Border States

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Editors' Notes

The seventeenth issue of *Border States* covers a wide range of topics and time periods in the Kentucky-Tennessee region. Matthew Sutton continues this journal's examination of country music by revisiting Loretta Lynn's representation of her self and her music in *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Lynn's 1976 autobiography, Sutton argues, assured her fans that fame would never divert the singer-songwriter from the core values of her upbringing and that her music would remain true to their shared experiences as everyday people. Loretta Lynn's songs resonated strongly with women of her generation, and another essay in this issue by Judith Hatchett also examines a writer who addressed the women of her time. Lettice Bryan's *The Kentucky Housewife*, an 1839 compendium of recipes and household advice, offered mixed signals about which southern women were doing the cooking: affluent white ladies, white women of lesser means, or slave women. As Hatchett demonstrates, Bryan's "receipts" show her to have been an important contributor to southern food culture.

Turning from Kentucky to Tennessee, James B. Jones Jr.'s essay focuses on an early and rare set of editorial cartoons inspired by an 1887 Nashville referendum on public support for railroad construction. The cartoons' images of masculinity and femininity, and of corporate wile and monopoly domination, illustrate the linkages between culture and politics in the New South and industrial America.

These essays began as presentations at the Kentucky-Tennesseee Chapter's 2007 annual meeting, which continued our own tradition of returning to the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in Kentucky every four years. We hope that readers will enjoy their insights into our region's many contributions to southern culture and history.

Mary S. Hoffschwelle and Ellen Donovan

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Talking Back to the Country: *Coal Miner's Daughter* Revisited

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The procession of autobiographies by country music stars in the last forty years has revealed much about the roots, popularity and preservation of the genre, as country has grown from American vernacular music to a driving force in the larger, international recording industry. Loretta Lynn and George Vecsey's *Coal Miner's Daughter* remains a touchstone for country music memoirs, an unexpected yet massive commercial success that became one of the top-ten nonfiction bestsellers of 1976 and the basis of an award-winning 1980 film. Often portrayed as a country music adaptation of the standard show-business autobiography or a rags-to-riches tale, *Coal Miner's Daughter* deserves a retrospective reading for the way it emphatically affirms the authenticity of its subject and engages in a spirited dialogue with its readers.

While promotional materials for *Coal Miner's Daughter* brought to the foreground the poverty of Lynn's early years in Eastern Kentucky, the book itself presents a more nuanced picture. With detail and wit, Lynn highlights the close family bonds and self-sufficiency of mountain life. Reprising the theme of the 1970 hit that gives the book its title, Lynn idealizes her mother and father as hardworking, attentive parents and represents Appalachia with what country music historian Bill Malone terms "a veneer of romanticism" (*Country Music* 299). At the same time, Lynn describes a life of emotional isolation; married at fourteen, mother of four by the age of eighteen, Lynn sublimates her own wishes, following her hard-drinking husband Doolittle Lynn from her family home in Butcher Holler, Kentucky to Tacoma, Washington. Though a faithful listener to the *Grand Ole Opry* radio program, Lynn makes no connection between her own love of singing and music as a profession; "It was another world to me," she claimed (Lynn with Vecsey 14).

Though never explicitly addressed in the book or its film adaptation, Lynn gains her first degree of confidence through her music, as well as her first hint that she can have

an identity beyond her circumscribed roles as wife and mother. In a chapter titled "Beginner's Luck," Doolittle buys Loretta a Sears and Roebuck guitar for her eighteenth birthday. Lynn teaches herself to play and makes up songs each night after putting her children to bed. Writing her story years later, she admits that she played music to fend off feelings of loneliness and homesickness. Lynn's self-taught after-hours musicmaking presents an interesting spin on the trope of woodshedding, where a young (usually male) musician attains artistic mastery after a prolonged period of practice, exile and cunning. However, Lynn and her co-writer follow an unspoken convention of country music autobiographies by sublimating the story of her musical training. Now writing from the vantage point of a star, Lynn chooses to represent herself to fans as humble and approachable by omitting most of the details of her musical literacy, portraying her musical talent instead as a natural "gift."

Loretta Lynn came to fame as much for her singular songwriting as for her performances. Developing her style in the Pacific Northwest, away from the increasingly streamlined and corporate "Nashville Sound" of the late 1950s, allowed her to organically build a persona based on her own music and lyrics and build a fanbase apart from the star system. By contrast, many of her contemporaries became "typecast" by the Nashville establishment as they exhausted a series of musically and thematically similar tunes by professional songwriters. For example, the musical and public personae carved out for Kitty Wells almost exclusively presented, in Mary Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann's phrase, "the woebegone woman's point of view" (176), while Patsy Cline's early gospel and rockabilly work has all but been forgotten in favor of such Nashville Sound "weepers" as "Crazy" and "I Fall to Pieces."

While many of Lynn's early compositions are Nashville pastiches, her repertoire never conforms to a prefigured country music stereotype. Lynn's talent for writing songs from a first-person perspective allows for a freedom of expression that "readymade" songs by outside songwriters cannot provide. Her songs craft a multifaceted yet cohesive persona that resists victimization, expressing the points of view of a loyal, working-class daughter in "Coal Miner's Daughter," "Christmas Without Daddy," "They Don't Make Them Like My Daddy No More"; a feisty yet steadfast wife in "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)," "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)," "Fist City"; and a proud country woman in "Back to the Country," "Still Country," "Blue Kentucky Girl." Beginning with the introduction to her autobiography and continuing with the epigraphs that introduce each chapter, Lynn and Vecsey reference many of these songs to bridge her established musical voice with her new literary one.

The book's paratext – its cover, jacket blurb and illustrations – underscores the essential elements of Lynn's persona and her connection with fans. Vecsey recalls, "[T]he cover, suggested by my wife, helped sell the book at eye level. My wife felt that the white elegant dress reached women on some basic level, and I believe she was right" (E-mail correspondence, 19 March 2007). The jacket copy on the original hardbound edition promises potential readers the text "tells *you* about the struggle for survival in the hollers and coal camps" (emphasis added) and "offers a behind-the-scenes tour of the real Nashville." An extensive, mainly chronological photo section – titled "My Photo Album" – traces Lynn's personal journey. Family snapshots offer a simulated glimpse into her home life, while early publicity shots, juxtaposed with photos of her tour bus and mansion, demonstrate how far she has come. Performance pictures are placed alongside more candid pictures of Lynn's charity work and talk-show appearances, emphasizing her multi-tiered celebrity status in the mid-1970s. A picture of Lynn embracing her matinee idol Gregory Peck turns the tables and allows her readership to see a celebrity acting as a star-struck fan, while images of her with Nashville contemporaries Conway Twitty, Charley Pride, Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb and sister Crystal Gayle solidify her place in the country music pantheon. As critic Pamela Fox notes, the pictures and informal, first-person captions pull together her various guises in a seemingly informal manner, both effacing and elevating her star status (238).

A scale drawing of her thirty-eight-foot-long tour bus underscores this level of fame while simultaneously shedding light on her creative life. The caption to the illustration points out the bus's nine bunks, array of modern conveniences and then-stylish purple velvet décor. Yet the bus represents more than gaudy ostentation; such a "traveling home" was necessary (especially in the South) to reach far-flung towns on a series of one-night stands. Most importantly, Lynn reserves for herself a private area in the back of the bus, denoted on the diagram as "Loretta's Room," where "I've written a lot of my songs riding at night in the back of the bus. I'll get an idea for a song and sing into the recorder until dawn" (Lynn with Vecsey 178). In this quasi-private space, Lynn continues the method of solitary, late-night writing she began in Tacoma. Amid the luxury, she feels pangs of alienation "traveling in my special bus with my private bedroom in the back. I don't even open the shades in my bus anymore. I've seen every highway in the United States by now, and they all look alike to me" (Lynn with Vecsey xii). If her section of the bus is not an ideal living arrangement or precisely "a room of one's own" as Virginia Woolf conceived it, it does serve as a provisional sanctuary, allowing Lynn to collect her thoughts, assert her artistic impulse and continue to write music while maintaining a hectic tour schedule.

In light of the apolitical stance of most celebrity autobiographies, and in light of country's unwillingness to step outside the limits of mainstream popular opinion (as demonstrated most recently by the rancor directed at the Dixie Chicks), *Coal Miner's Daughter* is surprisingly outspoken and candid on the issues of its day. Co-writer George Vecsey notes, "She didn't have much enthusiasm for movements…but she was a raging feminist in her actions. She loved to hear about women getting better jobs and asserting themselves" (E-mail correspondence, 4 March 2007). Though Lynn rejects feminism as both a label and movement, she comes out in her book in favor of many of its constituent issues: equality, self-determination and, as evidenced by her 1975 hit "The Pill," reproductive rights. In addition, Lynn, the composer of "Your Squaw Is On the Warpath," expresses pride in her Cherokee roots and concern for Native American rights. "Near my house in Hurricane Mills," she writes, "is a place where the Cherokees had to ford the Tennessee River on their Trail of Tears. There are times when I can almost feel and hear them squaws and their babies crying from hunger" (Lynn with Vecsey 16). Though such sentimental identification may seem patronizing and presumptuous out of context or resemble what Vine Deloria termed whites' "Indian grandmother complex," it should also be read in the context of the book, as Lynn draws from her own experiences with poverty and class discrimination to convey sympathy with the poor and disenfranchised.

This extra-musical populist stance recalls T.S. Eliot's 1922 essay on the English music-hall performer Marie Lloyd. In eulogizing Lloyd, Eliot praises her as much for her social function as her individual talent. Pinpointing what he calls her "vitality" and "moral superiority," he notes "it was her understanding of the people and her sympathy with them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life, that raised her to the position she occupied at her death" (173). In characteristically apocalyptic terms, Eliot worriedly predicts that the working-class audiences who idolized the music-hall singer will lose their chance to connect emotionally with popular culture following "the decay of the music-hall," as its dynamic of artist-fan "collaboration" will soon be subsumed by moving pictures and recorded music (174). Yet Loretta Lynn reproduces this dynamic precisely within the spaces of popular culture – recordings, radio, the press, television, and ultimately film. Through songs such as "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "You're Looking at Country," Lynn positions herself as a spokesperson for her audience. Like Lloyd, her commercial success comprises only a small part of her ultimate significance; both the music-hall doyenne and the country-music star earn their fame by portraying the concerns, language and humor of the working classes faithfully and sensitively.

In her book, Lynn and Vecsey draw fans into a literary dialogue through personal anecdote, second-person address and rhetorical questions. "Fans" in this instance refers not just to a nebulous group of record-buyers and concertgoers, but in Lynn's case, people met face-to-face or through mediated relationships, such as fan clubs. George Vecsey notes that the bond between Lynn and her fans represented "the most pure relationship in entertainment that I know" (E-mail correspondence, 4 March 2007). Appropriately, then, "the fans" constitute a tangible presence in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, existing as a composite character of sorts who alternately supports, admires and complicates her endeavors. *Coal Miner's Daughter* addresses fans of all stripes, from the three sisters who organize her fan club, to the pesky but harmless "bugs" who simply want personal time with the star, to the fringe elements who make threats on her life. Despite such dark overtones, Lynn affirms the steadfast loyalty of the country audience, a loyalty that allows her in turn to speak frankly and openly about her life, both public and private, in her autobiography.

