Publick Occurrences 2.0 June 2008



June 30, 2008

The Age of Analogies

One of Josh Marshall's posts last week noted the dismal failure of the Bush administration's attempt at a Radio Free Europe for the Arab world, al-Hurra ("The Free One.") Like most of the Shrub crew's schemes, this one was doubly incompetent, both erroneously conceived *and* poorly implemented. It was dopey enough to think that the situation in the present Middle East resembles Eastern Europe during the Cold War at all. Al-Hurra competes with a brace of widely-watched Arabic-language satellite channels and web sites while Radio Free Europe supplied peoples who were starved for outside information by their Communist state media monopolies. Then the dopey idea could not even be executed properly. The men behind al-Hurra turn out to be the news geniuses responsible for Casey Kasem's "American Top 40″ and other syndicated national radio programs. It seems that none of the managers knew Arabic or much of anything about the Arab news media, but the founder (Norman Pattiz) is, like Casey, a Lebanese-American, so people in D.C. must have assumed that was

qualification enough.

This story crystallized for me something that is going to be an historical hallmark of the present era. In this Age of Analogies, with television chat shows defining the public sphere, we have American leaders not just using dumb historical analogies as cheap talking points, but actually trying to put the dumb analogies into practice, as the basis for policy. We can't just compare a foreign leader we don't like to Hitler, we have to take the approach toward the world's "bad guys" we think we would have taken towards Hitler, if we were time-travelling nincompoops from the 21st-century with 20-20 hindsight supplied by Hollywood. That is very close to what most of our current national leaders and pundits really seem to think they are.

So we have the current debate over "appeasement," a word rolled out anytime someone suggests there might be some other way of dealing with regimes and peoples we don't like other than bombing, invading, and overthrowing them, not necessarily in that order. The appeasement concept was problematic even back in the Cold War when it was cultural gospel, taught at the deepest level possible, that every conflict was a case of handing Czechoslavakia and your manhood over to the Nazis, or standing up and fighting. Westerns, *Star Trek*, *The Brady Bunch* could all agree on that. Fight, or Hitler wins and millions die! Interestingly, the promise that Cold War popular culture often made was that if you stood up and showed you could fight, the Romulans or the bully or the outlaws would go away and leave you alone. In fact, when the Allies stood up to Hitler they had to fight history's greatest war machine for years, and millions still died. And that would have been the case even if the standing took place in 1938 rather than later.

But how much dumber is "appeasement," and the implicit Hitler-Chamberlain comparison, when there is no continent-sweeping dictator demanding that we let him have some defenseless country? Who would we appease even if we wanted to? How would we go about it? What could we give the Islamists that we haven't already? Pakistan and Iran aren't enough?

Of course, "appeasement" is raised to twist the debate, not advance it. In the Bush-Cheney worldview any solution not imposed by force on a weaker foe is inherently suspect; any other form of adjudication or discussion is idle chit-chat of a particularly dangerous kind. Making every enemy into Hitler, the guy we know for sure was a psychopath bent on world domination, stacks the deck in favor of the force-first point-of-view:

"Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all along," Mr. Bush said, in a speech otherwise devoted to spotlighting Israel's friendship with the United States.

"We have an obligation," he continued, "to call this what it is: the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history."

(Yes, thank God Ronald Reagan finally cut loose and let our military show those Soviets who was stronger, otherwise the Iron Curtain never would have fallen. Oh, wait. . . .) At any rate, the "appeasement" concept resonates very well with conservative hatred of egalitarianism and its suspicion of legal processes, but its universal application to real life is just a little lacking, considering that 99.9% of real conflicts actually do not end with the total defeat and suicide of the Big Bad. Really pretty much just that one. Not sure how to score the Pacific theater.

Munich and World War II have loomed over U.S. policy minds since the end of that war, but there is something particularly goofy and post-modern about way the analogies work today, when so few of the top policymakers or journalists have any first-hand experience that goes back earlier than the Kennedy era. The historical analogies are taken sooo literally, regardless of whether they are remotely applicable. So I saw *Newsweek* wondering from the airport newsstand a couple of weeks ago, "What Would Winston Do?" The accompanying article actually does a pretty reasonable job distinguishing past from present and puncturing some of the Munich myth, but that cover says the opposite, much more powerfully. In any case, Evan Thomas's article seems to be one of many belated efforts to catch up with reality by the sort of pop-history-writing journos (like Tom Brokaw and Evan Thomas, among many others) who have worked so hard to build up the power of the World War II analogies.

P.S. Based on the quite good and relatively even-handed new museum at the Churchill Memorial in Fulton, MO (the site of the Iron Curtain speech), what Winston would have done is attack something.

June 22, 2008

Popular Constitutionalism Illustrated

Readers of my book, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, may be interested in a much more lavishly illustrated rendition of some of the book's points that has been just been published in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's magazine *Pennsylvania Legacies*. The article, "Popular Constitutionalism in Philadelphia: How Freedom of Expression Was Secured by Two Fearless Newspaper Editors," is part of a special issue on "Defining Civil Liberties in Pennsylvania." Naturally, the two editors are Benjamin Franklin Bache and William Duane of the Philadelphia *Aurora*. It looks like you have to join HSP to actually read the whole thing, but there is a preview available here.

