at that time my collection was larger than his.”


American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Engraving from the original painting by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887).
Case 4: Nature's West

Thomas Ashe (1770-1835). Memoirs of mammoth, and various other extraordinary and stupendous bones, of incognita, or non-descript animals, found in the vicinity of the Ohio, Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Osage, and Red Rivers, &c. &c. .... Liverpool: Printed by G. F. Harris, 1806.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Thomas Ashe returned to his native Ireland after serving in the English army, and then spent several years traveling and recording his impressions of the Americas. Ashe published his first description and travel chronicle in Travels in America performed in 1806. At the same time, he completed a second book titled Memoirs of mammoth, a popular account of sites containing prehistoric remains in the western river valleys. Several Americans had already written about the giant bones unearthed in various parts of the country – Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860) in An historical disquisition on the mammoth: or, great American incognitum and before him, Thomas Jefferson in Notes on the state of Virginia. In query six of that work, Jefferson included a Delaware warrior’s story about the mammoth herd killed by the Great Man because it slaughtered all the animals he created for the “use of the Indians.”

4:2

Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark. Manuscript letter signed, December 19, 1807. William H. English Collection

Jefferson sent General William Clark (1770-1838) to Big Bone Lick, Kentucky in 1807 to collect fossils. Pleistocene-era mammoths, giant ground sloths, and giant bison had died near the salt lick when trapped in the surrounding bogs, and their bones created a rich preserve. In this letter, Jefferson asks George Rogers Clark (1752-1818), William’s older brother, to have the bones packed and shipped to a New Orleans collector who will forward them to Washington. Writing to Bernard, Comte de Lacépède (1756-1825) the following year, the president tells of Clark, “digging for these bones at this important deposit,” and offers them and other examples of American fauna to the National Institute of Paris. The offer and Jefferson’s remark that the mammoth on display in Paris is, “not very copious,” was a slight reference to his dispute with the late French naturalist Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788). Buffon’s theory, published in his Histoire naturelle, and discounted by Jefferson in Notes on the state of Virginia, supposed that the New World contained fewer species of plants and animals than the Old World, and those it did have were inferior in nature and size.
Henry McMurtrie (1793-1865). *Sketches of Louisville and its environs; including, among a great variety of miscellaneous matter, a Florula louisvillensis; or, a catalogue of nearly 400 genera and 600 species of plants,* ... Louisville: Printed by S. Penn, Jun., 1819.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In March 1820, several months after it was published, *The western review and miscellaneous magazine* printed a decidedly unenthusiastic review of *Sketches of Louisville and its environs*. Numerous errors were cited by the journal’s reviewer, particularly in physician Henry McMurtrie’s cataloging of fish in the Ohio River and local plants. Subscribers seeking accurate information on those subjects were encouraged to read articles written by Transylvania University professor Constantine Rafinesque, one of the magazine’s regular contributors.

François André Michaux (1770-1855). *Travels to the westward of the Alleghany Mountains, in the states of the Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and return to Charlestown, through the upper Carolinas; ...* translated from the original French, by B. Lambert. London: J. Mawman, 1805.

Rare Book Collection

Silviculturist François-André Michaux first came to America in 1785 with his botanist father. André Michaux (1746-1802) had received a royal commission to search for and collect plants and trees that could be transplanted in France. A new French government hired the younger Michaux seventeen years later to continue his father’s work. His record of western travel was published in Paris in 1804 as *Voyage à l’ouest des monts Alléghanys, dans les états de l’Ohio, du Kentucky, et du Tennessee, et retour à Charleston par les Hautes-Carolines.* The following year, London publishers offered readers three different English translations.
Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840), “Of the fishes of the Ohio River and its tributary streams,” The western review and miscellaneous magazine, a monthly publication, devoted to literature and science, vol. 1, no. 5 (December 1819): 305-313

Rare Book Collection

A year before his appointment in 1819 to the faculty of Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, naturalist Constantine Rafinesque began a journey on the Ohio River collecting specimens. His description and catalog of all the species of fish and mollusks found there was serialized as, “Of the fishes of the Ohio River and its tributary streams,” in The western review and miscellaneous magazine for 1819-1820. Later that year, the magazine’s editor William Gibbes Hunt (1791-1833) printed it in book form as Ichthylogia ohiensis. Both Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864) of the American Journal of Science and the publications committee of Philadelphia’s Academy of Natural Sciences refused to consider the treatise citing, respectively, its size and previous printing as reasons. Yet, Rafinesque’s work was most likely rejected because of doubts within the American scientific community concerning his qualifications. Three years earlier upon publication of Florula ludoviciana, colleagues were shocked to learn that the naturalist had classified and named plants not personally seen, but had accepted as accurate descriptions French traveler and writer Claude Robin (1750-1794) appended to his Voyages dans l’intérieur de la Louisiane.

Crerar Portrait Collection

Rare Book Collection

The American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia accepted Jonathan Williams as a member in 1788 upon the recommendation of his great-uncle Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). Williams would later serve as the society’s vice-president and a number of his writings appeared in its journal including the important “Thermometrical Navigation” and this study conducted in the mountains of Virginia. John Adams (1735-1826) commissioned the lay scientist a major in the Second Regiment of Artillery and Engineers; and his expertise in military affairs and fortification prompted Thomas Jefferson, in 1801, to appoint him inspector of fortifications and administrator of the post at West Point. When Williams became the new military academy’s superintendent the following spring, he modernized the curriculum, thereby creating the first school of scientific engineering in the country.
Case 5

WESTERN EXPLORATIONS

The first explorations of the trans-Appalachian West by European Americans came in the late seventeenth century. Virginia Colonel Abram Wood made the earliest recorded visit to what would become Kentucky in 1654. At that time and for more than a century that followed, France claimed the entire region to the west of the Appalachians. French outposts were established on the Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi and other western rivers. In 1729, French traders and groups of Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo established Lower Shawneetown in Ohio. French hegemony remained in place until 1763, when France's defeat in the French and Indian War brought the whole vast western territory into British hands.

Although a British royal proclamation forbade any settlement west of the crest of the Appalachians, explorers and settlers were already beginning to push deeper into the interior. In 1750, Dr. Thomas Walker, traveling on behalf of the Loyal Land Company of Virginia, discovered Cumberland Gap. That same year, the owners of the Ohio Company commissioned Christopher Gist to explore their western lands; after traveling down the Ohio River, Gist explored eastern Kentucky and crossed the mountains into the Carolinas. Daniel Boone first visited Kentucky in 1767, and he returned to Kentucky in 1769 with a party of hunters led by John Finley for a two-year exploration of the region. By the time Simon Kenton entered northern Kentucky in 1771, the stream of traders, surveyors, and settlers coming westward from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina was growing larger each year.

Western explorers and the information they collected were of immediate use to American government officials and land development companies, but their reports were also an important factor in developing European interest in the West. English and French editions of books describing travels in the West conveyed the wonder and promise of the new territory and encouraged European observers to follow Americans westward over the mountains.
Reproduction from
Georges-Henri-Victor Collot (1750-1805). A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries watered by the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and other affluving rivers; with exact observations on the course and soundings of these rivers; and on the towns, villages, hamlets and farms of that part of the new-world; .... Atlas. (1826. Reprint, with an introduction and a critical index, also a translation of the appendix from the French edition, by J. Christian Bay, Firenze: O. Lange, 1924). Engraving. “View of the rapids of the Ohio and of Louisville taken from the village of Clarkesville.”

Rare Book Collection

When boat captains transported goods or immigrants on the Ohio between Pittsburgh and New Orleans, they would encounter the Falls of the Ohio, the only break in navigation on the Ohio-Mississippi river system. At Louisville, it was necessary for both cargo and travelers to be transported over land, for the rapids, as Collot correctly identified them, descended over a distance of two miles in a twenty-six foot fall of limestone that could be traversed only during periods of high water in spring and autumn.

Georges-Henri-Victor Collot (1750-1805). A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries watered by the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and other affluving rivers; with exact observations on the course and soundings of these rivers; and on the towns, villages, hamlets and farms of that part of the new-world; .... (1826. Reprint, with an introduction and a critical index, also a translation of the appendix from the French edition, by J. Christian Bay, Firenze: O. Lange, 1924).

Rare Book Collection

M. Adet, Minister Plenipotentiary from France to the United States, having proposed to me to furnish him with a minute detail of the political, commercial, and military state of the western part of that continent, I determined to undertake an expedition, ....

General Georges-Henri-Victor Collot was sent west by the French government to gather intelligence on American expansion toward the Mississippi and prepare maps of the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. At different points on his 1796 expedition, both American and Spanish officials tried to confiscate Collot’s notes and correspondence; to avoid further interference from them he began to duplicate his work and conceal the extra copy. In addition to his descriptions, Collot provided images of what he encountered, such as contemporary watercraft used by settlers, Native Americans of the northwest, and local architecture, including one of the earliest renderings of an American log cabin. The resulting text and atlas of A journey in North America was not published until 1826, twenty-one years after the author’s death, with a printing limited to 300 copies in the original French and 100 copies of an English translation. Equally scarce is this 1924 edition printed in Italy for the series Reprints of Rare Americana. Today, historians consider Collot’s record of his journey one of the foremost works on exploration of the late eighteenth-century frontier.
Thomas Hutchins (1730-1789). *A topographical description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina, comprehending the rivers Ohio, Kenhawa, Sioto, Cherokee, Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi, &c. The climate, soil and produce, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral; the mountains, creeks, roads, distances, latitudes, &c.* London: Printed for the author by J. Almon, 1778.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

When orphaned at sixteen, Thomas Hutchins joined one of Pennsylvania’s militias and later learned to survey and draw maps while serving in the French and Indian War. Hutchins’ skill earned him a British army commission, and ultimately he was recognized as North America’s premier frontier surveyor and cartographer. Following his resignation from the army and return to America in 1781, Hutchins received a congressional appointment as the country’s first geographer. It is thought that the surveyor, while at that post, created the now-standard subdivision of township-section-range used in the first scientific survey of the Northwest Territory mandated by the Ordinance of 1785.

To supplement his army pay while in London during the Revolutionary War, Hutchins produced for the commercial market *A topographical description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina*. A large map of the colonies accompanied the book with small maps of the Illinois country and the Falls of the Ohio bound in. The author appended Patrick Kennedy’s journal of a trip up the Illinois River and this unattributed list of northern Native American tribes.


Rare Book Collection

The American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia accepted Jonathan Williams as a member in 1788 upon the recommendation of his great-uncle Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). Williams would later serve as the society’s vice-president and a number of his writings appeared in its journal including the important “Thermometrical Navigation” and this study conducted in the mountains of Virginia. John Adams (1735-1826) commissioned the lay scientist a major in the Second Regiment of Artillery and Engineers; and his expertise in military affairs and fortification prompted Thomas Jefferson, in 1801, to appoint him inspector of fortifications and administrator of the post at West Point. When Williams became the new military academy’s superintendent the following spring, he modernized the curriculum, thereby creating the first school of scientific engineering in the country.
Reproduction of
Thomas Pownall (1722-1805). *A map of the middle British colonies in North America. First published by Mr. Lewis Evans, of Philadelphia, in 1755; and since corrected and improved, as also extended, with the addition of New England, and bordering parts of Canada; from actual surveys now lying at the Board of Trade.* London: J. Almon, 1776.
Reuben T. Durrett Collection

For nearly sixty years following his death, the work of cartographer and geologist Lewis Evans (ca. 1700-1756) was pirated by English map publishers, in particular his 1755 *Map of the middle British colonies in North America.* Out of sixteen major publications, only that of Thomas Pownall, his friend and patron, acknowledged the debt and the mapmaker's skill. Pownall's revision of Evans' map and notes with his own observations appeared in 1776 and included an excerpt from Evans' lost journal of his expedition across the Appalachians with botanist John Bartram (1699-1777), appended with selections from those of Van Schaick, Hobbs, Gordon, and Gist.

Andrew Burnaby (1732-1812). *Travels through the middle settlements in North America, in the years 1759 and 1760; with observations upon the state of the colonies.* 3rd ed. London: T. Payne, 1798.
Ebenezer Lane Collection presented by Ebenezer Lane and Fannie G. Lane

[Virginia] women are, generally speaking, handsome, though not to be compared with our fair country-women in England. They have but few advantages, and consequently are seldom accomplished; this makes them reserved, and unequal to any interesting or refined conversation.

Church of England minister Andrew Burnaby made note of inhabitants, social customs, weather, commerce, and scenic wonders encountered on his journey through the middle colonies in 1759 and 1760. In Virginia, the local gentry told him about Augusta County's "natural curiosities," which he declined to visit because, "the Cherokees had been scalping in those parts only a few days before." His must-see list for the intrepid traveler included hot, medicinal, and sulphur springs, as well as waterfalls, caves, a natural arch, and a lost river flowing under a mountain. According to the preface of this 3rd edition, the popular journal was not printed until 1775, fifteen years after Burnaby's travels and at the time when England and their American colonies were preparing for hostilities. The minister, whose friends encouraged him to publish, hoped through the appearance of his writings, "that the evil [of war] might, if possible, be prevented; and a reconciliation happily effected...."
ANCIENT MYSTERIES

When European Americans first entered the western country, they were intrigued and puzzled by numerous mounds and earthworks found in abundance along rivers and highlands. As early as 1750, Dr. Thomas Walker noted earthworks at the head of the Cumberland River in Kentucky. Clusters of earthen mounds were discovered throughout the Ohio River valley and Kentucky, at locations such as Grave Creek in what is now West Virginia and at the site of Marietta on the Ohio. Eventually, more than 10,000 mounds were recorded in the Ohio country north of the river. Larger and more elaborate mound complexes were discovered further west and south, some of the most notable on the Ohio near the Wabash and on the Mississippi near its confluence with the Missouri. In some places, mummified human remains and other artifacts of ancient life were uncovered.

The Native American peoples living near these formations had not built them, and European Americans with dismissive racist assumptions found it impossible to believe that any immediate forebears of the indigenous tribes could have constructed such impressive complexes. A variety of imaginative theories were advanced to identify the mysterious "mound builders" who had created the earthforms. Some observers claimed that they had been constructed by the lost tribes of Israel or by Tartars or Greeks. Some saw clear ties to the culture of the Welsh, Vikings, Hindus, or Phoenicians. Whatever was made of their origin, most of the mounds were not considered sufficiently valuable to be preserved for more careful study. Farmers routinely leveled mounds while plowing their fields, and rectilinear patterns of urban streets were surveyed directly through rather than around the larger earthworks. Dr. Daniel Drake systematically excavated a few of the mounds in his home city of Cincinnati, but many of the ancient western earthworks, and much of the information they may have contained about their origins, disappeared in the era of settlement.
Reproduction of
Winthrop Sargent (1753-1820), "A drawing of some utensils, or ornaments, taken from an
old Indian grave, at Cincinnati, county of Hamilton, and territory of the United-States,
north-west of the river Ohio, August 30th 1794," Transactions of the American
Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia, for promoting useful knowledge, vol. 4, no.

Rare Book Collection

You have, I think, been heretofore told by me, and perhaps received a sketch, of
very extensive ancient fortifications at Cincinnati, not regular as those at
Muskingum, but very worthy of notice.

When he wrote to physician Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815) in 1794, Colonel
Winthrop Sargent told of excavating an ancient mound at Cincinnati and included
descriptions and drawings of artifacts he removed. Both the letter’s text and the
illustrations were published five years later by the American Philosophical Society, of
which Barton was a member. While excavating, Sargent found human remains, and
objects of stone and copper, and a piece of bone inscribed with "hieroglyphicks." Daniel
Drake (1785-1852) incorporated a version of Sargent’s list in his Picture of
Cincinnati published in 1815, and appended to that record notes on artifacts he had dug
up from the same mound. The scientist cataloged beads, shells, copper articles, and
more human remains and documented the dimensions of the earthwork standing at the
intersection of Third and Main streets as, "about eight feet high, one hundred and twenty
long, and sixty broad."