Though billed as "The First Lady of Country Music" from the early '70s on, even Loretta Lynn had to periodically reaffirm her authenticity as a "pure" country music performer. In 1973, to mark its first in-depth study of modern-day country and its mass popularity, *Newsweek* featured Lynn on its cover.[1] The accompanying article by New York sportswriter Pete Axthelm surveyed the stars in the field – like Johnny Cash, Charley Pride and Dolly Parton – but culminated with the story of Lynn's rise to fame. This publicity sparked something of a backlash, and alienated some of her most loyal fans, who feared she would forsake them for the more lucrative (and fickle) pop marketplace.

To reassure these older fans and acclimate her new ones, *Coal Miner's Daughter* retraces the steps of her career, authenticating her allegiance to country music, emphasizing her distance from the pop music field and narrating such common tropes of a musician's life story as the first instrument and the first public performance. Michael Apted's film adaptation of *Coal Miner's Daughter* finesses this backstory even further, at times taking liberties with Lynn's own remembrances. For example, while the book recalls her first guitar as an eighteenth-birthday present, the film shows Doolittle giving Loretta the guitar for their tenth anniversary. In some respects, it seems such a minor point one wonders why the scriptwriter went to the trouble of changing the facts. In other respects, it demonstrates how the filmmakers in their retelling wished to strengthen the link between the Lynns' marriage and her creativity. Challenged with portraying a controversial (and, at the time, very much alive) figure in Loretta Lynn's life, the change in the script recasts Doolittle as a proud husband who places his trust in his wife and her burgeoning career.

While musicians' memoirs typically paint a first performance as both a rite of passage and a prelude to a career, Lynn recalls her first encounter with an audience as an involuntary one. One night, Doolittle brags to his drinking buddies about Loretta's singing skills. To silence his doubters, he brings her to the bar the following night, even going so far as to verbally abuse her when she tries to back down. At this crucial moment, Lynn must simultaneously master the act of performing in public and defend her husband's ego and pride. Though clumsy and unschooled in stage mannerisms, Lynn naturally wins everyone over. But her performance, as represented in her memoir, is more about a husband putting his wife up on display than Loretta Lynn "finding her voice" and singing. Significantly, she and her co-writer narrate the first steps of her career as a series of happy accidents; her success is the unlikely result of her husband's drinking and outspokenness, making her move onto the public stage an extension of her family duties, rather than a rejection of the domestic sphere.

Likewise, in the film version of *Coal Miner's Daughter*, we see Lynn (Sissy Spacek) trying out her early songs on her children. A rendition of her first record "Honky Tonk Girl" subtly reminds the viewer that, despite her family obligations, Lynn at this stage is barely an adult. The script collapses Lynn's series of good fortune into a montage, blithely representing her career as a series of uncalculated "breaks," rather than the result of Lynn's unique talent: in short order, she wins a local amateur contest, makes a local TV appearance in Tacoma, then renders a professional recording of "Honky Tonk Girl" good enough to catch the ear of influential record men. Doolittle and Loretta are savvy enough to promote her first record in person to radio stations but allegedly ignorant of national sales charts. By the time they finally "learn the ropes," Lynn's career has already been established.

While this encapsulation of events makes good narrative sense, it elides a few important facets of Lynn's early career which she emphasizes in her book. For reasons probably related to her "outsider" status, her early career is guided by the Wilburn Brothers, an established country act who take her on tour and bring her to the attention of Decca Records. Beyond this professional assistance, the brothers attempt a Pygmalion-like transformation of Lynn, sometimes in cooperation with Doolittle, sometimes over his objections. In addition to training their young charge in professional stage performance, the Wilburns insist Lynn wear makeup, store-bought clothes and high-heeled shoes for the first time. The irony speaks for itself, as it takes a patriarchal system (made up of both her husband and industry insiders) to teach her how to "be a woman" in country music.

This imposition of readymade country signifiers imitates the larger Nashville system of starmaking, succinctly characterized by country music historian Richard Peterson as "fabricating authenticity." Peterson isolates the elements of country authenticity, including originality, lack of pretension and credibility (206-211). The Wilburns' attempt to dress Lynn in the "uniform" of a female country music star is an attempt at credibility, as it conforms to a mass audience's notions of presentation; only in retrospect does the transformation seem contrived or foolish. As Lynn takes control over her own career – a process reified by the publication of her book – she shifts her presentation toward the type of authenticity that emphasizes the non-imitative aspects of her music and persona and targets a smaller, more personally invested audience. Peterson defines this type of authenticity as being perceived as "true, consistent, sincere or real as opposed to the imitative, artifactual, contrived, or phony" (209). Of course, the expectation of truth and sincerity is universal, and applies equally well to listeners of country music and readers of autobiography, but it bolsters T.S. Eliot's observation that the "embodiment of virtues" often binds together a performer and audience as much as the performance itself (172-174). Through active reading and listening, Lynn's core audience interprets the more idiosyncratic, unpolished elements of her performance style as evidence of truth, consistency and sincerity, while Lynn in turn honors her fans for their "reception" of her persona. "That's why I appreciate my fans," she writes. "They accept me for being myself" (Lynn and Vecsey 158). Thus, Lynn's status of "First Lady of Country Music" reads as both an honorary title and an affirmation that she has remained true to herself while laboring in an increasingly homogenized industry. The reciprocal relationship Lynn and her most devoted fans share illustrates that for all the work Nashville does in manipulating raw talent into a fixed idea of the genuine item, perceptive, attuned fans exert power as the ultimate judges of authenticity.

As Lynn establishes her personal authenticity and her country authenticity, there remains a curious, almost postmodern twist to *Coal Miner's Daughter*, as much of it is written in the wake of Robert Altman's 1975 film *Nashville*. Joan Tewkesbury's intricate screenplay portrays Nashville as a town of rivals, with established stars beset by overzealous fans and ambitious newcomers with varying degrees of talent.[2] In preparation for her role as country queen Barbara Jean, singer/actress Ronee Blakley shadowed Lynn on tour and performed three songs on the soundtrack in the Loretta Lynn mold. Not surprisingly, then, the character Barbara Jean looks a lot like Loretta Lynn, sings a lot like Loretta Lynn, and has a dominating, belligerent husband a lot like Loretta Lynn's. Barbara Jean suffers from a series of so-called "nervous breakdowns" and public collapses which we are led to believe result from drugs and her husband's domineering presence; these

breakdowns have more than a passing resemblance to what were euphemistically termed at the time Lynn's "health problems." Blakley's appropriation of Lynn's informal performance style and visual trademarks (her floor-length white gowns, her big hair) left little doubt who her role model was. Critics and moviegoers naturally assumed that Blakley's performance was a direct imitation. This leaves Lynn and Vecsey with the unenviable task of countering an unflattering, mass-mediated image over which she had little control. Lynn addresses the film and its publicity head-on, writing in the third page of her book's introduction: "I ain't seen it, so I can't tell you whether it's any good or not.... I ain't worrying about no movies. My records are still selling, and I get more offers for shows than I can handle. So if you're wondering whether that character in the movie is me, it ain't. This book is me. I've got my own life to lead" (Lynn and Vecsey xi).[3] From Lynn's point of view, the film *Nashville* engages in nothing more than a cinematic version of identity theft, co-opting her public image and leaving Lynn little recourse but to win back her persona and the public's trust through self-conscious performance, both on the stage and on the page. *Coal Miner's Daughter* endeavors to reclaim her identity, reconnect with her audience and introduce the "real" Loretta Lynn to a larger public.

So it is strange to see the Hollywood version of her life story take a page from *Nashville* in its climactic scene. Superstardom has pushed Lynn to the point of exhaustion, while her separation from her family and the death of her friend Patsy Cline has left her isolated. (Significantly, Doolittle, played by Tommy Lee Jones, is tacitly absolved from blame, as he transforms late in the film into a faithful househusband.) In concert, Lynn addresses a large but strangely impassive audience: "I had something I wanted to come out here and tell you tonight. But Doo, he don't want me to say nothing. But I can tell you...friends. 'Cause you wouldn't be here if you didn't care about me...." It is a stark irony that while the book *Coal Miner's Daughter* went to great lengths to distinguish Lynn from the fictional Barbara Jean, the film adaptation appropriates elements of Barbara Jean's story in depicting Lynn at her lowest point: a dramatic onstage "meltdown," a physical collapse, and a retreat into her husband's arms. Calling upon her "friends," which a quick cut to the audience reveals to be her female fans, she seems to be reaching out for something beyond the established star-fan relationship. But soon enough she seeks paternal protection from Doolittle, who, in his newly responsible guise, picks her up like a child and returns to her the safety and comfort of home, "home" being an antebellum mansion in Tennessee, overlooking the adjoining town of Hurricane Mills, which the Lynns have purchased outright. (This purchase is detailed in Chapter 21 of *Coal Miner's Daughter*, "We Bought the Whole Town.") Country music historians like Bill Malone or Mary Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann identify Lynn's strongest compo-

sitions as those that "chronicle the battles between man and woman, and the respective campaigns made to hold on to their partners," but in the Hollywood revisioning of Lynn's life all battles are called to a sudden truce (Malone *Don't Get* 184). As in the book, the movie never fully resolves the push-and-pull dynamic between Lynn's need to be independent and desire to be protected. Whereas *Nashville* ends on a note of chaos, the last scene of *Coal Miner's Daughter* restores order, especially on the domestic front.

The "happy ending" of the movie sees her back on stage, with a larger audience, a nicer gown and bigger hair, all signs that she has ultimately maintained her professional stature. She performs "Coal Miner's Daughter" rather than one of her more feminist-identified songs. And even though the movie crosses the all-important two-hour mark at this point, Sissy Spacek-as-Loretta sings the entire song. Dispensing with a traditional verse-chorus structure, the five verses follow the same melody and simple rhyme scheme. A modulation between the verses gives the storytelling a musical "lift," but overall the music is secondary to the plain, unambiguous lyrics that celebrate her parents' goodness and sacrifice and the world she has left behind. But the song does not accurately portray all that we have seen in the movie and all we have encountered in her memoir. The song both encapsulates and idealizes her life in Butcher Holler, Kentucky, without mention of her artistic awakenings, her turbulent marriage to Doolittle Lynn, or her connection with her fans. The last line of the penultimate verse (and the last line we hear before the credits roll), "I never thought of leaving Butcher Holler," is at once a gracious acknowledgement of her roots and a somewhat disingenuous rhetorical move – of course she thought of leaving the small town and she has indeed left Butcher Holler for a life that, while far from easy, has offered her many more choices and rewards.