(I love the cartoon of a lightning-swathed printing press that the HSP has posted with the preview, which I am borrowing for this post. It looks like it should be the chest emblem of a printing-themed superhero, if there ever were to be such a thing.)

As usual with small assignments covering old ground, I tortured myself to put something new into this piece, only to have most of the extra material not make it into the final version. In this case, I tried to go a little further than the book did with the idea of popular constitutionalism – constitutional interpretation as worked out and enforced in the arena of popular politics rather than the courts – as the driving force behind what Americans came to see their constitutional rights. In the case at hand, the expansive American version of press freedom was worked out in the political battle of 1798-1801. Constitutional law and elite political thought only caught up many decades later. At any rate, I have posted a "director's cut" of the article here. (Having an outlet for my long versions was a good chunk for my motivation for starting a website in the first place.) It is still unfootnoted and pitched to a relatively popular audience, like the *Pennsylvania Legacies* version, but it will be a starting point for an argument I hope to be making at greater length and with more scholarly rigor in the future.

June 16, 2008

Jefferson Whitewashers for Clinton and McCain

Thanks to reader Ben Carp for pointing out the following item from *The Politico* that needed to be mentioned in this space:

Ben Smith's Blog: From Jeffersons vs. Hemingses to McCain vs. Obama

A key organizer of John McCain's meeting Saturday with former supporters of Hillary Clinton is best known for her role in another bitter American fight: The effort by some white descendants of Thomas Jefferson to keep his possible African-American descendants out of family gatherings.

Paula Abeles emailed Politico yesterday to complain that her group had gotten short shrift in a blog item, writing, "I initiated the teleconference with McCain on Saturday and was solely responsible for the guest list." Another Clinton backer at the event, Will Bower, confirmed that she was "integral" to assembling the group.

But Abeles first made the news in 2003, when she and her husband, then-Monticello Association President Nat Abeles, led the fight to keep members of the Hemings family – descendants of Jefferson slave and, some historians believe, mistress Sally Hemmings – out of a gathering of the Monticello

Association, which is made up of lineal descendants of the third president.

Abeles drew national attention for her role in an episode of online espionage.

The AP reported in May of 2003:

The wife of a Thomas Jefferson family association official said Friday that she masqueraded as a 67-year-old black woman on an Internet chat room in a bid to keep descendants of a reputed Jefferson mistress out of this weekend's family reunion.

"It might have been somewhat unethical," said Paulie Abeles of Washington, D.C., who participated for eight months in the Yahoo! message board created for relatives of Jefferson slave Sally Hemings.

"It might have been childish, but I really think I was working in the best interest of the majority of the family members to make the reunion a calm and civilized gathering," she said.

The story goes on a bit from there. Many of *The Politico*'s commenters made the obvious point that this would seem to confirm what many Obama supporters have suspected about the racial views of some of Clinton's more diehard supporters. Abeles and her ilk probably don't think of themselves as racists, but their fury at the very idea of connecting African Americans with something they revere like the presidency or their own family heritage says it all.

Also, one correction to Smith's post is in order: the "some historians" are on the other foot. Perhaps people are just keeping quiet about it, but my sense is that the vast majority of historians (especially under age 60 or 70) now accept that Thomas Jefferson fathered some or all of Sally Heming's children. And not just scholars who are bent on trashing Jefferson.

The turning point for me personally was Annette Gordon-Reed's 1997 case history *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*. In a very even-handed work written before the DNA testing, Gordon-Reed reached their conclusions by sifting carefully and logically through the then-available written records and the various arguments that had been made over the years. The clincher for me was the fact that Sally Hemings never conceived a child when Jefferson was not living on the same premises, during the height of his political career when he was away from home, and Sally, much of the time. The DNA testing just confirmed what already seemed very, very likely. Even the modern-day custodians of the Jefferson legacy at Monticello basically accept the Jefferson-Hemings relationship, if that is the term. Why some white Jefferson descendants cannot accept it, and why they would switch parties to support McCain, I leave to the reader to decide.

June 10, 2008

Hamilton's house on its way to Jeffersonian setting



I was amused by the *New York Times* story last weekend about Alexander Hamilton's country house, The Grange, getting moved "from its cramped site on Convent Avenue to an appropriately verdant new location a block away in St. Nicholas Park, facing West 141st Street." Andy Robertson and I visited that lonely site (in terms of tourists) a few years ago. The house was indeed challenging to find, crammed in behind an Episcopal Church and surrounded by other buildings. (In the picture above, you can see the portico of the Richardsonian-style church on the upper right.) We were the only people there except for one ranger, but we thought that the old site was actually rather *appropriate*. The Founder most devoted to economic development and high finance got his house completely overshadowed by the growth of exactly the sort of city he sought to foster, with all the sensitivity to the small, rural, and outmoded that such cities usually show. I am sure it is true that the new location will more closely replicate the house's original setting, back when Harlem was a country village, but the old one sent a more accurate message about the what the historical figure stood for. Of course, the fact that Hamilton's Monticello-like hilltop shrine will be created at public expense seems pretty Hamiltonian.