6:2a

Ephraim G. Squier (1821-1888). Ancient monuments of the Mississippi Valley. By E. G
U. P. James, 1848. Lithograph. "Marietta works."

Library General Collection

Though Squier and Davis provided much of the material for Ancient monuments of
the Mississippi Valley their preface contains the names of a number of contributors
who made available their own notes, plans, and drawings. The ground plan shown
was the work of Charles Whittlesey, the former topographic engineer of Ohio, whose
contribution to the volume included twenty plans of sites surveyed with his explanatory
notes and observations.
Reproduction from

Library General Collection

Two years after it was founded, the Smithsonian Institution published the first monograph in its series *Smithsonian contributions to knowledge*. The book titled *Ancient monuments of the Mississippi Valley* was the work of Chillicothe, Ohio, newspaper editor Ephraim Squier and physician Edwin Davis (1811-1888). In their spare time, both men had pursued separate studies of the Scioto Valley’s ancient monuments, an antiquarian approach to the nineteenth century’s newly emerging science of archeology. Squier and Davis began their collaboration in 1845 and over the next two years personally funded an examination of antiquities in the Mississippi Valley. The results of their work – excavation of approximately 200 mounds, examination of numerous artifacts collected, and surveys of 100 earthworks – collected in this volume, constituted the first systematic cataloging of American antiquities ever undertaken.

Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840). *Ancient history, or annals of Kentucky; with a survey of the ancient monuments of North America, and a tabular view of the principal languages and primitive nations of the whole earth.* Frankfort, Ky.: Printed for the author, 1824.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

While teaching at Transylvania University, Constantine Rafinesque published the first of his studies of indigenous peoples and the origin of ancient architecture and artifacts in the Ohio River Valley. In order to trace the migration from the sons of Noah to Indian nations in the Americas, Rafinesque attempted to use lexicostatistics to discover language affinities among the tribes. Twelve years later, he published his most notable work based on linguistic research, the two-volume *The American nations; or, outlines of their general history, ancient and modern*, which included a fragment of the *Walam Olum*, said to recount the Asiatic origin of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware tribe. Today Rafinesque is recognized as a pioneer of modern linguistic methodology and one of the founders of the scientific study of American Indian languages.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

No one is sure when the legend of Prince Madog ab Owain Gwynedd’s discovery of the New World began to circulate or how old the story really is. Several versions are known, but all began with an account of the Welsh King Owain’s death and the subsequent struggle between his sons for the throne of North Wales in the twelfth century. Madog, worn down by the constant warfare among his brothers, left the country with a company of followers to search for a peaceful land in which to settle. After sailing west, the assembly made landfall near present-day Mobile Bay, Alabama, according to one account. Another source told of Madog and his party immigrating to the Mississippi Valley, where they lived among its inhabitants and taught them to build stone fortifications.

In the Early Modern period, the alchemist and astrologer John Dee (1527-1608) made use of the legend in an attempt to legitimate his patron Elizabeth I’s claim to the New World. Dee asserted that King Arthur had ruled over territories in the Atlantic and that Madog’s voyages confirmed the Welsh title to this empire. Thus, he reasoned, as a descendant of the Welsh royal line, the English queen was the rightful heir to the lands of the West. By 1791, author John Williams published this enquiry in support of truth of the story and the following year had printed further observations, incorporating factual accounts given by members of a “Welsh Tribe or Tribes of Indians, now living in the Western parts of North America.”
Two years after his death, excerpts of John Poage Campbell’s unfinished work on western antiquities was published in the journal *Port folio*. The Presbyterian minister and physician pursued criticism in the spare time available to him, and the origin of Kentucky’s ancient monuments and artifacts was of particular interest. Campbell theorized that the structures’ builders had knowledge of architecture and art and for that reason could not be the ancestors of contemporary Indians. Using the Bible as a starting point, Campbell assumed that the craftsmen were from Asia and thus the descendants of Noah’s son Shem; together with his brothers Ham (Africa) and Japheth (Europe), the three were believed to be progenitors of the races of man, based on Genesis 9:19, “and of them was the whole earth overspread.” Noah had preserved the knowledge of building which predated the Flood, Campbell stressed, skills that he conveyed to his sons. Barbarians subsequently drove Shem’s descendants from Asia according to one of Catherine the Great’s historians whom the minister quoted, and these were the immigrants, he believed, who first brought civilization to the Ohio River Valley. Campbell bolstered the argument with statements by white informants, such as British Colonel Alexander McKee (1748-1849). The Shawnee chief Cornstalk (ca. 1720-1774), McKee claimed, told him about the builders of the ancient forts, a fair-skinned people whom the Indians destroyed in a great battle at the falls of the river in the land of Kentucke.
James Adair (ca. 1709-1783). *The history of the American Indians; particularly those nations adjoining to the Mississippi, East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia: Containing an account of their origin, language, manners, religious and civil customs, laws, form of government, punishments, conduct in war and domestic life, ....* London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

It has been suggested that author and trader James Adair was descended from landed gentry; but, when he immigrated from Ireland to South Carolina in 1735, Adair had little money and began to earn a living by trading with Native American tribes. His first ventures were with the Overhill Cherokee along the Little Tennessee River, and during the next thirty years, his trading expanded to include the Catawbas, Chickasaws, and Choctaws. It is believed that Adair read widely and was well-educated, an assumption based on the appearance of learned quotes and citations within his book *The history of the American Indians*. The author, who carefully described the culture of the various tribes with whom he lived, also speculated on their origin and descent from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. This theory, which he attempted to demonstrate by a comparison of cultural traits, was not original. Similar supposition had appeared much earlier in the writings of scholars Abraham Farissol (1451-1525) and Manasseh ben Israel (1604-1667), and in *Jewes in America*, published in 1660 by British clergyman Thomas Thorowgood (d. ca. 1669). Yet, despite its outdated conjecture, Adair’s book is today considered a valuable resource, a unique record of the customs, manners, and vocabularies of America’s southeastern tribes in the eighteenth century.
Case 7&8
NATIVE ENCOUNTERS

Anglo-Americans looking westward beyond the Blue Ridge imagined it to be a vast territory largely unoccupied and freely available for the taking. Kentucky was thought to be a “happy hunting ground” shared amicably by a number of Native American tribes but not exclusively claimed by any of them.

To be sure, when explorers and settlers first arrived, the trans-Appalachian West was not very heavily populated. By 1690, many of the Native American peoples in the eastern part of the region had been driven out by the Iroquois and their allies. A scattering of groups had returned, but their communities were concentrated in a few locations along river lowlands, and they did not maintain close connections with each other. In 1797 Gilbert Imlay estimated that within the entire area between the Allegheny and Wabash Rivers and south to the Tennessee River the Native American population totaled no more than 6,000.

At the time of initial European American settlement, the principal peoples living in the upper Ohio River valley were the Shawnee and the Delaware. As Native Americans were displaced from traditional lands further to the east, they migrated into the western territory and intermingled with existing populations, resulting in the overlapping presence of Miami, Wyandots, Pottawatomis, Wea, and Piankishaw. Most of these groups moved through the region seasonally to hunt and trap, although sizeable Native American towns of several hundred residents could also be found, particularly in the Ohio country at locations such as Lower Shawnetown.

Most accounts of Native American life and culture came from European Americans responding to situations of intense danger or brutal conflict: narratives of escaped captives, military reports on expeditions and battles, or letters and stories of settlers describing bloody attacks. Even more thoughtful and sympathetic observers had difficulty understanding the character of Native American peoples or interpreting their cultures as anything but a primitive survival doomed to fall before the advance of
Reproduction of
Reuben T. Durrett Collection


Rare Book Collection

When army surgeon Dr. Hugh Martin was stationed at Fort Pitt, he became interested in the properties of different plants, in particular those used by the Shawnee to create dyes for their clothing and paraphernalia. A number of years after the doctors’ death ca. 1784, the American Philosophical Society published extracts from a paper he composed on the subject. Martin noted the types of plants used by the tribe, environments where these were gathered, how they were prepared, the mordants employed, and the materials treated. For example, to make a red dye to color deer tails and porcupine quills, the Native Americans collected domestic madder (*Rubia*) from swampy areas, mashed the root, and cooked it with crabapple acid. Martin also described the results of experiments in which he modified Shawnee color recipes by introducing a variety of vegetable fixatives, information he shared with Philadelphia’s European American dyers.

"Instances of Indian genius," *The port folio*, 4th ser., vol. 2, no. 4 (October 1816): 319-322.

Library General Collection

The story related by an anonymous author is that of an Algonquin-speaking Sauk (Sac) who stopped in Frankfort, Kentucky in 1805 on his way to Washington. The young man was traveling to see President Jefferson with a group of thirty chiefs from nations on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Those whom he met were astonished that he was neither ferocious nor savage, and could when tested recite Greek, Latin, and English poetry after hearing it read aloud only a few times.
Richard Caswell to Evan Shelby. Manuscript letter signed, February 27, 1787.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Evan Shelby (1719-1794) was serving in the Washington District as brigadier-general of the militia when he received this letter from Richard Caswell (1729-1789) the governor of North Carolina. Caswell notifies Shelby that he is sending his son Winston to the trans-mountain region (the future Tennessee) as a courier with military commissions and governmental papers. Among the documents, the governor notes, is a proclamation to the sheriffs of four counties that requires settlers to move off land reserved as hunting grounds for Native Americans.

Mary Mitchell to Isaac Shelby. Manuscript letter signed, May 1, 1793.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Mrs. Mary Mitchell petitions Isaac Shelby in his first year in office as Kentucky's governor for help in obtaining news about her missing granddaughter Salley. In the fall of 1790, an unidentified Native American tribe took the girl captive on the southwestern frontier; at that time, the elderly woman contacted William Blount, governor of that territory in the hope that he might have received some information on the lost child. But, in the two years since Salley has been gone, Mrs. Mitchell has heard nothing from that governor and would like Shelby to contact him on her behalf.

Men of Mars Lick, Kentucky. Scalp subscription, March 10, 1795.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

A six-month subscription by the men of Mars Lick, Kentucky offering a bounty on all Indian scalps taken in Jefferson County west of the main road leading from Louisville to Shepherdsville. Amounts of money, both pledged and paid, are recorded next to the signatures of thirty-four settlers.
“Rights of the aborigines of our county,” *The western review and miscellaneous magazine, a monthly publication, devoted to literature and science*, vol. 4, no. 5 (June 1821): 292-300.

Rare Book Collection

*We govern blacks and indians, and always shall, because we have more mind, more knowledge, more skill, and of course more power. Europe governs the world for the same reason, and its stock is undoubtedly superior to the other stocks on the globe. We are of the same race ....*

Nothing that William Gibbes Hunt had previously published in *The western review and miscellaneous magazine* displayed the racist tone and inflammatory language found in this editorial. In his prior three volumes, a number of articles had appeared which supported the notion of Manifest Destiny, but the content of those tales with their portraits of heroic European American settlers besieged by the frontier’s bloodthirsty savages seems bland in comparison.

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“Attack upon Boonesborough by the Indians, in 1778,” *The western review and miscellaneous magazine, a monthly publication, devoted to literature and science*, vol. 3, no. 6 (January 1821): 362-366.

Rare Book Collection

The Shawnee chief Blackfish (1729?-1779) had been striking settlements throughout Kentucky and western Pennsylvania in the years following the murder of his predecessor, Cornstalk, by European American soldiers. When he appeared before the stockaded village of Boonesborough on September 7, 1778, the chief led a contingent of approximately 350 warriors supported by a small British controlled unit of Canadians. For two days, he negotiated the fort’s surrender with Daniel Boone and others but began an assault after talks broke down. Eight days later, the Shawnee forces and their allies withdrew when their attempts to tunnel under the stockade failed and rain prevented it from burning.
Reproduction from
Georges-Henri-Victor Collot (1750-1805). *A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries watered by the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and other affluing rivers; with exact observations on the course and soundings of these rivers; and on the towns, villages, hamlets and farms of that part of the new-world; ...* Atlas. (1826. Reprint, with an introduction and a critical index, also a translation of the appendix from the French edition, by J. Christian Bay, Firenze: O. Lange, 1924). Engraving. “Indian of the nation of the Shawanoes.”

Rare Book Collection

A Shawnee warrior dressed in full regalia was no longer a familiar sight in the Ohio River Valley by the time Collot began his survey. The tribe and its allies had been defeated by army regulars and Kentucky militiamen led by Anthony Wayne (1745-1796) at Fallen Timbers. A year later in 1795, the Shawnee surrendered much of its homeland under the treaty signed at Fort Greenville in the Ohio Country. Subsequent to the signing and the northwestern tribe’s removal, large areas of the northwest were effectively opened up to new waves of European American migration and settlement. Assurances circumscribed by the accord’s language that hunting grounds would be preserved (article five) and that the United States would, “relinquish their claims to all other Indian lands,” (article four) were soon ignored by government agents under pressure from encroaching whites.

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Reproduction from
Georges-Henri-Victor Collot (1750-1805). *A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries watered by the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and other affluing rivers; with exact observations on the course and soundings of these rivers; and on the towns, villages, hamlets and farms of that part of the new-world; ...* Atlas. (1826. Reprint, with an introduction and a critical index, also a translation of the appendix from the French edition, by J. Christian Bay, Firenze: O. Lange, 1924). Engraving. “Indian of the nation of the Kaskaskia.”

Rare Book Collection

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Kaskaskia, like other members of the Illinois Confederacy, suffered from declining populations and deteriorating tribal structures, a breakdown due in part to warfare with the northern tribes and an unsettling European military presence. The Kaskaskia signed the Treaty of Greenville, but unlike the Shawnee, remained on their land until 1832 when they ceded all remaining territory in Illinois and were resettled in Indian Territory west of the Mississippi.

American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton Collection of Lincolnniana

Engraving from the original painting by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887).

Alatala Hooma to James Wilkinson. Receipt, August 31, 1803.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Alatala Hooma served as commissioner plenipotentiary for the Choctaw Nation at the signing of the Treaty of Hoe Buckintooopa, August 31, 1803. The treaty was the fourth in a series of nine between the Choctaw and the United States and certified the cession of 853,760 acres of land in Alabama and Mississippi to settle a debt of less than $50,000 the tribe owed a government-sactioned trading house.

Captain John Bower and Joseph Chambers stood as witnesses for both the treaty and this receipt that Alatala Hooma signed in acknowledgement of $7 received from General James Wilkinson. The money was paid to the commissioner for his work redrawing “the boundary line between the United States Territory not adjoining the Tombigby and Mobile rivers and the said Choctaw Nation,” a stipulation of the 1802 Treaty of Fort Confederation.
William Henry Harrison to Charles Jouett. Manuscript letter signed, June 8, 1803.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection

The Mahican chief Hendrick Aupaumut (1757-1830) served American interests throughout the Revolutionary War and later when he entered government service as a diplomat and envoy to the northwestern tribes. Officials such as Arthur St. Clair (1737-1818), Henry Knox (1750-1806), and Anthony Wayne whom Aupaumut supported during the Fort Greeneville negotiations recognized his talent for peacemaking.

On June 7, 1803, Captain Aupaumut again served his country as a negotiator in talks at Fort Wayne, Indiana Territory. With his encouragement nine of the tribes who had endorsed the 1795 Greenville accord – Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Miami, Kickapoo, Eel-River, Wea, Piankashaw, and Kaskaskia – agreed to an extension of those boundaries for European American settlements. More complicated than it first appeared, the treaty marked a turning point in relationships and power structures, setting in motion the future cession of all Native American territory to the United States. The following day Governor Harrison wrote this letter on Aupaumut’s behalf to Charles Jouett, agent of Indian Affairs at Detroit noting that, “[h]e has done me much service recommending to the Indians to adopt the plans which were proposed to them. I must request you to receive & treat him Kindly ....”

