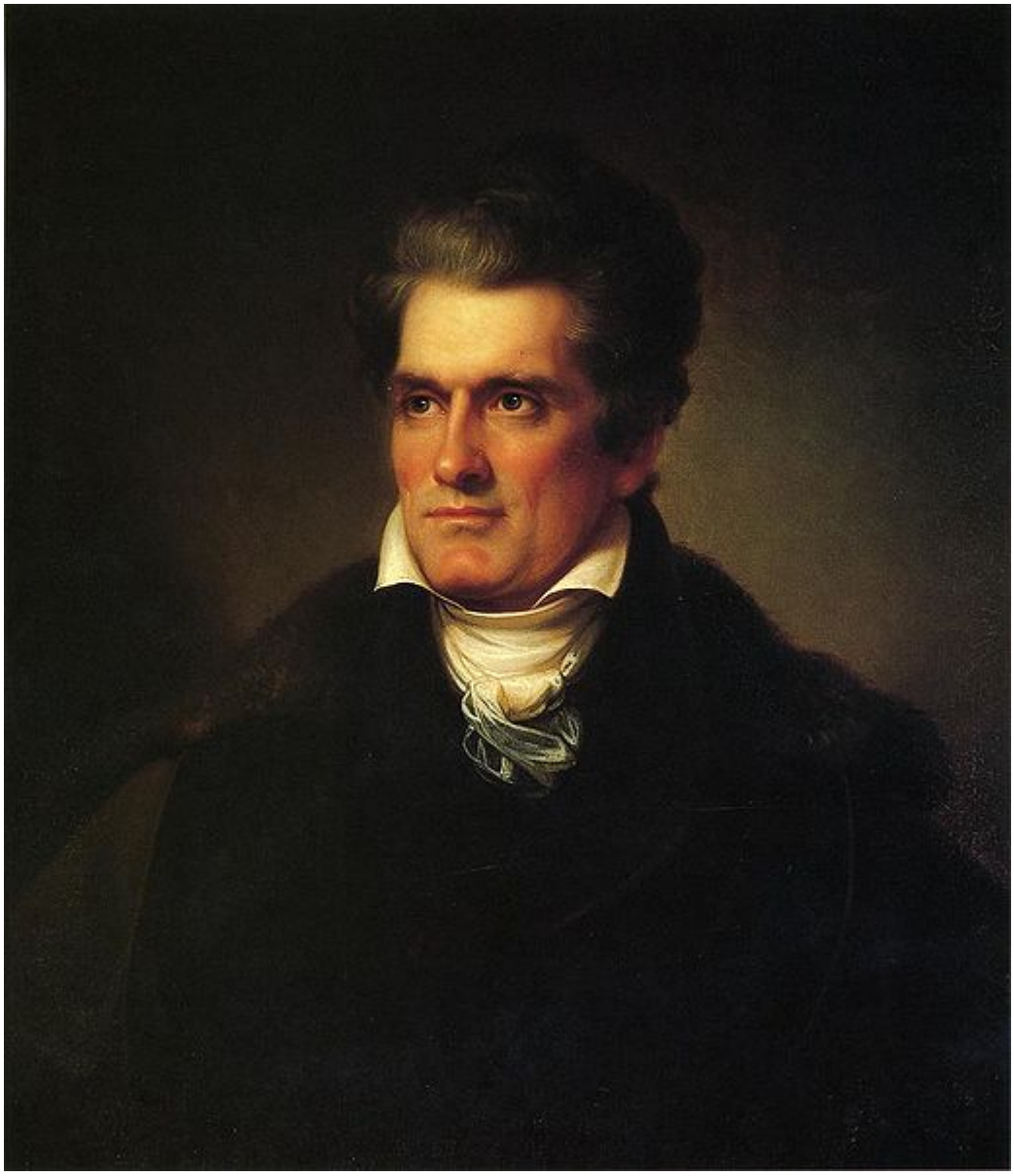
Publick Occurrences 2.0 September 2008



Historians, find the pattern

Assuming there is one, besides electoral fear. Any thoughts? Any other maps this resembles?

September 28, 2008

St. Louis not good enough for Palin “debate camp”

Be insulted, my fellow Missourians and swing-state voters, be very insulted.

From CNN.com:

Gov. Sarah Palin will now spend two and a half days near Sedona, Arizona, to prepare for Thursday’s debate, instead of prepping in St Louis, as originally planned.

Sarah Palin will be at John McCain’s rustic creek side home outside Sedona [a.k.a. his 5-building “Sedona compound”] for what a top aide calls “debate camp.”

Gee, I went to debate camp in Emporia, Kansas and I survived. That’s where I learned that you could eat anything an institutional kitchen produced if you just added enough steak sauce. Call me a liberal elitist, but that’s how I saw it.

Actually, I suspect this has more to do with keeping Sarah away from reporters and voters, and near at hand for Daddy Mac, where she won’t be able to say anything he has to retract.

September 23, 2008

The Bailout of Abominations?

The nasty, mendacious creativity of the present, cornered GOP really does seem to know no bounds. The near economic collapse that occurred on their watch, fostered by their ideology and their mismanagement, Republicans have decided to blame on poor non-whites. “Loaning to minorities and risky folks is a disaster” that Congress should have warned the lenders about, they were saying on Fox News, as though someone forced the financial industry to go out and make all those sub-prime loans and sell them to each other. (”Allow under pressure of furious lobbying” would be the more appropriate verb phrase for Congress’s attitude toward virtually unrestricted lending lately.) A century or so ago GOP jurists called those kind of bad deals “freedom of contract,” and unlike the 19th-century workers whose complaints were usually rejected, our modern financiers actually did have a choice when they made these bad bargains. For instance, they had the choice of actually requiring proof of borrowers’ source of income, a standard that I gather had been largely abandoned by many lenders.

This latest conservative meme is a breathtakingly yet typical effort to project and racialize systemic, top-down economic failures – it's only *those people* who go bankrupt, lose their homes, etc.

Of course, lots of ordinary middle-class Republicans and business page columnists, raised on the small government gospel, are suffering tremendous cognitive dissonance at sight of their party engineering what must be dollar-wise the largest public invasion of the private sector in American history. GOP leaders have naturally seen in their followers' confusion a chance to spin more fantasies and try to turn the responsible efforts of others to clean up the mess they have made into one more desperate political ploy. Here's Ed Kilgore, writing in *The Democratic Strategist*:

Every Democrat should read Patrick Ruffini's post from yesterday at NextRight. He is, I strongly suspect, perfectly reflecting the game that Republicans, including Team McCain, want to play with the Paulson Plan:

Republican incumbents in close races have the easiest vote of their lives coming up this week: No on the Bush-Pelosi Wall Street bailout.

God Himself couldn't have given rank-and-file Republicans a better opportunity to create political space between themselves and the Administration. That's why I want to see 40 Republican No votes in the Senate, and 150 in the House. If a bailout is to pass, let it be with Democratic votes. Let this be the political establishment (Bush Republicans in the White House Democrats in Congress) saddling the taxpayers with hundreds of billions in debt (more than the Iraq War, conjured up in a single weekend, and enabled by Pelosi, btw), while principled Republicans say "No" and go to the country with a stinging indictment of the majority in Congress….

In an ideal world, McCain opposes this because of all the Democratic add-ons and shows up to vote Nay while Obama punts.

History has shown us that "inevitable" "emergency" legislation like the Patriot Act or Sarbanes-Oxley is never more popular than on the day it is passed – and this isn't all that popular to begin with. All the upside comes with voting against it.