In his book *Hillbillyland*, J.W. Williamson remarks, with a touch of condescension, that such a portrayal of a coal town as an Edenic paradise flatters her working-class audience, while insuring that she "remains one of the good rural poor of Butcher Hollow" [*sic*] (248). The question is why does she soft-pedal her success on the one hand and co-write a lengthy autobiography that capitalizes on her fame on the other? Both her performance and her writing explicitly address her most devoted fans, who see Lynn as both a relatable person and a star, with little contradiction between the two. Her attempt at reclaiming her identity and control of her career by invoking Butcher Holler seems to be a way to gain equilibrium after two decades of fame, invoking the type of interpersonal "sympathy" and "vitality" T.S. Eliot recognized between Marie Lloyd and her fans. Yet both book and film prevaricate on the issue of how success has changed Loretta Lynn. Like her protestations that her songwriting is a mere "knack," her self-portrayal as a

simple coal miner's daughter, reified through her co-written book and a Hollywood film, ultimately underestimates both her talent and the longevity of her career in the interest of maintaining an image co-created and closely guarded by her mainly working-class audience.

The ending of her book is even more ambiguous. Having enjoyed unprecedented success and acclaim as a female country performer, Lynn promises in her final chapter that there will be "more to come" (194). Referring less to the trappings of fame and more toward a sense of empowerment, this would seem to be the point where she breaks out of the circumscribed role imposed by stardom, where she emerges from the image of the "Coal Miner's Daughter" or the "Honky Tonk Girl" and claims a personal identity. She can take pride in a loyal fanbase, and an audience who identify with her through her songs. But most importantly she has agency, a choice in the way she sees and represents herself, offering readers a logical and overall satisfying conclusion to the story of her development.

Today, country music rarely enjoys the period of commercial ascendancy it had in the '70s, while it still struggles with its identity in relation to its demographics and tradition of social conservatism, and stands at a crossroads between honoring the legacy of veteran performers and aggressively promoting a new generation of more polished crossover acts. In short, it has become nearly everything prophesied by Altman's *Nashville*. Even *Coal Miner's Daughter*'s sequel, 2002's *Still Woman Enough*, co-written with Patsi Bale Cox, assumes a weary, almost cynical tone toward the modern country music industry she helped establish. Therefore, it is important to rediscover and re-read *Coal Miner's Daughter* as a snapshot of its times and a signpost to future autobiographies, both in the country music field and the larger "memoir boom" that continues to this day. More recent autobiographies by female country stars such as Barbara Mandrell, Reba McEntire and Naomi Judd have appropriated Lynn's plainspoken narrative voice, but have not fully captured its spirit, one that revels in assertiveness, hard-won success and the sheer joy and satisfaction inherent in just plain "talking back."

Notes

[1] It is worth recalling here the importance of the newsmagazine cover story at that time. Before the twenty-four-hour televised news cycle became dominant, the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* signified both prominence and timeliness. Lynn's placement on the cover of *Newsweek* put her in rarefied company. In the years between 1970 and 1975, only six other non-classical musicians graced the cover: Barbra Streisand (1970), Burt Bacharach (1970), Bette Midler (1973), Stevie Wonder (1974), Bob Dylan (1974) and Bruce Springsteen (1975). Lynn is unique among these stars: not only is she the only country performer represented, but she also had received virtually no in-depth mainstream press coverage or crossover radio airplay at that point.

[2] Lynn's book must counter this perception of a cutthroat industry with positive assessments of both her peers and younger talent, including those who found success in country in the 1970s after "crossing over" from the pop field, like Olivia Newton-John and John Denver. This approach has subsequently been taken up and made a staple of country music autobiographies, as legends like Johnny Cash interrupt their narrative to offer a roll call of praiseworthy younger musicians, creating the impression that Nashville thrives as a tightly knit, mutually supportive family/community.

[3] Interestingly, Lynn's denial echoes the gruff statement George Vecsey coaxed from Roy Acuff after the film's premiere in Nashville in the *New York Times*: "I haven't seen the film and I don't have time to see it tonight" (Vecsey, "Nashville" 41).

[4] In *Country Music Culture*, Curtis Ellison points out that the membership and leadership of country-music fan clubs are overwhelmingly female (184).

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Visual Documents Relating to the Midland Railroad Subsidy Issue in Nashville, Tennessee, September 1887

James B. Jones, Jr.
Tennessee Historical Commission

In September 1887, the voters of Davidson County and the city of Nashville were asked to approve a bond issue aimed at building the Tennessee Midland Railroad. The Midland promised competition with the existing Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) and its nominal competitor the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railroad (N&C), a regional monopoly. The ensuing battle over the subsidy was fought in the editorial columns of both the pro-Midland Nashville *Daily American*, and the advocate for the L&N, the Nashville *Banner*. A particular characteristic of this fight was the use of the contemporary cartoons, usually but not exclusively, by the *Daily American.*[1]

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century the L&N gained a reputation as one of the most efficient and profitable railroads in the South if not in the nation. Running on a north-to-south axis, it held an absolute monopoly between its two termini, which effectively deterred economic competition. The L&N had gained its monopoly stature by the close of the 1860s, its initial success partly a matter of gaining public support for the road before the Civil War. A hostile takeover in 1880 allowed the L&N a majority interest in N&C stock, and the two operated virtually as separate entities, although always in each other's interest.

The Midland, on the other hand, had not one mile of track laid in 1887, although it had completed its survey of what was basically an east-west route. This route would break new ground, although the idea for an east-west route had been discussed for decades before the outbreak of the Civil War. Its construction, however, would rely upon public support. The L&N's opposition to the referendum was based on economic motives rather than political philosophy, for the L&N's own early success was, in part, a result of public support: Louisville and the government of Warren County twice passed a referendum to purchase stock in the early history of the L&N.[2] The actual building of the Midland represented a dangerous economic threat to the L&N – and to a lesser extent the N&C.

The fight began after backers of the Midland project gained approval to hold a referendum that would put the matter of public subscription to the voters. The campaign for public subscription reflected important contemporary political battles: economic concentration versus the ideal of competition, and moneyed power versus the common man. The subscription effort in Davidson County and Nashville occurred in the context of the emergence of Populism from its Farmers' Alliance antecedents.[3] Centering on the question of whether or not public support should be translated into a public subscription to fund competition for the L&N, the Midland subscription campaign represented an early manifestation of the Populist strategy to link rural with urban black workers to obtain economic justice through political means. Both the Midland and the L&N courted the African-American vote which was robust in its appearance in the initial days of Jim Crow. The biracial political rallies and ethnic block voting that characterized this campaign during the first phases of the Jim Crow era are at odds with interpretations of the beginnings of segregationist policies.[4]

The L&N, meanwhile, used Pinkerton detectives, corrupt electoral practices, and bribery as weapons to maintain its monopoly and defeat the subscription. The L&N company officers made threats of joblessness to L&N workers if they dared vote for the Midland subsidy, and resorting to bribery was not unknown. Nor did the L&N hesitate to recruit voters from along its line and charter crews of Pinkerton detectives in order to spy on and intimidate workers.

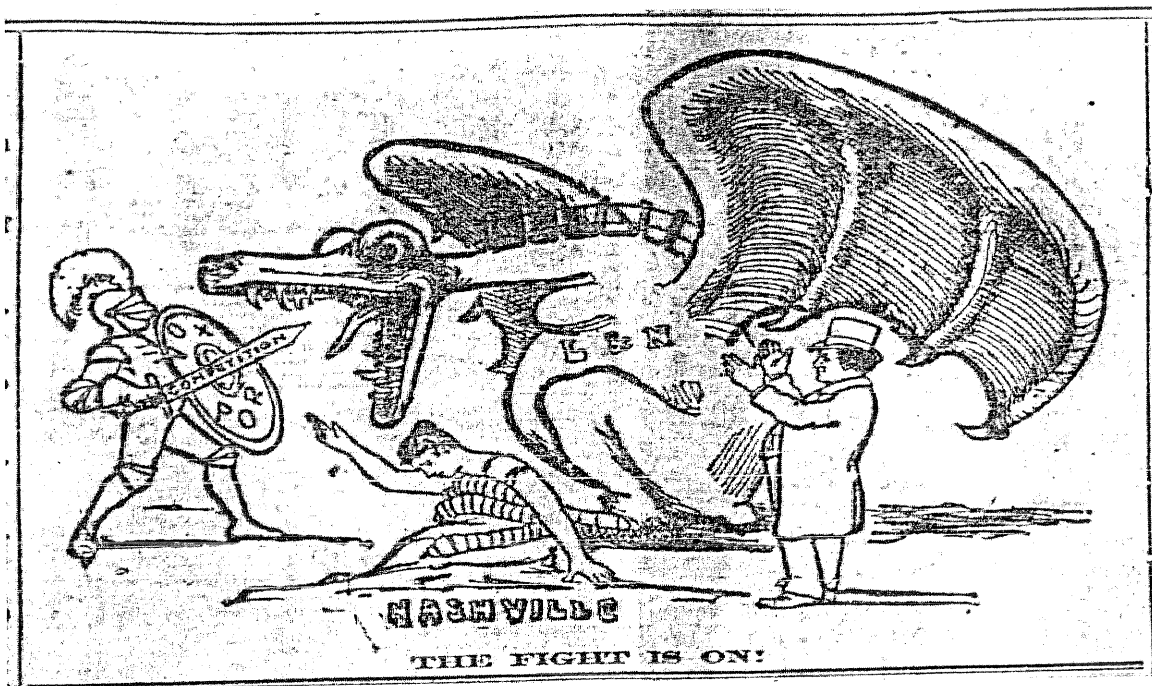
The *American*, a solidly Democratic party paper, supported the project while the Nashville *Banner*, substantially Republican in orientation, opposed it. The *Banner*'s editor, Edward B. Stahlman, was coincidentally a third vice-president of the L&N, a fact that was not wasted upon the editors of the *American*. Yet the *American* could not throw the first stone inasmuch as its leading officer, A.S. Colyar, was a vice-president of the Tennessee Iron and Coal Company, ironically the subject of two *Banner* cartoons in 1885 against that company's practice of leasing convicts to work in the coal mines.[5]

The *American* utilized editorials and cartoon art, beer and political rallies in its campaign to persuade voters to approve the referendum. It was not shy in appealing to proto-Populist xenophobia or in depicting the monopoly as threatening to emasculate voters' manhood. The *Banner* likewise staged rallies and, more conventionally, printed editorials castigating the project as a charade. It is not difficult to deduce how the battle went, but it is significant that it permanently quashed the Midland project. Monopoly triumphed over the ideal of competition.