June 7, 2008

"Two Systems of Science" — Good one!

I did not work as a reporter for all that long, but I do remember the elation I felt when a "source" (as journalists like to call people they talk to on the phone) gave me a really awful, colorful quotation. The key was to find some exponent of a ridiculous or distasteful cause who liked to talk a little too much. I imagine the writer of the recent *New York Times* story on the latest evolutionary leap of the anti-evolution cause must have been pumping her fist in the air on the other end of the phone (or inwardly), when the head of the Texas state education board uncorked the following explanation of why it is perfectly appropriate to teach the evangelical Christian critique (a.k.a. "weaknesses") of evolutionary theory in science classes:

Dr. [Don] McLeroy, the [Texas state education] board chairman, sees the debate as being between "two systems of science.""You've got a creationist system and a naturalist system," he said. . . .

Dr. McLeroy believes that Earth's appearance is a recent geologic event —

thousands of years old, not 4.5 billion. “I believe a lot of incredible things,” he said, “The most incredible thing I believe is the Christmas story. That little baby born in the manger was the god that created the universe.”

Believing incredible things – now that’s science. I imagine Dr. McLeroy is perfectly sincere about the “scientific” truth of his Christian beliefs. I have never been able to find a good book to read about this – please advise – but American fundamentalism does seem to have this strange scientistic streak. In literally interpreting the Bible, they believe one can find “the facts,” the objectively, universally true principles of all existence. They even tend to use scientistic, quasi-scholarly methods to get at the “real” meaning of the text.

At least this was how it was explained to me by a former graduate student who had attended a conservative Christian seminary. We were talking about the apparent contradiction between the belief in the transparent and complete inerrancy of the English-language biblical text and the requirement that students learn ancient languages in order to translate the originals. It seemed to me that anyone who had translated more than a few sentences of any foreign language, let alone ancient ones using a different alphabet, would twig to the gaps and multiple possibilities involved in the process. But if you think of translation as a quest for scientific fact, then perhaps that is less of a problem.

June 4, 2008

A Trip of Two Game-Show Hosts

Back to history (mostly), and back to blogging a little more regularly as I try to stay in the writing habit. Unfortunately, most of my bloggable thoughts are still back on the GeoBee trip.

Game-show hosts turned out to be one of the surprise sub-themes of the trip. We knew about Alex Trebek of *Jeopardy!* hosting the finals of the National Geographic Bee, but we were not expecting Isaac to get that far, nor that the finals would actually *be* a sort of game show, with a giant two-tiered set, desks with lights on the front, and the whole nine yards. From the looks of the set, I was worried that there might be buzzers and wrong answer sound effects, too, but luckily National Geographic did not take things quite that far. Alex Trebek seemed exactly like what you see on *Jeopardy!*, and very good with the kids. I haven’t watched his show since sometime in the 90s, but as TV personalities go Alex seems like a credit to the culture. Canadian culture, perhaps, but a credit, a figure who honors knowledge and intelligence and a

modest pride in one's accomplishments rather than exhibitionism, ruthlessness, and stupidity like 90% of the rest of TV.

The other game-show host came as more of a surprise. Karen and the boys had never been out to Presidential Shrine #1, a.k.a. Mount Vernon, so we spent the afternoon there on the way out to Karen's uncle's house out in suburbs. I had not been to Washington's pad in quite a while, and the place was much changed. The house was the same, but there is now a glitzy complex of ancillary museums (The Ford Orientation Center and Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center) that seem to be the result of a massive infusion of right-wing money, or at least money from rich people and corporations with quite conservative notions about patriotism and history.

In the new orientation center, visitors are ushered into a giant movie theater for a double-feature. First up, a cheery overview of the grounds featuring . . . *Wheel of Fortune* host Pat Sajak, in colonial costume! I must admit I did not see this coming. It is hard to imagine a less 18th-century or Washingtonian figure than Pat Sajak, especially when he takes off the tri-corner hat to reveal his trademark, blow-dried 1970s 'do. Even some of the other tourists chuckled a bit at the incongruousness of starting off their visit to a national shrine with a few words from the the guy on *Wheel of Fortune*. Pat's major qualification for the job would seem to be status as a token Hollywood conservative, as noted on this roster of "Patriotic Actors" from a conservative web site. Apparently Pat has contributed more than his hairdo and cheerful demeanor to the right-wing cause; on another conservative site, he enlightens us at some length on "The Disconnect Between Hollywood and America."