Thomas Baldwin (b. 1750?). Narrative of the massacre, by the savages, of the wife and children of Thomas Baldwin, who, since the melancholy period of the destruction of his unfortunate family, has dwelt entirely alone, ... in the extreme western part of the State of Kentucky. New-York: Martin and Wood, 1835. Hand colored wood-block print. “Massacre of Baldwin’s family by the savages.”

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Thomas Baldwin’s family was massacred on the frontier in the late eighteenth century, but the story was not published until 1835. This small pamphlet graphically recounts and the wood-block print vividly depicts the horrors of scalping and burning that the parents and children endured. By the 1830s, however, the frontier wars were long past; treaties had appropriated homelands and mandated boundaries like the Greenville line, which Native Americans could not safely cross. Additionally, the government had begun to pass a series of removal acts, which would force relocation of all tribes west of the Mississippi. Lawyer Jeremiah Evarts brought the issue to the public’s attention when he argued for Cherokee rights in the so-called William Penn essays and it is likely that the publication of the Baldwin story in this period was meant to counter such writings. For as the laws began to take effect, petitions to Congress from whites opposing Native American removals were far more numerous than those in favor of
Case 9
SELLING THE WEST

The opening of the trans-Appalachian West launched one of the greatest land rushes in American history. Contrary to legend, however, most of the land was won not by hardy pioneers seeking a family farmstead but by wealthy individuals and powerful companies who quickly claimed possession of all the prime areas.

One of the most famous of the corporate land developers, the Transylvania Company, was formed to exploit and colonize the area now comprising much of Kentucky and Tennessee. In March 1775, at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River in Tennessee, Richard Henderson and other members of the association secured a deed from members of the Cherokee tribe for all of the territory embraced by the Ohio, Kentucky, and Cumberland Rivers, a tract of more than twenty million acres. Henderson hoped to make Transylvania a proprietary colony similar to Pennsylvania and Maryland, but the project was immediately blocked by Virginia and North Carolina, which held charters for the Transylvania tracts. Although the land grant was voided, Virginia and North Carolina each awarded Henderson and his associates 200,000 acres in compensation. One consequence of the Transylvania venture was the spur it offered to immediate settlement of Kentucky. In 1774, James Harrod led the first group of permanent settlers into the heart of the Bluegrass and founded Harrodsburg. In 1775, Daniel Boone and a work party representing the Transylvania Company cut the path of the Wilderness Road across Cumberland Gap and laid out the frontier settlement of Boonesborough on the Kentucky River.

Land speculation was a big business in Kentucky in the eighteenth century, and the potential for making a quick fortune was unprecedented in American history. A few land owners were able to buy up or seize massive holdings, among them Thomas Marshall, the father of the U.S. Chief Justice, who claimed 128,000 acres; David Ross who claimed 211,417 acres; and Thomas Shore, who claimed 344,783 acres. The landholdings and claims of John May, one of Kentucky’s earliest surveyors, dwarfed all of these at 831,000 acres.

The rush of land claims and settler migrations came so quickly that they overwhelmed the limited skills of many poorly-trained frontier surveyors, including Daniel Boone, and the unscrupulous practices of buyers and sellers soon left Kentucky landholding in a legal jumble. Surveying lines laid out crudely from tree to rock to creek bed could easily be misinterpreted, and “shingling” or overlapping claims of ownership for the same piece of land became commonplace. When inaccurate or spurious land surveys were used to identify land as collateral for further purchases, the resulting layered claims and counterclaims could require years of court proceedings to unravel. The consequences for the common subsistence farmer were not encouraging. In 1792, the year Kentucky was admitted as a state, 65 per cent of heads of households did not own land. By 1800, half of all Kentucky heads of households still did not own any land.

Rare Book Collection

In 1795, land speculator Robert Morris (1734-1806), together with John Nicholson and James Greenleaf, formed the North American Land Company. The partners purchased undeveloped tracts of land largely on credit, a total of 6,000,000 acres in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, New York, and Kentucky. Morris had hoped that his standing in the public and private sectors — signer of the Declaration of Independence, first senator from Pennsylvania, and partner in the Philadelphia mercantile firm Willing and Morris — would attract many investors to the new offering. Both the economy and western migration, however, failed to grow as anticipated, and Morris, who had speculated heavily in the East India and China trade, went bankrupt, was arrested, and imprisoned for debt.

Great Britain. Board of Trade. *Report of the Lords Commissioners for the trade and plantations on the petition of the honorable Thomas Walpole, Benjamin Franklin, John Sargent, and Samuel Wharton, esquires, and their associates; for a grant of lands on the River Ohio, ... London: J. Almon, 1772.*

Rare Book Collection

London banker Thomas Walpole (1727-1803), Benjamin Franklin, John Sargent, and Philadelphia merchant Samuel Wharton formed a company and applied to the British government for a grant of land west of the Alleghenies. Directors of the Ohio Land Company and Virginia's royal governor immediately voiced their opposition to the Walpole grant, as it came to be known, claiming that it would interfere with their respective interests in the region. In the end, the British Board of Trade overruled all objections to the company's petition, though it failed to receive George III's authorization because of revolution in America.
Thaddeus Mason Harris (1768-1842). The journal of a tour into the territory northwest of the Alleghany Mountains; made in the spring of the year 1803. With a geographical and historical account of the state of Ohio .... Boston: Printed by Manning & Loring, 1805. Map. “Plat of that part of the state of Ohio which is appropriated for military services. Surveyed under the direction of Rufus Putnam Surveyor General of the United States.”

Rare Book Collection

Various maps and documents pertaining to the European American settlement of Ohio were appended to Thaddeus Mason Harris’s account of his northwestern journey. Included were copies of the Treaty of Greenville, the Northwest Ordinance, Jefferson’s Territorial Ordinance of 1784, and papers of the speculative land company, Ohio Company of Associates. The plat map shown is of the United States Military District, an area bounded by the Greenville Treaty Line, the Seven Ranges, the Refugee Tract and Congress Lands, and the Scioto River. Congress established the district in 1796 to satisfy earlier resolutions that granted bounty land to Continental Army officers and soldiers. Amounts of land distributed were determined by a soldier’s rank and ranged from 100 acres for every non-commissioned officer and foot soldier to 1,100 acres for each major-general.


Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Daniel Smith studied surveying under Dr. Thomas Walker (1715-1794), the well-known surveyor who explored southeastern Kentucky for the Loyal Land Company in 1750. Most of the surveys in Smith’s book were located in Albemarle County, Virginia, recorded during the time he lived there with the Walker family. In 1773, Smith and his wife Sarah Michie moved to Fincastle County, where he surveyed for the Loyal Land Company whose grants west of the Blue Ridge totaled 800,000 acres. Smith would later serve under Governor William Blount (1749-1800) as Secretary of the Territory Southwest of the River Ohio, and as a United States senator from Tennessee.


Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Stock share for 100 acres of land in Virginia and Kentucky issued to Henri Mercier by De Redern & Cie. of Paris.
Nicholas King and Joshua Moore to the president of the North American Land Company. Manuscript letter signed, August 27, 1795 (ca. 1809 copy).

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

One may surmise from this letter’s content that the North American Land Company hired Philadelphia surveyor Nicholas King (1771-1812) and Joshua Moore to craft maps and advertisements for their Kentucky holdings. The letter includes the writers’ depiction of tracts within the 400,000 acres, each one highlighted with information gathered from surveyor’s certificates and from various authors such as John Filson, Thomas Hutchins, and Gilbert Imlay.
Virginia secured its claims to land in the trans-Appalachian West by organizing the county of Kentucky in 1776. The commonwealth awarded its western acreage to soldiers for military service and to settlers for improving a claim, and sold it to speculators and land companies for cash or on credit. Land Warrants in this period were considered commodities and often were sold many times over; patents granted might note the land’s owner as the assignee of another followed by a list of other purchasers and assignees’ names.

Virginia’s soldiers received bounty land in both the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars. Amounts distributed were determined by rank; thus, a private would receive fifty acres and a field officer five thousand. Nonetheless, before the land office issued a warrant, a veteran had to obtain a certificate from his commanding officer stating that he had served Virginia faithfully. With certificate in hand, the soldier had to appear before a Virginia court of record and swear an oath or offer evidence as to its validity. When signed by the court of record’s clerk, the certificate would then be taken to the Virginia land office in Richmond to be registered. Upon presentation of the signed service certificate, the land office would grant a warrant entitling the veteran to claim an amount of Virginia land appropriate to his rank. Unlike settlement warrants, a warrant for bounty land was not tied to a specific parcel of land.

By 1777, the Virginia Assembly decreed that those who settled in the western country and raised a crop of corn or built a cabin before June 1, 1776 (amended to January 1, 1778) would receive clear title to a 400-acre pre-emption. A legislature-appointed land commission ruled on the validity of claims, and if an initial 400 acres was awarded, a settler was allowed to purchase an adjoining 1,000-acre pre-emption. The commission’s certificate would be taken to the land office and a settlement warrant issued following payment of a fee.

Prospective land owners – whether holding military or settlement warrants, or purchased treasury warrants – had to complete several complex and time delimited procedures mandated by Virginia’s Assembly before legal land titles were granted. This process involved five distinct steps:

Step 1. Land to be claimed had to be located either by the warrant holder or by a hired locator.

Step 2. Land had to be entered, that is, the warrant holder had to notify the country surveyor of the particular area or areas to be claimed.

Step 3. When a survey was made, the warrant holder had to provide and pay for chain carriers and a line marker.

Step 4. A plat and certificate furnished by the surveyor had to be delivered to the land office.

Step 5. The warrant holder had to pay all fees levied in order to receive the final patent or grant.
Abraham Bowman to Jonathan Clark. Manuscript letter signed, April 25, 1784.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Bowman asks that Clark obtain military service certificates for him and his brother Joseph from Generals John Peter Muhlenberg (1746-1807) and George Rogers Clark.

Virginia Land Office to George Rogers Clark. Land warrant, January 29, 1780.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Land warrant in the name of George Rogers Clark directs the principal surveyor of any county within Virginia's Commonwealth to lay off one or more surveys totaling 560 acres. Virginia owed Clark acreage for recruiting his battalion and in lieu of a $750 bounty.


Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Contract under which James Wilkinson (1757-1825) is to locate five land warrants totaling 11,000 acres for John Lewis (1747-1825). In return, Wilkinson will receive half of all lands located or two-thirds if he pays all necessary expenses including those for entering and surveying. (This represents step 1)

Thomas Jefferson to [Mary Willing Byrd]. Manuscript letter signed, October 24, 1779.

William H. English Collection

Jefferson offers to help Mrs. Byrd (1740-1814), executrix of husband William Byrd III's estate, clear the entry and title claims of various military land warrants. The letter opens with a discussion of a prisoner-of-war exchange, of interest to Mrs. Byrd because her brother James Willing is a British captive. Jefferson notes that the trade being discussed is of British governor Henry Hamilton, taken at Vincennes by George Rogers Clark, for American Lieutenant Colonel George Matthews. (This represents step 2)
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Plat of six surveys lying between the Ohio River and Panther Creek in Jefferson County. The map illustrates the overlapping survey boundaries of parcels owned by Thomas Bland, John Smith, and John Tennant and adjoining tracts held by John Lee, Ambrose Madison, and Abraham Haptonstall. The surveyor's note describes Bland's survey as inaccurate although the earliest entered. (This represents step 4)

Fayette County, Virginia Office of Surveyor to John Lewis. Survey, August 15, 1784 (True copy November 20, 1795).
Lewis Family Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Copy of a 1784 survey made for John Lewis by virtue of part of an entry on three treasury warrants. A small map and an account of corners, distances, and boundaries describe a 6,847.5-acre tract lying on Elkhorn River in Fayette County. Included are the names of Francis McDurmet, Daniel McCoy, Josiah Collins, Henry Lee, and Thomas Marshall, the chain carriers, marker, and surveyors. (This represents step 3)

Thomas Jefferson to the heirs of Hugh Mercer. Land grant, September 1, 1780.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Land grant in the name of the heirs of Hugh Mercer, assignee of George Weedon. Land is given in consideration of Captain Lieutenant Weedon's service in Virginia's Second Regiment during the Anglo-French war and according to the terms of George III's 1763 proclamation. A description includes corners, distances, and boundaries of the 3,000-acre tract lying in Kentucky (formerly Fincastle) County. (This represents step 5)
United States Department of War. Contract for bounty land sale or assignment, 1785-1794.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Contract for soldiers' use in selling or assigning their rights to land granted for Revolutionary War service. Secretary of War Henry Knox or his successors are requested to issue a warrant to the assignee for the correct number of acres due.

John Todd to Elizath Faith. Bond and receipt, January 20, 1780.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Bond under which John Todd agrees to obtain 400 acres of land for Mrs. Elizath Faith. In return, the widow, guardian of John Faith, will assign and convey her son's 400-acre pre-emption to Todd. Receipt appended noting delivery of Faith's pre-emption assignment, a power of attorney, and a lot assignment.
Case 11
SETTLER MIGRATIONS

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, more than 200,000 people had migrated westward over the Wilderness Road, the route first laid out by Daniel Boone for the Transylvania Company. But a majority of settlers avoided overland travel and headed for Kentucky on the Ohio River.

Boats used on the Ohio by migrating settlers varied in size and construction. Pirogues were fashioned from hollowed out logs. Skiffs were smaller boats built from wooden planks and maneuvered with oars, while keelboats were larger craft that could be ridden downcurrent and dragged or poled upstream. Flatboats, sometimes called “Kentucky boats” or “family boats,” held the greatest amount of cargo and could be 40 to 100 feet in length.

The best time to descend the Ohio was in the spring, when seasonal rains raised the river’s water level and made it easier to avoid snags on buried tree limbs and sandbars. Many settlers carried Zadok Cramer’s Navigator, a frequently updated guidebook that described each stretch of the Ohio and suggested the safest course of passage down the river.

While European travelers described their western journeys in detail, relatively few migrant settlers kept diaries or wrote about their experiences. Many were illiterate, and those who could read and write were preoccupied with the daily dangers and physical demands of the journey. Once in Kentucky, the settlers’ attention had to turn to the immediate needs of securing a claim, building shelter, clearing land, and planting the first crop to carry a family through the winter.

William Vaughn Moody Collection


Rare Book Collection

Because of political and social restrictions, Quaker Morris Birkbeck left England in 1817, and immigrated to America with his friend George Flower (1788-1862). His *Notes on a journey in America* describes both men’s search for a place to create a colony in which all inhabitants could experience prosperity and freedom. Birkbeck’s book, published in America, England, Ireland, and Germany together with his later *Letters from Illinois*, is thought to have had an enormous influence on the settlement of the western prairie. The colony that Birkbeck and Flower envisioned, however, was never realized; rather, the two parted soon after settling in Southern Illinois, each to found separately the less than prosperous Wanborough and the equally unproductive Albion, villages known collectively as the English Settlement.

Zadok Cramer (1773-1813). *The Navigator: Containing directions for navigating the Monongahela, Allegheny, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers; with an ample account of these much admired waters, from the head of the former to the mouth of the latter; and a concise description of their towns, villages, harbours, settlements, &c. ...*. 7th ed. Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear, & Eichbaum, 1811.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Pittsburgh book publisher and dealer Zadok Cramer observed that immigrants arriving daily in town would regularly ask for but not always receive accurate information on river navigation and the western lands to which they were traveling. Cramer realized there was money to be made in marketing a guide to this audience and set about creating an affordable pamphlet. When first published in 1801, *The Navigator* was a patchwork of maps and descriptions its author had lifted from the works of well-known writers such as Thomas Hutchins, Gilbert Imlay, and Jedidiah Morse. Subsequent editions, though, were guaranteed to have been updated and improved with the latest maps and descriptions of the “towns, villages, harbours, settlements, &c.” which
Adlard Welby. *A visit to North America and the English settlements in Illinois, with a winter residence at Philadelphia; solely to ascertain the actual prospects of the emigrating agriculturist, mechanic, and commercial speculator.* London: J. Drury, 1821. Lithograph. “Ferry at Maysville, on the Ohio.”