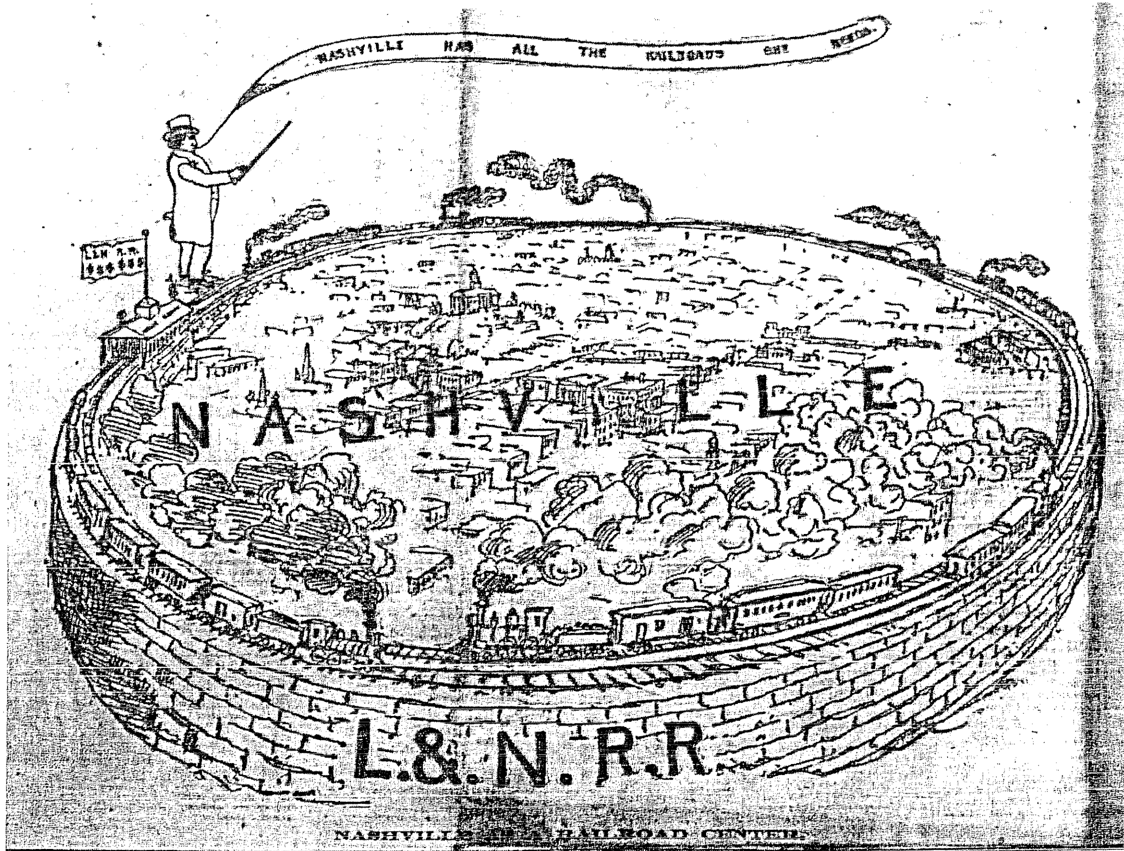
Perhaps more important, however, are the visual documents generated by the controversy, part of what can legitimately be called one of the first, if not the first, nineteenth-century visual media campaigns in Tennessee political and economic history. The L&N's tendency to wage public, large-scale political efforts in such southern states as Alabama and Kentucky in 1900 is well documented.[6] However, its actions in 1887 in Nashville and Davidson County likely served as a model, defining action in similar efforts in the future.

The following do not represent the full number of the cartoons that appeared but a sampling that is captivating in its focus and iconic imagery, in addition to being entertaining as political art. They are visual documents worthy of further research and study.

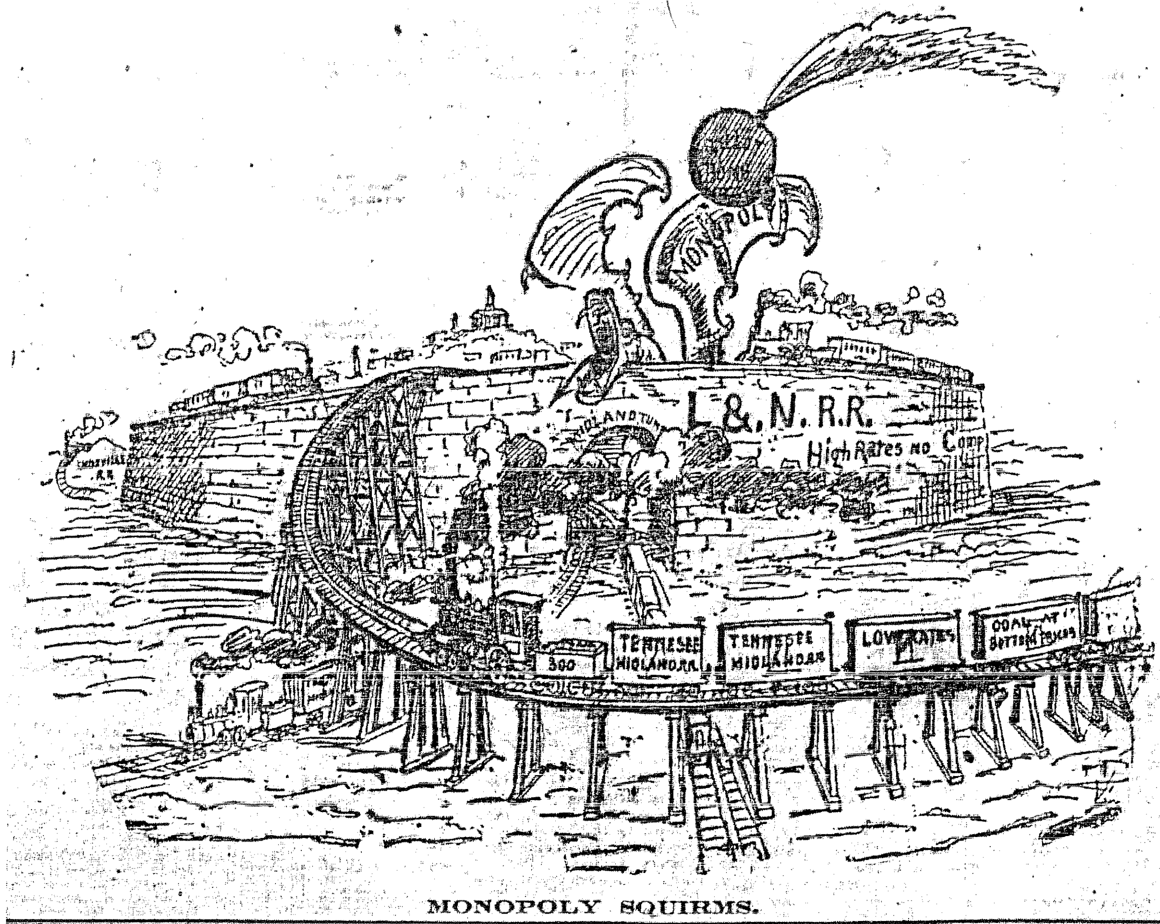
[1] This subject was presented in greater detail in a paper delivered under the title "The Midland Railroad Subsidy Struggle of September 1887," at the April 2007 meeting of the Kentucky-Tennessee American Studies Association at Pleasant Hill Shaker Village, Kentucky. Karina McDaniel, photographer at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville, digitally prepared these images.
[2] Kincaid A. Herr, *The Louisville & Nashville Railroad: 1850-1940; 1941-1959* (Louisville: L&N Magazine, 1959), 4-5, 8.
[3] James T. Moore, "Agrarianism and Populism in Tennessee, 1886-1896: An Interpretive Overview." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1983), 80.
[4] The narrative has been unnoticed in Tennessee historiography. Connie L. Lester, "John H. McDowell, 1844-post 1911;" "Agricultural Wheel;" "Colored Agricultural Wheel," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net>; James B. Jones, Jr.,"'General' John Hugh ('Jehazy') McDowell: A Brief Biography of a Confederate Veteran and Political Maverick (1844-1927)," *The Courier*, October 1998; Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 151-260.
[5] See for example Nashville *Banner*, March 18, 1885.
[6] William G. Thomas, *Lawyering for the Railroads: Business, Law, and Power in the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 108, 181-183, 185-186; Moore, "Agrarianism and Populism in Tennessee." The L&N records held at the Louisville University Archives do not reflect the 1887 controversy in Nashville.



This, the first of many cartoons published in the Nashville *Daily American* on the Midland issue, announces on September 6 that the fight for a public railroad subsidy has begun. The Midland, not yet a railroad but merely a proposal, sought public funding for its construction, which was opposed by the monopoly L&N railroad. Here, a heroic St. George figure clad in medieval armor prepares to fight the vicious, stiletto-toothed L&N dragon. A nearly unconscious damsel representing "Lady Nashville," dressed in classical Grecian costume and vaguely reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty, is held in the dragon's sharp, scaly clutches. The dragon's crest is characterized by a section of railroad ties and steel rails. The plumed knight holds a sword labeled "competition" and a shield with the motto "Vox Pop." Third Vice-President of the L&N and editor of the opposition newspaper, the Nashville *Banner*, Edward B. Stahlman, applauds the L&N dragon, symbolizing monopoly, in its combat with the knight representing free market competition. Nashville's economy is visibly distressed by the L&N monopoly. The plump Stahlman's top hat is typical of the attire worn by cartoon characterizations of millionaire monopolists of the day. This cartoon, like most of those that followed up to the vote on the September 22, appeared on the first page of the *American*. It would have been difficult not to discern the cartoon's meaning. It was the nineteenth century's equivalent to late twentieth and early twenty-first century "negative advertising." The identity of the cartoonist (or cartoonists) is unknown.



The reality of the L&N monopoly's constriction of the state's government (symbolized by the capitol), economy, and indeed the entire city of Nashville is represented in this cartoon appearing in the Nashville *American* of September 8. A medieval theme is again utilized, that of a walled city. The walled city has no facility for entrance or egress. L&N trains pass in order along the fortress's ramparts as sentries protecting the city from competition. The caption reads "Nashville As A Railroad Center." The commanding top-hatted Stahlman, seen in the distance just outside the wall with disciplinary rod in hand, declares, "Nashville has all the railroads she needs." A flag on the L&N station (just left and below Stahlman) has as its device dollar signs underneath the letters L&N.



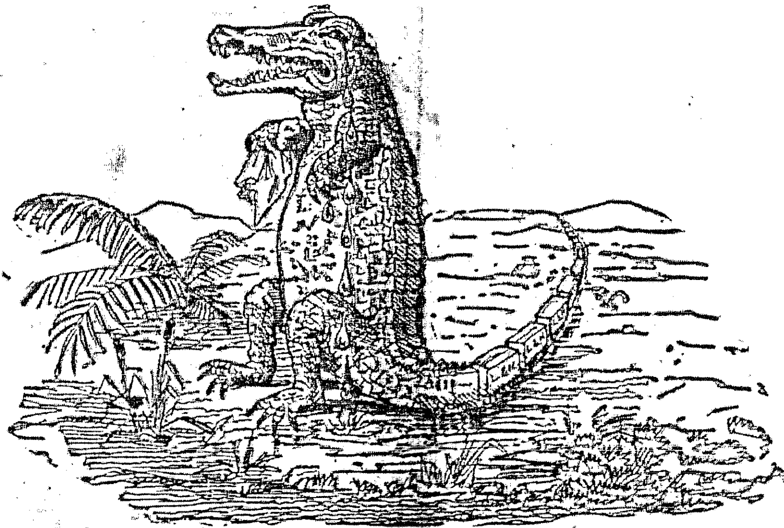
MONOPOLY SQUIRMS.