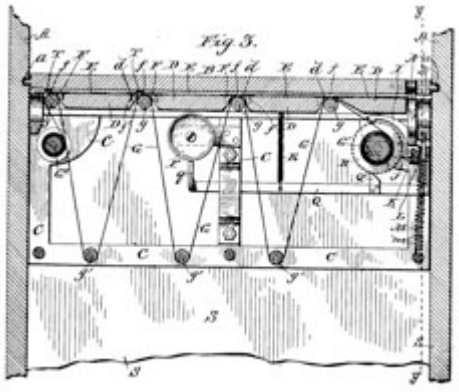
Pat's participation in conservative Hollywood-bashing is interesting considering that his Mount Vernon intro is followed by a very Hollywood-esque "action-adventure movie" on Washington called *We Fight To Be Free*. Written by token conservative screenwriter Lionel Chetwynd (author of the celebratory George W. Bush docudrama *DC 9/11: Time of Crisis*), the film turns Washington's life into a collection of near-cover versions of scenes from recent popular historical dramas. I suspect many non-historian visitors must get a little confused by the way preparations for the Battle of Trenton (complete with Washington giving a Bush-ian patriotic speech) are intercut with scenes from Braddock's Defeat that seem to exist so that a *Last of the Mohicans*-style battle scene could be included, complete with scalpings and dramatic rescues. It was George Washington, King of the Wild Frontier.

This article originally appeared in issue 8.4 (July, 2008).

Jeffrey L. Pasley is associate professor of history at the University of Missouri and the author of *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the*

Early American Republic (2001), along with numerous articles and book chapters, most recently the entry on Philip Freneau in Greil Marcus's forthcoming New Literary History of America. He is currently completing a book on the presidential election of 1796 for the University Press of Kansas and also writes the blog Publick Occurrences 2.0 for some Website called *Common-place*.

Voting Machines and the Voters They Represent



Presented as part of the special Politics Issue

The layout of a voting machine harbors implications about meaning, about what is and what is important, and therefore harbors politics in its broadest sense.

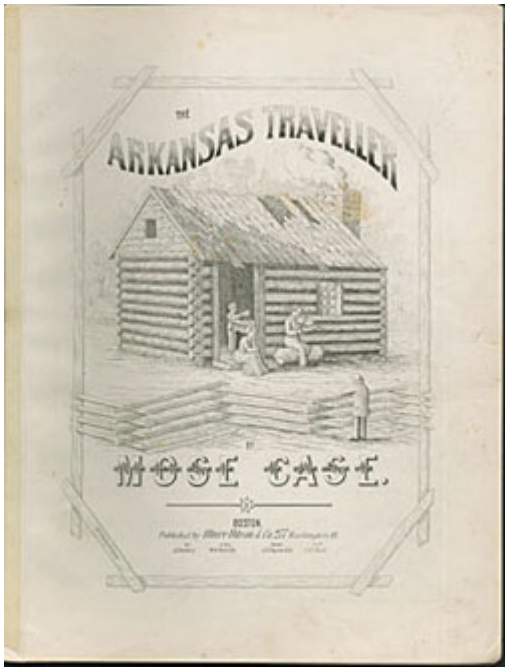
Facts and Fictions in Revolutionary Boston



Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

The book’s a genre send-up: a mystery, with traces of the gothic; a love story, with an overwrought romantic sensibility; a picaresque, somewhat overblown.

The Newberry Consort



1. “The Arkansas Traveller,” title page of sheet music by Mose Case (Boston, Massachusetts). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections at the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

2. “Hard Times Come Again No More,” title page of sheet music by Stephen Collins Foster (New York). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Newberry Consort presents historically informed programs of early music, often drawn from the collections at the Newberry Library, through an annual concert series in Chicago, national and international touring, residencies at colleges and universities, and recordings. The Newberry Consort was founded in 1986 to present public concerts of music from the collections at the Newberry Library and has offered an annual concert series continuously since 1988.

As part of our ongoing commitment to excellence in programming, we expand the usual definition of “early music” (Western European medieval, Renaissance and Baroque) to include historically informed performances of other genres, such as Polish Renaissance music and Mexican colonial Baroque music. When we began work on this program, we were astonished at the Newberry’s holdings of late nineteenth-century books and music. Then we remembered that this wealth of material came from the time when Walter Loomis Newberry and his industrialist friends were first assembling the collection. It made sense that their personal libraries would include many items from their recent history. In 1968, the Newberry Library added substantially to its holdings of Americana by acquiring the Driscoll Collection of American Sheet Music, amassed by James Francis Driscoll (1875-1959). One of the largest and most representative collections of its kind, the Driscoll Collection includes 80,000 pieces of sheet music and

related materials. Driscoll was by profession a civil engineer, but music was always his passion—for many years he was the organist and choir director at Boston's Sacred Heart Cathedral—and having a great interest in American history and music, he began collecting. As early as the 1890s, he was well on his way to amassing one of the largest collections of American sheet music.