Gift of Mrs. C. Phillip Miller

Adlard Welby returned to England following a two-year American tour to record his unenthusiastic comments on what he had seen. He did enjoy the beautiful land, but noted that its people possessed, “blind conceit in their own superiority,” and lacked a “goodwill and benevolence.” As noted in his preface, Welby was skeptical of authors who encouraged European immigration to the West. His particular target was popular writer Morris Birkbeck whom he personally and professionally attacked.

Frances Wright (1795-1852). *Views of society and manners in America; in a series of letters from that country to a friend in England, during the years 1818, 1819, and 1820.* London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821.

Rare Book Collection

Conservative relatives in Scotland and England had raised Fanny Wright and her siblings following the death of their parents. Yet, it was her radical father James, a supporter of Thomas Paine (1737-1809), and his views on equality and justice that influenced her life and work. At age twenty-three, the author came to America and discovered a country in which she found no extremes of poverty or wealth. Following a return to England after a two-year stay, she published *Views of society and manners in America*, a collection of first impressions and somewhat romantic and naive observations. Fanny Wright the reformer would later return to America to live, write, and lecture on the need for education and manumission of slaves and social and political equality for women. Though often faced with public outrage and condemnation, she continued for the rest of her life—courageous, fearless and determined—her efforts to raise awareness of these and other social issues of the day.
Mary Coburn Dewees. *Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky, September 27, 1787 to February 11, 1788*. Codex 58.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Mary Coburn Dewees’ diary contains a record of her family’s journey from Philadelphia to Lexington, Kentucky over a three-month period in 1787. Mrs. Dewees’ epistolary entries addressed to friends left behind include descriptions of towns passed through, people encountered, accommodations, scenery, historic sites, and travel in both wagon and flatboat.

Georges-Henri-Victor Collot (1750-1805). *A journey in North America, containing a survey of the countries watered by the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and other affluing rivers; with exact observations on the course and soundings of these rivers; and on the towns, villages, hamlets and farms of that part of the new-world; .... Atlas. (1826. Reprint, with an introduction and a critical index, also a translation of the appendix from the French edition, by J. Christian Bay, Firenze: O. Lange, 1924). Engraving. “Sketch of a flatbottom boat; such as are used to descend the Ohio and the Mississippi.”

Rare Book Collection

A description of an Ohio River flatboat from Mary Coburn Dewees’ *Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky, September 27, 1787 to February 11, 1788*:

**Oct 18th and 19th:**

*our B[o]at resembling Noahs ark not a little ... is 40 foot long. our room 16 by 12 with a Comfortable fireplace, our Bed room partitioned off with blankets, and far preferable to the Cabbins we met with after we crosd the Mountains, we are clear of flea which I assure you is a great relief fore we were almost devoured when on shore, –*
Harvey Heth to Thomas Posey. Manuscript letter signed, March 10, 1814.

William H. English Collection

Heth asks Indiana Territorial Governor Thomas Posey (1750-1818) for help in expelling “a hoard of free Negroes” from Harrison County. He suspects the recent immigrants are escaped slaves who entered the territory from Canada and expresses outrage at some of area’s white citizens (“White Negroes”) who have supported the new arrivals. The angry settler warns of a violent confrontation and further complains, “Believe me my dear Sir, My Parridse will be converted into a Hell, if those Negroes Remains in this Neighbourhood.”
Case 12
SLAVERY AND INDENTURE

One out of every five migrants to Kentucky was an African American. Many were brought with the initial groups of European American settlers coming from Virginia and North Carolina, where law and custom recognized slavery as an accepted institution. African Americans shared the rigors of the mountain crossing or downriver journey, and they labored to clear land, build houses, and plant crops. Slaves also played a role in defending forts and frontier stations during periods of hostile attack and accompanied militia and army units on punitive expeditions against the British and their Native American allies.

Slavery in the West was not a uniform practice. By the end of the 1780s, Kentucky counties of Virginia reported varying levels of households owning slaves, ranging from 15% in western Nelson County to 31% in the Bluegrass county of Fayette. Half of Kentucky slaveowner households had only one or two slaves each. Socializing and family formation among Kentucky slaves presented more difficulties than in the Deep South because slaves were thinly scattered and, except for those on the larger hemp and tobacco plantations, physically isolated from each other.

Not all Kentuckians bound to service were African American. By 1790, six per cent of the Kentucky population was composed of white indentured servants. The indenture system held laborers to a restrictive covenant of employment for a fixed period, typically four to seven years. Those on the eastern seaboard facing poverty or escaping legal difficulties were the prime candidates for indentured service in the West. Under law, indentured servants were entitled to adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, but many had masters who treated them little better than slaves.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

An apprenticeship was a legal contract made between an apprentice and a master craftsman. A court often witnessed the indenture’s signing and recorded the document, the conditions of which were binding for the length of an apprentice’s term. In March 1781, Virginia’s Jefferson County Court apprenticed Thomas George, an orphan infant and ward of that court to master blacksmith William Spangler. Under the provisions required by law, Spangler agrees to teach the “art and mystery” of the blacksmith trade to Thomas; and, in addition to clothing, washing, lodging, and feeding him, the blacksmith will provide money for his education (reading, writing, ciphering), pay poll taxes levied, and freedom dues when his term is complete. For his part, Thomas will serve his master honestly, diligently, faithfully, and obediently to the end of his seven-year apprenticeship.

Judge George Turner to Henry Vanderburgh, and Peter and Queen McNelly. Writ of Habeas Corpus ad Subjiciendum, August 23, 1794.
William H. English Collection

This writ was issued by Judge George Turner in response to a complaint filed in territorial court by Peter McNelly. The slave McNelly and his wife Queen fled Kentucky in the fall of 1793. In the territory, both Native Americans and whites captured and repeatedly sold the couple in violation of the Northwest Ordinance’s prohibition of slavery and involuntary servitude. Moreover, the last purchaser Henry Vanderburgh (1760-1812) pressured the couple to sign an indenture as a means of legalizing their enslavement. McNelly, escaping confinement, filed a protest at the court in Vincennes charging Vanderburgh with unlawful and forcible restraint.
United States vs. Benjamin Beekes. Plea incorporating an indenture, September 9, 1808.

William H. English Collection

Although the Northwest Ordinance’s article six prohibited slavery in Indiana Territory, it also provided, “That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed ...” This plea incorporating an indenture is from a case heard at Vincennes involving a fugitive slave who indentured herself as a servant. Hanah, a Virginia slave owned by the heirs of John and Elizabeth Kuykendal, escaped and was arrested by a slave catcher under the fugitive slave act. At the time of detention, Hanah proposed to indenture herself for a term of twelve years to Daniel Sullivan, a local man, in return for his purchase of her freedom. After formalizing the contract, Sullivan sold the indenture to Benjamin Beekes with his servant’s consent, but Beekes then asked the court to

Commissioners of Jefferson County Court. Return of Sarah Hite Clark’s allotment of dower, December 24, 1811.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

A return made by four commissioners appointed by the County Court to allot Sarah Hite Clark’s dower portion in slaves from the estate of her husband General Jonathan Clark (1750-1816). The widow received one-third or seventeen of the estate’s fifty-six slaves — six men, five women, four girls, and two boys — with the remainder divided among the Clark children. An owner holding a life estate in slaves was required under Kentucky law to submit an annual list that included slaves’ names, sex, and ages to the clerk of the county in which they resided.

Isaac Shelby. Affidavit and deposition, October 10, 1782.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In October 1778, the Virginia Assembly passed an act declaring further importation of slaves into the commonwealth illegal. The particulars of the act required citizens and new residents to take an oath swearing that they had neither imported nor sold slaves from Africa or the West Indies. In 1782, Isaac Shelby (1750-1826) began moving his household from Virginia’s southwest to its western territory in Kentucky. Shelby’s deposition and affidavit, given respectively in Washington County, Virginia, and in Kentucky record the oaths affirming his compliance with the law for slaves Rachel,
Benjamin Harrison. Appointment of commissioners of oyer and terminer, February 2, 1784.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

County justices conducted the trials of slaves charged with capital offenses in courts of oyer and terminer. A Virginia statute of 1692 established the courts in response to the government and public's ever-present fear of slave uprisings. No jury was empanelled to hear the defendant's case, and appeals were limited to a single gubernatorial review. This spare legal structure provided for a trial, verdict, and punishment, all swiftly conducted, in the county where the offense had been committed.

Reproduction of
Advertisement for runaway slaves, Kentucky Gazette and General Advertiser, August 30, 1803.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection


Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In his deed of emancipation, Robert Moore does not describe the services performed by the slave Nanny that prompted him to free her. Yet, he did state clearly his aversion to the practice of enslaving, "considering it repugnant to natural right that any Human being should be compelled to render perpetual involuntary servitude." Being a free African American in Kentucky however, did not guarantee a life free from oppression. Legal restrictions required free people of color to register yearly, at the same time pay a fee, and always carry identification documents called "free papers." African Americans who had been emancipated could also be re-sold if, when found guilty of a minor offense, they simply could not afford to pay a fine.
Part 3: EMPIRE AND CONQUESTS

Case 13
CAMPAIGNS AND CONQUESTS

From the time of the first French and Spanish expeditions into the American interior in the seventeenth century, the trans-Appalachian West was an arena of continuing conflict. Western territory was crucial to continuing international struggles for control of waterways, natural resources, and areas for settlement. As France moved south from Canada through the Great Lakes, as Spain pushed northward along the Mississippi River and across the Great Plains, and as Britain and its colonies moved inland from the Atlantic seaboard, the West was repeatedly enveloped in global geopolitical warfare.

For those living in the Ohio River Valley, recurring hostilities were marked by a succession of strikes into enemy territory, whether invading force considered the enemy to be the British empire, tribes of Native Americans, or settler outposts in the Bluegrass region. Following a cyclical pattern, western wars were frequently as brief as they were bloody. Campaigns opened with the mustering of military troops and local militias, often in the spring, followed by a forced march against the enemy, a fixed battle or series of skirmishes, and retreat or withdrawal, invariably accompanied by the burning of enemy villages, houses, and crops.

From Bouquet’s expedition into the Ohio country of 1764, through Clark’s attack on Vincennes in 1779, to the Kentuckians’ defeat at Blue Licks of 1782, St. Clair’s defeat of 1791, and Fallen Timbers in 1794, the cycle of conflict appeared irresolvable. Only after Harrison’s victory over the British and Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1813 was it possible to foresee the end of warfare east of the Mississippi. The victors of the Thames returned home to write flattering narratives and claim the political power made possible by enlarged public reputations. Native Americans were left without their ancestral land and with no written accounts to document their experience of dispossession.

From the Library of Phillip and Florence Miller. Gift of Phillip and Warren Miller

Colonel Henry Bouquet (1719-1765) enlisted Philadelphia educator and clergyman William Smith to record his account of the 1764 military expedition to the Ohio Country. There Bouquet negotiated the surrender of the Shawnee and other tribes fighting in Pontiac’s war (1763-1766), so-called for the Ottawa chief who united them against the British. Lord Jeffery Amherst (1717-1797), commandant of forces in North America, provoked the conflict by his treatment of Native Americans whom he intended to manage by strict regulation and punishment. Indeed, the year before the expedition, Amherst had consented to the use of disease as a means of population control. In an exchange of letters with Bouquet, the military commander sanctions the colonel’s plan to distribute smallpox infected blankets to the tribes, and directs him, “to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable race.”

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Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

European Americans refused to honor the Proclamation Line of 1763, and in violation of George III’s edict settled on Cherokee land along North Carolina’s Watauga, Nolichuky, and Holston Rivers. For seven years, the tribe had ceded its acreage rather than fight, but in May 1776, it joined with the Shawnee, Delaware, Mohawk, and other northern tribes to repel further encroachment and drive the squatters from the region. In response to a perceived threat, colonial militias, over the next few months, entered Cherokee territory to loot and destroy towns and kill their inhabitants. The last of these attacks occurred in October, when William Christian (1743-1786), commander of the Virginia militia at Fort Patrick Henry (present-day Kingsport, Tennessee) devastated Island Town, the focal point of Cherokee resistance. The following July, Overhill Cherokee chiefs signed a treaty on Long Island of the Holston surrendering all lands in Virginia and North Carolina east of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

A month before Christian led his 1,700 militiamen to Island Town, he issued these written orders to Isaac Shelby. The captain is directed to secure two wagonloads of flour that have been delivered to Major Evan Shelby and distribute the contents equally among the wives and widowed mothers of the men who will be sent on the Cherokee Expedition.
Joseph Bowman to George Brinker. Manuscript letter signed, July 30, 1778.

William H. English Collection

Virginia governor Patrick Henry (1736-1799) approved George Rogers Clark’s plan to reduce the British presence in Illinois Country and authorized his recruitment of a company. Clark’s force numbered 175 when he left Corn Island at the Falls of the Ohio and entered Illinois territory. The troop arrived at Kaskaskia on the evening of July 4, 1778 and over the next year captured many French and British settlements including Post St. Vincents (Vincennes), and colonial officials such as Henry Hamilton (d. 1796), lieutenant governor of Detroit.

Major Joseph Bowman (1752-1779) wrote to George Brinker, his sister Rebecca’s husband, describing events that occurred in the first few weeks after the expedition’s departure from Kentucky. Bowman supplies details of the capture at Kaskaskia of commandant Philippe Rocheblave (d. 1802) whom, “we Catcht. In bed, and Emmediately Confind,” and the surrender of Cahokia where, “105 [inhabitants] Took the Oath of ferdelity to the states.” The following year, the major died at Fort Patrick Henry (Fort Sackville) near Vincennes.


William H. English Collection

This receipt book of William Clark contains a record of land conveyed by the Illinois Grant’s board of commissioners. Under resolutions passed in 1781 and 1783, the Virginia Assembly set aside 150,000 acres of land to serve as payment to George Rogers Clark and the soldiers who took part in Clark’s Expedition to the Illinois (1778-1779). Commissioner and principal surveyor William Clark (d. 1791) distributed the certificates and collected this book of receipts, which contains a recording of signatures and amounts of land given each officer, soldier, or assignee.

George Rogers Clark (1752-1818)

Pictures, Maps, Sketches, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

From a crayon sketch on paper, artist unknown, in the possession of R. T. Durrett.
Arthur Campbell to Isaac Shelby. Manuscript letter signed, March 20, 1792.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

While serving in a Virginia company of rangers, fifteen-year old Arthur Campbell (1743-1811) was captured by a Wyandot band and remained their prisoner for two years. Campbell’s hostility toward Native Americans is displayed in this letter to Isaac Shelby in which he faults Kentuckians for prolonging the frontier war by not supporting the federal government’s efforts. The former Virginia Assemblyman includes no names as he complains to Shelby, but criticizes sharply those he dubs the Quaker and mercantile interests in Congress who would pay “The irritated Savages” for land rather than seize it. No doubt, Campbell’s early trauma influenced his opinion, but so too did his ties to the speculative Transylvania Land Company and his ownership of extensive Kentucky acreage.

Kentucky. Laws for regulating the militia. To which is added, an act for establishing rules and articles for the government of the armies of the United States. Frankfort, Ky.: Printed by W. Hunter, 1807.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In May 1792, the Congress and president approved An Act more effectually to provide for the National Defense, by establishing an Uniform Militia throughout the United States. The act’s provisions required that every free able-bodied white male citizen, age eighteen to forty-five, be enrolled in a militia troop. Each man was compelled to appear for exercises on company days properly attired and armed with a good musket or firelock. In addition, the militiaman was obliged to supply a bayonet, belt, two spare flints, a knapsack, a pouch with a box to contain not less than twenty-four cartridges, and a proper amount of powder and ball. If he was unable to produce a musket, then a rifle would suffice, together with a knapsack, shot pouch, powder horn, twenty balls, and a quarter pound of powder. The act further stipulated that:

... every citizen so enrolled and providing himself with the arms, ammunition and accoutrements required, as aforesaid, shall hold the same exempted from all suits, distresses, executions or sales, for debt or for the payment of taxes.
Robert B. McAfee et al. “Volunteers.” July 14, [1813].
Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

This appeal for volunteers includes a reference to the Battle of River Raisin, fought on January 22, 1813, in which a force of 1,400 British regulars and Native Americans killed more than 400 Kentucky militiamen.