Ruffini is exactly right about the politics of this issue, especially for Republicans. Think of this as one of those periodic votes on raising the public debt limit. It has to pass, of course, but there's zero percentage in supporting it for any one individual. The speculative costs of the legislation actually failing are completely intangible and ultimately irrelevant, while the costs it will impose are tangible and controversial from almost every point of view. For McCain and other Republicans, voting "no" on Paulson without accepting the consequences of that vote is the political equivalent of a bottomless crack pipe: it will please the conservative "base," distance them from both Bush and "Washington," and let them indulge in both anti-government and anti-corporate demagoguery, even as Democrats bail out their Wall Street

friends and big investors generally.

Josh Marshall has links to more material in this vein here.

So, to go historical for a second here, current Republicans apparently want to turn the Paulson bailout plan into the new "Tariff of Abominations," a policy of theirs that they hope will reflect even worse on their opponents. The fabled Tariff of 1828 was a Democratic-originated bill that their hated enemy President John Quincy Adams signed into law. Adams was then furiously denounced for signing it in the ensuing campaign, which he lost, especially by tariff-hating southerners who had no choice (by their proslavery lights) but to keep supporting Democratic candidate Andrew Jackson whatever his northern allies had done. The traditional stories that this was all a plot by Martin Van Buren to allow Jackson to run as both pro- and anti-protection, and that the bill was intended to fail, are now thought to be somewhat mythical. (Wikipedia seems pretty good on the topic, or you can read Frederick Jackson Turner about it on Google books.) If the Tariff of 1828 was a Van Buren plot, it was a little too clever. Jackson would probably have won anyway, John C. Calhoun-led South Carolina would soon try to destroy or hamstring the Union over the issue, and the enmity of many southern Democrats for Van Buren would burn for decades, eventually getting him thrown out of the presidency.

I am guessing any serious effort to boomerang the Bush administration's bailout against the Democrats or to help John McCain will also turn out to be a little too clever. It might help soothe the aching heads of some in the GOP base, but the Bush brand of Republicans-as-irresponsible-rich-people is a little too well-established by now. That's what a lot of Republican voters I know seem to *like* about them.

September 22, 2008

A Pollster's Dilemma

I have not seen that it got a lot of play nationally – though admittedly I did not watch much TV over the weekend – but a couple of the local papers were full of mischievous AP material seemingly aimed at turning the clock back to the ugly part of this year's Democratic primaries, if not much, much further. In particular, AP's Ron Fournier takes the opportunity of this week of national economic crisis to publicize a poll done with Stanford University that gave whites a chance to apply various racially charged adjectives to describe blacks:

WASHINGTON (AP) – Deep-seated racial misgivings could cost Barack Obama the

White House if the election is close, according to an AP-Yahoo News poll that found one-third of white Democrats harbor negative views toward blacks – many calling them "lazy," "violent" or responsible for their own troubles.

The poll, conducted with Stanford University, suggests that the percentage of voters who may turn away from Obama because of his race could easily be larger than the final difference between the candidates in 2004 – about 2.5 percentage points.

Historians will be shocked – shocked – that racism has not evaporated overnight because an African-American won a major party presidential nomination. To round out the story, Fournier and company find the grumpiest old guys in some working-class Ohio diner to make a few racist remarks, all along making various defeatist insinuations about the Obama campaign.

The underlying message seems to be that Republicans should rest easier, even now that McCain has started to fall behind in the polls again. Thanks to racism, McCain is ahead of Obama even if he is way behind. So, congratulations, GOP, prejudice is still your friend.

But guess what? AP implies that the real problem is actually *Democratic* racism. "Lots of Republicans harbor prejudices, too, but the survey found they weren't voting against Obama because of his race. Most Republicans wouldn't vote for any Democrat for president – white, black or brown." That's right, GOP voters in white-flight suburbs never ever vote for black candidates or a candidate friendly to black people, but only because they care about the *issues*. Voting for the GOP in the first place has nothing at all to do with race. Riiiight. Of course, the m.o. in many of these 'burbs, especially the wealthier ones, is not being a racist by never personally encountering poor people of other races in a non-employee context.

Political scientist Nate Silver explains why the AP's leap from the racial attitudes found in the poll to measurable race-based voting effects is not borne out by the data. I don't have Silver's statistical expertise or mathematical voting models, but it is easy to enough tell that national Democratic candidates of any race almost never run as well the local Democrats in white working-class areas. And haven't since the late 1960s. These were the fabled "Reagan Democrats" of yore, at least the northern division of them. I am guessing that Obama will not do much worse than John Kerry or Al Gore in those places, but in some of them he will do a lot better.

Presumably the tactic behind Fournier's story is to continue the "Democratic screw-up" meme by implying that if the liberals had only let Hillary Clinton have the nomination, instead of Obama, then white working-class voters would now be enthusiastically supporting the ticket. Uh, right. Tell me the guy who would say this to a reporter in a public place would be singing Hillary's praises instead: "'We still don't like black people,' said John Clouse, 57,

reflecting the sentiments of his pals gathered at a coffee shop in Somerset, Ohio." They sure seem like probable feminists to me. (Joke! I suspect they were against wimmin's-libbers before the idea of black presidential candidate ever crossed their mental transoms.)

What I really don't understand is why responsible scholars of public opinion would be involved in releasing such a poll just before an election, other than money and attention. Especially if you sincerely believe racism remains a problem in this country, as I suppose the scholars in question must, it does not seem helpful to encourage whites in the idea that their prejudices are secretly shared by their neighbors. Or does this poll emanate one of Stanford's conservative think-tank branches? That would explain a lot.

September 19, 2008

Barack Obama and Jackie Robinson: An Historical Analogy that Works for Me

It was partly the St. Louis angle, I admit, but I was quite moved by Boyd Reed's reader blog post at *TPM*, "How Racism Works for Me." The post chiefly concerns Reed's own experiences as an African American who does not fit into white stereotypes about African Americans, and how those experiences inform his work as an active supporter of Barack Obama. One passage that particularly struck me was Reed's comparison of the challenge Obama faces to that met by the first black man in *baseball*'s big leagues, Jackie Robinson. My sons were making this comparison at dinner the other night, and Reed made me feel that they were even more perceptive than I thought they were. Frankly, it is analogy that a lot of adult white liberals I know or read should consider very seriously before they moan again about Obama's seeming centrism or apparent failure to rip the Republicans with sufficient ferocity on a given day.

Here's Boyd Reed:

I've made the comparison between Obama's candidacy and Jackie Robinson's major league debut before. As you read the various histories that have been written about Robinson, you come to understand that he had a great deal of inner anger about the way he was treated at the start of his career with the Dodgers.

Of course, he had every right to be angry. But the whole reason Branch Rickey picked Robinson to break the color barrier in baseball wasn't just because of Robinson's playing ability, which was unquestioned. Rickey picked Robinson because he believed Robinson would be able to endure being spat on by fans, openly cursed by other players and defamed by the press, and keep playing

without complaint. Robinson excelled, even with all that negativity towering over him.

It's now been 61 years since a Black man hit the big leagues, and Blacks have come a long way since then. We've seen Black billionaires, Fortune 500 CEOs, entertainers, moguls, movie stars, designers, entrepreneurs, professors, activists, race car drivers, jockeys, and politicians. But never have we seen a truly viable Presidential candidate of color before now.

So, when I go out canvassing, I keep all that in mind. When I talk to an undecided voter or a hostile voter on the phone, I remember that we're working against virtually everything in our nation's relatively short history to get this man elected.

I hold my anger at the injustice. I hold my despair at the seemingly irreversible backward thinking and illogic. I hold my horror at the idea that this man, so uniquely qualified for this time in our history, may not have a chance to do what so many of us so desperately want him to do – lead this country.

I carry hope – not just Obama's hope, but my hope, and the hopes of my family. The oldest girls actually talk about politics – with knowledge, no less! It's all I can do to keep from keeling over in shock whenever they talk about electoral votes or Sarah Palin's latest lie. My five-year-old son shakes me and says, "Daddy, look! It's Barack Obama!" whenever he sees Obama's face on TV. And my wife registered to vote this year for the first time – then promptly contacted a field office and planted an Obama sign on our lawn.