3. "Money Musk," sheet music published and sold by Geo. Willig (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections at the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

So much of our time as an early music ensemble is spent exploring European cultures that it was a welcome diversion to explore the early music of our own county. Music from late nineteenth-century America reflects the panoply of styles of the country's vast melting pot of cultures and classes (much as it remains today). But the music also reflects the huge, untamed wilderness at the doorstep of the urban centers that fueled the imagination of performers and composers. Stories of life and death experiences rubbed shoulders with the centuries-old traditions of European cultures. As a result, our program presents an array of musical entertainments, from the fireside recreations of pioneers and sod farmers to the concert hall performances and parlor soirees of high society. We spent the same care finding old instruments or reconstructions of old instruments to play this music as we do to play Renaissance or medieval music. Nineteenth-century pianos and violins are easy to find, but a gut-strung fretless banjo from the 1860s was another challenge. We are lucky to have in our city one of the world's experts in historical banjo, Michael Miles.

While our audience was surprised when we first presented this program on our series, they loved it, and audiences who have heard early American music only through the lens of folk traditions are surprised at the elegance and complexity in the music of Foster, Gottschalk, and others when played in a historically informed manner.

Visit The Newberry Consort's website.

David on Bows:

David on Lincoln's America:

Michael Miles Lincoln Banjo:

This article originally appeared in issue 13.2 (Winter, 2013).

In Search of American Music: Introduction to Common-place 13:2



What makes American music *American?* Is there a distinctive American music? What is the relationship between American music and music that is performed in America, that is, musical practices transplanted from other parts of the globe? These questions have commanded the attention of American music historians ranging from George Hood in the nineteenth and John Tasker Howard in the earlier part of the twentieth century, to Charles Hamm and Richard Crawford today. The essays collected in this issue on American music before 1900 provide a range of approaches and answers to persistent questions about the Americanness of American music.

Two scholars (Jeanne Eller McDougall and Nara Newcomer) explore the performance of European musical styles in their original form in North America. Both concern Europeans who travelled and settled in the coastal south during the colonial and early national periods. Other contributors (Myron Gray and Glenda Goodman) are more concerned with hybridity in American music culture. Their essays focus on how musical practices rooted in other places and eras change as a result of the unique musical and political climate of the United States. As essays by Christine DeLucia and me suggest, music could and did reflect political transformations, serving as a form of memory that shaped how composers, musicians, and listeners understood their past.

Finally, two other contributors (April Masten and Carol Medlicott) detail more idiosyncratic forms of American hybridity: Their essays explore jigs based on Irish and African American performance traditions and Shaker music, rooted in their distinctive concepts of family, society, and gender, as well as the special role they created for sacred music.

Rather than trying to define American music according to a narrow understanding and definition, the contributors to this special issue of *Common-place* explore the multivalent world of British North America and the United States for its first three centuries of existence. They reveal uniquely American trends in music performance, composition, and the climate for musicking, especially in the period predating recorded sound as well as the replication of European practice in the Western Hemisphere and its resonance and use in its new environment. Together, their essays explore the *many* ways in which music existed in the United States. The result reveals how disparate and quirky American music was in that period. For me, this issue musically captures the sentiment of *E pluribus unum* so central to our national character.

This article originally appeared in issue 13.2 (Winter, 2013).

Nikos Pappas, an assistant professor of musicology at the University of Alabama, is actively engaged as a scholar and performer of American music from the colonial, early nationalist, and antebellum periods. A recognized Kentucky master traditional musician, he is currently preparing a database of Southern and Western sacred music from 1750 to 1870. His research has received support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies, the American Musicological Society, the Bibliographic Society of America, Music Library Association, and the American Antiquarian Society.

The Civil War at 150: Memory and Meaning – Special Issue of Commonplace



The making of Civil War memory did not begin only after the war ended. Americans began shaping their memories of the war in camps, on battlefields, and in homes across the nation as early as the spring of 1861. Officers wrote battle reports and soldiers jotted down diary entries, describing their experiences and shaping the war's many histories. They picked up cotton bolls and shards of trees, bullets and buttons, and sent these souvenirs home as records of what they lived through during the war. After 1865, veterans and their families pondered these relics and thought about their wartime experiences, telling stories and sharing memories of those who had fallen in battle.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the war generation began to publish memoirs, letter collections, and other accounts while both Union and Confederate veterans' groups erected monuments on town greens and in cemeteries across the nation, creating the war's public histories. These texts and objects offered competing versions of the war's events and ideologies: the North's won cause, with its

assertion of the perpetuity of the Union and the moral victory of emancipation; and the South's lost cause, with its twin themes of defeated valor and noble sacrifice in defense of states' rights. In the first decades of the twentieth century, white northerners and southerners began to reconcile their war memories and craft a shared narrative of white, martial manhood that ignored the contributions of black soldiers and denied the centrality of slavery and emancipation to the conflict. This new narrative of reconciliation and reunion was not uncontested, but it was strong, and it endured.

We find ourselves at a critical moment; at the sesquicentennial's midpoint, we can assess how Americans have remembered the war, and how we might commemorate it in the future.

Fifty years ago Americans commemorated and celebrated the centennial of the American Civil War. On the surface, the centennial reflected a broad consensus among white Americans that had changed little since the turn of the twentieth century. The war was remembered through battle reenactments and in museum exhibits as a gallant struggle between soldiers who fought for their respective – and equally legitimate–causes. The war's consequences were minimized and often ignored entirely. Below the surface, however, cracks appeared and widened. The civil rights movement, gaining ground in the late 1950s and early 1960s, transformed the nation politically and socially. African Americans challenged the nation's collective Civil War memory by drawing its attention to the war's legacy of emancipation and Reconstruction.