John Payne to Hannah Payne. Manuscript letter signed, September 11, 1813.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection

On September 10, 1813, Commodore Oliver Perry in command of nine small ships defeated Robert Heriot Barclay and a British squadron comprised of six vessels near Put-in-Bay on Lake Erie. The victory effectively secured territory in the northwest, stabilized lines of supply, and increased support for the war effort.

Kentucky volunteer John Payne was stationed at Camp Seneca in Ohio when he wrote to his mother Hannah at Mays Lick. Payne’s letter opens with the news of his troop’s departure for Canada and the expressed hope that his regiment will be the first to land in enemy territory after crossing the lake. Moreover, the soldier relates that the day before, “a most tremendous Cannonade [was] heard off the mouth of the Sandusky — no doubt but the fleets have had an engagement.”

Frontier knife and leather sheath. [ca. 1820].
William Beaumont Collection
Case 14
CRAFTING STATEHOOD

In 1776 Kentucky became a separate county of Virginia, and on June 1, 1792 it was admitted as the fifteenth state of the federal Union and the first state west of the Appalachians. The fifteen years between legal recognition by Virginia and statehood were clouded by complex maneuvers and alliances and struggles between partisans of America's nascent political party system.

Kentucky became a county just as the first waves of settlers were making their way over the Cumberland Gap and down the Ohio River. At the time of the first federal census in 1790, Kentucky already had more than 73,000 residents, more than 12,000 of them slaves. The great distance between Kentucky and the eastern seaboard and the continuing fears of attacks by Native Americans encouraged Kentuckians to feel that Virginia was not sufficiently attentive to the needs of the West. A separation movement grew in strength, and it led to nine successive constitutional conventions held between 1784 and 1791. Much was at stake, not only Kentucky's status within the newly created federal Union, but also its position on the extension of slavery and the nature of its relations with Spain, which controlled all commerce on the Mississippi south to the port of New Orleans.

In the end, slavery proved to be the most deeply divisive issue. Slavery was legal in Kentucky so long as it remained governed by the laws of Virginia, but anti-slavery activists like Presbyterian clergyman David Rice argued that it should not be retained in a new state. Pressing just as adamantly for maintaining slavery were powerful figures such as George Nicholas and John Breckinridge. The forces of slavery won the constitutional contest, with results that would leave Kentucky bitterly divided along lines of race, class, and religious belief.
Kentucky. General Assembly. Senate. *Journal of the Senate at the first session of the General Assembly for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, begun and held at the town of Lexington, on Monday, the fourth of June in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two*. Lexington: Printed by John Bradford, 1793.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

During the first two days of Kentucky’s first General Assembly session, a series of elections were held and appointments made: Jefferson County planters Alexander Scott Bullitt (1762-1816) and Robert Breckinridge were elected respectively speakers of the Senate and the House; jurist Buckner Thruston (ca. 1763-1845) was designated Senate clerk; Baptist minister John Gano (1727-1804) was selected to serve as House chaplain; and newspaper publisher John Bradford (1747-1830) was appointed printer to the Commonwealth.

David Rice (1733-1816). *Slavery inconsistent with justice and good policy proved by a speech delivered in the convention, held at Danville, Kentucky*. New York: Printed by Isaac Collins and son, 1804.

Rare Book Collection

Sir, I have lived free, and in many respects happy, for near sixty years; but my happiness has been greatly diminished, for much of the time, by hearing a great part of the human species groaning under the galling yoke of bondage.

Mercer County sent both Presbyterian minister David Rice and George Nicholas (1743-1799) as delegates to the 1792 constitutional convention. The two took opposing positions on the issue of slavery; Rice and six other ministers rallied the anti-slavery contingent while Nicholas firmly supported the claims of Kentucky’s slave-holding class. The minister’s speech, delivered during the debate over codification of slavery in the constitution, echoed his pamphlet and its proclamation on the immorality of one man holding another as property. George Nicholas, to counter Rice, framed the debate in terms of property rights and protection.

On April 11, before the business of constitution drafting was finished, David Rice resigned his post as delegate, perhaps to gain public support for his anti-slavery stand. His replacement Judge Harry Innes (1752-1816) voted with the so-called emancipators when Samuel Taylor moved to have Nicholas’ article nine deleted from the constitution’s draft. The paragraph, which legalized a system of perpetual slavery within the state, stayed on a vote of 16 to 26.
"To the citizens of Fayette County," and A Tenant, "To the poor and indigent citizens of Fayette." [1799].

Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Two handbills in which appear arguments in support of a second constitutional convention. Voters are urged to oppose the Bryan's (or Bryant's) Station slate of delegates backed by John Breckinridge (1760-1806) and George Nicholas and elect Edmund Bullock, Robert Todd, James Hughes, John Bradford, John Parker, and William Barbee, men who, "are in favor of emancipation and in favor of free suffrage." The extensive marginal notes are in George Nicholas' hand.

George Nicholas. Notes on the courts, ca. 1792.

George Nicholas Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Mercer County sent George Nicholas as one of its delegates to the last constitutional convention to convene before Virginia's former western territory became a state on June 1, 1792. Forty-five men from nine counties met at Danville on April 2 to begin the procedure of drafting Kentucky's first constitution. As a prominent Virginia lawyer and former legislator before his move west, Nicholas was well suited to the process of structuring a new government. Over the next seventeen days, the committees of the convention laid out a collection of resolutions, which a select group of delegates under Nicholas’ guidance refined.

These notes on the courts are part of a series of outlines on the institution of slavery and the divisions of government—legislative, executive, judicial—and correspond to specific articles of the constitution, which George Nicholas authored. He begins with four propositions to consider regarding the judiciary:

1st Their necessity and importance
2d The proper manner of constituting and organizing them
3d How far this ought to be settled generally by the constitution of a country
4th What regulations are made necessary by the peculiar situation of this country
John Breckinridge to Isaac Shelby. Manuscript letter signed, March 11, 1798.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

When former Virginia legislator and lawyer John Breckinridge moved to Kentucky in 1793, his ties to prominent families in the region helped further his political activities and ambitions. During his first year in the state, Isaac Shelby appointed Breckinridge attorney general, and by 1798 when this letter was written to the former governor, voters had elected him to the Kentucky House of Representatives.

Breckinridge wrote his letter from Fayette County, the site of his stockbreeding farm Cabell’s Dale, whose work force contained sixty-one slaves. He urges Shelby to run for the General Assembly to help block the schemes of certain representatives. According to Breckinridge, these plans involve overturning the constitution and drafting of a second one at a new convention; the legislator lists the most problematic amendments on the radicals’ agenda:

[1] an abolition of the senate
[2] the whole power of appointment to offices to be vested in a House of representative
[3] a representation by counties to wit by population
[4] a speedy emancipation of slaves and a tax on the land to pay for them

Partial voting list and return. December 9, 1802.

William H. English Collection

Residents who favored the legalization of slavery in Indiana Territory received a sympathetic hearing from their governor, William Henry Harrison (1773-1841). The Congress of Confederation in 1787, however, had added a provision against the establishment of both slavery and involuntary servitude in the Northwest Ordinance. In 1802, Harrison called a general election to select delegates to a convention on the question and in December, men from the four participating counties met at Vincennes. At their assembly, the group fashioned a petition, which Congress would ultimately deny, requesting a suspension of what they considered the burdensome and discriminatory article six of the ordinance.

This voting list and return for Knox County, Indiana Territory, contains voter and candidate’s names, tallies, and certifications by judges and poll keepers. Delegates elected included: Francis Vigo, Luke Decker, William Prince, and William Henry Harrison.
List of taxable property. 1818.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

When drafting the constitution of 1792, George Nicholas proposed to include a system of taxation in the articles, thus preventing the legislature from controlling tax increases. Delegates rejected his proposal and left the assembly free to increase or reduce taxes at will. Support for minimal governmental services and low taxation remained strong throughout the years, with land and slave revenue providing the bulk of funding. By 1798, taxes levied on first-rate land stood at 17 cents per acre, at 10 cents for second-rate, and at 6 ¼ cents for third-rate land and slaves.

Six categories of assessable property for 1818 appear on this partial tax list from the Kentucky counties of Jessamine, Scott, Franklin, and Fayette. These include: rated land, horses, slaves, stud horses, tavern licenses, and billiard tables.

Reproduction from

The Kentucky Gazette, May 19, 1792 gives notice of Isaac Shelby’s election as Kentucky’s first governor:

On Tuesday the 15th – inst. the Electors from the different counties in the State of Kentucky, convened at Lexington agreeably to the Constitution, and proceeded to the election of a Governor and Senate. ISAAC SHELBY, Esq. was elected Governor.

Rare Book Collection

> Whatever pleasure is derived from the punishment of crimes, it is always painful to become the instrument of inflicting it. It was therefore with regret that I found myself called on to lay before the house of representatives the information I possessed of general Wilkinson's treachery and corruption.

In 1807, Daniel Clark appeared before a congressional committee and revealed what he knew about James Wilkinson's connection to Aaron Burr and their plan to invade Mexico. Clark had first met Wilkinson in the 1780s through business dealings transacted in New Orleans; the acquaintance was renewed several years later in the Territory of Mississippi, where Wilkinson commanded the region's troops and Clark served as American Counsel.

Thomas Jefferson's defense of James Wilkinson, one of his administrators in Louisiana territory, and successive allegations by the press that Clark was involved in Burr's schemes, ultimately destroyed Clark's political career. His attempt to restore his reputation with publication of *Proofs of the corruption of Gen. James Wilkinson* in 1809 was unsuccessful.

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Kentucky. General Assembly. House of Representatives. *The report of the select committee to whom was referred the information communicated to the House of Representatives, charging Benjamin Sebastian, one of the judges of the Court of Appeals of Kentucky, with having received a pension from the Spanish government.* Frankfort, Ky.: J. M. Street, 1806.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

General James Wilkinson secured a pension for Benjamin Sebastian (1745-1834) from Spain's representatives in New Orleans, a return for his effort to separate Kentucky from Virginia and the American Confederation. Sebastian continued his work for the Spanish government even after statehood was granted in 1792 and the separatist proposal was no longer viable. By his resignation from the Kentucky Court of Appeals in 1806, Sebastian hoped to end a legislative probe initiated by his Federalist enemies. The House Committee, however, concluded that the former justice had acted as Spain's agent and published the results of its findings.
William Littell (1768-1824). *Political transactions in and concerning Kentucky, from the first settlement thereof, until it became an independent state, in June, 1792.* Frankfort, Ky.: William Hunter, 1806.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Judge Harry Innes (1752-1816), lawyer Caleb Wallace (1742-1814), and legislator John Brown (1757-1837) hired William Littell to write *Political transactions in and concerning Kentucky.* Littell’s book challenged the reasoning of Federalist author Humphrey Marshall who had labeled Innes and the others “Spanish Conspirators.” The Aaron Burr affair had renewed the public’s interest in the older conspiracy and offered Marshall further opportunities to harass the suspect Kentuckians. Indeed, he did so, maliciously, in the blatantly partisan *Frankfort Western World*, ultimately sparking the government’s investigation of Judge Benjamin Sebastian and Harry Innes’ lawsuit which accused Marshall of libel.

William Wirt (1772-1834). *The two principal arguments of William Wirt, esquire, on the trial of Aaron Burr; for high treason, and on the motion to commit Aaron Burr and others, for trial in Kentucky.* Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, Jun., 1808.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

William Wirt’s prosecution of Aaron Burr in 1806 enhanced his reputation as an accomplished lawyer. His published account of the trial appeared two years later when he ran successfully for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates.
James Madison to George Nicholas. Manuscript letter signed, May 17, 1788.

George Nicholas Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1786, Kentucky farmers were among those most angered by the Jay-Gardoqui treaty. Under one of its provisions, the American government would relinquish its navigation rights on the Mississippi River for twenty-five years, in return for Spain's help in driving the British out of the northwest. Though the treaty failed to achieve a majority in Congress, it had won the backing of economically depressed areas in the east with its promise of formalized trade relations. The government's attempt to barter away Kentucky's only access to domestic and foreign markets left many questioning whether or not the west should remain tied to Virginia and the central Confederation.

Debates over each states' approval of the new Federal Constitution were in progress when George Nicholas wrote to James Madison (1751-1836) on May 9, 1788. Nicholas, who would immigrate to Kentucky later that year, asked Madison to explain how the proposed system of government would protect navigational rights on the river; several days later, Madison sent his reply in this nine-page letter. In June, Nicholas spoke before the Virginia Constitutional Convention, incorporating much of Madison's argument. He failed, however, to convince the Kentucky delegation, and consequently, most of the delegates voted to oppose ratification.


Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

_I will support the Federal and State constitutions and Laws with every nerve in my body, and every fibre of my heart and with every particle of brains in my head, when they are assaulted by a set of desperate Conspirators._

Claiborne Rice (ca. 1768-1829) wrote these words to his cousin minister Joshua Lacy Wilson soon after Thomas Jefferson had publicly labeled Aaron Burr a traitor. Burr's grand jury appearance in Frankfort, Kentucky convinced many of his guilt and Rice is hopeful that ministers who are loyal to the nation will rise up and condemn his actions.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

These Louisiana House of Representatives resolutions are addressed to the territorial governor, William C. C. Claiborne (1775-1817). Claiborne is asked to share any information he might have regarding Aaron Burr’s movements and the threat he poses to the region. Not quite three weeks earlier on January 10, 1807, Burr and his collaborators entered the adjacent Territory of Mississippi.

Aaron Burr, 1756 - 1836

American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Reproduction of
James Wilkinson, 1757 - 1825.
Pictures, Maps, Sketches, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

From an 1808 portrait by Charles Fevret de Saint-Mémin (1770-1852)


American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Engraving from the original painting by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887).
Case 16

POLITICAL AMBITIONS

Political careers in the trans-Appalachian West were shaped by a combination of influences including family lineage, land holdings, social and business alliances, and military reputation. Early in the period of settlement and statehood, power in Kentucky devolved upon a relatively small elite dominated by names such as Shelby, Adair, Breckinridge, Brown, and Henderson.

Into this group came an aspiring young attorney, Henry Clay, who was born in Virginia and in 1799 married Lucretia Hart, youngest daughter of Thomas Hart, a wealthy and influential Lexington businessman and landholder. Quickly gaining entry to Kentucky's most influential circles, Clay became widely known for his legal skills and was retained to defend Aaron Burr against charges of treason in Kentucky courts. In 1811, he was elected to Congress and chosen Speaker of the House on his first day of service. He subsequently served twenty years as one of the most powerful members of the U.S. Senate.

Clay's career was not without controversy, including a duel fought with a bitterly partisan Humphrey Marshall. Clay was also shadowed by his difficult relationship to Masonry. The Masonic order was at the height of its prominence and proud to point to a roster of members that had included George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Paul Revere, and others of the Revolutionary generation. For the young Henry Clay, Masonic membership was an important avenue to social and political power, and he was glad to accept appointment as Master of Lexington Lodge No. 1 and Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky. With the founding of the Anti-Masonic Party in the late 1820s, however, the tide of public opinion turned, and Clay was among those who broke publicly with Masonry and attacked it for wielding a dangerous, hidden influence in American political affairs.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Humphrey Marshall's version of the state's early history disputed the one published by his political enemies in William Littell's *Political transactions in and concerning Kentucky.*

George Nicholas. Manuscript draft of a speech, 1798.