And, above all else, I do what so many of all colors have always done when confronted with injustice. **I dig in, and I work. I work against the tide. I work in places where conventional wisdom says Obama can't win.** I volunteer to call southern Missouri. I call South Carolina. I call central Pennsylvania. I canvass in West Virginia. I canvass in southern Ohio. I go to the places where "Obama" is one of the seven words you can't say on television.

Then, I silently say a prayer of thanks whenever I encounter racist reaction in my election work. For me, it only adds fuel to my urgency in getting Obama elected.

There is a lot more to Reed's post, and I suggest reading it from the beginning. I would also advise skipping the comments, because some of the ugly attitudes Obama is up against show up right there.

September 17, 2008

Sarah Palin, Natural Aristocrat?

In a rare non-worthless column today, David Brooks took issue with a typically insincere *Weekly Standard* piece that professed to find in former local sportscaster and present tanning enthusiast Sarah Palin the fulfillment of the Founders' fondest dreams. (It's funny how everything conservatives favor seems to bring smiles to the statues' faces.) In one of those faux-populist jags conservatroids like to go on only when discussing Democrats, Europeans, academics, or the media, writer Stephen F. Hayward ends up bringing both Harry Truman and Thomas Jefferson on board the Palin dogsled, busting out Jefferson's famous dialogue with John Adams on the "natural aristocracy" in the process:

The issue is not whether the establishment would let such a person as Palin cross the bar into the certified political class, but whether regular citizens of this republic have the skill and ability to control the levers of government without having first joined the certified political class. But this begs an even more troublesome question: If we implicitly think uncertified citizens are unfit for the highest offices, why do we trust those same citizens to select our highest officers through free elections?

In his reply to Adams, Jefferson expressed more confidence that political virtue and capacity for government were not the special province of a recognized aristocratic class, but that *aristoi* (natural aristocrats) could be found among citizens of all kinds: "It would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society." Jefferson, moreover, trusted ordinary citizens to recognize political virtue in their fellow citizens: "Leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the *aristoi* from the pseudo-*aristoi*, of the wheat from the chaff. In general they will elect the really good and wise."

Today's establishment doubts this. The establishment is affronted by the idea that an ordinary hockey mom—a mere citizen—might be just as capable of running the country as a long-time member of the Council on Foreign Relations. This closed-shop attitude is exactly what both Jefferson and Adams set themselves against; they wanted a republic where talent and public spirit would find easy access to the establishment.

OK, down with that "closed-shop attitude," though neither Jefferson nor Adams dreamed of opening the shop to non-white males, and they weren't too sure about shopkeepers, either. But even if we don't take Hayward's argument too literally, did Jefferson's willingness to allow the voters to separate the

wheat from the chaff mean that he discounted the importance of education and experience in candidates for public office? Well, not so much. Later in the same letter, Jefferson explained his elaborate plan for a steeply graduated public education system that would provide basic skills to all while selecting out only the very best students in each area to move on to the higher levels of the system and *possibly* qualify for leadership roles. Outlining his program for eliminating the "artificial" aristocracy of birth and wealth in Virginia during the Revolution, Jefferson regretted that one key piece of legislation never passed:

It was a Bill for the more general diffusion of learning. This proposed to divide every county into wards of 5. or 6. miles square, like your townships; to establish in each ward a free school for reading, writing and common arithmetic; to provide for the annual selection of the best subjects from these schools who might receive at the public expense a higher degree of education at a district school; and from these district schools to select a certain number of the most promising subjects to be compleated at an University, where all the useful sciences should be taught. Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and compleatly prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts.

In appointing officials to his own administration, Jefferson applied even more stringent educational standards, giving most of the jobs to men with college educations at a time when only a tiny handful of men even had the opportunity to go. Would Jefferson be celebrating over the idea of elevating nearly to the presidency a book-banning small-town mayor (and religious fanatic, by his lights) who cobbled together her education from five different miscellaneous institutions and acquired not an ounce of intellectual or cultural sophistication in the process?" Not hardly, as John Wayne used to say. For Jefferson, the value of a governance system could be measured by whether "worth and genius" tended to find their way to power under it: "May we not even say that that form of government is the best which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural *aristoi* into the offices of government?"

I will leave to the reader what the Sarah Palin pick says about the health of our current form of government.

September 10, 2008

The Deference Strategy

I linked to one of my recent deference posts on the blog for my "Age of Jefferson" course, and the comment below was submitted. I thought I would

answer it here, in a somewhat more comfortable environment for overt politics. At any rate, “cheese” had this to say:

I think in this situation she wants to have a fair interview. His choice of words probably could have been better but all in all everybody on both sides reads way too much into these small comments. I think he is just trying to talk about the media being respectful and courteous.

As far as her not wanting to talk about her political record, this is simply not true. She is a candidate with an executive record who is intelligent enough to know that everything she has done is going to be called into question. The simple fact is that people like Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow are not going to give her a fair interview. She won’t do an interview with word twisting NBC commentators. I can guarantee that she will do Meet the Press with a real reporter of the news. No matter how liberal Tom Brokaw is he will still give a fair interview to Palin. I think we should let her pack her bags in Alaska and get out on the campaign trail full force before we start saying she is afraid of the media.

The gloves have come off in this election and the interesting thing is that Senator Obama has to fight it out with the VP nominee of the GOP. The top of the Dem ticket is fighting it out with the VP of the Rep ticket and the press but not so much with McCain. Palin does not feel the need to fight it out with the press like Obama is doing with Hannity. She is going after the Democrats and not after whatever commentator wants to take the gloves off and battle it out with her. It is more child-like to have this Obama-Hannity type of banter with the top of a ticket going after a political commentator rather then talking about actual policy. I believe this comment of “respect and deference” is more directed at commentators with outside agendas rather than true reporters.

For the record Palin has talked to the media and very intelligently about energy I might ad. As you can see from the interview she knows her information and has no problem answering the questions of a true reporter. It is very recent she mentions Obama and Biden.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAYPxIJSDg0

I suspect “cheese” is right that Palin can handle herself quite well with the press. She is obviously an adept and feisty public speaker. (As far as energy issues go, that’s pretty much what Alaska’s political economy revolves around, so I should hope she is strong in that area.) Indeed, Palin’s obvious talent for public speaking, far outstripping that of the top name on the GOP ticket, makes the McCain campaign’s protective attitude a little mysterious.

The best explanation is that most of the recent McCain campaign’s “defenses” of Palin, including the demand for “deference” to her from the media and the howls of “sexism” over minor Obama comments that weren’t aimed at her personally –

are all rooted in conscious political strategy. However capable Palin may actually be, the McCain people chose her as a symbol, of small-town motherhood, in an effort to pump up the GOP's conservative Christian base and perhaps bring in some of the older female and Catholic voters who went for Hillary Clinton in the primaries. As a symbol, Palin's family decisions are her qualifications more than anything she has or has not done or could or could not do in government. (Almost any other criteria for the veep pick would have generated a different result, especially if they were really looking for a qualified female Republican.)

As a symbol aimed at groups of voters who often perceive themselves as slighted and/or persecuted by the culture at large (especially small-town and exurban Christian women), Palin is actually better for McCain if she too is perceived as beset by sneering elitists and haters. Hence the rush to "protect" her, even if she doesn't need it, from personal attacks that are largely not even being made, at least by the Democrats. NYU journalism professor Jay Rosen saw what was happening even before Palin made her now-famous convention speech last week:

John McCain's convention gambit [the Palin pick] is a culture war strategy. It depends for its execution on conflict with journalists, and with bloggers (the "angry left," Bush called them) along with confusion between and among the press, the blogosphere, and the Democratic party. . . . It dispenses with issues and seeks a trial of personalities. It bets big time on backlash.