As Americans have marked the Civil War's sesquicentennial over the past few years, the cultural impact of the civil rights movement on the dominant narrative has been clear. The anniversary's events have emphasized the story of slavery, emancipation, the service of black Union soldiers to the war effort, and to the cause of freedom. Although this is the most salient shift in how Americans are currently remembering and commemorating the war, it is far from the only one.

A range of historical topics that take us beyond the traditional narrative of battles and leaders can now be found in public events, museum exhibits, and classrooms from Georgia to Massachusetts to California. The scholarly output on the Civil War has burgeoned, while Civil War enthusiasts of all stripes are making use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to share perspectives that do not easily fit into the standard narrative of Civil War memory.

We find ourselves at a critical moment; at the sesquicentennial's midpoint, we can assess how Americans have remembered the war, and how we might commemorate it in the future. To this end we have assembled essays for this special issue of *Common-place* that examine war memory produced from the 1860s to the present, in unexpected places and with surprising results. While each essay focuses on a specific "site" of memory–battlefield parks, for example, or the published memoirs of abolitionists–what brings them together is a shared interest in

challenging ingrained assumptions and established dichotomies. Like recent sesquicentennial events, they emphasize the important roles that race, slavery, and emancipation played in the war and its memory, but they also reveal that this narrative has been and continues to be contested. The essays also suggest that the war and its memory-making did not only occur only in the "North" and "South," but also in Kentucky and Missouri, in Wisconsin and Colorado. And it not only occurred in the pages of published letters, diaries, and memoirs, but also at veterans' events and memorial dedications. The future of Civil War memory is currently being shaped in classrooms and movie theaters, in government agencies and cultural institutions, and by individuals across the nation.

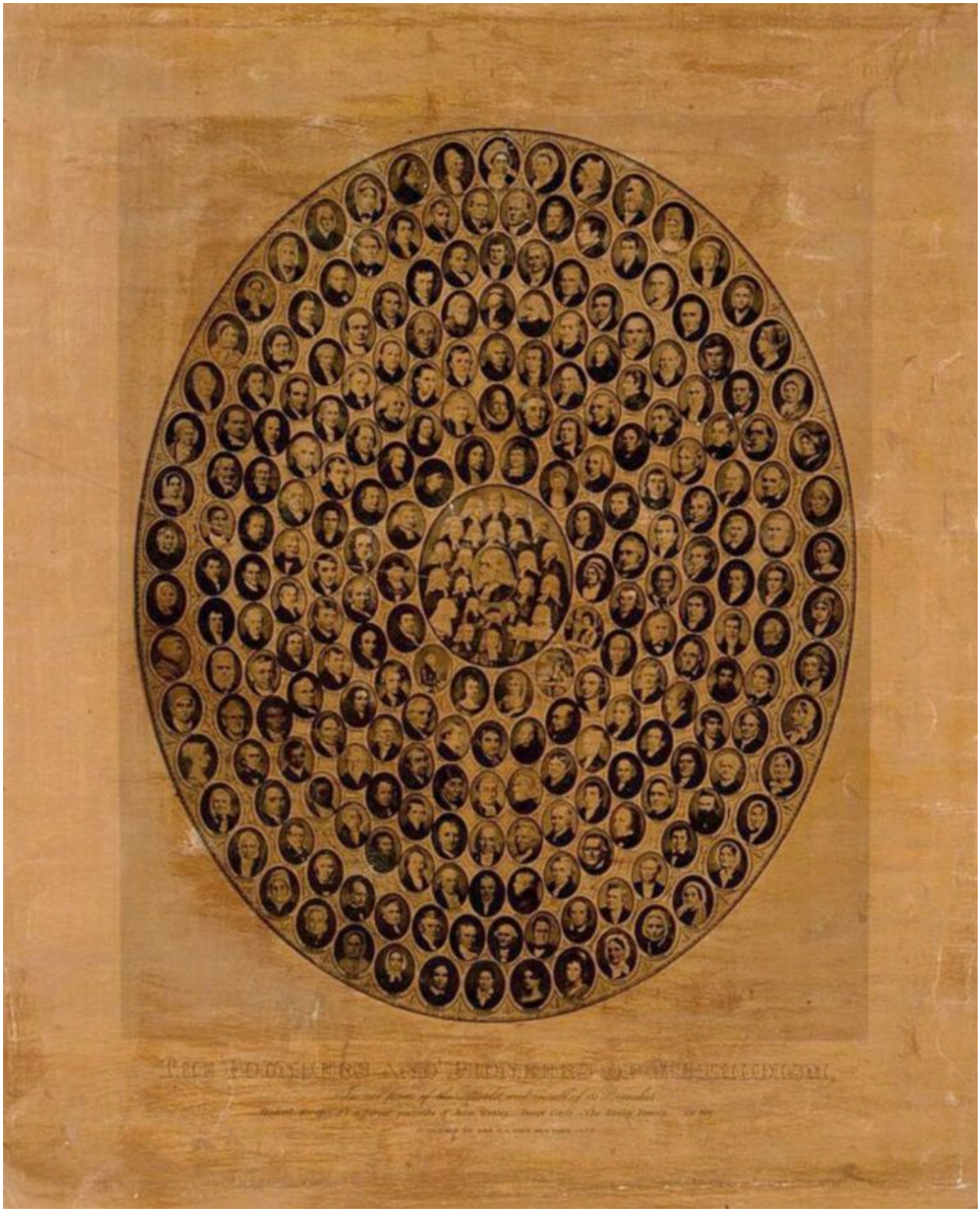
With this special issue of *Common-place*, we hope to illuminate the myriad ways that Americans have wrestled with our Civil War past and why we continue to return to it to bring meaning to our own lives.