George Nicholas Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1798, the Federalist Adams administration backed passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts in anticipation of war with France. Those security procedures mandated a longer waiting period for naturalization; allowed foreign nationals from unfriendly countries to be detained; empowered the president to expel any alien considered dangerous; banned publication of material considered false or malicious; and proscribed inciting opposition to any congressional or presidential act. Moreover, the measures were intended to silence the Federalist's political opponents, the supposedly pro-French Jeffersonian Republicans.

That same year in Lexington, Kentucky, at a Republican political rally, George Nicholas delivered an eloquent speech, which is evoked by this draft. Nicholas vigorously opposed the sedition act, and affirmed the right of dissenters to express their views without fear of imprisonment and to call public officials to account for their unwarranted actions. Henry Clay, who had been in Kentucky only a short time, followed Nicholas on the platform and delivered the first political speech of his career.
Kentucky Resolutions. Printed handbill, November 10, 1798.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1798 and 1799, the Kentucky and Virginia assemblies passed resolutions condemning the Alien and Sedition Acts. Representative John Breckinridge (1760-1806) introduced Kentucky's version of the declaration, a document he had received from his friend Thomas Jefferson and which he had slightly modified. James Madison authored Virginia's decree and neither his nor Jefferson's role in creating the documents was revealed.

Henry Clay to Harry Innes. Manuscript letter signed, January 16, 1807.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Harry Innes' relationship with James Wilkinson and Judge Benjamin Sebastian led many to believe he took part in their treasonable scheming to detach Kentucky from the central government and align it with Spanish Louisiana. When Burr's conspiracy was made public those formerly suspect, such as Innes, were accused of trying to revive the old plot. A resolution was sent from the Kentucky Assembly to Washington at the instigation of Innes' political enemies, in an attempt to have him impeached and removed from the Federal bench.

Henry Clay was serving in the Senate when he wrote to Innes from Washington; his letter contains the news that Congress would most likely refuse to hear the impeachment case, though a number of senators thought him guilty.

Devall Payne to Hannah Payne. Manuscript letter signed, January 18 and 21, 1809.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection

Mr. Clay and Marshal has been gone for several days with their seconds but Knowbody can tell where but it is expected they have gon across the Ohio it is the opinion of every body that they will not come back without one or both being killed or badly wounded.

Kentucky state representative Devall Payne (1764-1830) wrote to his wife Hannah Brent Payne (1769-1837) from Frankfort, Kentucky, during one of the Assembly sessions. His letter provides details of the duel between political adversaries Henry Clay and Humphrey Marshall and incorporates a vivid description of the wounds both men
Henry Clay (1777-1852).
American Historical Portraits, William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Masonic Apron, ca. 1800-1820.
Artifact Collection

The shape of this lambskin Master Mason’s apron was based on that of a craftsman’s working apron. Its hand-drawn iconographic imagery includes an all-seeing eye with subordinate sun and moon; a square and compass; images of Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars which stood before Solomon’s Temple; the mosaic pavement as representative of the temple’s floor; an anchor; Tyler’s sword; an hourglass; and a scythe.
Case 17

COMMERC

With access to the Ohio River and astride the Wilderness Road bringing settlers westward, Kentucky was well positioned for commercial success. Agriculture became the economic mainstay of the area, and by the late 1780s burley tobacco was the primary cash crop. Kentucky was also a leading producer of the nation's supply of hemp, which was used to manufacture rope and other fiber products such as bag cloth. By the early nineteenth century, Kentucky industries included tobacco processing houses and ropewalks as well as gristmills, sawmills, ironworks, meatpacking plants, and glassworks.

One Kentucky staple crop that was initially difficult to transport was corn. By the mid-1780s, however, a number of Kentucky distillers including Elijah Craig, Evan Williams, and Jacob Beam had developed a new variety of corn-based whiskey that acquired the name Bourbon from its original county of origin. Thereafter, Kentucky's corn crop could be converted from hulled kernels into kegged liquor and readily shipped to markets in the eastern United States or down the Mississippi to New Orleans.

Kentucky's experience with banking was less successful. The War of 1812 spurred economic prosperity, but once peace returned financial difficulties threatened many with ruin. The state responded in 1818 by chartering a number of new banks that were authorized to issue their own currency. These banks soon collapsed, and the state legislature passed measures for the relief of the banks' creditors. When these measures were declared unconstitutional by a state court, the electorate became deeply divided between pro-relief and anti-relief factions, a political struggle over the proper role of banks that moved to the national stage in the 1830s with President Andrew Jackson's attack on the Bank of the United States.
Anthony Boucherie. *The art of making whiskey, so as to obtain a better, purer, cheaper and greater quantity of spirit, from a given quantity of grain: Also, the art of converting it into gin, after the process of the Holland distillers, without any augmentation of price.* Translated from the French by C. M********. Lexington, Ky.: Printed by Worsley & Smith, 1819.

Rare Book Collection

Kentucky’s first settlers raised crops of corn in order to earn 400-acre pre-emptions offered by the Virginia Assembly. With stabilized corn cultivation came an ever-increasing domestic whiskey production in Jefferson, Lincoln, and Bourbon Counties where the region’s earliest whiskey makers resided. By the 1790s it appears that much of the production was located within the county of Bourbon where at least twenty-five distillers were listed as working.

B. H. Latrobe, William and N. Carrol. “Cumberland Steam Boat. Proposals for raising a stock to build a Steam-Boat to complete the line between Nashville, Pittsburgh, New-Orleans and Louisville.” [ca. 1810].

Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Latrobe and the Carrols published this subscription hoping to interest prospective investors in their Cumberland line of steamboats. The very earliest steamers were relatively inexpensive to build and highly profitable. Compared to other modes of transport available at the time, the latest news reports, passengers, and cargo such as livestock and building materials moved rapidly down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the west. These were cumbersome vessels, heavy in structure with deep drafts, and impossible to navigate up small rivers and shallow tributaries.
Day book and ledger salt sales. May through June 1787.

Lyne Estate Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Salt was a necessity, the only thing available on the frontier that could preserve a perishable food source like game meat. Early producers in the western region were able to retrieve the mineral only through a tedious, labor-intensive, and environmentally destructive process that included the digging of saltwater wells and the felling of large stands of trees. Once the saltwater was collected in kettles in quantities of twenty or more gallons, it was brought to a boil over an open fire to steam the liquid away. The residue of salt crystals was collected, stored, and then bartered away or sold in amounts ranging from a pound to a barrel.

Colonel Edmund Lyne established his salt works at Blue Licks, one of the earliest and most important salt-producing sites in Kentucky. His day book and ledger contains a record of salt sales, as well as other entries for ferriage charges, barters, meat, tallow, corn, cloth, whiskey, tool purchases, kettle rentals, and attorney’s fees.
James Wilkinson and Peyton Short to Isaac Shelby. Manuscript letter signed, December 19, 1789, with the subscription "To the planters of the District of Kentucky."

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

[1788]

... General Wilkinson returned from Orleans, ... And soon it was rumoured that he had made a contract with the Spanish governor, which enabled him to ship tobacco, and depoiste it in the king's store, at ten dollars per hundred -- which none but Spanish subjects could do. In fact, that he was a Spanish subject; having taken the necessary oath of allegiance, &c. He forthwith proposed buying tobacco, and let it be known that he had an exclusive privilege at New Orleans; ....

Humphrey Marshall described the intrigues of James Wilkinson in the second edition of his History of Kentucky. He detailed too the relationship between other political and financial leaders in the region who, like the general, supported separating the western territory from the United States and aligning it with Spain, the so-called Spanish Conspiracy. Wilkinson's foreign alliance allowed him to ease a huge debt load, due in part to tangled business affairs; he had no doubt persuaded himself that an American trade monopoly in New Orleans was worth the risk of exposure and disgrace.

Isaac Shelby's election as Kentucky's first governor was over two years away, but he was a well-respected community leader and recognized war hero when Wilkinson and his new partner Peyton Short (1761-1825) contacted him. Their letter outlines a cooperative scheme, in which the two men will serve as agents at New Orleans for Kentucky tobacco farmers, pooling and selling the commodity in bulk. The partners solicit Shelby's backing and ask him to urge his friends to do the same.

John Fitzgerald and John Robertson to Jonathan Forbis. Bill of sale for Peter, June 22, 1797.

Slavery and Indentured Servitude Collection

At age thirty-one, Peter the former slave of the late Nathen Farris was sold to Jonathan Forbis of Lincoln County, Kentucky for one hundred and fifteen pounds. The slave-brokers Fitzgerald and Robertson state that, "[this] Negro man Peter we will warrent to be helthey Sound & Sensible Clear of any impediments or desorders whatsoever ...."
Jonathan Jennings to Robert Morrison and Robert Hill. Bond and license, February 21, 1817.

William H. English Collection

A bond in acknowledgement of Robert Morrison and Robert Hill’s payment of $2,000 to the governor of Indiana, Jonathan Jennings (1784-1834). Upon receipt of the payment, the state granted a license to the men to trade with four Native American tribes — the Delaware, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Potowatami — for as long as they adhered to all state laws regulating that trade.

Bank note, Bank of Henderson, Henderson, Kentucky, August 18, 1818.
Bank note, Cumberland Bank, Burksville, Kentucky, December 28, 1818.
Bank note, Farmers & Mechanics Bank, Logan, Kentucky, April 30, 1819.
Check, Bank of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Bowling Green, Kentucky, June 12, 1823.

American Currency Collection

Banks, with authorization from state-granted charters, could issue their own notes, the values of which were supported by the institutions’ reserves of gold and silver. Nonetheless, Kentucky’s legislature charted forty-six independent banks in 1818 and allowed them to issue notes at three times the rate of their hard currency holdings. As the currencies’ worth fluctuated, merchants and financially sound banks refused to accept them in payment or exchange.

Steelyard or lever scale, n.d.

William Beaumont Collection

Goods to be weighed hung from end hooks and load size was determined by attaching
Kentucky inherited its common law system from Virginia, the state of which it was a part until 1792. The opening of the trans-Appalachian West created a vast field of activity in the region for local, state, and federal courts and the attorneys and judges who built their careers on legal practice. The law was involved in every transaction of consequence to the new society in the West, from the purchase and sale of land to the formation of corporations, operation of businesses, prosecution of crime, conveyance of dowries, and settling of estates.

Legal documents provide a unique perspective on the workings of the western social order. This is especially true of legal records related to slavery, since court proceedings and other legal documents preserve some of the few surviving facts about individual slaves of the period. Slaves were considered an important and valuable form of property, and they were thus included in court proceedings as subjects in legal contests, sales, inheritances and estates, and marriage portions and dowers. As with other forms of property, slaves could be mortgaged or used as security for payment of loans, and they were recoverable in a suit of law. Slaves could also be attached by government officers as assets for their owners’ nonpayment of debts or taxes.
John Bradford (1747-1830). *A general instructor; or the office, duty, and authority of justices of the peace, sheriffs, coroners, constables, jailors, and jurymen, with precedents, suited to every case that can possibly arise, in the discharge of the duties in either of those offices....* Lexington, Ky.: Printed for the author by T. T. Bradford, 1820.

Rare Book Collection, D’Angelo Library

A guide published for local and county officers containing brief outlines of their duties and examples of documentary forms for legal proceedings. The types of actions for which forms were needed ranged from the issuing of writs and taking of depositions to the servicing of warrants for crimes such as selling spirits near a place of worship, poisoning, and polygamy.

William Clutter, defendant. *A concise statement of the trial & confession of William Clutter, who was executed on Friday the 8th June, 1810, at Boone Court-House, Kentucky, for the murder of John Farmer. To which is prefixed a short sketch of his life.* Cincinnati: John W. Browne & Company, 1810.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Cautionary tales of crime and punishment began to appear in print in early nineteenth-century Kentucky. Readers were treated to tabloid-like biographies of felons who when dying offered confessions and expressions of remorse for their actions. The most popular narrative within this genre was that of Jereboam Beauchamp, who was hanged in 1826 for the murder of Colonel Solomon Sharp. Beauchamp’s wife Ann committed suicide on the day of his execution, and the couple’s tragic story inspired a play and a number of novels.
Richard Dickinson. *An address to Judge Innes, sole and absolute judge of the Federal Court, in all cases to the amount of two thousand dollars; and to the citizens of the United States of America.* Louisville: Printed by Vail and Berry, 1803.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Yes, you have endeavored to establish an arbitrary, self-created code, the offspring of your own disordered brain, ... and have nearly reduced us to the same situation, as in the dark ages of ignorance & superstition, ... when the discretion of a judge was the law of tyrants.

Richard Dickinson published his caustic assessment of the Federal Court judge Harry Innes following an unfavorable ruling in the suit Few vs. Dickinson. In 1801 and 1802, Innes sat on both the 6th Circuit Court and the Federal District Court of Kentucky and heard the complicated suit involving a sale of vacant land. The disgruntled defendant presented his side of the story a year later, in this book, the first published in Louisville.

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Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Attorneys Law and Wallach advertised that they would prosecute all claims made against the government for recovery of damage and property loss due to military action.
Kentucky Court of Appeals. Court Ruling, December 9, 1803. (True Copy)
Lyne Estate Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

It is lawful for any person by last will and testament ... to emancipate and set free his slave or slaves. All slaves so set free, ... males under twenty-one, and females under eighteen shall be supported by the persons liberating them.

From: An act of the Virginia Assembly, 1782

When Colonel Edmund Lyne died in late 1791, Judge Harry Innes wrote to Lyne’s family in Virginia informing them of his friend’s death and notifying them that, “[He] hath left me his only executor.” In a will dated November 26 of that same year, Lyne expressed a wish that all his slaves be freed and that his assets – cash holdings and real property – be used to maintain them. The colonel owned six or seven slaves at the time of his death, three of whom were underage and needed to be financially supported according to law.

Members of Lyne’s family (residuary legatees) sued to have the will set aside; a lower court ruled in their favor and stipulated that Lyne’s former slaves, Milley (16), James (15), and Lucy (12) be apprenticed rather than allowed to attend school. This appeals court ruling quashed the lower court order issued December 1802 and placed the estate’s executor Harry Innes in charge of the children and their educational and financial needs.

John Moore to the County Court, Jefferson County, Kentucky. Estate inventory and appraisal, February 6, 1804.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

On October 4, 1802, the Jefferson County Court certified Sarah Beard’s will, appointed John Moore her estate’s administrator, and ordered that the amount and worth of her assets be tallied. Almost two years later, Moore made and signed this inventory and appraisal of Sarah Beard’s holdings listing her furniture, tableware, tools, a gun, a compass, a slave named James, and books such as John Wesley’s Primitive physick, and Form of discipline, a Methodist Episcopalian tract.
Affidavit and notice. November 13, 1810.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Affidavit by editor David Rannell, certifying that the *Louisville Gazette* published the above court announcement eight weeks in succession. The appended notice contains an order of the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Circuit Court for the appearance of Spencer Cooper. Mr. Cooper was to appear at the court’s November term to answer the charges of his wife Mary Cooper, who asked for a divorce on grounds of abandonment and adultery.

List of writs. May 4, 1802.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

A list of writs of several Kentucky counties containing the names of the persons served together with notation of dates of service and of writs not executed. The types of court orders presented included *Fieri facias*, which directed a sheriff to seize the property of a debtor to satisfy a judgment; and, *Capias ad satisfaciendum* charging a sheriff to arrest and hold a defendant and to bring him to court on a particular day.
Part 4: WESTERN PATTERNS

Case 19

HOUSEHOLDS

Travelers found the log cabin to be the most characteristic settler dwelling of the trans-Appalachian West. Cabins were invariably crude buildings, sixteen to twenty feet in length and not more than twelve or sixteen feet wide. The interior typically held a single room centering on a fireplace along one wall with an unfinished loft above. Furniture was simple, a table, a few stools or chairs, and mattresses stuffed with corn shucks. Windows were few and frequently without glass, covered by wooden shutters and animal skins during the winter months.