Readers may remember the GOP self-pity party that went on all the day before Palin's speech last Wednesday, with the McCain people moaning about their former buddies in the D.C. media being "on a mission to destroy" the Alaska governor. They screamed about the "smears" against Palin's pregnant daughter, many of which the McCain campaign itself was the first to publicize. McCain campaign officials also went out of their way to tell the world about their threats to sue the *National Enquirer* for an upcoming story alleging that Sarah Palin had had an affair with one of her husband's business partners. Last Wednesday may also have been the day many conservative Republicans first discovered the formerly liberal concept of sexism, as their vice-presidential nominee's many quasi-scandals came out and her remarkably thin credentials were parsed. In retrospect it all looks like a set-up to bring the Christian Right's blood to a boil at seeing one of their own pitched into the proverbial den of lions.

This game of strategically stoking up white Middle America's sense of moral superiority and victimization by sinister elites has a long history, which I will blog about soon. In recent times, it has worked out a lot better for the Republicans politically than it has for small-town America in reality. Read Kansas City native Thomas Frank's *Wall Street Journal* essay, "The GOP Loves the Heartland to Death," for an eloquent explanation of what I mean.

September 9, 2008

More Deference

The *Anchorage Daily News* suggests some questions that ABC's Charlie Gibson will doubtless not be asking between licks of Sarah Palin's cute ankle boots later this week. Our friend "deference" makes a reappearance:

There's no polite way to say it: Sarah Palin has been hiding out from hard questions. [Who does she think she is, George Washington?]. . .

McCain's camp has handled their vice-presidential pick like some celebrity who will only deign to give an interview if conditions are favorable. McCain campaign manager Rick Davis told Fox News Sunday, Palin would take questions "when we think it's time and when she feels comfortable doing it." . . .

Here are some of the questions Palin should be answering, for Alaskans and the rest of the country: . . .

• McCain spokesman Rick Davis told Fox News the media didn't show you enough "deference." How much deference do you expect to get from Vladimir Putin or Hugo Chavez?

It seems like the McCain people may have been a bit too open in their contempt for the media, their own supporters, and elementary standards of honesty. Palin's flat-out lies about her record on the "bridge to nowhere" and earmarks are being widely reported. The bridge, particularly, has a bit too much mainstream notoriety for even the MSM to let that pass. It would be nice to think there are some limits.

September 7, 2008

Deference: Not just for historians anymore

I was just talking to one of my classes last week about the concept of political "deference." In early American history, "deference" refers to the much-disputed interpretation that before some (also-disputed) era of democratization, common people tended to follow the lead of the wealthier, better educated, and more socially prestigious men in their community, even if

they didn't have to. That is, even in communities where political rights were widely distributed and overt coercion and bribery relatively absent – as was the case in most of early America, at least compared to Europe – voters still elected the same sort of local bigwigs from the same set of leading families (especially large landowners), year after year, decade after decade, usually without much competition or complaint.

Imagine my surprise to learn that "deference" has come back into fashion, at least for Republican vice presidential candidates. Washington Monthly had a good round-up of the story and blog comments:

'DEFERENCE'…. So, when might we see Sarah Palin talk to the media about, well, anything? According to Rick Davis, McCain's campaign manager, Palin won't tolerate an interview "until the point in time when she'll be treated with respect and deference."

Who would have thought a just-folks "hockey mom" would need the kid gloves treatment? At the last hockey game I attended, they took the gloves *off* before going after each other.

Actually, my serious observation here is that all conservatives seem to want "deference," no matter what their era, gender, or particular ideology. Puritan town fathers, "big house" planters, and modern GOP "change agents" alike want citizens and reporters sitting kinder and gentler at their feet, to borrow a phrase from a song about the *1992* election.

September 5, 2008

From Old Tip to Old Mac: "Bragging War Heroes" Then and Now

Today there was an incendiary post by M.J. Rosenberg at TPM Cafe called "Bragging War Heroes." The post got quite tough with the McCain campaign's heavy reliance on their candidate's POW experience, in the acceptance speech and before. Rosenberg made some claims about past war heroes and their comparatively modest political use of their military backgrounds that are devastating, if true (to paraphrase my old graduate adviser). I would be interested to know what other historians think:

You would never know it from the media coverage, but John McCain is not one of America's greatest war heroes. He is a former POW who survived, heroically. He deserves to be honored for that heroism.

But one thing distinguishes McCain from other war heroes, the kind whose

heroism changes history rather than their life stories.

America's two greatest war heroes were Ulysses Grant and Dwight Eisenhower. Grant saved the union. And Ike saved civilization.

And neither one ever bragged about their experience. (Can you imagine Ike smacking down Adlai Stevenson by saying that while Adlai ran a nice medium-sized state, he was the Supreme Allied Commander who ran D-Day, defeated Hitler, and liberated Europe?).

Impossible. Like Grant, Eisenhower did not brag.

Actually, modesty about military accomplishments is typical of war heroes and not just here. In Israel, it is unheard of for great military leaders to brag about their service.

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak was the most decorated soldier in Israel's history (he was a commando who, among other amazing feats, dressed as a woman – with a handful of soldiers – invaded a terrorist stronghold in Beirut, killed the terrorists, and then fled to a waiting dinghy and headed home). Yitzhak Rabin led the IDF in its Six Day War victory. Ariel Sharon saved Israel from destruction in 1973 when he snuck up behind the Egyptian army and encircled them in the Sinai.

None of these guys talked about it. McCain does. Continuously. His lack of modesty – about something war heroes tend to be modest about – does not become him.

Now it might well be true that Grant and Eisenhower were this reticent about using their military careers, but if so their modesty stands apart from a long pre-existing tradition. Perhaps President-Generals Washington, Jackson, Harrison, and Taylor did not personally make speeches about their war experiences, as far as I am aware, but the people who campaigned for them had no such compunctions, to say nothing of their lower-ranking successors Frank Pierce and Teddy Roosevelt. In the middle of the 19th century, bragging about war heroism was practically the default strategy of American presidential politics. There were campaign biographies galore, but probably more important were my true love (historical evidence division), the campaign songs. It was "The Hunters of Kentucky," promoting Andrew Jackson's role in the Battle of New Orleans, that really launched the trend:

I s’pose you’ve read it in the prints, how Packenham attempted
To make old Hickory Jackson wince, but soon his schemes repented;
For we with rifles ready cocked, thought such occasion lucky,
And soon around the general flocked the hunters of Kentucky.

You’ve heard, I s’pose, how New Orleans is famed for wealth and beauty
There’s girls of every hue, it seems, from snowy white to sooty.
So Packenham he made his brags, if he in fight was lucky,
He’d have their girls and cotton bags in spite of old Kentucky.

But Jackson he was wide awake, and wasn’t scared at trifles,
For well he knew what aim we take with our Kentucky rifles;
So he led us down to Cyprus swamp, the ground was low and mucky,
There stood John Bull in martial pomp, and here was old Kentucky.

A bank was raised to hide our breast, not that we thought of dying,
But then we always like to rest unless the game is flying;
Behind it stood our little force, none wished it to be greater,
For every man was half a horse and half an alligator.

Jackson won two terms against non-military opponents partly on the strength of such epic bragging. But his opponents were not to be outdone, unseating Jackson’s hand-picked successor in 1840 with an elderly veteran named William Henry Harrison. The Whigs’ campaign songs boasted even more broadly and folksily about Old Tippecanoe’s triumphs during the War of 1812 than Jackson’s had. Everybody knows “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too,” but there were many more, like “The Buckeye Song“:

In the end, I have to demur from M.J. Rosenberg’s broader interpretation of past American political practice. What is more unique and distinctively modern about John McCain’s politicization of his wartime service is the McCain story’s emphasis on suffering and endurance in the midst of military *failure.* There is a personal triumph there, to be sure, and a spiritual and psychological success. But surely there is a tremendous difference between the war record of a long-term POW in a losing cause and success as a field commander in a winning one. One might be said to make a bit more sense as a qualification for Commander-in-Chief than the other. Truly it took our modern therapeutic culture, in which people routinely publicize their past personal traumas as badges of honor and the subjects of best-selling books, to turn McCain’s sort of war heroism into a recommendation for high national office. [Probably the closest previous example at the presidential level would be the carefully

retailed legend of JFK and PT-109. Even there, the war was won even if the boat was sunk.]