This article originally appeared in issue 14.2 (Winter, 2014).

Kevin M. Levin teaches history at Gann Academy in Waltham, Mass. He is the author of *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* (2012) and blogs at Civil War Memory.

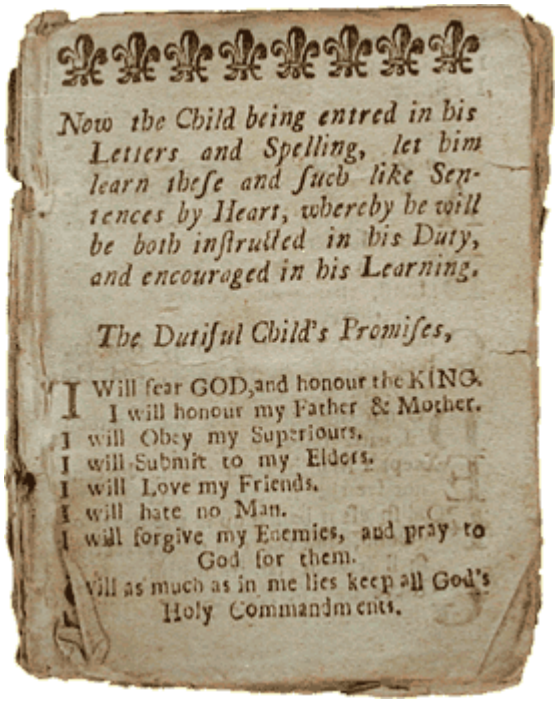
Megan Kate Nelson is visiting assistant professor at Brown University. She is a cultural and environmental historian of warfare and the author of *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (2012).

Religion, Revolution, and the Early Republic Revisited



Both New Englanders and English dissenters talked the talk of Protestant internationalism and unity, but when the conflict between Britain and the American colonies escalated, they did not walk the walk.

Literacy Then and Now



Now the Child being entred in his Letters and Spelling, let him learn these and such like Sentences by Heart, whereby he will be both instructed in his Duty, and encouraged in his Learning.

The Dutiful Child's Promises,

I Will fear GOD, and honour the KING.
I will honour my Father & Mother.
I will Obey my Superiours.
I will Submit to my Elders.
I will Love my Friends.
I will hate no Man.
I will forgive my Enemies, and pray to God for them.
I will as much as in me lies keep all God's Holy Commandments.

"The New England Primer emerged from, in David E. Stannard's phrase, 'a world in which the presence of early death was everywhere.'"

Crossing Frontiers: Early American and Native American histories



Taking Native culture seriously requires that we abandon the attempt to put Native wine into European bottles.

Puritan Spectacle



Three poems

In *God's Altar: The Word and Flesh in Puritan Poetry* (Berkeley, 1978), the literary critic Richard Daly writes that, for the earliest New England colonists, "symbolic correspondences occur . . . at the level of perception." I am interested in the way language, perception, and existence are central to the difficult lives of these American Puritans. My poems explore this phenomenon as the source of distinctly American expression.

They work specifically with the requirement for publicly delivered conversion narratives, sometimes called professions of saving grace, that were a prerequisite for full church membership in the seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony. [Examples of these narratives can be seen in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge* (Amherst, 1994), edited by the historian Michael McGiffert.]

My poem "The 88 Hearts of Wm. Adams" is written around an early conversion narrative I transcribed from the Massachusetts Historical Society archives. The title of the poem is derived from the overwhelming number of times Adams mentions a motion of his heart in the course of his twelve-page narrative.

"Visible" takes its title from Edmund S. Morgan's classic study *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, 1965) and the saints' central dilemma of making oneself an outward, visible sign of an inner, unknowable, and unconditional election to grace. The tortuous tautology of "I must show what

cannot be shown” yields much difficult beauty in Puritan expression and, I believe, continues to resonate in American poetry. “Visible” suggests that this beauty exists only where those inner truths and outer impossibilities collide: on the skin, in the eyes, in breath.