The cartoon in the *American* for September 9, entitled "Monopoly Squirms" illustrated a concerted attack upon the sequestered L&N bastion. In the foreground leading the assault are trains from the "Tennessee Midland RR" approaching the city atop railroad trestles. Underneath the trestles, other Midland trains leave via the arched egress labeled the "Midland Station" penetrating the stout L&N wall. Midland railroad cars are labeled "Low Rates" and "Coal—Better Prices," indicating the desired effect of competition. The L&N wall is labeled "High Rates, "No Competition." L&N trains symbolically continue their now largely impotent anti-competition patrol atop the ramparts while a viciously screaming, arrowhead-tongued "monopoly" dragon, an image first introduced on September 6, defends the city. A "vote bomb," reminiscent of the Haymarket Affair in Chicago a year earlier, soars hissing through the air at the dragon, symbolizing the explosive power of the franchise against monopoly.

The proto-Rube Goldberg image in the *American* cartoon of September 10, illustrates the manner in which the L&N worked to corrupt the vote on the Midland subscription ballot. To the right, on a railroad trestle, is an L&N train literally dumping large amounts of money into a funnel that reaches, to no one's surprise, the office of Edward B. Stahlman, Third Vice President of the L&N. The cash is deposited in large barrels from which Stahlman ladles generous portions into yet another funnel that fills the pockets of a wily speaker standing atop a beer barrel. The speaker is addressing a largely African-American audience. L&N cash is thus being employed behind the scenes to affect the black vote on the Midland issue. The clever slogans "Behind the Scenes" and "Loquence & Nterprise," reinforce the symbolic imagery of the cartoon's message.

WHAT COMPETING RAILROADS WILL DO FOR NASHVILLE.

Competition meant the ruin of the L&N's grip on the city of Nashville, if the symbolism of this *American* cartoon of September 11 and its caption, "What Competing Railroads Will Do For Nashville," are interpreted correctly. The destruction of the L&N's "great wall" of Nashville is represented by the devastation of the barrier, its stone blocks strewn about with abandon and railroad tracks ripped asunder. The city is compensated by the introduction of the Midland railroad. The cartoon claims Nashville supported a population of 200,000, all of whom were now set free from the demon monopoly. The banner over the L&N depot, seen to the upper left, is flying from a leaning flagstaff, as compared to the robust symbol of the healthy Midland flagpole. The Midland Railroad Station symbolizes freedom and victory over the L&N with six track lines emanating from its impressive Romanesque Revival depot, an architectural symbol of imposing strength and solidarity.



THE FABLE OF THE WEEPING CROCODILE.

A Large and Nergetic Crocodile, whose owners reside in the Ancient City of Amsterdam, across the Raging Sea, was Perceived roaming Loose in Davidson County. Seeing that he was Observed, He reared up on his Hind Legs and Commenced to Weep Scalding Tears.

"Prithee, Gentle Crocodile," said an Unsophisticated Citizen who was much moved by the Display of Grief, "Why do you Irrigate the Earth with the Juice from your Lachrymal Glands?"

"Alas," replied the Holland Crocodile, "I see that the People of this County are determined to Vote an Enormous Debt upon themselves and I desire to Prevent them if I can."

"But," replied the Unsophisticated Citizen, "don't you think the People can be trusted to Manage their own Concerns without the Interference of the Folks who own you and who have never seen this county, or this country either?"

"But," replied the Holland Crocodile, "my Owners don't want to pay the Additional Tax."

"Oho," replied the citizen, "then you are a Weeper for Revenue only? I think I begin to Understand the Situation a little more clearly. What would be the Tax which your Amsterdam owners would be compelled to pay in the event that the People concluded that you had Bled Them to a Sufficient degree and decided to cut Loose from your Rapacity?"

"Well, as to that," replied the Crocodile from Holland, "it wouldn't be Much, of course, but it Would Destroy the Pleasure the People who own me feel in Being able to say that they Own the People of This City and County. That, you know, is a good deal in itself."

"Certainly," replied the Unsophisticated Citizen, "as you say, that is a great deal." And he immediately went off and voted for the new railroad.

The *American* cartoon of September 13 presented another reptilian symbol for the L&N monopoly, that of a crocodile. In fact, this particular symbol for the L&N was utilized often in the remaining nine days of the subsidy campaign. In the cartoon, captioned "The Fable of the Weeping Crocodile," a "Large and Nergectic" crocodile converses with an "Unsophisticated Citizen." The gist of the conversation reveals that a firm in Holland controlled the L&N, and consequently the "Holland Crocodile" was the new symbol for the L&N monopoly. The beast, of course, cries crocodile tears while unsuccessfully attempting to convince the "Unsophisticated Citizen" to vote against the Midland subscription. The "Holland Crocodile" is an emblematic locomotive, pulling a long tail of L&N boxcars. Symbolic appeals to American xenophobia are clear.

NASHVILLE IN THE TOILS.

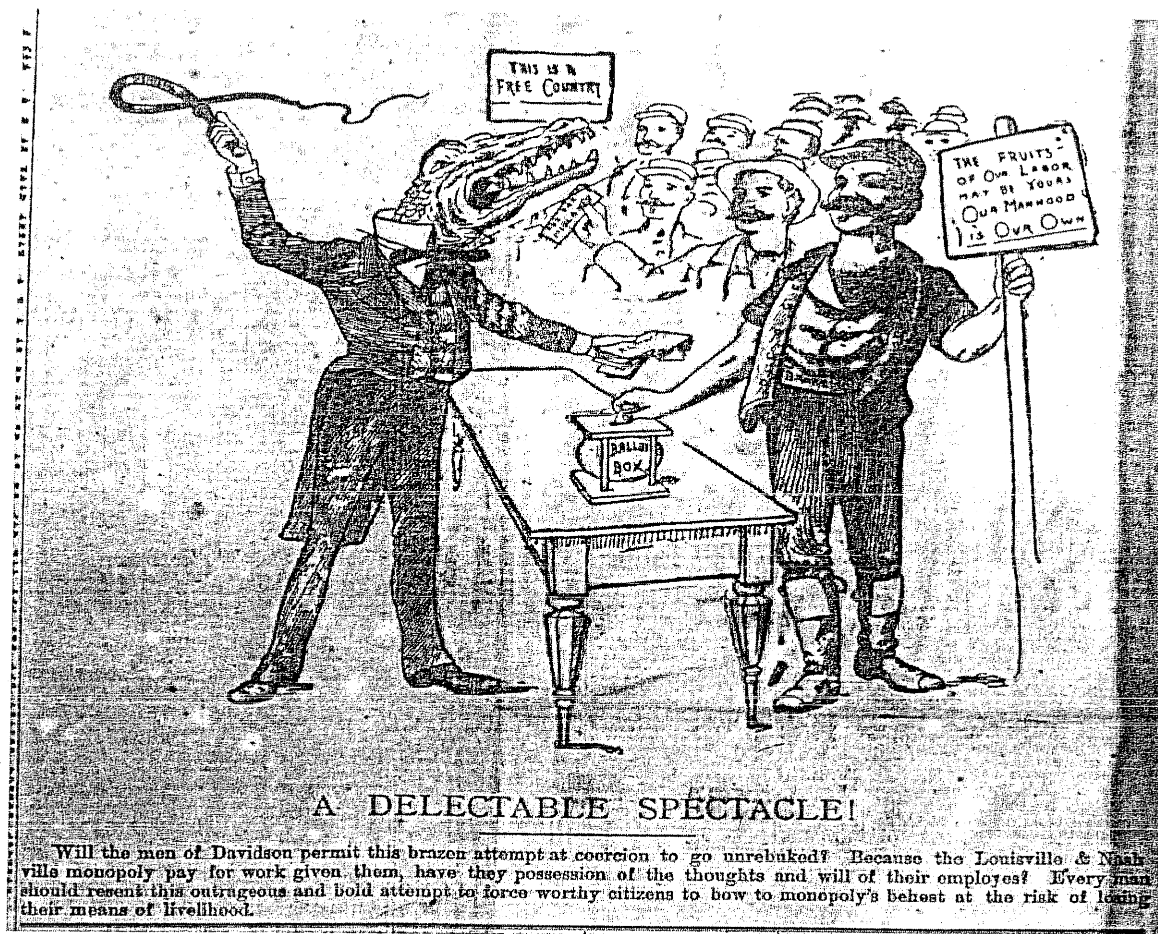
Will Her Sons Rescue Her From This Monster?

New railroads—competing lines—is all she needs to rise like a Queen among her sister cities. Brave Tennesseans, who have never turned your face from a foe, do not cower in the presence of this great enemy, but rise like freemen, and teach this foreign corporation that you dare stand like men in defense of your rights.

The "monopoly" anaconda wraps itself in a death grip around the symbol for economic freedom, the classically-clad iconic "Lady Nashville." The symbolism of the similarity to the Statue of Liberty is evident. At her side is a shield, labeled "Progress" which, in her present circumstance, is no longer of any value to her. The black serpent, "Monopoly," opens its expansive fang-contoured mouth while flicking it's tongue, about to strike and keep "Nashville in the Toils." Yet help arrives in the nick of time in the form of a stalwart ax-wielding yeoman farmer, whose belt is labeled "Competition." He will dispatch the serpent and symbolically rescue progress from monopoly. The extended caption of this September 15 *American* cartoon reinforces the visual message that "competing lines—is all she needs to rise like a Queen among her sister cities.... Brave Tennesseans...rise like freemen, and teach this foreign corporation that you dare stand like men in defense of your rights." Such symbolic imagery predated by only a few years the populist fight against monopoly.

IMMENSE! OMNIVOROUS!! INSATIATE!!!

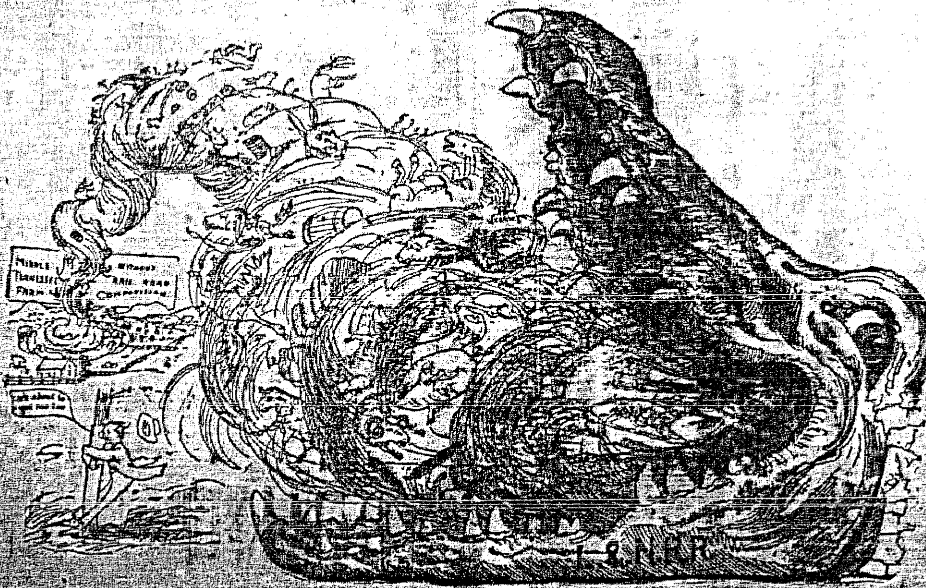
This immense monster, with a collar designated "Holland Crocodile," appeared in a naturally prone position in the *American*'s cartoon of September 16. Citizens ranging in occupation from urban merchants to farmers, carpenters, and industrial workers bring sustenance in the form of grain and money to the wide-mouthed, leering crocodile, whose tail, like that of the reptile when it first appeared on September 13, is a train of L&N box cars stretching phantasmagorically into a pastoral landscape. The larger caption indicates, with increasing alarm designated by an increasing number of exclamation points, that the monster monopoly would consume all of Davidson County's and Nashville's wealth. The crocodile is gratuitously labeled "No Competition Allowed." The image also hints at the symbolic possibility that the Holland Crocodile will even consume the Nashvillians forced to feed it—such were the dangers of monopoly.