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

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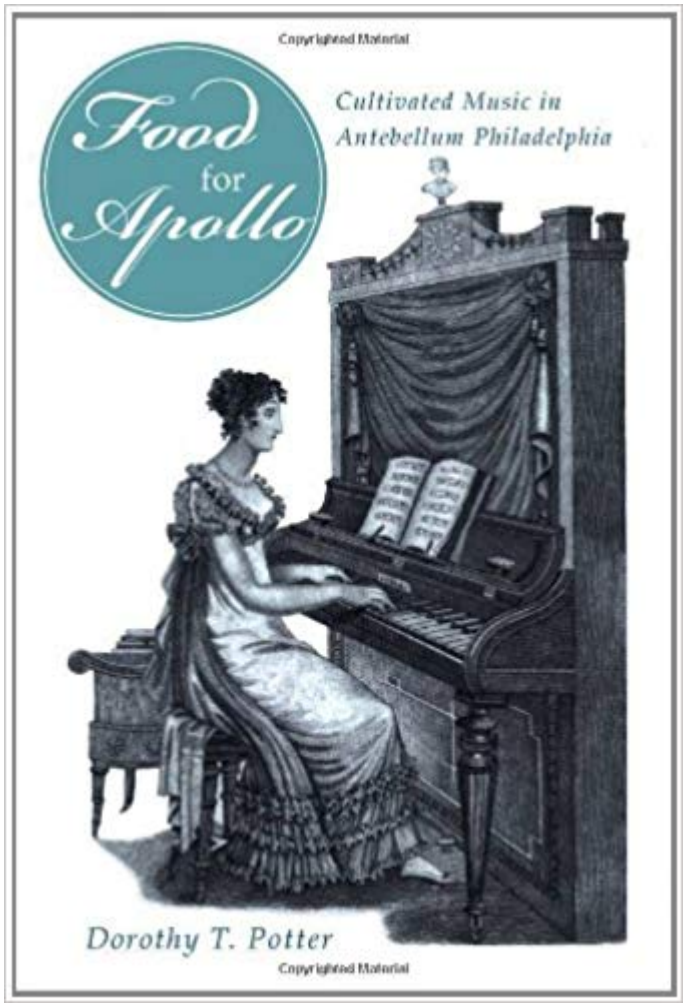
Mozart in America



How should we understand the major role European classical music has played in American cultural history?

Cosmopolite’s Mount Sinai Domains

Lorenzo Dow Dreams of Empire in the Era of Good Feelings

Before they left for a preaching tour of England in the fall of 1805, Lorenzo Dow warned his wife, Peggy, that once they got there she might have to sell her gown for bread. Lorenzo was famous in America as an apostle of God—an eccentric itinerant who traveled "without purse and scrip," usually on foot, unkempt, clothed in cast-offs. Austerity was part of the job, a crucial component of the character he played. Peggy didn't have to sell her gown during that trip, but only because the English were more inclined to charity than Lorenzo had led her to hope.

Eleven years later, in the autumn of 1816, Lorenzo met with a lawyer and some associates in Philadelphia and bought a little over 345,000 acres of what is now Wisconsin for the decidedly non-apostolic sum of $86,280, paid in full. In the midst of the bubble that would burst in the panic of 1819, credit was easy in 1816 and Dow certainly borrowed to put his stake together. Still, it was a lot of money for a "poor wanderer" to leverage: the common laborers, artisans, and farmers to whom Dow pitched his message likely wouldn't earn that much money in two lifetimes.

The interesting thing is that Lorenzo Dow's public persona did not change as his access to wealth grew; if anything, he doubled down on his performance of apostolic poverty. "His dress is mean, his voice harsh; his gesticulation and delivery ungraceful in the extreme, and his whole appearance and manners are calculated to excite the curiosity and wonder, if not the disgust, of his hearers," one genteel newspaper complained in 1820. In the 1814 edition of his autobiography Dow made a blunt assertion of his poverty specifically with respect to land: "I have not an acre of ground I call my own upon earth—and but a small pittance of this world's goods in any shape or form." Although he edited his journals incessantly, that passage didn't change for subsequent editions. The final edition he edited, published in 1833, told of his abject

poverty during this period of land acquisition.

The complications of Dow's character extend not just to the fact that he was quietly wealthy but also to what he desired to do with his wealth. As his fame grew in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Dow (who made a habit of referring to himself in the third person) had started calling himself "Cosmopolite": "a citizen of the world; one who is at home in every place," as defined by a contemporary dictionary. By all appearances, though, Cosmopolite bought all of that land with the intention of settling down. Dow exercised his penchant for eccentric eponym all over the maps drafted in conjunction with his purchases: he christened a choice plot at the confluence of two rivers "Cosmopolite's Mt. Sinai Domains"; he named townships for himself, Peggy, and various of his associates; he drafted a plat for his capital, which he called Loren. An ardent if cautious abolitionist, he inscribed his political beliefs onto the landscape, marking off a settlement for free blacks. In 1817 he began doling out parcels of his holdings to friends and acquaintances, creating networks of obligation among those who might follow him to his promised land. His imagination ranging over land he most likely never saw, the eccentric Cosmopolite dreamt an empire.

> Dow came to find the character he created constraining, but because his authority was tied to it, he could not easily escape it.

Dow's aspirations and the fact that he kept them quiet illustrate a crucial but overlooked point about self-creation in the early-national period. As we'll see, Dow was a premier representative of the populist, democratic, Jeffersonian ethos. He eschewed traditional authorities, valorized the "common man," and decried all forms of religious establishment, which he called "Law Religion." "He cautioned his hearers not to pin their faith on those who preach in steepled houses, or to believe a thing because their grandmothers before them believed it," as one paper put it. Dow's public persona was built on a theatrical irreverence that embodied what Joyce Appleby has identified as the Jeffersonian impulse toward "cultivating an appreciation for novelty, undermining deference, and enhancing the self-confidence of ordinary white men." Men like Dow have stood as symbols of the democratizing of American Protestantism in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Dow's secret attempt to shift roles, though, demonstrates that such leveling was much more complicated than it might appear. As an apostle of God as well as a man of the people, Dow not only reflected the "aspirations and values of common people," as Nathan Hatch put it: he also helped create those aspirations and values by performing them publicly, and this exaggerated performance of class identity constituted its own ideal type. The poor wanderer had to be poor; the champion of the simple man had to be simple. Dow came to find the character he created constraining, but because his authority was tied to it, he could not easily escape it. He eventually did escape it, in a way, but only by distancing himself from the biblical model on which he originally drew. This lesson speaks

to the relationship between authenticity and authority and to the conflation of religious and political identity in the new nation. It also says something about the perils of being a wealthy populist.

Lorenzo Dow started preaching in 1795, a few years after being converted among Methodists. He wasn't very good at it. "I being young both in years and ministry, the expectations of many were raised, who did not bear with my weakness and strong doctrine, but judged me very hard," he wrote of an early sermon. The first official correspondence Dow records from the Methodist hierarchy, following his first stab at itineracy in 1796, is a letter telling him to go home.