Houses of the western gentry represented increasing levels of physical comfort and social pretension. Brick houses were more expensive than frame, and stone cost more than brick. Constructed as two-story oblongs with two or four rooms on each floor, these houses usually had a kitchen wing or separate kitchen house to the rear. Furnishings varied greatly with the financial circumstances of the family, but they usually included a few pieces brought west in the migration, a table and chairs, chest, or bedstead. Owners holding extensive tracts of productive farmland or prospering in business were able to import higher quality finished goods and luxury products from the eastern seaboard and Europe.

Families could be both large and extended. Particularly in the early years of settlement, houses were often shared by grandparents, in-laws, and cousins. Deaths from violence or disease left widows, widowers, or orphans who needed to be temporarily sheltered with family or friends. Also present, for owners of sufficient wealth, were one or more slaves, usually housed in
Joseph Doddridge (1769-1826). *Notes, on the settlement and Indian wars, of the western parts of Virginia & Pennsylvania: From the year 1763 until the year 1783 inclusive; together with a view, of the state of society and manners of the first settlers of the western country.* Wellsburgh, Va.: Printed at the office of the Gazette, for the author, 1824.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Physician and clergyman Joseph Doddridge rode circuit, first as a Methodist and later as a Protestant Episcopalian in areas of western Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio. At age fifty-five, the minister published his notes on life in the late colonial period, incorporating what he had observed as a child living in the western country. His writings allow us a rare glimpse of the daily life of early settlers, of frontier conflicts, celebrations, clothing worn, food and its preparation, and entertainments enjoyed.

Marriage certificate. March 30, 1794.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Certificate of Marriage of Sarah (Salley) Tuley and the Reverend Jacob Lurton. The ceremony was performed by Methodist Episcopal circuit preacher Benjamin Ogden in Jefferson County, Kentucky.
Day book and ledger slave births and livestock accounts. February 18, 1787- September 4, 1791.

Lyne Estate Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Birth records of Jamima’s children, slaves of Colonel Edmund Lyne, Bourbon County, Kentucky:

1787

Febry. 18th. Jamima was delivered of a Girl, Milley.

1788

Sept. – 20 – [Jamima was delivered of] a Boy – James –

1790

March 3 – [Jamima] was delivered of a Dead Child. (– Girl –)

1791

March 13. [Jamima] was delivered of a Girl. – Lucy –

Harry Innes. Accounts for maintenance of manumitted slaves, [1804].

Lyne Estate Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Colonel Edmund Lyne’s will stipulated that all his slaves were to be freed, and money provided to educate those who were too young to have learned a trade. As Lyne’s executor, Judge Harry Innes was required by the court to document all expenditures charged against the estate. These accounts list the cost of clothing, boarding, and schooling the freed African American children Milley, James, and Lucy, ages respectively 17, 16, and 13.

Joshua Lacy Wilson to his children. Manuscript letter signed, April 24, 1817.

Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Presbyterian minister Joshua Lacy Wilson wrote this letter to his children Amanda, Joshua, Frances, and Mary Ann in Cincinnati. The minister describes for them the sounds of birds and the colors of forest flowers that he has seen while on a journey to Philadelphia. He notes that the children will want to hear about his horse Toley, and includes a funny story detailing the animal’s antics.
Prathers and Smiley. Bill and receipt, March 10 to September 7, 1795.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Bill against the estate of William Christian from dry goods merchants Prathers and Smiley. The list of items purchased includes cloth and notions such as: muslin, linen, chintz, needles, pins, and taste (silk edge-binding). Notation that the debt was paid in full by Colonel Alexander Scott Bullitt (Christian’s executor) appears at the foot of the page.

John Harrison, Robert and Sofie Harrison New. Indenture, October 16, 1810.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

An indenture recording the loan of household furnishings to Robert and Sofie Harrison New by John Harrison (Mrs. New’s father). It is stipulated that the furniture, tableware, and kitchen utensils are loaned and must be returned upon Harrison’s demand.

Drinking gourd, n.d.

William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Attributed to the family of Abraham Lincoln.

Tin candle-mold, n.d.

William Beaumont Collection

Selection of materials used in early candle production was based on cost and availability as well as scent; some materials used included tallow from rendered animal fat, beeswax, paraffin, and bayberry.


Reuben T. Durrett Collection
The patterns of Western agriculture were shaped by climate, soil, technology, and the market for fertile land. The Kentucky climate, while temperate, was not warm enough to support large plantings of crops such as cotton or rice. The soil of the Bluegrass was rich, as were expanses north of the Ohio River, but many areas of Kentucky were hilly, rocky, and difficult to till. Where the soil had supported the growth of lush native grasses and cane, wooden plows of the period proved inadequate to cut through the dense network of roots embedded below the surface.

Cutting dense forests thus became the preferred method for clearing agricultural land. Large trees were often killed by girdling, stripping the bark in bands about two feet above the roots and leaving the tree to die. Small trees and bushes were cut, piled, and burned. The ground around the stumps was broken with a light plow or hoe, and the first seeds were planted in the ashes. It was said that the average adult male could clear five or six acres of wooded land a year in this fashion.

The wealthiest farmers owned 500 to 1,200 acres or more, kept a quarter under cultivation, and raised livestock and other crops to market locally or ship downstream to New Orleans. Middling farmers had enough in savings for a down payment on a parcel of land, usually ten to thirty acres, which was adequate to feed a family and produce a surplus to reduce outstanding debt or to buy salt, gunpowder, and a horse or better plow. The smallest farms were those of the squatters, who cleared a few acres and remained until they had enough money to buy a farm elsewhere or were expelled by the legal owner.

Berlin Collection

By the 1770s, hemp (Cannabis sativa), a plant introduced to the New World in the sixteenth century and used to manufacture rope and sailcloth, had become Kentucky’s largest cash crop. Hemp cultivation was centered in Fayette and Bourbon Counties on farms like that of legislator John Breckinridge where slaves planted seeds, harvested plants, and extracted fibers. Extraction was left to the strongest workers, who first retted the stalks to remove the gum, a step, which accelerated the drying process so that the woody bark encasing the fibers could be broken and removed.

The Kentucky farmer’s almanac, for the year 1810; being the second after bissextile, or leap year; and (after the 4th of July) the 35th of American Independence. Containing, (exclusive of the astronomical calculations,) a variety of useful and entertaining matter. Lexington: Printed by Wm.W. Worsley, [1809?]

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

William Worsley’s Kentucky farmer’s almanac, which began publication several years after those of John Bradford and Joseph Charless, was the most informative and comprehensive of all the Kentucky manuals. Entertaining and instructive, Worsley offered his audience more than his competitors’ notes on weather, by filling the small pamphlets with proverbs, folk wisdom, articles on livestock maintenance, and sections on travel, literature, agriculture, and medical advice.

Rare Book Collection

In the first year of its publication, *The western review and miscellaneous magazine* printed several articles by Constantine Rafinesque. In addition to his popular treatise on fish in the Ohio River, the naturalist contributed a discussion on the prevention and treatment of excessive salivation in horses and cattle. In this piece, Rafinesque described the appearance of the most problematic weeds responsible for causing the disorder, identified environments in which they grew, and prescribed his method of detoxifying animals by providing a simple diet of cabbage, turnip, mustard, or radish leaves.

Thomas Jefferson to Harry Innes. Manuscript letter signed, June 20, 1806.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Thomas Jefferson wrote to both friends and acquaintances on the subject of agricultural technology. His letters reveal a concentrated interest in improving a farm’s efficiency and increasing its production by altering common cultivating implements such as plows. In 1788 while traveling in Europe, Jefferson made one of his earliest sketches together with notes of ideas for improving a mouldboard, that part of a plow, either wood or cast iron, which turns the earth that the plowshare cuts. Numerous letters to correspondents such as his son-in-law Thomas Mann Randolph (1768-1828), and Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827), contain Jefferson’s thoughts on lessening a mouldboard’s resistance when it met with the soil.

During his second term as president, he wrote this letter to Judge Harry Innes in Kentucky regarding a mouldboard that Innes had recommended to him. Jefferson notes how he changed the shape of its toe and sent an enclosure with his letter describing the modification.
Thomas Jefferson to [Henry] Remsen. Manuscript letter signed, April 2, 1795.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection

On December 18, 1793, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Caleb Lownes in Philadelphia requesting prices and credit terms for the purchase of nail rods, lengths of soft pliable iron used to make forged nails. Jefferson had decided to start a new business venture supplying local merchants, and by the following April, when he accepted delivery from Mr. Lownes of one ton (40 bundles) of rods, he had already constructed a nailery at Monticello adjacent to the blacksmith shop.

A year later, Jefferson wrote this letter on the subject of nails to his friend Henry Remsen (1762-1843), former chief clerk in the Department of State. He observes that his attempt to forge 4d (penny) nails on the anvil has not been successful. In response to Remsen’s description of a nail-cutting technique (in a previous letter), Jefferson recalls having once seen a New York cut nail-maker at work using tools that, “were of very small cost, and not under a patent, ....” He requests that Remsen buy those kinds of implements for him, “if they be few & of little cost as I suppose,” and reply to his questions regarding cost-efficient nail production and selling prices.


Ebenezer Lane Collection presented by Ebenezer Lane and Fannie G. Lane

Following the Revolutionary War, Virginia planters began cultivating tobacco in Kentucky. The planters’ migration west had been predicted by Thomas Jefferson, for tobacco had badly depleted Virginia’s soil of nitrogen, potassium, and, phosphorus, and crop yields were falling. In the colonial period, growers had developed the strain *Nicotiana tabacum*, a milder variety for smoking and snuff-dipping, than the *Nicotiana rustica* or wild tobacco used by Native Americans.

After harvesting, the plant’s leaves were cured, a process in which they were hung across poles ranged in barns or sheds to air-dry. A stronger flavored tobacco was produced by smoking, a method of curing over a wood fire, which also better preserved the product. Then leaves were packed for aging in hogsheads, large round wood casks of a varying size and weight that also served as containers for shipping.
Woodworking tools, small hammer, shovel, scythe, n.d.

William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

Tools attributed to Abraham Lincoln’s father, Thomas Lincoln (1778-1851), farmer and furniture maker.
Case 21
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Education was an early interest for western settlers, but the rigors of frontier life and scarcity of trained teachers made schooling a rare and discontinuous experience for most children. Simple lessons taught by rote were the limit of most curricula, supported by a few elementary textbooks, some of them published in Kentucky. For young girls from wealthier families, female academies offered more genteel training in literature, languages, and the arts.

In 1780, Transylvania Seminary was founded by a group of Presbyterians in Danville, Kentucky. Led by the Rev. John Todd and the Rev. Caleb Wallace, the founders were able to secure a charter and endowment for the new institution. Moved to Lexington in 1787, the seminary was eventually renamed Transylvania University. Under the leadership of the first chairman of its trustees, anti-slavery campaigner Rev. David Rice, Transylvania made its reputation as the first institution of higher learning to be established west of the Appalachians.
Peter Bailey. *The defining orthographer, and youth's plain guide to pronunciation and reading; containing, a selection of the most common and useful words of two, three, four, five, and six syllables, made use of in our language, with their definition* .... Lexington, Ky.: William and John M'Clane, 1815.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

By the eighteenth century, a movement to change English spelling from the unsystematic to the uniform was supported by the publication of such works as Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English language*. In the next century, schoolbooks like Peter Bailey’s *The defining orthographer* begin to appear as aids to teach students the newly fixed, but regrettably unphoentic word spellings.

Jesse Guthrie. *The American school-master's assistant; being a compendious system of vulgar and decimal arithmetic; containing the usual methods of calculation, with the calculation of federal money dispersed throughout the whole,* .... 3rd ed. Lexington: Maccoun, Tilford & Company, 1811.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

A mnemonic device for students found in this volume:

*The Golden Rule, or Rule of Three, is so called because there are three numbers given to find a fourth, which shall bear such proportion to the third as the second does to the first; hence it is also called “the Rule of Proportions” – and is either Direct or Inverse.*
Thomas Henderson (1781-1846). *Easy system of the geography of the world; by way of question and answer. Principally designed for schools.* Lexington, Ky.: Printed by Thomas T. Skillman, 1813.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1825, the Baptist Board of Missions and the United States War Department appointed Thomas Henderson superintendent of the Choctaw Academy at Great Crossings, Kentucky. Henderson, whose selection was recommended by Kentucky senator Richard Mentor Johnson (1781-1850), was a Baptist minister as well as a renowned surveyor who had helped to map out towns in Ohio, Missouri, Indiana, and Kentucky.

Lindley Murray (1745-1826). *Introduction to the English reader; or, a selection of pieces, in prose and poetry; calculated to improve the younger classes of learners in reading, and to imbue their minds with the love of virtue ....* Philadelphia: Benjamin Warner, 1816.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Lindley Murray had made his fortune in the American mercantile trade before retiring to England to write. In 1795, he began to publish a series of English grammars, which circulated widely in both England and America; the first edition of this *Introduction to the English reader* appeared six years later. In spite of recurrent criticism that he often forgot his own rules, Murray remained the nineteenth century’s most popular and prolific grammarian with over a million copies of his works in print by 1850, twenty-four years after his death.


Reuben T. Durrett Collection

At President James Monroe’s invitation, the Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), a hero of both the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution, returned to the United States in 1824 to begin a year-long tour. By May 1825, Lafayette had reached Kentucky where he was met by large cheering crowds, patriotic celebrations, and elaborate dinners. On May 16, the general and his party arrived in Lexington, where they watched a military parade, toured Transylvania University, and witnessed additional ceremonies at the Lafayette Female Academy.
At age twenty-six, Unitarian minister Harry Toulmin (1766-1823) immigrated from England to America, a country known to him only from the imaginative immigration tracts he once helped author. By 1793, he had established an educational seminary in Norfolk, Virginia and had become acquainted with both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. With the help of both men, Toulmin next traveled to Lexington, Kentucky, and was installed there as the head of Transylvania Seminary, a post he held until 1796.

It is likely that Harry Toulmin was in need of extra funds after arriving in Kentucky. His advertisement, perhaps meant for publication in a newspaper or as a handbill, offers his services as a tutor to twenty young men. For the cost of $4.25 a quarter session and $40 for a year’s boarding, Toulmin will provide an English and classical education, with training in grammar, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as, geography, and arithmetic. Those wanting to learn Latin, geometry, trigonometry, and surveying will be charged an extra 75 cents.
William E. Barton Collection of Lincolnniana

Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three; but that was all.

Abraham Lincoln’s remarks on his education were sent to his friend Jesse Fell in December 1859. The statement, together with genealogical information and an account of Lincoln’s life in politics to that time, were contained in a short autobiography prepared at Fell’s request, and which was later published in a Pennsylvania newspaper.

By 1816, the Lincoln family had moved from Kentucky to Indiana and settled on Pigeon Creek, in Warrick County. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) was about fifteen years old when he wrote out the Rule of Three on this page of his sum book. Before her death, Sarah Bush Lincoln (1788-1869) gave the hand-made manual (sheets of paper stitched together) to Lincoln’s law partner William H. Herndon (1818-1891). Herndon, whose signature appears on the fragment’s reverse, dismembered and distributed the pages, perhaps as souvenirs. Additional leaves from the book, considered to be the earliest extant example of a Lincoln manuscript, are held at the Indiana Historical Society, the Library of Congress, and the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

“Transylvania University and good economy,” The western review and miscellaneous magazine, a monthly publication, devoted to literature and science, vol. 4, no. 2 (March 1821): 92-94.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In a move to establish educational institutions on the western frontier, Virginia’s Assembly set aside an 8,000 acre-endowment and a public school charter in 1780. Another 12,000 acres was added three years later, and the enterprise was designated the Transylvania Seminary. The seminary’s twenty-five trustees and Presbyterian minister David Rice first established a grammar school in Rice’s cabin at Danville; but, as more students applied, classes were moved to a private home in Lexington, and then to a permanent donor-funded site. By 1799, the seminary united with the Presbyterian-run Kentucky Academy to form Transylvania University, the first of the western institutions to establish its own departments of law and medicine.
American evangelical Protestantism first found its voice in the Great Awakening that swept the British colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. Led by ministers such as Jonathan Edwards in the north and George Whitefield in the south, this surge of religious fervor generated revivals and camp meetings and helped spur the movement of evangelicals away from the state-supported churches of the eastern seaboard. From 1740 to 1790, America experienced a Second Great Awakening, which took place primarily in the South and was led by ministers from Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations.