A DELECTABLE SPECTACLE!

Will the men of Davidson permit this brazen attempt at coercion to go unrebuked? Because the Louisville & Nashville monopoly pay for work given them, have they possession of the thoughts and will of their employes? Every man should resent this outrageous and bold attempt to force worthy citizens to bow to monopoly's behest at the risk of losing their means of livelihood.

During the campaign it was reported that Edward B. Stahlman had visited L&N shops to threaten workers with discharge should they vote for the Midland subscription. In the September 17 number of the *American*, a hideous Holland Company whip-cracking crocodile, now surrealistically metamorphosed, holds dismissal notices over the ballot box to coerce workers' votes. They laugh, demonstrating that their manhood and honesty is validated as they vote defiantly against their employer. "A Delectable Spectacle" reads the caption. The reader is reminded by apparent graffiti in the background of the image that "This Is a Free Country." While the mustachioed workmen recognized the results of their labor belonged to the Holland Crocodile, their "manhood" was their own. One defiantly holds a ballot marked "For the Midland." They could not be intimidated and approved of competition, not monopoly. The cartoon symbolized the anticipated growing power and political awareness of Nashville's working class.



PART 1. **The Daily American.** 16 PAGES.

VOL. XIII. NASHVILLE, TENN., SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1887.—SIXTEEN PAGES. WHOLE NO. 4,023.

THE AMSTERDAM CYCLONE—TRUTH WITHOUT POETRY!

The above picture brings home a lesson to every farmer in Davidson County. Without railroad competition you are at the mercy of a soulless, greedy, Amsterdam corporation which has heretofore, and will continue, to bleed and bulldoze alike the producer, manufacturer and merchant. The Crocodile's mouth is open, and the whirlwind of necessity carries everything you have into its rapacious maw. Experience teaches that the farmer, with but one turnpike to town, must pay the toll, no matter how much exacted. If you have but one road to the market of the world, like the merchant you must expect to be discriminated against, bled and bulldozed. Helplessly the farmers of this county pay to the Louisville & Nashville Amsterdam blood-suckers a royalty on every household or farm article purchased and every product shipped. And now they add insult to injury; they browbeat their employes to throttle you or lose their situations. Ah! it is pitiful, but in justice to your manhood, in behalf of your children, it behooves you to go to the ballot-box in solid phalanx and teach the vote-buying, bulldozing hirelings of the Amsterdam corporation that the people, and not the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company, rule this country.

The *American*'s full front-page cartoon of September 18 was a partial repeat of the illustration of September 16. An even larger Holland Crocodile consortium was symbolically responsible for an immense tornado funneling horses, sheep, mules, swine, cattle, geese, goats and grain into the mouth of the "L.&N.R.R." A sign in the background identifies "Middle Tennessee Farms Without Rail Road Commission," from whence the tornado emanates. A small figure to the left, an apparent urban dweller, holds on to a torn tree trunk and exclaims "It's about to get me too." The giant monopoly was symbolically able to harness the forces of nature to gluttonously feed itself with the livelihood of hapless farmers.

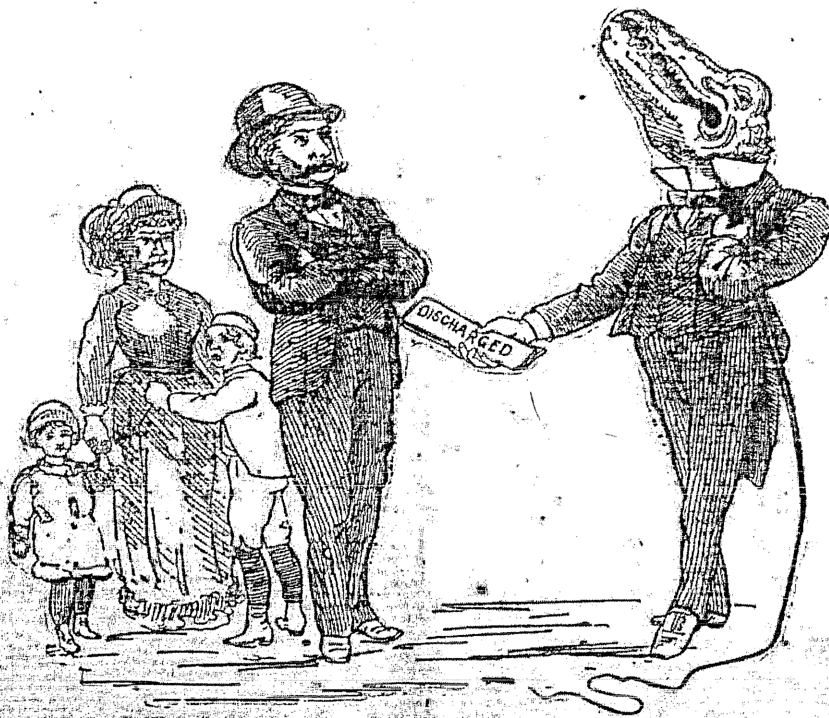
DETECTIVES RIVETING THE SHACKLES ON NASHVILLE.

The Latest and Boldest Attempt to Defeat the Building of a Competing Line of Railro

Perhaps one of the more compelling cartoons to appear in the *American* was that of September 19. Here Lady Nashville, the symbolic representation of the city, is restricted so she may be controlled by the hideous half man, half crocodile monopoly fiend. Lady Nashville, with her now useless shield of progress at her side, is held in manacles by a crew of men. Edward B. Stahlman, this time without his top hat, holds her right arm while one T. G. Hewlett, a notorious L&N detective, fastens the iron manacles on her left arm. A Pinkerton detective secures what could be called the "shackles of tyranny" around her ankles. A gang of Pinkertons hovers in the background eager to help in the work. To the right, the recently transmogrified whip-toting Holland Crocodile supervises the work. The resemblance between Lady Nashville and the Statue of Liberty is striking, particularly insofar as the foot irons, or "shackles of tyranny" are also placed upon her – the 'Shackles of Liberty" are broken at the feet of the Statue of Liberty, which was dedicated on October 28, 1886.

DAVIDSON'S PROTEST AGAINST SUBSIDY AND CONVICT BUILT RAILROADS.

The September 20, 1887 issue of the Nashville *Banner* carried the only cartoon that newspaper would print during the controversy over the Midland subscription question. The caption, "Davidson's Protest Against Subsidy and Convict Labor Railroads" supported an elaborate depiction of A. S. Colyar, a leading proponent of the Midland Rail Road, being vanquished by "Miss Davidson County," attired in classical costume and holding a shield labeled "Truth." Colyar's Midland boot is seen crushing workers, labeled "Labor," into the ground, not coincidently as Colyar was the primary exploiter of convict labor at the Grundy County coal mines administered by the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company. Colyar's surprised, off-balance posture indicates "Miss Davidson County" was about to run him through with her sword labeled "Honest Votes." To the left and just under Colyar's left hand, a Midland locomotive heads down the track to catastrophic ruin in the shape of a formidable boulder labeled "L&N." A woman to the upper right, standing near her humble house, raises her arms in thanks as Miss Davidson stops Colyar and the Midland. A kneeling figure caricatures the business and mercantile community, symbolized by a top hat. He clutches a document that, due to poor printing quality, cannot be read; most likely it and the figure's posture symbolize the ruin of the business community that would result from higher property taxes inevitably levied to pay for an approval of the Midland public subscription.



HE DARED TO ASSERT HIS FREEDOM!

Mr. Samuel S. Roche—The Louisville & Nashville Railroad can pay for my services, but my vote and my manhood are my own.
The Crocodile—Then, sir, you are discharged. If you refuse to vote as I dictate you disregard my property right in you, and you will have to step down and out.

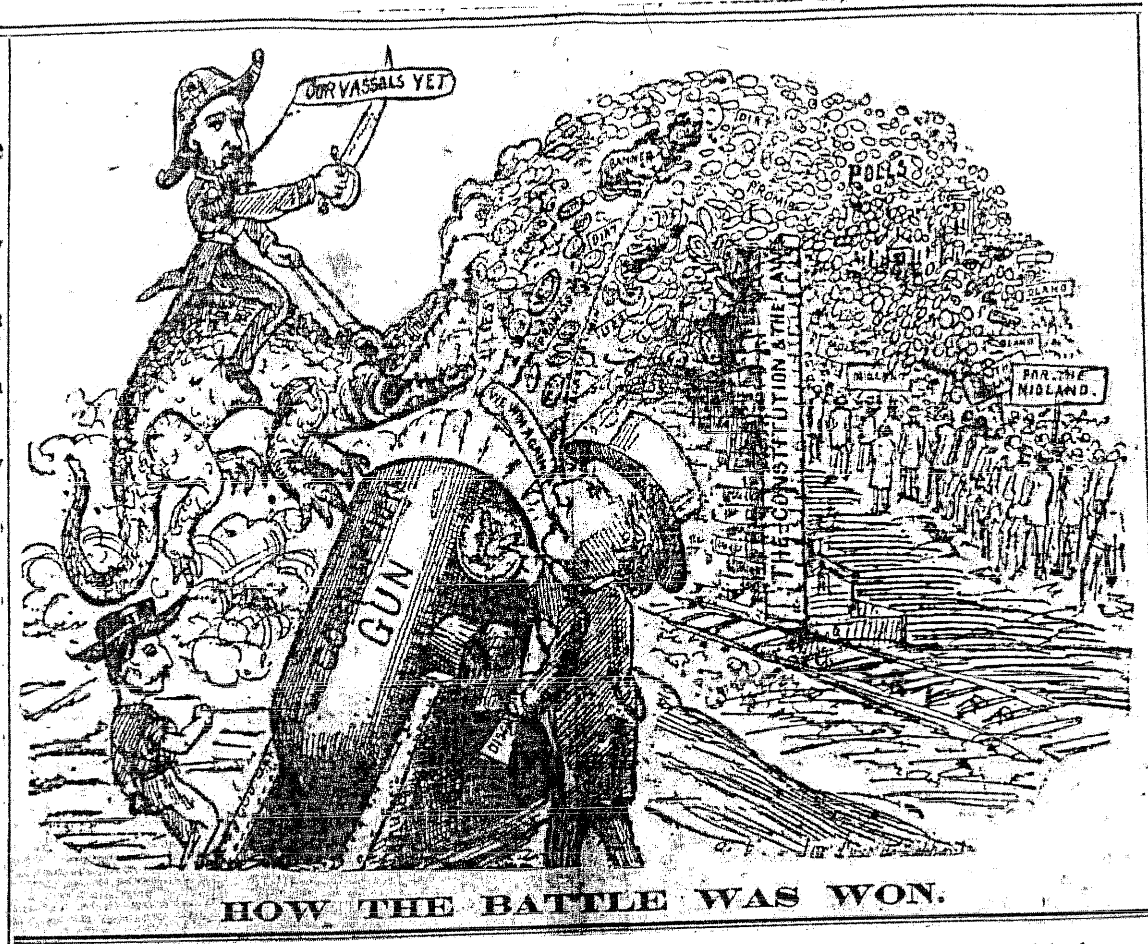
While there were smaller and less dramatic cartoons published in the back pages of the *American* of September 21, the eve of the Midland subscription vote, the front-page illustration carried the bold caption "He Dared to Assert His Freedom." The perfectly dressed and whip-brandishing Holland Crocodile, symbol of the L&N, is pictured handing an employment discharge notice to Samuel S. Roche. A fifteen-year veteran of the L&N, Roche had been terminated because he voiced his opinion, while off the job, that he favored competition and therefore the passage of the Midland subscription. This the L&N would not tolerate, having adamantly suggested that all its employees toe the line and vote as the company dictated – otherwise the corporation would force the employee "to step down and out." Roche, with folded arms, takes a bold, manly stand, refusing to take the discharge papers, while his dismayed and frowning spouse comforts the couple's frightened children. The entire cartoon symbolized the new power of the corporation to manipulate freedom of speech and the franchise to favor its own ends, a phenomenon then relatively new in American political life.