"Peggy Dow," engraving taken from History of Cosmopolite; or The Four Volumes of Lorenzo's journal, Concentrated in One: Containing his Experience and Travels, from Childhood, to Near his Fortieth Year, by Lorenzo Dow (Philadelphia, 1816). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

"Lorenzo Dow," engraving taken from History of Cosmopolite; or The Four Volumes of Lorenzo's journal, Concentrated in One: Containing his Experience and Travels, from Childhood, to Near his Fortieth Year, by Lorenzo Dow, third edition (Philadelphia, 1816). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

From early on, though, Dow made up in provocativeness and persistence what he lacked in skill. He preached a strong version of the era's common Methodist iteration of the evangelical message: repent or be damned; leave off the things of the world; stop drinking and playing cards and fiddling. It was *how* he preached it that made him successful. He preached at night, by torchlight, causing "a great deal of talk." He singled out members of his audiences for censure, based on their appearance or, often, based on nothing in particular. Sometimes he prophesied that specific individuals who opposed him would soon die; other times, he prayed openly that they would. He digressed, he ranted; detractors found him always "off in a tangent." "Some said I was crazy," he wrote, "others that I was possessed of the devil." It didn't matter to Dow what they said, as long as the stories about him generated audiences. "Many it brought out to hear the strange man: and [they] would go away cursing and swearing, saying that I was saucy and deserved knocking down, and the uproar was so great among the people." He took his "craziness" everywhere, relentlessly. On his first big preaching tour, Dow covered 4,000 miles and was gone eight months. Methodist leaders tried to send him home four different times.

In the spring of 1804, Dow estimated that in the preceding 40 days he had preached to 100,000 people, which was likely a characteristic over-estimate, but still. By 1808, he was so famous that a report of his death was covered by newspapers in at least 13 of the 16 states; a report from London finally assured Dow's anxious public that he was still on this side of Paradise. People started naming their kids for him at least as early as 1806—the later nineteenth century would see a number of men named Lorenzo Dow (Something). In 1823, an exhibit of wax sculptures on tour in the United States featured likenesses of celebrities such as George Washington, Andrew Jackson, notable European rulers, and the singular Lorenzo Dow.

The only thing people talked about more than Dow's eccentric style was his appearance. By nature, he was physically hard to miss—pale and tall, "a long-armed ape" as one rather pointed report had it. He made the most of that natural appearance through grooming and dress. "He wears his hair long and flowing, and his beard unshorn in imitation of the Apostles!"; "his pale visage [is] in contrast with locks that would vie with the wings of a raven, and a well set beard of the same colour extend[s] to his breast." An amused review of the wax exhibit in a Detroit paper reported that Dow appeared there "as usual, very dirty." During his first preaching tour of Ireland, a fellow preacher tried to give him his own razor and begged him "to dress more ministerial." "Many were offended at my plainness, both of dress, expressions and way of address in conversation about heart religion; so that the country seemed to be in an uproar; scarcely one to take up my cause, and I was mostly known by the name of Crazy Dow." As one paper summarized, "there was nothing then in his garb and habit that argued sense or even sanity."

Through his eccentricities Dow cultivated a particular kind of religious authority. He was frequently (and not just by himself) compared to an apostle: Paul did, after all, call himself "a fool for Christ's sake" (1 Corinthians 4:10). Hatch has suggested that Dow's performance was modeled on John the Baptist, which has its merits: he was a wanderer in the wilderness, proclaiming the coming of Christ. An argument could be made that he had something of a Christ complex—the first edition of his journal includes an extended account of a dream, later excised, in which he is unsubtly scourged and nailed to a cross. "Apostle" was the role he claimed for himself, though, arguing in an 1814 publication that there had to be latter-day apostles because in the Great Commission Christ told his (first) apostles that he would be with them "alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). "I ask how he could be *with* his Apostles unto the end of the world, unless he *had* Apostles to be WITH?" Dow argued, with characteristically literalist logic. "It is evident he could not allude to the *twelve* only; for he knew they would not live to the end of the world … he must include succeeding ministers, who would step into the Apostles' shoes." Dow travelled widely, founded churches, dispensed advice and explained doctrine in lengthy epistles. He also, as he was fond of relating, suffered constantly for the good work. "Thrice was I beaten with rods," Paul writes (2 Corinthians 11:25), "once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." According to Dow's journal: check, check,

and check. Well, only one shipwreck, and really it was just a close call, but he did get wet a lot, traveling in the rain.


“Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nawdowissie Indians,” 1816. Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives. Click image to enlarge in new window.

He accepted bodily suffering when he could, but Dow’s apostolic identity was primarily based in his utter independence and in his unqualified embrace of apostolic poverty. These went together. Itineracy was expensive—the costs of room, board, and transportation were compounded by the fact that someone traveling as constantly as Dow had no chance to farm or ply a conventional trade. Moreover, Dow had no access to the usual means of an itinerant’s support because he refused ordination. Ordained and licensed itinerants might expect to receive a small salary from whatever denominational organ they served, but the real monetary value of ordination was that it authorized a minister to expect, solicit, or at the very least accept support when it was offered by his audiences. Scholars often depict early-national revivalist evangelicalism as a realm of diluted institutions and open pulpits, where the authority to preach came from simply having the Spirit and the nerve. Assumptions about ministerial education and style were definitely different for New Light Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Christians, and other burgeoning denominations in this era, but ordination remained crucial: one could not simply declare oneself a preacher and pass the offering plate with impunity, because people still expected preachers to have papers. Women who wanted to preach ran up against this expectation constantly; African Americans did as well, until many formed denominational bureaucracies to issue themselves credentials. As a white male, Dow’s only disadvantage with respect to ordination was his inability to listen to absolutely anyone. After being put on a probationary period by the Methodists at the beginning of his career, he repeatedly clashed with church leaders and was recalled from or abandoned the various circuits to which he was assigned.

After 1802, Dow gave up any pursuit of a formal preaching license, but he felt the sting: in the years before his national reputation solidified he “felt the want of credentials.” Everywhere he went, Dow worried about being thought “an imposter.” Methodist leaders warned him that they would make him one: “J. Lee had said, if I attempted to travel in the name of a Methodist, without their consent, he would advertise me in every paper on the continent &c, for an imposter.” His solution was to build a personal following through his own methods and to never, ever, ask for donations. “There is no time nor place in Europe or America, that any person can point out, when or where I asked for a ‘CONTRIBUTION,’ for ‘*myself,*‘ either directly or indirectly.” Beyond the necessity that an apostle not beg, Dow felt that his role also meant that he could not always take even what came unasked. “It is true, I had many pounds,

and handsome presents offered me in my journey; but I could not feel freedom to receive them, only just what would serve my present necessity, to get along to my appointments, as I was such a stranger in the country; and so many to watch me (as an imposter) for evil." He estimated in 1814 that he had turned down the overwhelming majority of contributions he'd been offered during his preaching career, "perhaps ten to one."

The relationship between poverty and authority that so affected Dow was not new in Christian history, of course. "If he asks for money, he is a false prophet," observed the author of the *Didache*, seventeen centuries before Cosmopolite wandered around New York City praying someone would offer him a change of underwear without his having to ask. (He'd shipped his ahead and they'd been lost in transit.) What is distinctive in the early-national period is the political edge to Dow's biblically informed persona. His recognition as an apostle was undergirded by the trappings of poverty, which had not just biblical but social associations that complicated and further constrained his role. Because Dow worked outside of not only the traditional ideals of the sedate and sedentary ministry, but even beyond the institutional expectations of those with whom he made common cause, his authority as a preacher depended entirely on public opinion. He was an extreme case of the problem of doubt that Amanda Porterfield and others have observed in this period of fluid communities and self-invention: the real sense of "imposter" that haunted Dow was the possibility that those he encountered in the world would glimpse a distance between the character that he played and the person he was.


Detail of "Bulah Ethiopia" from "Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nawdowissie Indians" (1816). Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives.

Plenty of people looked for that distance, and plenty claimed to find it. Dow sort of broke character when he married Peggy in 1804: apostles couldn't be married, could they? He wrote an extensive "defense of matrimony" to compensate, and for a couple of years had to explain to skeptical congregations that while Paul might have been a eunuch for the Lord, Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law, and one cannot have a mother-in-law without being married. Ultimately, his reputation did not suffer on this count.