Brought into the Puritan fold by the missionary work of John Eliot and joined to their own congregations by full professions of saving grace, the “Praying Indians” of the Massachusetts Bay Colony faced the deep contradictions of visibility during King Philip’s War. They found themselves exiled to Deer Isle in Boston Harbor for the duration of the war where many starved to death. “A Bold Plea for the Easement of Suffering of these Professed and Reading Red Saints” is a voicing of the pleas, not only by the minister Eliot on behalf of fellow Christians, but also by a literary man for the protection of his best linguists and translators—the Christianized Indians.

The poems presented here explore an array of formal structures and expressive modes; I choose this strategy in allegiance with those colonists—be they antinomians, shy public performers, or native Algonquian speakers—who struggled against the predetermined and mediated structure of a required profession to communicate their experience of God’s saving grace. These poems pay tribute to those who faced the impossible task the Puritans required of themselves above and beyond mere physical survival: describing in words what they insisted was beyond language, what they insisted was the nigh-perceivable evidence of their relationship to God.

The 88 Hearts of Wm. Adams

d. 1659, Ipswich

Hollowed by shadow or shone forth
By sometimes more
Than ordinary stirrings
Against the awful ways

Occasion offers, I will tell you
The incision in my chest,
Let the mouth confess up
What the heart congests:

Pull aside my shirt, my
Addiction is stitched, stripped
Of circumstance, stripped of habit,
Confined to four chambers & their flagellation.

Pour black powder below

The smooth balls of shot
Set in each chamber.
Make fire by focusing, take flight

In the off-beat between
Each flutter—such like thoughts
Do much take me up—
It’s said this almost endless

Muscle is our weapon, in & out
It goes without meaning or sense
Being lost—limited
Only by half-life in a body

That diverts blood away
From less important humors
To keep an extra beat
From tripping the flintlock.

Armed, quitting earth
For the church turret I saw a bird
Change energy at higher elevations &
Clear out the thunderclouds

Like a topsail to loose itself
In the sky—my dull lusts
Let go as a fistful of dead petals
Flew round my feet & the war

Of good discord went off
In my chest. I fell with fatigue
Of breathing in thankfulness
For this new frame.

Limping home,
The storm seemed to go over.
I slacked my pace
& was overwhelmed in rain.

Will I falter like faith or
Will I falter like fear?
Things fall
From the sky we see

With our eyes. This spring
A swan did move easy
In the river’s shifting ice-splinters
As my flint failed, its neck motionless

As if stitched
To the white heart of a bird
Not beating her wings
& not falling.

Visible

waterproof with metaphor more than encasing
heaven
eyes make
every move, each window, wet lightning hits
the lights out, all us at last see each other only
like
souls again
walking this hard, electrified land in sight
not deeper than skin thin shallows
poured upon like milk muddied upward
toward out in the air between us,
groaning bones to cleave to
as tongues
to significance,
to hot, to (I am my map of) when the church
burned down some got charred,
repainted the hall and parlor for appearance,
for appearance degenerates into personality,
personality a vain plaything—

[*they armor as the congregation fronting the wreckage framed in fading light, a quarter faithful, porcelain features pre-disposed to being ill-treated, little ink edges under the skin rose pink: reverse if seen from the inside or thin pond-surface*]

it’s encased intention attached
to the small safety of saying attacked
to the danger of appearing over and over
every day
you might lovingly release the touch you’ve taken
too extremely to such
outsides disappear
into ideas, a whole body fed by eyes only
feel beauty then
to be misleading

A Bold Plea for the Easement of Suffering of these Confessed and Reading Red Saints

Rev. John Eliot
King Philip's War
Massachusetts, 1675

The sermon of the day is: physicians, books, the lost tribe of knowledge is forecast to unmanifest its fatal arrows: operate in this drastic forest of articulate sounds, please send bread and fish: starving guttural sounds aspirate at back the throat (where we shy from letting our own thoughts go even so deep: the way we think Devil where Oak and Fir cloak their universal sense and church, their not having words and we have nothing to carry them outside our own tongues: *For he that speaketh in an unkown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God*). Sirs, four hundred saved red souls starve on Deer Isle, selecting stones, as other sermons run to prophecies and fort defense: daily we drown in discovering loose heads strewn on the highway, as in the Bible: we must translate this universal nourishment to all tongues: every instrument set to work does press for pay, and in this desert the sermon of the day prays the biggest boats closer, waves the marked arm rising off Death Isle, says bring budgets and bring butter and that best Word: the least generous omniscience of our own utter limit unto death (or coming into sight) of those yet tasting what charity and what, already, we are capable of having done. *What? came the word of God* out *from you? or did it come* to you *only?* The press needs also twelve pounds each of fresh *k*'s and *l* 's to conform this ancient Hebraic language to the rules of our alphabet.

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Robert Strong is a poet and independent scholar living north of the Adirondack Park. His manuscript *Puritan Spectacle*, from which this work is drawn, was selected as a finalist for the Beatrice Hawley Award from Alice James Books and the Wick Prize from Kent State University Press. He completed this collection of poems with the generous help of a Mellon short-term research fellowship at the Massachusetts Historical Society. He is currently preparing a scholarly introduction and contextualization of William Adams's conversion narrative.