HARD AT WORK.
The Holland Crocodile Dictating Discharges of Men Who Refuse to Acknowledge Themselves Slaves.

Two *American* cartoons from Election Day, September 22, deserve attention. The first, captioned "Hard at Work," was meant to convince the average voter that the L&N would do to any erring employees what it did to Samuel Roche. Pictured at a table are the now wholly devolved primal Holland Crocodile, "Me Too" Edward B. Stahlman, and with his back to the viewer, Milton H. Smith, First Vice President of the L&N. Both men take orders from their reptilian chief and obediently write discharge notices to all the company's employees known to have expressed their desire to vote for the Midland subscription. A railroad detective-spy, most likely T. G. Hewlett, is seen scurrying to their table with a list of disloyal employees. Workers, symbolized by brawny blacksmiths pounding their hammers in L&N shops are seen in the background. No doubt their names were on the list being hastened to the executives' desk. The architectural symbolism of the Romanesque arches in the background suggest luxury and the atmosphere if not attitude associated with the paternalistic Latin American plantation.

THE FATE OF THE HOLLAND TROOPS—A BARRIER THEY CAN'T FIRE OVER.

The second cartoon to appear in the *American* on September 22 indicates that, no matter what the L&N's economic power might be, it was not enough to overcome the American Constitution and the law. Captioned "The Fate of the Holland Troops—A Barrier They Can't Fire Over," the cartoon depicts Edward B. Stahlman, T. G. Hewlett, and Milton H. Smith. "General Smith," sword in hand, sits astride a rearing Holland Crocodile. A hesitant Stahlman alludes to the 1885 defeat of legislation for establishment of a Tennessee Railroad Commission, saying "This Won Before, I Am Not So Sure This Time." T. G. Hewlett unquestioningly pulls the lanyard of the massive mortar-like "corruption gun" at Smith's command, "Fire!" The cannon shoots an immense charge of money and a cur dog representing the *Banner* at voters marching to the polls. The symbolic wall of "The Law and Constitution," however, shields the great throng of determined pro-Midland voters from the heavy-handed "military-industrial complex" assaults of the L&N.



HOW THE BATTLE WAS WON.

Despite the hullabaloo raised by the cartoons in the *American*, the Midland subsidy lost by the slim margin of 2 percent. The cartoon of September 23 was an adaptive reuse of the previous day's caricature with a new caption, "How The Battle Was Won." In it the much-revered wall of the Constitution and law proved no barrier against the corruption gun and its attendants. Still astride the bucking crocodile, "General" Milton H. Smith raises his sword and triumphantly exclaims, "Our Vassals Yet!" Top-hatted Edward Stahlman holds a discharge notice and an emblematic golden double eagle saying "We Win Again." Hewlett continues his artillery responsibilities with a better aim, firing a hurricane of money, the dog *Banner*, and a variety of ammunition at erstwhile Midland voters. The corporation had defeated the potential competition of the Midland subscription and maintained its monopoly control over Nashville, as the cartoon symbolized, by the use of newspaper editorials, tricks, money and lies.

SOMETHING FOR GOOD CITIZENS TO THINK ABOUT.

The last cartoon on the subject of the Midland subsidy appeared in the *American* on September 25, 1887. In it, a sandaled Miss Nashville, yet again symbolized as a modified Statue of Liberty, holds the odiferous "Holland Crocodile" at arm's length. She unrolls a scroll asking if the gateway of prosperity had been closed by the L&N "And This Monster Keep the Key?" The sneering cartel L&N crocodile, keeping the key to prosperity tucked tightly in its monopoly belt, displays its own scroll with the tauntingly direct exclamation, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" The caption admonished, "Something For Good Citizens To Think About." As it turned out, nothing was or could be done. Nashville and the nation at large were entering a new economic era and a new phase of social development. Concentration now held sway over economic and political freedom. There was no turning back, symbolically or otherwise.

NASHVILLE/DAVIDSON COUNTY MIDLAND SUBSCRIPTION VOTE TALLY							
Nashville Vote Tally by Ward							
			Pro-Midland		Anti-Midland		
First Ward			257		42		
Second Ward			563		98		
Third Ward			815		102		
Fourth Ward			540		106		
Fifth Ward			475		108		
Sixth Ward			727		246		
Seventh Ward			712		277		
Eighth Ward			573		299		
Ninth Ward			527		417		
Tenth Ward			416		315		
Eleventh Ward			655		71		
Twelfth Ward			231		112		
Thirteenth Ward			231		252	(+)	
Fourteenth Ward			298		80		
TOTAL			7,230		2,223		

NASHVILLE/DAVIDSON COUNTY MIDLAND SUBSCRIPTION VOTE TALLY

Davidson County Vote Tally by District and Precinct

	Pro-Midland	Anti-Midland	
Second District			
First precinct	156	84	
Second precinct	165	85	
Third District *			
Fourth District	90	129	(+)
Fifth District	113	68	
Sixth District	206	6	
Seventh District *			
Eighth District	87	139	(+)
Ninth District	312	56	
Tenth District	633	223	
Eleventh District	138	82	
Twelfth District	96	80	
Thirteenth District			
First precinct	614	294	
Second precinct	865	392	
Fourteenth District	90	128	(+)
Fifteenth District	216	71	
Sixteenth District *			
Seventeenth District	200	73	
Eighteenth District	320	40	
Nineteenth District	90	91	(+)
Twentieth District	113	179	(+)
Twenty-first District	106	22	
Twenty-second District *			
Twenty-third District *			
Twenty-fourth District *			
Twenty-fifth District *			
Total	4,741	2,224	
Total Wards	7,280	2,223	
Grand Total	11,971	4,417	

(*) There is no explanation given for the missing tallies from these districts.

(+) Indicates anti-Midland majority

Source: Nashville *Daily American*, September 23, 1887

"And Not A Wife Only": Advice and Receipts from *The Kentucky Housewife*

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The cover of *The Kentucky Housewife*, published in Cincinnati in 1839, boasts that the volume contains "over thirteen hundred full receipts," making it a 450-plus page treasure trove of nineteenth-century food and drink instruction and information. This long overlooked volume, however, contains even more: the prescriptive advice offered in the Preface, Introduction, and in "Remarks," as they are titled, offers a rare perspective on an important historical period. The book's author, Mrs. Lettice Bryan, apparently leaves no other record. But her shaping of this early cookbook—the recipes she includes, the advice she gives, what she does and does not explain—provides an important discourse about the lives and roles of white Southern women in the years before the Civil War. The book raises just as many questions.

In *Southern Foods: At Home, on the Road, and In History,* cultural historian John Egerton laments that this valuable archive was so long overlooked as to almost be lost. Even at this point the 2001 facsimile edition is out of print. *Kentucky Housewife*'s 1839 publication plants it squarely within the decades 1750-1860, which Egerton pinpoints as the years when "the hospitality and cuisine of the South reached its apex" (15). He further identifies the dual causes of this flourishing: the ability of well-off Southerners to acquire the best of both native and imported goods, including anything and everything related to food, and the dramatic rise in the slave population. Also during this period, cookbooks adapted to American kitchens were published for the first time, and Southern ones clearly established the European, Native American, and African origins of the region's cuisine.

The Kentucky Housewife arrived at the center of this socioeconomic and culinary merging, and also at the center of the first generation of recipe books to include and thus establish a distinctive Southern cuisine. It was very likely modeled on *The Virginia Housewife,* by Mary Randolph, published in 1824, which offered for the first time recipes for barbecued pork, fried potatoes, field peas, sweet potatoes, and other foods

now known as Southern. Some Southern foods had also been recorded by Amelia Simmons, "an American Orphan," who published her *American Cookery* in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1796. Sarah Rutledge, "a Lady of Charleston," published *The Carolina Housewife* in 1847, and Mary L. Edgeworth published *The Southern Gardener and Receipt Book* in 1859, just before the Civil War would end the legendary era. What these pioneering writers share in common is that so little is known about their lives or social status. The designations "Lady" and "Orphan" raise two distinct possibilities: a true plantation mistress recording recipes she has probably never cooked herself, or a down on her luck gentlewoman seeking an honorable means of support.

Egerton's concern is of course with the recipes, the archive of ingredients and methods of food preparation in an antebellum household. Equally intriguing are Bryan's advice and elevated, authoritative tone. In her Introduction, for example, she presents the role of housewife as one of tremendous responsibility and importance:

> You who have taken it upon yourself to be a helpmate for your companion, and a guide and governess to those who may be under your care, discharge each devolving duty with care and precision, fulfilling the station of a housewife indeed, and not a wife only. Very much depends on your own conduct and management to secure yourself and family happy, peaceful lives. Shun the deleterious practices of idleness, pride, and extravagance, recollecting that neither of them constitutes the lady. Never make your husband blush to own that you are his wife; but by your industry, frugality, and neatness, make him proud, and happy to know that he is in possession of a companion who is a complete model of loveliness and true elegance.

While the housewife must be constantly prepared and diligent, Mrs. Bryan explains that a major part of her role lies in establishing "rules for domestics and slaves" so that they may carry out assigned duties (Introduction). Here arises a question at the heart of many Southern cookbooks: Who exactly is doing the cooking? In *Inside the Plantation Household*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese contends that "slaveholding women wrote little about the preparations of meals, presumably because they more often ordered than prepared them" (118). Additionally, white Southerners habitually used language in ways that blurred their own actions with those they had ordered/asked their slaves or servants to perform. For example, as recently as 1987, Craig Claiborne reminisced about how he prepared his "first original dish": "I asked Joe to make me sliced ham on toast triangles

with a poached egg and a cheese sauce spooned on top. He did, and it was a great success" (xiii). Joe was an African American kitchen worker in the Claiborne boardinghouse.