The money question dogged him, though: rumors about secret wealth followed him everywhere. His mid-1810s land deals would be exceptional, but the reality is that the wandering apostle was perhaps never as destitute as he made out. In July of 1803, soon after his engagement, Dow wrote to his parents that he had bought some land outside of Natchez, Mississippi, "where one day I hope to call my home." To be sure, he must've bought it cheap, but already he was building a reputation on poverty to the extent that he couldn't admit to owning much of anything. His published journal for this period recorded that he had sold his watch to buy a site to build the locals a meeting house, but that personally he

was destitute. “I was now dirty and ragged, as my pantaloons were worn out, my coat and jacket worn through, as also my mogasons. I had only the smallest part of a dollar left: however some gentlemen gave me seven dollars, and then a collection was made, which I refused until they hurt my feeling and forced it upon me.” Prior to this he had refused contributions on this trip for appearance’s sake, so as not “to give Satan a sword to slay me, or power to hedge up my way, as the eyes of hundreds were upon me.”

A few years later, Dow was caught up in a controversy over a mill trace elsewhere in Mississippi and defensively inserted his explanation of the affair into his publications for the next several years. The whole thing actually put him in debt $6,000, he claimed, but gossip turned his Mississippi holdings into “‘three first rate flower mills;’ as many ‘saw mills,’ three Cotton and two Sugar plantations—a large elegant brick house and Twenty-five slaves, and a prodigious sum of money in the Bank!”

Beyond accusations of secret excessive wealth, Dow made so much of his poverty that detractors sarcastically wondered how he even fed himself. “We do not find that it is said, that any animal is supported on air, but the Cameleon,” suggested one (scientifically misinformed) letter to an Ohio paper in 1809. “Lorenzo is not the Cameleon, or Egyptian Lizard; therefore, Lorenzo is not supported on air.” Parroting Dow’s own argumentative style, the author cut to the central paradox of an apostle who did not work with his own hands but also refused donations: “Mankind in general, are supported by their own labor or the donations of others. Lorenzo is not supported by his own labor; therefore, he must be supported by the donations of others.”

Detail of the western portion of Carver’s Grant, where most of Dow’s holdings were, from “Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nawdowissie Indians” (1816). Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives.

Beginning in 1800, however, Dow actually was supported by his own labors, having availed himself of a means of support that the apostles of old had lacked: the popular press. It was common for itinerants to sell their writings as they traveled, to finance the good work. Dow took this to unprecedented levels. Before 1820, he published at least forty-five editions of at least 13 distinct works—autobiographies, hymnals, political treatises, theological arguments. There are so many, with so many different imprints (Augusta, Georgia; Windham, Connecticut; Salisbury, North Carolina; Nashville, New York, Dublin, Liverpool) that it’s difficult to keep track; the actual count of publications was probably much higher, as Dow often printed cheap pamphlets that may not have survived. In addition to his own works, he bought up copyrights for popular works by others, had them printed and reaped the proceeds. He always had some manuscript ready to be printed, some pamphlet to sell, a crate of books to trade.

Dow was predictably leery of acknowledging the income from his books. “The profits of my books—I derived no real advantage from, before I went to Europe the last time—and by the ‘Journal’ I sunk about one thousand dollars; by engaging too many to meeting-houses, before the work was done,” he wrote in 1814. He made much of instances in which he paid for books to be printed only to have them lost or stolen; his proceeds were constantly being eaten up by unforeseen exigencies.

Buying the land, though, was unavoidably an acknowledgement of some financial success. As far as I can tell, Charles Coleman Sellers, Dow’s only biographer to date, was the first to publicize the land deals, writing about them in shocked tones in 1928. Even at historical (and historiographical) remove, Sellers was uncomfortable with how they fit Dow’s image. “It was impossible that he should be both openly wealthy and continue his holy calling,” Sellers wrote. He was mostly right.

Resonantly, the story of Dow’s land purchases actually begins with another intrepid character’s frustrated authenticity. The parcels of land that Dow bought were part of what was known as the Carver Grant, a four-million-acre chunk of land roughly described by a triangle with points at St. Paul, Minnesota, and Iron and Wood counties in Wisconsin. The land was supposedly deeded to one Jonathan Carver by two chiefs of the Naudowessie tribe in 1767, when Carver visited as part of an expedition. In 1769, Carver—a onetime soldier in the British Army turned explorer, ne’er-do-well, and bigamist—went to London to try to get the Crown to validate his claim. He failed, but by the time of his death in 1780 he was quietly selling off his notional holdings to support his two families. Carver’s claim ran into a complicated thicket of legal questions involving the right of private individuals to buy land from Indians, the standing of British deeds following independence, and whether or not Carver had made the whole thing up (which he almost certainly did). A succession of quixotic champions—Carver’s several heirs, other land speculators, elected officials, assorted hangers-on—nurtured the Carver Grant into a land speculation scheme (almost) too big to fail, working to have the grant validated while continuing to buy, sell and trade its various parcels. One of Carver’s heirs sold his interest in the claim to one Benjamin Munn, whom Dow came to know in Philadelphia in 1816, and Cosmopolite, apparently, smelled an opportunity.

According to the deeds I’ve come across, Dow actively dealt in the Carver Tract between November of 1816 and February of 1818. He gave his purchases considerable thought. He laid out Loren, his capital, using street names from Philadelphia, subtitling the plat “The City of Peace.” In 1816—a few months before the American Colonization Society formed to facilitate free blacks’ emigration to Africa—he christened a corner of his imagined empire “Beulah Ethiopia,” combining a common term for all things African with a name for land promised to the redeemed in Isaiah 62:4: “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken … but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee.” Dow preached in African American churches routinely and,

judging from the number of African American children named for him in the nineteenth century, he was popular enough among the black population. It's hard not to notice, though, that Beulah Ethiopia was literally the farthest corner of Cosmopolite's empire: Dow was an abolitionist, not an integrationist.

"Lorenzo Dow," lithograph by Childs & Lehman, after painting by A. T. Lee (Philadelphia, 1834). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dow sold some of his holdings (including Beulah Ethiopia) in April of 1817 to Robinson Tyndale, gentleman of Philadelphia. Other deeds record sales the following November, but these appear to have been gifts from Dow to his would-be followers rather than business transactions: he unloaded plots of 100,000, 2,560, and 23,000 acres for a total of just $110. A notebook belonging to Tyndale, who for a while led a charge to have Carver's claim validated, contains a list of 21 individuals or groups "to whom Lorenzo Dow has given Deeds of Land in the N.W.T.," dated a few days after those generous transactions. Dow, it appears, had begun quietly playing the role of patriarch, building a following, possibly with an eye toward leading them west.

While Dow was in Philadelphia in November of 1817 distributing land, he published *Cosmopolite's Thoughts, on the Progress of Light and Liberty*, which amounts to a treatise on the providential unfolding of American history. Though characteristically idiosyncratic—somehow, he gets around to talking about how eels came to be in the Great Lakes—it is a strident statement of his commitment to democratic government, American exceptionalism and expansion, and "LIBERTY," in all its democratic grandeur. "When liberty of conscience was denied in the old world, and drove many to seek refuge in the new, improvements in society, in their form of government, have been increasing ever since." Without reading too much into it, the treatise might be the work of a man quietly beginning to imagine himself as the leader of a western colony. It ends with a curious statement that strains against Dow's typical self-positioning with regard to the things of the world. "Ease, popularity, or money, has not been my object or chief design; *and at most was only a secondary consideration*, subordinate to the first, viz. the glory of God, and the salvation of souls" (emphasis mine). That he might admit even a secondary concern for ease, fame, and money was unprecedented for Dow, but the poor wanderer had found some use, perhaps, for worldly things. "What is before me I know not, but I feel that there are *trials* ahead … I feel this world is not my home, but I must use a small portion of it, while here I stay."