The spiritual energies of the Awakenings impacted the West as ministers and missionaries crossed the mountains and descended the Ohio in search of souls. In the Bluegrass, Protestant denominational loyalists were joined by independent preachers and adherents of new faiths such as the Quakers and the Shakers. In August 1801, at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, 20,000 to 30,000 people were drawn to an open-air revival that saw waves of the faithful taken by great emotion, collapsing on the ground, shouting out in prayer and song, and heeding the call for conversion. The spirit of Cane Ridge led within a few years to the formation of new American denominational groups including the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Churches of Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church was also active in western missions from the 1780s onward. In 1808, a new diocese was created for Bardstown, Kentucky, that extended over nearly all of the trans-Appalachian West from Detroit to New Orleans. In 1811, Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget arrived in Kentucky to assume leadership of western Catholicism, and by 1819, construction of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Bardstown was completed.
William Downs (1782?-1860?). *A new Kentucky composition of hymns and spiritual songs; together with a few odes, poems, elegies, &c.* Frankfort, Ky.: Gerard & Berry, Printers, 1816.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Carter Tarrant (1765- ca. 1813). *The substance of a discourse delivered in the town of Versailles, Woodford County, State of Kentucky, April 20, 1806. With some additions, and miscellaneous thoughts, connected with the subject.* Lexington, Ky.: Printed by Daniel Bradford, [1806?].

William E. Barton Collection of Lincolniana

A number of newly established Baptist churches in Kentucky organized the Elkhorn Association in 1785 in an attempt to unite factions divided over theological tenets. Twenty years later, members of the associated churches, many of who were slave-holders, split over the question of slavery. In 1806, Carter Tarrant resigned his position as elder of the Hillsborough Baptist Church for that reason and published this book to explain his position on the issue. In that same year, Tarrant and other former members of the Hillsborough congregation established the first anti-slavery church in Woodford County, the Regular Baptist Church of Christ.

Joseph Thomas (1791-1835). *The life of the pilgrim, Joseph Thomas, containing an accurate account of his trials, travels and gospel labours, up to the present date.* Winchester, Va.: J. Foster, printer, 1817.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In the early nineteenth century, Joseph Thomas, called the White Pilgrim for the long spotless robe he wore, rode throughout Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina preaching the gospel. Thomas did not ride for the Methodists, Presbyterians, or Baptists who had established territorial divisions for their circuit ministers. Rather, in 1807, he had come under the influence of James O’Kelly (1735-1826) and had accepted the teachings of the “Christian Denomination.” That newly formed body was made up of former members from Protestant denominations who believed that church hierarchies usurped God’s authority. Traditional Protestant leaders challenged their stand and dubbed the movement the “New Light Schism.”
"Thoughts on the exercises which have occurred at the camp-meetings in the western parts of our country. Communicated to the editor, by Mr. William Young, of Delaware. "

John Crerar Library General Collection

Presbyterian minister James McGready moved his charismatic ministry to Logan County, Kentucky, from North Carolina in 1797 after a number of his converts settled there. McGready’s dynamic preaching overwhelmed those who heard him, producing a wave of religious enthusiasm that evolved into the camp revivalism of the 1800s. Other Presbyterians as well as Baptists and Methodists joined the movement, which began to spread across the frontier drawing in men, women, and children from every level of society. John Lyle (fl. 1801-1803) was one of the ministers at the Cane Ridge camp meeting in 1801 who documented a crowd overcome by emotion and fervor. Lyle’s record of those days makes note of the fallings, tremors, shrieks, groans, and death-like poses of the congregants, reactions which serious church-goers thought irreligious.

Dyer Burgess, “A Pastoral Letter, from the Presbytery of Miami, to the churches under their care.” April 9, 1819.

Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

An open letter addressed to members of the Miami Presbytery reminding parents of the obligation to raise their children as Christians.


Church History Documents Collection

Methodist Episcopal minister Benjamin Lakin began riding circuit through Kentucky in 1794, and later extended his ministry into Ohio. This small journal of a year’s travel on the Miami circuit contains entries listing sites where Lakin preached, sermon texts, and expenditures such as horse shoeing.
William Kearney. Manuscript copy of the St. Louis chapel construction plan, May 1, 1811.
Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

A plan and contract for the Catholic Chapel of Louisville submitted by William Kearney to Father Guy Chabrat (1787-1868). Kearney’s proposal includes a description of the structure’s proposed foundation, exterior and interior design, and roof. An acceptance of the contract and the obligation to raise building funds by subscription is noted on the final page by the chapel’s trustees, Worden Pope (1772-1838), Reverend Stephen T. Badin (1768-1853), J. Gwathmey, and J. A. Tarasion.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1808, Pius VII created the diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky and appointed Benedict Flaget (1763-1850) its first bishop. Flaget’s subscription addressed to the people of Louisville contains his request for donations to complete the chapel of St. Louis in that town.

Pictures, Maps, Sketches, Reuben T. Durrett Collection
MEDICAL PRACTICE

In an age when poultices, herbal remedies, and bleeding were conventional medical treatments, illness in the West often carried the danger of death. Whooping cough, scarlet fever, and measles killed or disabled many. The "ague," a malarial fever with chills, was associated with swamps and standing water. "Milk sick" brought death to those who drank milk produced by cows that had eaten poisonous plants. Most serious of all were the epidemics of smallpox and cholera that swept through whole communities. As threatening as these diseases were for the settlers, they were often even more devastating for Native Americans, who lacked immunity to European diseases.

In the face of these challenges, the medical profession made significant advances. In 1799, the trustees of Transylvania University established a medical school and appointed Dr. Samuel Brown to teach chemistry, anatomy, and surgery. Brown introduced the practice of vaccination to Kentucky and by 1802 had vaccinated more than 500 people in the Lexington area against smallpox, the largest number of vaccinations performed anywhere in the world to that point.

Dr. Benjamin Dudley, head of the medical department at Transylvania after 1817, became one of the world's leading surgeons in the removal of bladder stones. A Transylvania medical graduate, Dr. Walter Brashear, performed the world's first successful amputation at the hip. Dr. Daniel Drake, another influential physician raised in Kentucky, established a notable medical practice in Cincinnati and later founded the medical departments at the Medical College of Ohio, Cincinnati College, and Miami University.

Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Doctors treating a wide range of disease in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries commonly turned to the perilous practices of blood-letting and of purging with a mixture of jalap (*Ipomoea*) and the toxic calomel (*Mercurous chloride*) to effect cures. Poorer folk, who could ill-afford the services of physicians, treated their families with traditional home remedies or concoctions made up from healing plants listed in herbals. The itinerant practitioner and author Richard Carter guaranteed his publications' nostrums, the restorative powers of which were noted in testimonials from patients in many Kentucky counties. Their statements were incorporated in Carter's *Valuable vegetable medical prescriptions, for the cure of all nervous and putrid disorders* and in this later collection, which contains additional medical recipes, misogynistic poetry, and a short autobiography.


John Crerar Library General Collection

Scottish-born doctor Anthony Fothergill was living in Philadelphia when Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815) published his article on the therapeutic effects of the common hop. Fothergill had trained in Holland and France, and had lived in England before moving to America in 1803. He returned to London, however, prior to the outbreak of war in 1812, and died the following year.

Fothergill focused on the medical application of the common hop, and noted the diseases and conditions, which were relieved by its curative attributes; his list contains loss of appetite, catarrh (cerebral hemorrhage or a discharge of mucus), asthma, inquietude (restlessness caused by pain), biliary concretions (complication of the bile ducts), after-pains of child birth, dyspepsia (indigestion), and gravel (urinary crystals).
Sarah Owenes. Medical bill, 1792-1793.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

It is not known how common it was for slave-holders to seek medical treatment for their slaves; one such instance is recorded in a midwife’s claim against William Christian’s estate. Sarah Owenes requested that the estate’s executors pay her the 0-15.-0 (fifteen shillings) owed for delivering the child of Christian’s slave Pole [Polly?] in May of 1792.

Adam Rankin. Medical bill, January 4, 1793.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

In 1797, Adam Rankin opened an apothecary shop in Danville, Kentucky in partnership with Ephraim McDowell (1771-1830), a pioneer in abdominal surgery. Rankin was both a medical doctor and a Presbyterian minister, a founding member with David Rice of the Presbytery of Transylvania (1785).

Dr. Adam Rankin claimed 5-7-6 (five pounds, seven shillings, six pence) against William Christian’s estate for medical services and medicines provided the Christian family and their slaves.


Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet (1787-1851) established the Connecticut Asylum for the education and instruction of deaf and dumb persons in 1817, the year before minister Joshua Lacy Wilson wrote this letter to him. The facility was the first of its kind in America, and its operation was supported by the state of Connecticut and private donors.

Wilson, who had visited the school when it first opened, wrote to Gallaudet on behalf of Freeman Burt, the son of a poor Cincinnati widow. Wilson notes that funds to educate the child, who is “dumb,” have been raised by a church guild, the First Female Society of Cincinnati for Religious Purposes. He also states that the society will pay Burt’s expenses for three years and that, “the material talents of this boy ... justify a belief that he can be instructed with facility.”
Enoch Smith to Asa Blanchard. Manuscript letter signed, May 7, 1820.

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Enoch Smith came to Kentucky with Daniel Boone in the year 1775 and later, with other early settlers, donated the land on which the town of Mount Stirling was established. When he wrote to his nephew Asa Blanchard, a noted Lexington silversmith, he had been living in the area for forty-five years. In a previous letter Blanchard had asked that his uncle furnish details concerning the state of his health. This letter contains the elderly man's reply, a candid description of medical practice and prescription in nineteenth-century Kentucky.

Before he began a program of self-diagnosis and medication, Smith's many disorders were treated by several doctors. His ailments included palsy, numbness, violent pain, fever in the leg, and gravel (urinary crystals); the medical treatments he endured involved blood-letting, blister plasters, and purges, a therapy that triggered excessive salivation. Smith credits his own remedies, decoctions of sarsaparilla and rattlesnake roots, for the recent improvement in his health, and the reading of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans for lifting his spirits.


John Crerar Collection of Rare Books in the History of Science and Medicine

When Rafinesque published his well-received two-volume Medical flora, in 1828 and 1830, he succeeded in transforming a disparate collection of data – home remedies found in herbal texts and Native American cures – into a catalog of medical botany. Using text and image, the naturalist described the appearance of plants, their environments, edibility, and most importantly, the ailments alleviated or cured by their properties. The Humulus lupulus or the common hop, which grew in the west, is typical of the plants discussed.

Rafinesque's extensive list of conditions and diseases which the common hop was known to affect includes: gravel (urinary crystals); nephritis (kidney inflammation); gout (characterized by joint inflammation); phrenitis (brain inflammation); alopecia (baldness); luxations (dislocated joints); articular rheumatism (rheumatic fever); dyspepsia (indigestion); scrofula (characterized by enlargement and degeneration of lymph glands); rachitis (rickets); erysipelas (St. Anthony's fire); debility (weakness); strangury (slow and painful urination); cancer; and hysterical and nervous complaints.
Hernstein surgical kit, n.d.

William Beaumont Collection

In 1822, Army surgeon William Beaumont (1785-1853) was posted on Mackinac Island in Lake Huron when he saved the life of Alexis St. Martin, a voyageur who worked for the American Fur Company. St. Martin had been shot in the abdomen; the wound, when healed, did not close, but formed a passage into the man's stomach. When treating his patient for another ailment months later, Beaumont used a funnel to pour medicine into the fistula. His curiosity about the liquid's passage into the stomach and its effects led him to experiment further on an often unenthusiastic St. Martin using a variety of raw and cooked foods and other substances. Beaumont's eight years of research offered some of the earliest evidence of the importance of gastric secretions in the digestive process. His studies were later published in *Experiments and observations on the gastric juice and the physiology of digestion*, a work which made Beaumont famous in both America and Europe.
Case 24
ENTERTAINING PURSUITS

In a region where arduous work was a daily commonplace, recreation was particularly treasured. Activities necessary to rural life such as hunting, shucking corn, or quilting could also be made into pleasant shared events and essential points of connection for a scattered community. Dances and church socials offered other opportunities for friends and relatives in a neighborhood to gather, as did speeches offered by candidates for public office.

In villages and towns, more resources were available for popular diversion. Larger populations could support regularly published newspapers and the establishment of lending libraries. Touring troops of players presented theatrical productions, and itinerant lecturers instructed and entertained in courthouse squares and lodge halls. Musical groups assembled in parlors and public lyceums to perform, and private tutoring on musical instruments was available for the well-to-do.

Public taverns were also a center of lively interchange and entertainment. In the large public rooms of these establishments, locals and travelers mingled and exchanged gossip. In one corner of the main room or in a separate room, a bar offered refreshment. Guests made their way upstairs at the end of the evening, rarely to a private chamber, more frequently to a common dormitory room to share a bed, and often with a stranger.
John James Audubon (1785-1851). *Ornithological biography, or an account of the habits of the birds of the United States of America; accompanied by descriptions of the objects represented in the work entitled The birds of America, ....* Vol. 3. Edinburgh: Adam Black, 1835.

John Crerar Collection of Rare Books in the History of Science and Medicine

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Reuben T. Durrett Collection

By subscription, Transylvania Seminary trustees raised the funds necessary to transport books over the Appalachians to Danville in 1784. The works had been donated to the seminary’s students, and the collection formed the first permanent library in Kentucky. Within the next fifteen years, Lexington and Georgetown established library companies that offered the public a wide range of reading material on such subjects as history, philosophy, poetry, and fiction.

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*The whim wham; or, evening amusement for all ages and sizes. Being an entire new set of riddles, charades, and transpositions. By a friend to innocent mirth.* Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1811.

The Celia and Delia Austrian Collection

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Reuben T. Durrett Collection
James Sanderson (1769-1841?). *Sandy & Jenny*. Frankfort, Ky.: Printed by I. Goodman, [1806?].
Broadsides, Broadsheets, and Circulars, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

24:6

Amanda Wilson to George Wilson. Manuscript letter signed, April 25, 1817.
Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Amanda Wilson often wrote to her brother George who attended school in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Her letter tells of a play she attended at Mr. Todd’s school in Cincinnati. The entertaining drama featured some of the Wilson’s friends, young male students whose roles included dueling contestants, a dead admirer, and a weeping woman.

24:7

Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

Upon receipt of a £100 payment to the governor of Kentucky, James Garrard (1749-1822), a bond and license was granted to John Nelson to keep a tavern in Louisville. Nelson was required to offer clean lodging and adequate diet for travelers, and corn, hay or pasturage for horses. No gaming, excessive drinking, or scandalous behavior was to be permitted.

The gentlemen of Lexington, Kentucky, according to a travelers’ guide from 1808, spent every leisure hour gambling, drinking, playing billiards, and cards in the town’s many billiard rooms and taverns. The best quality establishments in the area charged 50 cents a day for lodging and three meals, each of which included meat, game, vegetables, and coffee or tea.
Joshua Lacy Wilson Papers, Reuben T. Durrett Collection

I thought Bardstown the worst place in the world but I begin to think other places as bad. The Blackest Atheism seems to be prevailing here.

Joshua Lacy Wilson writing to his wife Sarah from Lexington, Kentucky describes his encounter with a local society called the “Free and Easy Club.” Its members induct the town’s respectable citizens in absentia and dub them its honorary associates. According to Reverend Wilson, the men drink every night, sing songs, and play cards, and once a week listen to an “infamous scoundrel” preach a mock sermon or deliver a ridiculous lecture.