Lettice Bryan exhibits a similar schizophrenia about agency. On one hand, her Introduction prescribes specific activities in a firm imperative: "Save your herbs and seeds; dry your fruits, and prepare your sweet meats, catsups, vinegars, etc...." Yet she slides quickly into language less definite about who is the agent: "Keep a supply of spices and peppers ground, and bottled; also sage, and other sweet herbs, which should first be powdered and sifted." The quick shift to passive voice is similar to a diary reference noted by Fox-Genovese, wherein a plantation mistress records "having had four pounds of blackberry jam made" (118). Indeed Bryan soon clearly indicates that her housewife's role is a supervisory one: "Attend to the giving out of your meals, and proportion the seasonings to each dish yourself. This may be done at an early hour; and with the proper instructions to the cook, the lady may be relieved of further trouble during the day" (Introduction). Elsewhere she assigns the duty of frequently checking on cupboards, furniture, smokehouse, cellar, <u>and kitchen</u> [emphasis added] to assure that nothing is "lost or wasted by the neglect of servants and hirelings" (Introduction). Obviously a woman assumed to be at daily work within a kitchen, and a kitchen outside the main house at that, would not be ordered to check on it.

On the other hand, Bryan, unlike the Southern women mentioned by Fox-Genovese, does write extensively about food preparation, in much detail and with what seems to be first-hand knowledge. This intimacy with all sorts of food preparation, from cleaning hog intestines to stuffing a beef heart to making ice cream, would seem to separate Bryan from the audience she appears to address. Further, most recipes conclude with an instruction of when or how to send the dish to the table. The point of view of this moment of sending to table is from a fireplace or spit, and readers must ask whether a plantation mistress would be bent over an open fire while her guests waited upstairs or in the main house. The instructions for ice cream order the cook to prepare the cream, "put it in the freezer, set it in the tub of ice, pressing the ice closely to it; cover it with a folded carpet, turn it round constantly, taking care not to let a drop of the salt water get in it" (339). This turning around period, in a pre-crank era, required at least two hours, hardly the task for the elegant lady of Bryan's introductory remarks.

Thus one obvious conclusion is that the cooking and massive kitchen work was done by slaves or other servants, supervised by the lady of the house. In that case the book is an extended argument that the housewife must know the intimate details of the

work she supervises lest the household be run in a slovenly or wasteful manner. Accordingly, Mrs. Bryan's souse receipt includes a caution against indolent cooks who try to boil the hogs' feet to loosen the hooves (93) or milk maids who fail to wipe the cows' udders before milking (377). Her instructions regarding cakes are meticulous and demanding, but she assures readers that her instructions will prevent the hiring of a cook specifically for cakes or having them baked elsewhere (274-5). If we accept this relationship between Mrs. Bryan and her audience, she becomes a general training an army for daily battle against bad advice, waste, disorder, and laziness, with the reward of a well-run home, happy family and guests, and a proud husband.

Further, in a world where white males ruled over all, neither white nor black women had any choice about domestic responsibility, no matter how different their actual tasks were. Thus Bryan's serious approach also raises the status of the white housewife to one of co-manager—not a wife only. Her seriousness is suggested by her vocabulary as well as her desire to encourage thoughtful competence rather than a slavish adherence to a recipe. Bryan calls cooking a "culinary art" and refers to "the domestic economy of housewifery"; starchy food is "farinaceous" (184); baking soda is "saleratus" (285); edible mushrooms are "esculent" (207); cherries are "pellucid" (357). Skill and judgment are of uppermost importance. Beginning with her Preface and in "Remarks" throughout her book, Bryan rails against the apparently recent and, to her, absurd instruction to time dishes by the clock. When a dish is done, Bryan argues, can only be "intuitively perceived by every reflecting mind." In place of such worthless instruction, tempting only to the inexperienced, Bryan includes what she calls "infallible rules to ascertain when dishes are done" (Preface). She also transforms the domestic drudgery of food preparation into both art and science.

With these previous comments we also notice that Bryan has once again slipped into the role of actual cook, not the Lady but perhaps the Orphan, or Widow or Spinster, who may have written *The Kentucky Housewife* as a means of support. The first sentence of the Preface states that the authoress has "turned her attention almost wholly to the domestic economy of housewifery for the last few years." This statement can mean that she really decided to take an academic approach to housekeeping; it can also mean that like most nineteenth-century women she has no other place to focus her attention. In her Introduction, Bryan addresses her plantation mistress audience—the Ladies—as "you" rather than "we." She also includes many recipes that she calls "plain and cheap," such as pig's feet, boiled greens, many variations of cornbread, dried beans, and others like "Beef's Cheeks Hashed" (45). Just as most Southerners of her time did not own slaves,

most of them ate the food just listed rather than the lobsters, oysters, and ice cream whose recipes she also provides. Bryan consistently distinguishes between humble dishes and dishes reserved for company, as in her recipe for peach "cobler": "Although it is not a fashionable pie for company, it is very excellent for family use, with cold sweet milk" (268). (Also noteworthy is the fact that Bryan's is the first known print appearance of the word *cobbler* to refer to a fruit pie. The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first usage to 1859.) Bryan may have hoped to broaden her audience by making her recipes so inclusive, but Southerners today still eat high and humbly, and current cookbooks reflect that practice.

Another of Bryan's purposes may have been to offer guidance and thus confidence to women of modest means, who had few or no servants and may actually have done their own cooking. Thus her Introduction, which begins addressing women who supervise slaves and are then free for the day, ends with this admonition: "Never strive to have a great variety of made dishes on your table when you have but few to eat with you.... Just try to learn what your company is fondest of and have their favorites. A few things well ordered will never fail to give a greater appetite and pleasure to your guest than a crowded table badly prepared.... As there is a time for all things, there will be a time to crowd your table with delicacies. We should not only consult economy, but daily practice it; which is nothing more than saving knowledge, carried into action. Such a course will bind up a lasting treasure for the rich, and secure a plentiful living for the poor." The passive voice lends ambivalence to the phrase "a few things well ordered," once again blurring the identity of the cook: is she the Lady, ordering her servants and slaves to behave wisely, or the Orphan, preparing them herself? This back and forth between high and humble also appears in the Preface, in which brief space Bryan refers to the volume both as "her little work" and the greatest collection of recipes "on the western continent."

The size of the recipe collection also raises an interesting question. Where did this Lady or this Orphan get so many recipes? Bryan claims that many are her original creations, some are committed to memory, and others are taken from other collections and then "improved." Plagiarism has long been practiced and gone unpunished in cookbook compilation, and Bryan's most obvious source is *The Virginia Housewife*. Several of the more exotic recipes appear with phonetically spelled titles: "Beef Casse Role" (37), "Cold Slaugh" (192-3),"Beef Malaga" (37), "Chopsa-La-Manta of Veal" (62), and "A Fricando of Veal" (63), thereby indicating the author's distance from their origins. The possibility also arises that Bryan included some dishes not because she expected them to be prepared regularly, but to add interest, prestige, or sheer numbers.

The Kentucky Housewife also astonishes with its testimony to the bounty of the antebellum table, even if that bounty was available only to a minority. Native game, domesticated meat, and imported spices are assumed to be right at hand. Oysters are so common as to be used as thickeners. A broth made "in the usual way" contains veal, chicken, and ham—and then becomes the base for asparagus soup (22). Bryan includes several flavors of ice cream and many types of ketchup, including pineapple and oyster. Nutmeg is required as frequently as salt, and a multitude of more exotic spices is frequently called for. A recipe "To Keep Cream" yields a product similar to sweetened condensed milk, which is then preserved in corked jars (379). While Bryan acknowledges that pea fowls have "generally been admired more for their plumagerous appearance than for diet," she nevertheless offers a recipe for roasting them over a spit (132). Another recipe tells how to bone a turkey, stuff it with forcemeat so as to return it to its original shape, and bake it. With her usual disdain for laziness, Mrs. Bryan laments that this practice takes effort and skill and is thus seldom executed, even though the "art was taught in schools some years ago" (113-4). Today's readers cannot know whether nineteenth-century Kentuckians really sat down to Chicken Ollo, a dish made with veal, chicken, noodles, fresh mint, potatoes, and half a dozen boiled eggs, "divested of their shells" (124); or Bird Dumplings, "made with "any kind of nice small birds," heads and feet removed and joints crushed, encased in pastry and boiled (255). Some of these exotic "receipts" reveal their origins. Even though the *American Heritage Dictionary* lists the word *ceviche* as entering English in the 1950s, Mrs. Bryan offers a recipe "To Caveach Cat-Fish" (152-3). *The Oxford English Dictionary* does include the word *caveach*, of West Indian origin, and lists its first printed appearance as 1730, in Eliza Smith's *The Complete Housewife, or the Gentlewoman's Companion.* This reference also suggests where Mrs. Bryan might have "borrowed" the recipe.

Other questions arise regarding Mrs. Bryan's instructions for the preservation and storage of food. Electricity and refrigeration separate us from Bryan's need to dry, brine, pickle, and preserve, and most of us, even after following ever-authoritative instructions, would hesitate to consume the results. For instance, Mrs. Bryan tells us that cucumbers to be used for pickles may be stored in brine for up to two years (180). The subsequent pickles are stored in "a stone or earthen jar" and tied with a cloth over the top. Mrs. Bryan's references to "a cool place" can unnerve today's readers for whom that phrase means a refrigerator or freezer. Pickled salmon, for example, kept in an earthen jar in "a cool place" are said to keep for several months (141). Eggs in brine and limewater will keep "for several years" (225). Crocks and jars are to be sealed with wax, corked, or covered with oil cloth—no mention of boiling water. Therefore one of the several puzzles

The Kentucky Housewife leaves us with is how our forebears avoided food poisoning, which is not even among the ailments mentioned in Mrs. Bryan's "Preparations for the Sick."

We might also ponder which schools taught turkey boning. Most important, though, we are left uncertain whether Mrs. Bryan is the Orphan or the Lady. A fellow Southerner may provide a clue. A Georgia housewife with an alcoholic husband, two young sons, and panic attacks that kept her confined to the house turned to cooking because, as Paula Deen explains, "that was all I knew—with the possible exception of cheerleading and being cute" (113). Deen knew that she had to turn herself into "a woman of substance" in order to support herself and her two sons. She is now wealthy and famous for recipes cheerfully plundered from throughout the South. Whatever her beginnings, she is now a "Lady," and the ever-present fans circling her Lady and Sons restaurant in Savannah may even assume she still does the cooking. In her nineteenth-century slave-holding society, with carefully prescribed roles for white women, Mrs. Lettice Bryan may have faced even fewer choices than Paula Deen. Like Paula Deen, she created a persona, a front to meet the world and sell the "receipts." From our twenty-first century perspectives, we can only hope she succeeded. We do know, though, that whether she was the Lady or the Orphan, she was certainly a Writer.

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