It's possible that the "small portion" Dow had in mind in that sentence was a chunk of modern-day Wisconsin. Dow travelled to London the next year to preach and to continue investigating the Carver claim. He managed to view some of Carver's petitions to the Crown and tracked down a copy of the third edition of Carver's published journal, which contained an engraving of what claimed to be

Carver's deed from the Naudowessie (shockingly, the original was lost). In 1820, though, Dow reported to Tyndale that he'd reached a point with the British officials at which seeing more of the relevant legal documents would "be attended with considerable expence, which in the end might lodge me in the light house and there I stopt." Dow held onto parts of his land, but I've found no further evidence that he continued to pursue a clear claim (the federal government issued its final decision on the Carver Grant in 1825). In the last edition of his journal he edited, published shortly before his death in 1834, Dow added a paragraph explaining that his extended presence in Philadelphia in the fall of 1816 had been caused by "a severe sickness." He also accented his poverty at about that time, noting that in the spring and summer of 1817 he was destitute. Dow died without direct descendants, but his second wife's nieces were still trying to make a claim on the Carver Grant in the 1870s, one of them reporting that her late uncle had never given up: he'd always been for suing the government over the land. Her aunt, she said, had thought it was all nonsense.

Dow never became a patriarch or a prophet like Moses, but his dreams of empire appear to have altered his self-representation. He was never quite the same poor apostle after he returned from England in 1819. In 1820 Peggy died, and Dow remarried mere months later. His second wife, Lucy Dolbeare, came from a wealthy family, and this brought renewed focus on his finances. Significantly, he stopped protesting. Though he changed nothing about his public performances, Dow more or less stopped professing apostolic poverty. After turning out at least seven editions of his journal between 1804 and 1816, an expanding record of his privations in the Lord's service, he didn't publish another one until 1833. In 1820, moreover, he began selling Dow's Patented Family Medicine, capitalizing on his fame to sell, well, snake oil. "Lorenzo Dow was at Tuscumbia, Alabama, on the 21st ult. Preaching and vending medicines for both soul and body, in the form of religious pamphlets and patent drugs," one paper reported in 1827. In his later years, it appears that he made more money from medicine than from books—the patent is the only specifically enumerated item in his will.

Other things changed, as well. While in prison for libel in 1821 (it's a long story), he who had once prayed for providence to supply him with underwear "gave money to each of the other prisoners, and distributed flannel shirts among them." The man who could brook no traditional, inherited authority became a Freemason in 1824. In 1825 he finally accepted formal ordination, from a Methodist splinter group.

Reproduction of the deed to Jonathan Carver as it appears in Carver's Travels in Wisconsin by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Includes the marks of Chiefs Hawnopawjatin and Otohtongoomlisheaw. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society,

Worcester, Massachusetts.

In short, Lorenzo Dow gave up being a biblical character and became an American one: a self-made, self-authorizing celebrity. Some commentators still made note of his “apostolic” beard, and he did emphasize the biblical resonance of the time he spent in prison (Acts 16:23: check!), but his appearance and demeanor were now what was expected of being Lorenzo Dow, not of being Paul. “His beard is permitted to grow entire, not even the upper lip being shaved, and his whole contour, is just such as might be expected in so extraordinary a man,” one paper wrote. Detractors mocked him for being a preacher and a snake-oil salesman at the same time, but his place in the public consciousness was no longer dependent on consistency with a role other than the one he had defined. The character had such an independent existence that in 1830, an imposter Dow gave a number of successful sermons before being found out. As the *Didache* would have predicted, the false Dow did not have any qualms about asking for money.

Reproduction of the deed to Jonathan Carver as it appears in Carver’s Travels in Wisconsin by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dow died—rather unexpectedly for someone who had been predicting his imminent demise for more than 40 years—while on a trip to Washington, D.C., in early 1834. He was visiting the seat of federal government on his own business, not the Lord’s: he was hand-delivering a petition to renew the patent on his Family Medicine. He would not have objected to the first obituary that ran in his hometown paper. In a move that Amazon.com could certainly appreciate, the publisher, who was also a bookseller, announced Dow’s death and then reminded the bereaved public that he had a large edition of Dow’s collected works ready to sell.

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“A New Map of North American from the Latest Discoveries 1778,” lithograph by Nathaniel Currier from engraved version for Carver’s Travels in Wisconsin by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Click image to enlarge in new window.

Further Reading:

Lorenzo Dow’s works are most readily available in the various editions of the collection titled *The Dealings of God, Man, and the Devil, as Exemplified in the Life, Experience, and Travels of Lorenzo Dow, in a Period of More than a Half Century; with Reflections on Various Subjects, Religious, Moral, Political and Prophetic*, or some variation on that, published all over the place beginning in 1833.

The Minnesota Historical Society’s Robinson Tyndale Collection is an amazing digital resource on the Carver Grant.

The only biography of Lorenzo Dow is Charles Coleman Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow: The Bearer of the Word* (New York, 1928).

On populism, imposture, and religion in the early national period, see Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago, 2012).

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Go East, Young Man: How a drifter from

Revolutionary Connecticut found the Pacific

Presented as part of the Special Issue: Pacific Routes

Sparks’s Ledyard is thus the supreme romantic hero. His adventures are not inhibited by worldly concerns or fear of physical suffering; like the ancient Stoics or the great saints of Christendom, he freely sacrificed himself for some greater cause.

The Adolescent Equinox

From the moment we arrived, I could tell I was going to have a hard time making peace with resort culture.

A House in Vermont, a Caribbean Beach

I sensed the spark of time travel, but even the most vaporous spirits seemed unable to slip between the apertures of the past and this particular May evening.

Stubborn Loyalists

My sister has a box of extraordinary things such as are not to be seen every day.

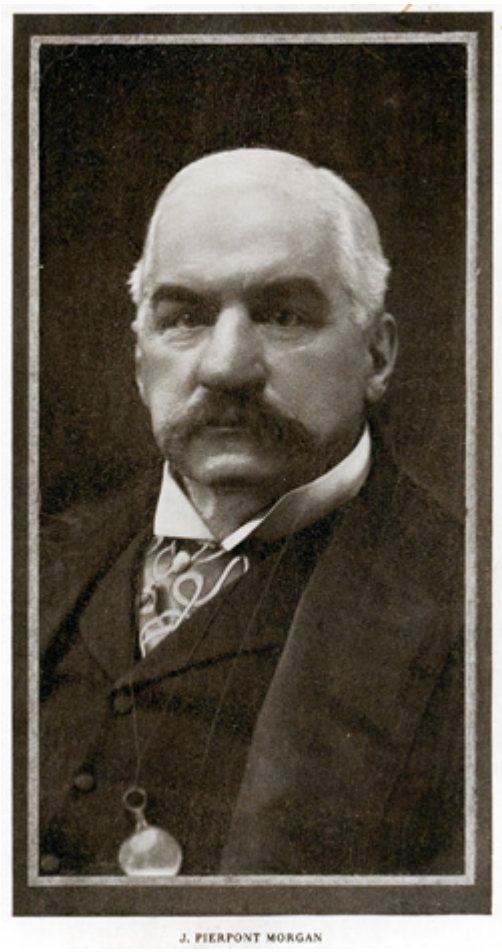
Potent Papers

Presented as part of the special Politics Issue

Before the secret ballot became the national standard, election ballots were a

vivid genre of print ephemera.

The Rise and Fall of Relationship Banking



The early banks were typically established by individuals with common ties—whether political, social, or commercial in nature.

In this Issue

Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

This special issue of Common-place gives us a chance to step back from the earnest defensiveness that has sometimes characterized early American literary history and delight publicly in the strange and wonderful books that are our American legacy.